When Walls Fell

Tracing the consequences of Constantinople's conquest

AWH.C.12.5 "Examine the sack of Constantinople in 1453 and its consequences, describing why the event is considered a turning point in medieval history."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two immediate results of the conquest, circle two longer-term effects, and number one sentence that explains why 1453 is considered a turning point.

Constantinople in 1453

1 In the spring of 1453, Constantinople stood between Europe and Asia, its massive walls protecting the last major city of the Byzantine Empire. Byzantine rulers had governed from the city for more than a thousand years, though their territory had shrunk. Sultan Mehmed II led an Ottoman army against it. Large cannons battered the land walls, while Ottoman ships pressed the city from the water. On May 29, attackers broke through. Emperor Constantine XI died in the fighting. The city's fall ended the Byzantine Empire and gave the Ottomans control of a strategic crossing between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

2 After the breach, Ottoman soldiers plundered Constantinople, seizing goods and taking captives. Mehmed soon moved to restore order and make the city his capital, which came to be widely known as Istanbul. The great church of Hagia Sophia became a mosque. These changes marked a shift in political and religious power, but they did not erase the city's population or its earlier history. Ottoman rulers rebuilt and repopulated the city, bringing people from different parts of their empire. For residents, the conquest meant danger and loss for some, while others lived and worked under a new government.

3 Historians call 1453 a turning point because a surviving center of the medieval Roman world disappeared and Ottoman power expanded into southeastern Europe. News of the conquest alarmed many Christian rulers. Some Greek scholars moved west with knowledge of ancient texts, adding to intellectual exchanges already underway in Italy. European merchants still traded through Ottoman lands, so the fall did not suddenly shut every route to Asia. Over time, some European kingdoms pursued ocean voyages for trade, wealth, and other reasons. The conquest did not start a new age overnight, but it changed the balance of power and helped shape later choices.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did control of Constantinople matter to the Ottomans beyond gaining one city?

2. How did the effects on residents during the sack differ from Mehmed's later plans for the city?

3. How did the conquest change both political rule and a religious institution in Constantinople?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say that the conquest immediately ended European trade with Asia and caused ocean voyages?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label of 75 to 100 words explaining why 1453 is considered a turning point. Connect an immediate consequence to a longer-term change, and correct one oversimplified claim about the conquest.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two immediate results of the conquest, circle two longer-term effects, and number one sentence that explains why 1453 is considered a turning point. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did control of Constantinople matter to the Ottomans beyond gaining one city?	**It gave them control of a strategic crossing between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean and strengthened their power.**
2	How did the effects on residents during the sack differ from Mehmed's later plans for the city?	**During the sack, soldiers took goods and captives. Mehmed later restored order, made the city his capital, and brought in new residents.**
3	How did the conquest change both political rule and a religious institution in Constantinople?	**Ottoman rule replaced Byzantine rule, and Hagia Sophia changed from a church to a mosque.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say that the conquest immediately ended European trade with Asia and caused ocean voyages?	**Merchants continued trading through Ottoman lands. Some kingdoms pursued ocean voyages over time for several reasons, including trade and wealth.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1453, Ottoman forces captured Constantinople, ending the Byzantine Empire. This immediate end to Byzantine rule allowed Mehmed II to make the city an Ottoman capital, strengthening Ottoman control of a key crossing. Soldiers also took goods and captives during the sack. In later years, Greek scholars moving west added to exchanges of ancient learning in Italy. The conquest marks a turning point because it ended a long-lasting medieval state and shifted political power. It did not instantly end European trade with Asia or cause every ocean voyage; those voyages had several motives.

Accept other passage-supported immediate and longer-term consequences. The museum label should explain a causal connection and avoid presenting 1453 as an instant end to trade or medieval life.