Byzantine Echoes

Tracing the influence of Byzantine culture

SS24.8.2b "Evaluate the cultural contributions of the Byzantines to art, religion, and architecture."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one Byzantine contribution in each paragraph, then circle a detail that shows why it mattered beyond its original setting.

What Byzantium Passed On

1. After the western Roman Empire fell, artists in the eastern Roman Empire, often called the Byzantine Empire, developed a striking way to tell stories with mosaics. They pressed small pieces of colored glass and stone into walls and ceilings, often against gold backgrounds. In churches, images of religious figures helped worshippers focus on sacred stories. The glittering surfaces also made imperial and church authority seem powerful. Byzantine mosaic techniques and styles later influenced artists in places such as Sicily and medieval Russia, so their visual language reached far beyond Constantinople.

2. Religion shaped daily life in Byzantium. Its rulers supported Eastern Orthodox Christianity, and church leaders used Greek in worship and religious writing. Missionaries Cyril and Methodius developed an alphabet called Glagolitic to translate Christian texts for Slavic-speaking people. Their followers helped spread a later alphabet, Cyrillic. These efforts let more people encounter religious ideas in their own language. As Orthodox Christianity spread among Slavic peoples, it also carried Byzantine customs, texts, and art beyond the empire. The influence lasted in communities whose churches still follow Orthodox traditions today.

3. In Constantinople, Emperor Justinian I ordered the rebuilding of Hagia Sophia after a revolt damaged an earlier church. Completed in 537, it placed a vast dome above a wide interior. Builders used curved supports called pendentives to set the round dome over a square space. The building joined engineering skill with religious purpose: its soaring interior gave worshippers a sense of awe. Later builders studied its design, and Ottoman architects drew on its domes when creating mosques. Hagia Sophia shows how a Byzantine building could shape architecture across cultures.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did mosaics serve worshippers in Byzantine churches, and what shows that their influence reached beyond the empire?

2. Why were translations of Christian texts for Slavic-speaking people a lasting cultural contribution, not just a way to share religious ideas at the time?

3. What evidence shows that Hagia Sophia's design influenced architecture across cultures?

4. Which has stronger evidence of influence beyond Byzantium, its mosaics or Hagia Sophia's design? Choose one and support your judgment with a detail from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a museum can feature only one Byzantine contribution to show how art, religion, and architecture were connected. Choose a contribution from the passage, explain how it connects at least two of these areas, and judge why it deserves the display using two details from the passage. Write one paragraph of 5 to 6 sentences.

ANSWER KEY

Byzantine Echoes

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.2b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one Byzantine contribution in each paragraph, then circle a detail that shows why it mattered beyond its original setting. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did mosaics serve worshippers in Byzantine churches, and what shows that their influence reached beyond the empire?	**The images helped worshippers focus on sacred stories. Byzantine mosaic techniques and styles later influenced artists in Sicily and medieval Russia.**
2	Why were translations of Christian texts for Slavic-speaking people a lasting cultural contribution, not just a way to share religious ideas at the time?	**The work led to the spread of Cyrillic through the missionaries' followers. Orthodox traditions, texts, and art also spread among Slavic peoples and continue in some communities.**
3	What evidence shows that Hagia Sophia's design influenced architecture across cultures?	**Ottoman architects drew on Hagia Sophia's domes when creating mosques.**
4	Which has stronger evidence of influence beyond Byzantium, its mosaics or Hagia Sophia's design? Choose one and support your judgment with a detail from the passage.	**Either choice is defensible. For example, mosaics influenced artists in both Sicily and medieval Russia, showing influence in more than one place.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would feature Hagia Sophia because it links Byzantine architecture and religion. Its builders used pendentives to place a vast dome over a square space. The soaring interior gave worshippers a sense of awe, so its design supported a religious experience. Ottoman architects later drew on its domes when creating mosques. Its religious purpose and influence across cultures make it a strong choice for the display.

For the marking job, accept contributions such as mosaics, translations of Christian texts, and Hagia Sophia's dome, paired with evidence of their effects. For the judgment questions, accept any supported choice that explains cultural significance rather than only naming a feature.