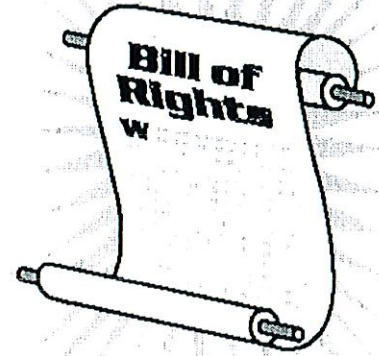


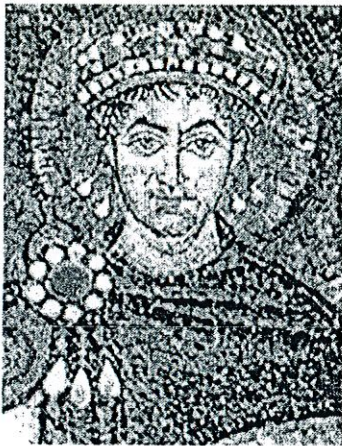
JUSTINIAN CODE ACTIVITY: CREATE YOUR OWN LAWS

Background

In the United States, we have a very important document called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights is a list of rights that everyone enjoys. These laws were written down a long time ago, when our country was first formed, so that everyone would know their rights. This document was saved and protected, so that all citizens today and in the future would enjoy the same rights.



Over the years, new rights have been added to the list. These new rights are called Amendments. One of the added amendments freed the slaves. Another gave American women the right to vote. These are important rights. They also have been written down, saved, and protected.



The same was true with the Justinian Code. Emperor Justinian wanted to save in writing all the laws that began in ancient Rome. There were thousands of Roman laws that ordered life in the empire. The most famous which were reviewed were called the Twelve Tables. These tables assured that all citizens had a right to the protection of the laws. Nearly 1,000 years later, Emperor Justinian chose ten men to review 1,600 books full of Roman Law and create a simpler legal code. These men were able to create the Justinian Code with just over 4,000 laws. They collected up all the old laws, and added new ones that gave Justinian's people even more rights.

One of the laws in the Justinian Code stated that a person was innocent until proven guilty. Can you think of any country today that has this same law? Well, sure - we do! Many countries do, including the United States, Great Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Belgium, and others.

It is not easy to write laws that are fair for everyone. Our founding fathers did a great job with the Bill of Rights, but then they some great teachers, one of which was Justinian! Justinian wrote laws that were fair for everyone because he thought about the needs of all the people. He did such a good job way back in the year 500 that new and existing governments still refer to his laws as guides when creating laws for their own countries today.



Activity

On your own or with a partner, come up with your own laws for the five categories below to create your very own code of law. These should be laws that let people know what their rights are and/or potential punishments are relating to the categories in the graph below. For example, what rights do you think all women should have? What should happen to people who commit robbery? Be prepared to share these laws with the class.

<i>Laws about...</i>	Your Code of Law
Women's Rights	What rights do you think all women should have? ★ ★ ★
Robbery	What, if anything, should happen to people who commit robbery? ★ ★ ★
Failure to Pay Debts	What, if anything, should happen if someone doesn't pay off a debt? ★ ★ ★
Murder	What, if anything, should happen to people who commit murder? ★ ★ ★
Inheritance	What rights should people have relating to inheritance after a person dies? ★ ★ ★

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

JUSTINIAN CODE VS. PRESENT U.S. LAWS

"Things which are common to all and not capable of being owned are: the air, running water, the sea, and the seashores."

-Justinian Code

<i>Laws about...</i>	Justinian Code	U.S. Laws
Women's Rights	All women can own property, make contracts and will, and bring a lawsuit.	All women can own property, make contracts and wills, bring a lawsuit. Women are guaranteed the same right as men.
Robbery	Robbery was not a crime. The victim could sue the robber for up to four times the values of the stolen property.	Robbery is a crime and is punishable by a fine and/ or a prison sentence.
Failure to Pay Debts	People owed something had to go the person owing them to gain debt back.	People owed something have to go the person owing them to gain debt back.
Murder	Murder was punished by banishment	Murder is punished by a prison sentence or death.
Inheritance	Women could not inherit property from their husbands unless it was provided in a will. Children received equal amounts of the father's estate.	Standard law allows wives and children to divide an estate. Other directions can be provided for in a will.

1. According to the chart how did the people in the Byzantine Empire get justice if they were robbed?
2. According to the chart do women in Justinian's time have the same rights as men like we do in the US?
3. Which US Laws are most similar to Justinian's Laws? Explain.
4. Which US laws are most different to Justinian's laws? Explain.
5. In your most humble opinion do you think laws were better in the Byzantine Empire were better than today? Explain your answer.