

# The End of the Empire

## If YOU were there...

You are a former Roman soldier who has settled on lands in Gaul. In the last few months, groups of foreigners have been raiding local towns and burning farms. The commander of the local army post is an old friend, but he says he is short of loyal soldiers. Many troops have been called back to Rome. You don't know when the next raid will come.

## How will you defend your lands?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** Though the Roman Empire remained large and powerful, it faced serious threats from both outside and inside. Beyond the borders of the empire, many different groups of people were on the move. They threatened the peace in the provinces—and eventually attacked the heart of the empire itself.

## Problems in the Empire

At its height the Roman Empire included all the land around the Mediterranean Sea. In the early AD 100s, the empire stretched from Britain south to Egypt, and from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Syrian Desert.

But the empire did not stay that large for long. By the end of the 200s, emperors had given up some of the land the Roman army had conquered. These emperors feared that the empire had become too large to defend or govern efficiently. As later rulers discovered, these emperors were right.

## External and Internal Threats

Even as emperors were giving up territory, new threats to the empire were appearing. Tribes of fierce Germanic warriors attacked Rome's northern borders. At the same time, Persian armies invaded in the east. The Romans defended themselves from these invasions for 200 years, but only at great cost.

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. Many problems threatened the Roman Empire, leading one emperor to divide it in half.
2. Rome declined as a result of invasions and political and economic problems.
3. In the eastern empire, people created a new society and religious traditions that were very different from those in the west.

### The Big Idea

Problems from both inside and outside caused the Roman Empire to split into a western half, which collapsed, and an eastern half that prospered for hundreds of years.

## Key Terms and People

Diocletian, p. 340

Attila, p. 341

corruption, p. 342

Justinian, p. 342

Theodora, p. 343

Byzantine Empire, p. 343



Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire.



hmhsocialstudies.com

**ANIMATED HISTORY**

The Division of the Roman Empire, AD 395

**THE IMPACT TODAY**

Constantinople is now called Istanbul, and is a major urban center.

The Romans struggled with problems within the empire as well. The raids against Rome made people near the border nervous. In time, these people abandoned their land. To grow enough food, the Romans invited Germanic farmers to grow crops on Roman lands. These farmers often came from the same tribes that threatened Rome's borders. Over time, whole German communities had moved into the empire. They chose their own leaders and largely ignored the emperors. This caused problems for the Romans.

Other internal problems also threatened Rome's survival. Disease swept through the empire, killing many people. The government was also forced to increase taxes to pay for the defense of the empire. Desperate, the Romans looked for a strong emperor. They found one in Diocletian.

**Division of the Empire**

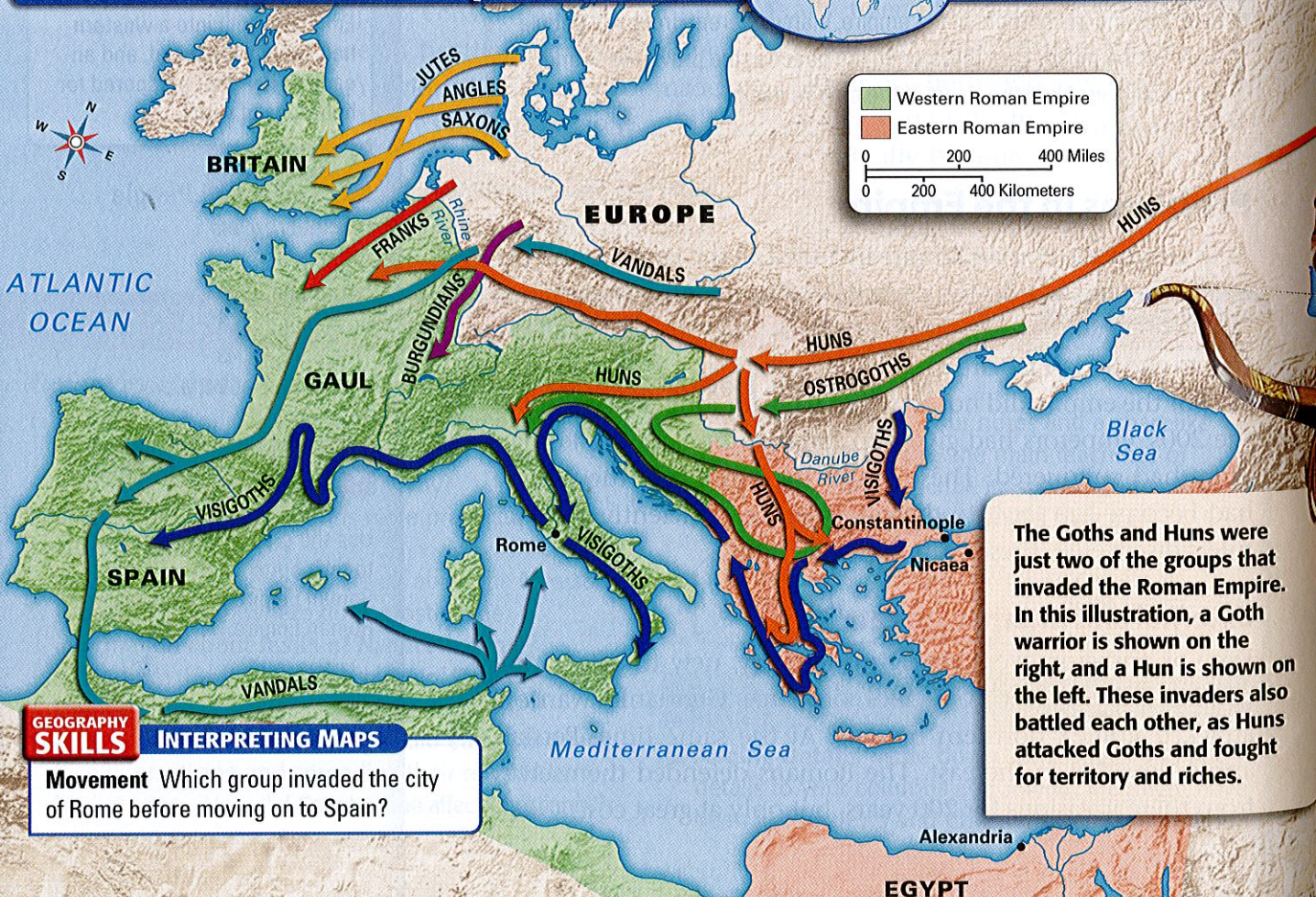
**Diocletian** (dy-uh-KLEE-shuhn) became emperor in the late 200s. Convinced that the empire was too big for one person to rule, Diocletian ruled the eastern half and named a co-emperor to rule the west.

Not long after Diocletian left power, the emperor Constantine (KAHN-stuhn-teen) reunited the empire for a short time. He also moved the capital to the east, into what is now Turkey. He built a grand new capital city there. It was called Constantinople (kahn-stant-uhn-OH-puhl), which means "the city of Constantine." Although the empire was still called the Roman Empire, Rome was no longer the real center of power. Power had moved to the east.

**READING CHECK Identifying Cause and Effect**  
Why did Diocletian divide the Roman Empire?

hmhsocialstudies.com **INTERACTIVE MAP**

**Invasions of the Roman Empire, 340–500**



**GEOGRAPHY SKILLS INTERPRETING MAPS**

**Movement** Which group invaded the city of Rome before moving on to Spain?

The Goths and Huns were just two of the groups that invaded the Roman Empire. In this illustration, a Goth warrior is shown on the right, and a Hun is shown on the left. These invaders also battled each other, as Huns attacked Goths and fought for territory and riches.



## The Decline of Rome

As you have read, foreign tribes had settled along the Roman Empire's northern border in the 200s. A century later, these bands of fighters began raiding deep into the heart of the empire.

### Early Invasions

The source of these raids was a group of people called the Huns, fierce warriors from Central Asia. The Huns first invaded southeastern Europe and then launched raids on nearby kingdoms. Among the Huns' victims were several groups of people called the Goths, made up of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths. Unable to defeat the Huns, the Goths fled into Roman territory.

Rome's leaders feared that the Goths would destroy Roman land and property. They fought to keep the Goths out of Roman territory. The eastern armies were largely successful. They forced the Goths to move farther west. As a result, however, the western armies were defeated by the Goths. After their victory, large numbers of Goths moved into the Roman Empire.

The Romans fought desperately to keep the Goths from Rome. They even paid the Goths not to attack. In 408, however, the Romans stopped making payments. The Visigoths marched into Rome and sacked, or destroyed, the city in 410. This devastated the Romans. No one had attacked their city in nearly 800 years. Many Romans began to fear for the future of their empire.

### The Fall of the Western Empire

The Gothic victory inspired other groups of foreign warriors to invade the western half of the empire. The Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Franks all launched attacks. Meanwhile, the Huns, under a fearsome leader named **Attila** (AT-uhl-uh), raided Roman territory in the east.

Rome needed strong leaders to survive these attacks, but the emperors were weak. Military leaders took power away from the emperors and, by the 450s, ruled Rome.

Conflict among these military leaders gave the invaders an opening. In 476 one of the foreign generals overthrew the last emperor in Rome and named himself king of Italy. Many historians consider this event the end of the Western Roman Empire.

### Factors in Rome's Fall

There were several causes of Rome's decline. One was the vast size of the empire. Communication among various parts of the empire was difficult, especially during times of conflict. The Roman world simply became too big to govern effectively.

#### THE IMPACT TODAY

We still use the word *vandal* today to describe someone who destroys property.







## BIOGRAPHY

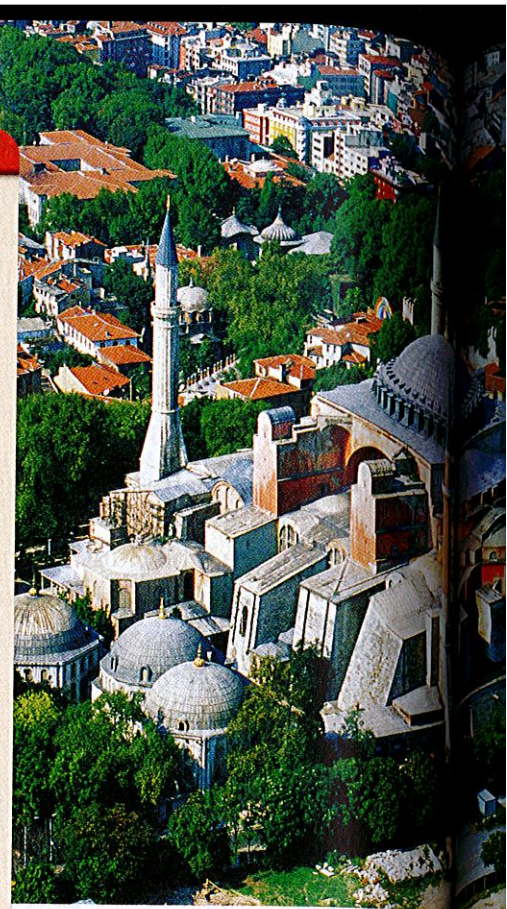
### Justinian and Theodora

483–565; c. 500–548

Justinian I was the emperor of the Byzantine Empire from AD 527 to AD 565. As emperor, Justinian reconquered parts of the fallen western empire and simplified Roman laws. He also ordered the building of many beautiful public structures and churches, including the Church of Hagia Sophia.

He married Theodora in about AD 522. Together they worked to restore the power, beauty, and strength of a vast empire. While Justinian was waging military campaigns, Theodora helped create laws to aid women and children and to end government corruption.

**Evaluating** Which of Justinian and Theodora's accomplishments do you find most impressive? Why?



Political crises also contributed to the decline. By the 400s **corruption**, the decay of **people's values**, had become widespread in Roman government. Corrupt officials used threats and bribery to achieve their goals, often ignoring the needs of Roman citizens. As a result, Rome's government was no longer **efficient**.

Many wealthy citizens fled to their country estates and created their own armies for protection. Some, however, used these armies to overthrow emperors and take power for themselves. For those people who remained in the cities, life became more difficult. Rome's population decreased, and schools closed. Taxes and prices soared, leaving more Romans poor. By the late 400s Rome was a changed city, and the empire slowly collapsed around it.

#### READING CHECK Analyzing Information

Why did Rome fall to invaders in the 400s?

## A New Eastern Empire

Despite the fall of Rome, the eastern empire grew in wealth and power. Its people created a new society that was different from the society in the west.

### Justinian

The eastern emperors dreamed of retaking Rome. For **Justinian** (juh-STIN-ee-uhn), an emperor who ruled from 527 to 565, reuniting the old Roman Empire was a passion. His armies conquered Italy and much land around the Mediterranean.

Justinian's other passions were the law and the church. He ordered officials to remove any out-of-date or unchristian laws. He then organized all the laws into a new legal system called Justinian's Code. By simplifying Roman law, this code helped guarantee fair treatment for all.

Despite his successes, Justinian made many enemies. In 532 an uprising

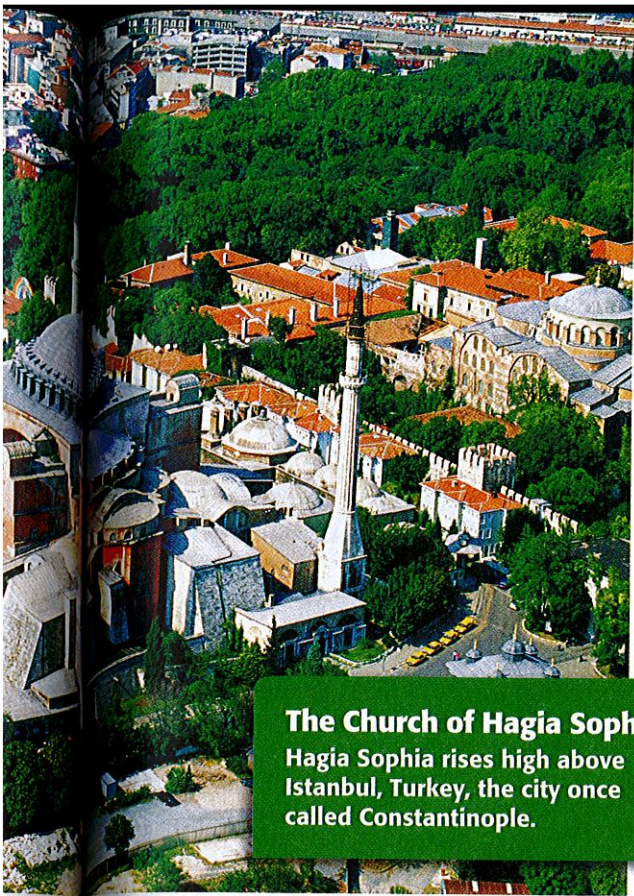
#### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

##### efficient

(i-FI-shuhnt)

productive and not wasteful





**The Church of Hagia Sophia**  
Hagia Sophia rises high above Istanbul, Turkey, the city once called Constantinople.

threatened to drive him from Constantinople. However, his smart and powerful wife **Theodora** (thee-uh-DOHR-uh) convinced him to stay and fight. Taking her advice, Justinian crushed the riots and ruled effectively for the rest of his reign.

After Justinian's death, the eastern empire began to decline. Invaders took over all the land Justinian had gained. The empire continued to shrink for the next several hundred years. In 1453 the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople, bringing an end to the Eastern Roman Empire.

### Byzantine Society

The society of the eastern empire was distinct from that of the west. Non-Roman influences took hold in the east. People spoke Greek rather than Latin. **Historians call the society that developed in the Eastern Roman Empire the Byzantine (BI-zuhn-teen) Empire**, after Byzantium, the Greek town Constantinople had replaced.

The importance of Christianity in the eastern empire is reflected in the Byzantines' beautiful works of art and magnificent churches. As time passed, people began to interpret and practice Christianity differently in the east and the west. Eventually these differences led to a split within the Christian Church. In the 1000s Christians in the east formed the Orthodox Church. As a result, eastern and western Europe were divided by religion.

#### THE IMPACT TODAY

The Orthodox faith is still the main religion in Russia, Greece, and other parts of eastern Europe.

#### READING CHECK Drawing Conclusions

Why did Justinian reorganize Roman law?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** After the fall of Rome, Roman power shifted east. The Orthodox Church became a major force in the Byzantine Empire. Next, you will learn about members of another religious group—the Muslims.

### Section 3 Assessment

[hmhsocialstudies.com](http://hmhsocialstudies.com)  
ONLINE QUIZ

#### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Recall** To where did Constantine move Rome's capital?

**b. Explain** What effect did Roman farmers' fear of raids have on the empire?
- a. Identify** Who was Attila?

**b. Analyze** Why did the Goths move into the Roman Empire?
- a. Summarize** What were two of Justinian's major accomplishments?

**b. Contrast** Name two ways that the Byzantine Empire was different from the Western Roman Empire.

#### Critical Thinking

- Drawing Conclusions** Draw a word web like the one shown. In each of the outer circles, list a factor that helped lead to the fall of the Western Roman Empire. You may make more circles if needed.



#### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Adding the Final Details** Add the key events, persons, and places that were covered in this section to the list you have been making. Once your list is complete, review it to get an idea of what to include in your screenplay.