



Sixth Grade Social Studies



6th Grade Social Studies Task 4

**There will be a short video lesson of a Knox County teacher to accompany this task available on the KCS YouTube Channel and KCS TV.*

Standard 6.61 Explain the division of the Roman Empire into East and West, and identify the later establishment of Constantinople as the capital by Constantine. (C,H,P)

Standard 6.62 Analyze the fall of Western Roman Empire, including difficulty governing its large territory, political corruption, economic instability, and attacks by Germanic tribes, and identify the continuation of the Eastern Roman Empire as the Byzantine Empire.(C,E,G,H,P)

Learning Focus: I can list 3 reasons why the Roman Empire fell and give evidence to support each reason.

Items needed for the lesson: paper, pencil, playdough/clay, drawing materials, text provided, graphic organizers

Vocabulary Words for the lessons: internal, external, Germanic Tribes(called barbarians- uncivilized people -from the north by the Romans) known as Huns, Goth, Visigoths, Vandals, Ostrogoths,Franks, Diocletian, Constantine, Attila, corruption

Text 1: [Problems Threaten the Empire p. 364-365](#)

At its height the Roman Empire included all the land around the Mediterranean Sea. The empire in the early 100s stretched from Britain south to Egypt, and from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Persian Gulf.

But the empire did not stay that large for long. By the end of the 100s, 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.

Problems in the Empire

Even as emperors were giving up territory, new threats to the empire were appearing. Tribes of Germanic warriors, whom the Romans called barbarians, attacked Rome's northern borders. At the same time, Persian armies invaded in the east. The Romans defended themselves for 200 years, but only at great cost. The Romans struggled with problems within the empire as well. As frontier areas were abandoned because they were too dangerous, Germanic tribes moved in. A large army meant that there weren't enough farmers. To help produce more food, the Romans even 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, which caused problems for the Romans. Other internal problems also threatened Rome's survival. Disease swept through the empire, killing many people. The government increased taxes to pay for the defense of the empire. Prices of goods went up, making it hard for some Romans to meet their basic needs. Desperate, the Romans looked for a strong emperor to solve their problems.

Text 2: [Factors in Rome's Fall p. 369](#)

Barbarian invasions are often considered the **cause** of Rome's decline. In truth, they were only one of several causes.

One cause of Rome's decline was the vast size of the empire. In some ways, Rome had simply grown too big to govern. Communication among various parts of the empire was difficult, even in peaceful times. During times of conflict it became even more difficult.

Political crises also contributed to the decline. By the 400s **corruption** had become widespread in Rome's government. Corrupt officials used threats and bribery to achieve their goals, often ignoring the needs of Roman citizens. Because of officials like these, Rome's government was no longer as efficient as it had been in the past.

In the face of this corruption, many wealthy citizens fled the city of Rome to their country estates. This action created a series of causes and effects that further weakened the empire. Outside Rome, many landowners used slaves or serfs to work on their lands. To protect their estates and their wealth, many landowners created their own armies. Ambitious landowners used these personal armies to overthrow emperors and take power for themselves. As wealthy citizens abandoned Rome and other cities, city life became more difficult for those who remained. Rome's population decreased, and schools closed. At the same time taxes and prices soared, leaving more and more Romans poor. By the end of the 400s, Rome was no longer the city it had once been. As it changed, the empire slowly collapsed around it.

Graphic Organizer to help take notes: as you read write supporting details for each problem

I. Foreign Invasions

- A.
- B.

II. External Problems

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

III. Internal Problems

- | | |
|----|----|
| A. | B. |
| C. | D. |
| E. | F. |

Think?: Why did the Roman Empire really fall? List 2-3 reasons why it fell.

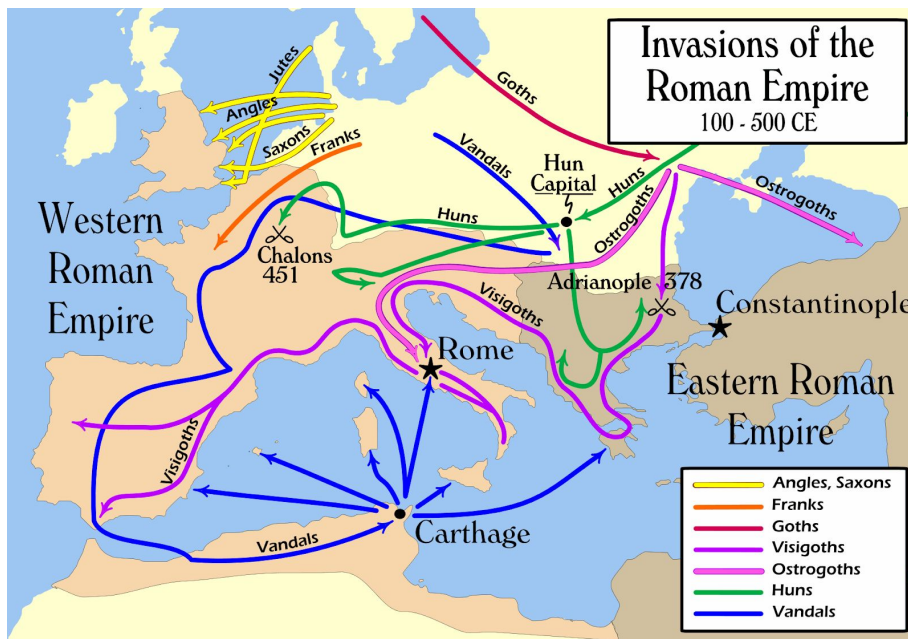
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Dig Deeper: Using the playdough/ clay or drawing, Design/ create 3D examples of why the Roman Empire fell. Time limit 3 min. Another learner will need to be to identify what you have created.

Reflection: Identify the most important problem you believe led to the fall of the western Roman Empire. Write 2-3 sentences Identify the problem and justify your thoughts.

Extended Learning: Map Skills Handout “The Attack Of The Barbarians” Examine the map and answer the questions that correspond with the map.

“Barbarians” was the name given to outside invaders of the Roman Empire. These barbarians were of Germanic origin, from the north. The Romans protected their frontiers with forts and stone walls where natural boundaries did not exist. As the tribes from the north grew more powerful, they became restless. The invaders saw that they could take power and riches from the weakening Roman Empire. In A.D. 410, the city of Rome fell to these invaders. The remaining Roman Empire was left powerless against looting and destruction. In A.D. 476, the last Roman emperor was overthrown and the days of the Western Roman Empire were concluded. Although the barbarians played a key role in destroying the Roman Empire, they also played an important role in building a new society and in spreading the Christian religion and Latin culture. Answer the questions below.



(source: Wiki commons)

1. Which of the barbarian tribes settled in what is now Great Britain? _____
2. Which of the tribes controlled what is now Spain? _____
3. Which tribes controlled what is now France and Germany? _____
4. Which of the tribes controlled parts of North Africa? _____
5. Which of the tribes controlled what is now Ireland? _____
6. The takeover by the barbarians marks the beginning of the period known as the _____.
7. Because of the loss of Roman and Greek culture, this period was called the _____ ages.
8. The only barbarian group to create a lasting state was the _____.
9. The great king of the Franks who conquered large areas was King _____.
10. Because he helped the Catholic Pope defend Rome, the King of the Frankish Empire was crowned as the head of the lands called the _____.

Standard 6.61 Explain the division of the Roman Empire into East and West, and identify the later establishment of Constantinople as the capital by Constantine. (C,H,P)

Learning Focus: I will compare and contrast Diocletian and Constantine strategies to effectively lead Rome and debate who had more success.

Video link Chaos as the Empire Falls- 6:33 watch the video as an introduction to the lesson and Constantine becomes Emperor 3:05 for supporting evidence.

<https://cleversso.discoveryeducation.com/learn/videos/ae756d7b-938f-43c4-9944-9d97d320a3ce/>

<https://cleversso.discoveryeducation.com/learn/player/92ca8341-7077-4a7e-b5a2-4baa5fff95b8>

Text 1: Division of the Empire p. 365-366

The strong emperor the Romans were looking for was **Diocletian** (dy-uh-KLEE-shuhn), who took power in the late 200s. Convinced that the empire was too big for one person to rule, Diocletian divided the empire. He ruled the eastern half of the empire and named a co-emperor to rule the west.

Not long after Diocletian left power, Emperor Constantine (KAHN-stuhn-teen) reunited the two halves of the Roman Empire for a short time. Constantine went on to become one of the empire's most influential leaders. In his book *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius of Caesaria described Constantine: "He was the kindest and mildest of emperors, and the only one of those In our day that passed all the time of his government in a manner worthy of his office."



Constantine grew up in the court of the Roman emperor and is considered one of Rome's greatest emperors.

Constantine moved the empire's 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."

Constantinople was located on the Black Sea and was close to the Mediterranean Sea. As the doorway between Europe and Asia, it held great strategic importance, both economically and militarily. Many trade routes passed through the city, and it was difficult to attack because it was accessible by land from only one direction. Although the empire was still called the Roman Empire, Rome was no longer the real seat of power. Power had moved to the east.



Text 2: The Eastern and Western Empires p.365

Text 3; New Teachings and Emperors p. 401-402 The emperor who became a Christian was **Constantine** (KAHN-stuhn-teen). He came to power in 306 after fighting and defeating many rivals. According to legend, Constantine was preparing for battle against one of these rivals when he saw a cross in the sky. He thought that this vision meant he would win the battle if he converted to Christianity. Constantine did convert, and he won the battle. As a result of his victory he became the emperor of Rome. His conversion encouraged others to convert to Christianity as well.

As emperor, Constantine removed bans against the practice of Christianity. He also called together a council of Christian leaders from around the empire to clarify Christian teaching. Under Constantine, a close relationship existed between the church and the government. For example, the emperor appointed bishops himself and regularly met with councils of bishops to discuss matters of Christian faith.

After he converted to Christianity, Constantine came to believe that he had been successful all his life because he had God's favor. He built several great churches in the empire, including one in Jerusalem at the spot where Jesus was believed to have been buried. Throughout history Christians have considered him one of Rome's greatest emperors.

Graphic organizer to use: Compare and contrast Diocletian and Constantine strategies to save the Roman Empire. Use both text provided and video clips as evidence.

Diocletian	Same	Constantine
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.		3.
4.		4.
5.		5.
6.		6.

Dig Deeper: Plan a debate for which emperor had the best plan for saving the Roman Empire. Think about 3 pros and cons for each leader. You will need to provide support for your candidate and why he is the better leader for Rome.

Extended Learning: To enrich your knowledge, research the life of Diocletian and Constantine to gain insight on how they were "chosen" to become an emperor of Rome.