Beyond Constantinople

Trace how Byzantine contributions lasted and spread.

MWH.C.1.1.G "Describe the contributions of the Byzantine Empire, including the significance of the Justinian Code."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline four different Byzantine contributions in the passage. Circle a detail that shows why each one mattered.

What Byzantium Passed On

1 In the sixth century, Emperor Justinian faced a difficult problem: Roman laws were scattered across many books, and some rules disagreed with others. His government ordered legal experts to collect and organize those laws. The resulting body of work, commonly called the Justinian Code, also included explanations and new laws. It gave officials and judges a more consistent written basis for decisions throughout the empire. The laws did not treat everyone equally, yet this organized record helped later European legal scholars study Roman law. Its importance lay both in governing Byzantium and in carrying legal ideas beyond it.

2 In Constantinople, Byzantine builders raised Hagia Sophia during Justinian's reign. Its vast dome covered a space used for Christian worship. Over time, mosaics of sacred figures decorated its walls. The building showed how engineering and religious art could work together. Byzantine Christianity also shaped churches far outside the empire through its services, icons, and traditions. Meanwhile, scholars copied ancient Greek works and wrote their own histories, medical texts, and commentaries. Copies helped preserve learning that later readers could study. These contributions were more than beautiful objects: they carried beliefs and knowledge across generations.

3 Constantinople also linked markets around the Mediterranean and Black Seas. Merchants arriving by land and sea exchanged silk, grain, spices, and other goods. As people traded, they carried ideas as well as cargo. Missionaries from Byzantium spread Orthodox Christianity among Slavic peoples, and Byzantine religious traditions influenced Kievan Rus after its ruler adopted Christianity in 988. This reach did not mean every neighbor copied Byzantine life. It meant that trade routes and religious contacts let the empire shape communities beyond its borders. Law, learning, architecture, and faith made Byzantine influence last long after the empire ended in 1453.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Justinian Code help officials and judges govern the empire?

2. Why did the Justinian Code matter after Justinian's reign?

3. How did Byzantine scholars contribute to learning across generations?

4. Describe one way Byzantine Christianity reached people beyond the empire.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a museum curator's note of 80 to 100 words comparing two different Byzantine contributions from the passage. Explain why each mattered, then argue which had the wider reach using two specific details from the text.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond Constantinople

HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.1.1.G

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline four different Byzantine contributions in the passage. Circle a detail that shows why each one mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Justinian Code help officials and judges govern the empire?	**It organized laws into a more consistent written basis for their decisions.**
2	Why did the Justinian Code matter after Justinian's reign?	**Its organized record helped later European legal scholars study Roman law.**
3	How did Byzantine scholars contribute to learning across generations?	**They copied ancient Greek works and wrote new works, preserving learning for later readers.**
4	Describe one way Byzantine Christianity reached people beyond the empire.	**Accept that missionaries spread Orthodox Christianity among Slavic peoples or that Byzantine religious traditions influenced Kievan Rus after its ruler adopted Christianity.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Justinian Code and Byzantine religious traditions both influenced people beyond Constantinople. By organizing Roman laws, Justinian's government gave judges a more consistent basis for decisions. Later European scholars studied that written record. Byzantine religious traditions shaped Slavic communities, including Kievan Rus after its ruler adopted Christianity in 988. I think religious traditions had the wider reach because missionaries carried them to other peoples, while the passage describes the code's later influence mainly through European legal scholars. Both legacies outlived the empire, but religion also shaped daily worship.

Accept different choices in the curator's note if the student explains two contributions, supports a reasoned comparison with two accurate passage details, and writes 80 to 100 words.