After the Empire

Trace Rome's fall and the kingdoms that followed.

AWH.C.7.9 "Describe the Sack of Rome, fall of the Western Roman Empire, and the establishment of Germanic kingdoms (e.g., Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Vandals, Franks, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about the sack of Rome, circle the change in leadership in 476, and put matching numbers beside each Germanic group and the region where it established a kingdom. Use your marks to trace how political control changed.

A City Sacked, a West Remade

1 In 410 CE, a Visigothic army led by Alaric entered Rome and took valuables from the city. For three days, soldiers looted buildings while residents fled or hid. Rome was no longer the western emperor's usual home, but it remained a powerful symbol of Roman rule. News of its sack shocked people across the empire. The attack did not end the Western Roman Empire: emperors still held office, and Roman officials still governed. In 455, Vandal forces sacked Rome again. These attacks showed how difficult it had become for western leaders to defend even their most famous city.

2 In 476 CE, the Germanic commander Odoacer removed the young western emperor Romulus Augustulus from power and ruled Italy himself. Historians often use 476 to mark the fall of the Western Roman Empire, not the sudden disappearance of Roman people or customs. The eastern half of the empire continued from Constantinople. In the west, Roman tax systems and armies had weakened amid political struggles, lost territory, and pressure from different armed groups. Some Germanic leaders had served in Roman armies before they claimed land and power. The shift from emperors to regional rulers took decades, not one day.

3 New kingdoms took shape across former western Roman lands. The Visigoths built a kingdom centered in Hispania after losing much of their territory in southern Gaul. The Vandals ruled North Africa, with Carthage as a major center. In Italy, the Ostrogoths established a kingdom under Theodoric by 493. The Franks expanded their kingdom in Gaul under Clovis, who ruled around the turn of the sixth century. Across parts of Britain, Anglo-Saxon peoples formed several kingdoms as Roman rule there faded. These rulers did not simply erase the past: many used Roman laws, cities, and Christian institutions while building new political systems.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Describe what happened in Rome in 410 and explain why the sack shocked people even though Rome was no longer the emperor's usual home.

2. Explain why historians use 476 to mark the fall of the Western Roman Empire. What Roman rule continued after that date?

3. Describe where the Vandals and Ostrogoths established kingdoms after western imperial power weakened.

4. Describe how the Franks and Anglo-Saxon peoples changed political control in two different regions.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum label for a display called "After Rome." Explain how the sack of Rome and the events of 476 show different kinds of change, describe two named kingdoms in different regions, and identify one way Roman traditions continued.

ANSWER KEY

After the Empire

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.7.9

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about the sack of Rome, circle the change in leadership in 476, and put matching numbers beside each Germanic group and the region where it established a kingdom. Use your marks to trace how political control changed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Describe what happened in Rome in 410 and explain why the sack shocked people even though Rome was no longer the emperor's usual home.	**Alaric's Visigothic army entered Rome and looted it for three days. The sack shocked people because Rome remained a powerful symbol of Roman rule.**
2	Explain why historians use 476 to mark the fall of the Western Roman Empire. What Roman rule continued after that date?	**In 476, Odoacer removed the western emperor Romulus Augustulus and ruled Italy. The eastern half of the Roman Empire continued from Constantinople.**
3	Describe where the Vandals and Ostrogoths established kingdoms after western imperial power weakened.	**The Vandals ruled North Africa, with Carthage as a major center. The Ostrogoths established a kingdom in Italy under Theodoric by 493.**
4	Describe how the Franks and Anglo-Saxon peoples changed political control in two different regions.	**The Franks expanded a kingdom in Gaul under Clovis. Anglo-Saxon peoples formed several kingdoms in parts of Britain as Roman rule there faded.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Visigothic sack of Rome in 410 damaged a city that still symbolized Roman power, but it did not end the Western Roman Empire. In 476, Odoacer removed its emperor and ruled Italy, marking a change in who held power. New kingdoms emerged in former Roman lands: the Vandals ruled North Africa, while the Franks expanded in Gaul. These kingdoms were not a complete break from the past. Their rulers used Roman laws, cities, and Christian institutions.

Accept descriptions that distinguish the sack of a symbolic city from the end of the western imperial office. For the museum label, look for two correctly located kingdoms and an accurate example of continuity.