Ideas Built to Last

Greek and Roman traditions in the eastern empire

AWH.C.9.1 "Describe the preservation of Greek and Roman traditions, the Code of Justinian, and the construction of the Church of the Holy Wisdom or Hagia Sophia."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ways the eastern empire preserved Greek or Roman traditions, circle one change Justinian made to Roman law, and number two details that show how Hagia Sophia used older building methods for a new purpose.

An Empire Carries Ideas Forward

1. In the sixth century, a visitor to Constantinople could hear Greek in its streets and see an emperor ruling a state that called itself Roman. After the western half of the Roman Empire fell, the eastern empire continued, with Constantinople as its capital. Its educated people studied ancient Greek literature and philosophy, and scribes copied Greek texts so later readers could use them. Roman ideas also remained visible in imperial government, public offices, and the use of written law. This was not a museum of the past. People in the eastern empire kept older traditions alive while adapting them to a Christian society.

2. Emperor Justinian I wanted law to be clearer across his empire. Roman rules had accumulated over centuries, and some contradicted others. In the 500s, he directed legal experts to gather, sort, and revise this material. Their work included the Codex, a collection of imperial laws, and the Digest, a collection of legal opinions. Together with a textbook for law students and later new laws, these works formed what is often called the Code of Justinian. Judges and officials could turn to an organized written record instead of searching through scattered rules. In this way, Justinian preserved Roman law while reshaping it for his own time.

3. Justinian also rebuilt a major church in Constantinople after riots destroyed its predecessor in 532. Completed in 537, the Church of the Holy Wisdom, or Hagia Sophia, amazed visitors with a vast central dome above a bright interior. Its builders used brick, arches, and curved supports to hold up the dome, drawing on Roman engineering to create a space for Christian worship. The building made the emperor's power visible while expressing the empire's Christian faith. Alongside copied Greek works and organized Roman law, Hagia Sophia shows how the eastern empire carried older knowledge forward and put it to new purposes.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did people in the eastern empire preserve a Greek tradition and a Roman tradition? Give one example of each.

2. How did Justinian's legal experts both preserve and change Roman law?

3. How did the construction of Hagia Sophia put Roman building methods to a new use?

4. What do Justinian's law project and Hagia Sophia show about the eastern empire's use of the past? Use one detail about each.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are guiding a visitor through three stops in Constantinople: a copied Greek book, a page of Justinian's laws, and Hagia Sophia. Write a five-sentence audio guide explaining how each stop shows an older tradition kept or adapted, and end with an insight linking all three.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.9.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ways the eastern empire preserved Greek or Roman traditions, circle one change Justinian made to Roman law, and number two details that show how Hagia Sophia used older building methods for a new purpose. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did people in the eastern empire preserve a Greek tradition and a Roman tradition? Give one example of each.	**Scribes copied ancient Greek texts. Imperial government, public offices, or written law continued Roman traditions.**
2	How did Justinian's legal experts both preserve and change Roman law?	**They kept Roman laws and legal opinions but gathered, sorted, and revised them into an organized collection.**
3	How did the construction of Hagia Sophia put Roman building methods to a new use?	**Builders used brick, arches, and curved supports to raise a large dome over a church for Christian worship.**
4	What do Justinian's law project and Hagia Sophia show about the eastern empire's use of the past? Use one detail about each.	**The empire adapted older knowledge for new needs. Justinian organized Roman law for judges, while Hagia Sophia used Roman engineering to create a Christian church.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At our first stop, a scribe copies a Greek book so readers in another generation can study its ideas. Next, Justinian's officials turn centuries of Roman rules into an organized guide for judges. Look up at Hagia Sophia, where Roman building methods help create a vast church for Christian worship. Each stop keeps something valuable from the past but gives it a purpose in the present. Together, these stops show an empire building its identity from inherited knowledge, law, and engineering.

Accept other passage-supported examples of Greek or Roman traditions. For the audio guide, look for five sentences that address all three stops and link preservation to adaptation.