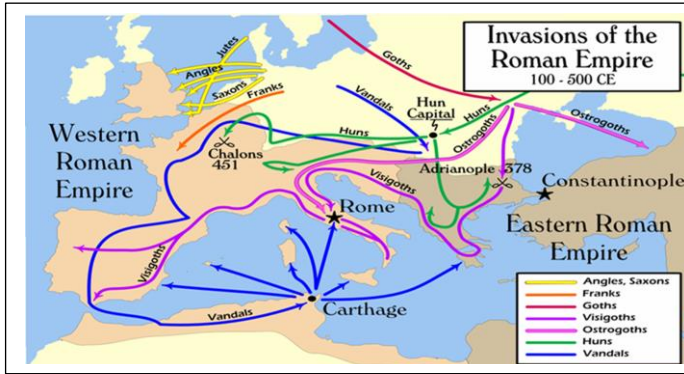
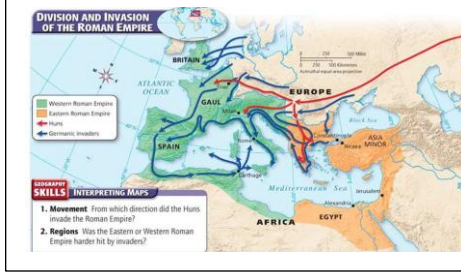


Aim #22: How did the Western Roman Empire fall?

The Long Decline

NYS SS Framework: 9.3d



“Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder”

- Arnold J. Toynbee

Fall of Rome: Immediate Causes

Pressure from Huns	Invasion by Germanic tribes & Huns	Sack of Rome	Conquests by invaders
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Fall of Rome: Long-Term Causes

Military	Economic	Political	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • army lacks training & discipline • forced to hire foreign mercenaries • Invasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy taxes • Farmers leave land • Middle class disappears • Used too much slave labor- no incentive to make technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many corrupt officials • Political instability • Divided empire becomes weak (E. didn't help W.) • Ppl stop supporting gov't 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper class became selfish w/ luxuries rather than be leaders • “Bread & Circuses” • Decline in values of patriotism, discipline, & devotion to duty

Mini Lecture

- In about the 200s, the Roman Empire began to weaken. The golden age of the Pax Roman had ended. Rome faced political & economic problems.
- A decline in traditional values & frequent invasions were threatening the empire. Corrupt government added to Rome’s troubles. Political violence grew. Over & over, emperors were overthrown or assassinated by ambitious generals. Instability was the norm.
- In 284, the emperor **Diocletian** set out to restore order. He divided the empire into two parts. He controlled the eastern part. A co-emperor, Maximian, ruled the western part.
- To help strengthen the weak economy, Diocletian slowed **inflation**, or a rapid rise of prices. He did this by establishing fixed prices on many goods & services.
- When the emperor **Constantine** came into power, he continued Diocletian’s reforms. He also granted religious freedom to Christians & founded a new capital, **Constantinople**. This made the eastern empire the center of power.
- Although these reforms helped temporarily, they did not stop Rome’s long-term decline.
- In the late 300s, a nomadic people from Asia, called **Huns**, began a savage campaign across much of Europe. This pushed other nomadic tribes (Visigoths, Vandals, Franks...) into Roman territory. Fierce battles resulted. Soon, Rome itself was under attack.
- By then, the empire had already lost many of its territories. Roman power in the West was fading. The main cause for Rome’s decline was constant invasion.
- To fight back, Rome hired **mercenaries**, or foreign soldiers serving for pay, to defend its borders. However, many of these paid soldiers felt no loyalty to Rome.
- In addition, heavier & heavier taxes were needed to support Rome’s military. As Roman citizens worried about the consequences of a declining empire, patriotism diminished. The upper class, which had once provided leaders, now devoted itself to luxury & to gaining prestige.
- In **476**, Germanic warriors captured Rome & removed the emperor. The Roman Empire had ended.
- “Rome” lived on through the Church & in Byzantine

Review Questions:

1. What is inflation?
2. Why do you think Diocletian split the Empire?
3. Why do you think Rome had to hire mercenaries?

Resources/Documents:

- Excerpts on the reasons for the Fall of Rome
- Chart, map, & images on the reasons for the Fall of Rome

Further Reading: Chapter 5, Section 5

How and why did the Roman Empire lose power?

... By the middle of the second century Italy [within the Roman Empire] was in a state of decline. By the time of Diocletian, at the opening of the fourth century, decay was apparent throughout the empire. Commerce [business] had largely disappeared owing to the lack of customers, to piracy on the seas, and to insecurity of the roads on land.

Generally speaking, purchasing power [the ability to buy things] at that time was confined to the public officials, to the army officers, and to the great landowners. Trade in the everyday objects of daily use had all but disappeared, but trade in luxuries prospered.

[T]he old traders [were] replaced by the traveling eastern merchant [...] Foreign trade was sharply curtailed.

According to Louis C. West, what were *two* economic problems the Roman Empire faced during its period of decline?

Changes of Leadership during Third Century Rome

Emperor	Reign	Cause of Death
Maximinus	235-38 CE	Assassination
Gordian I & II (co-rulers)	238	Suicide; Killed in Battle
Balbinus & Pupienus	238	Assassination
Gordian III	238-44	Possible Assassination
Philip the Arab	244-49	Killed in Battle
Decius	249-51	Killed in Battle
Hostilian	251	Possible Plague
Gallus	251-53	Assassination
Aemilianus	253	Assassination
Valerian & Gallienus	253-60	Assassination

Emperor	Reign	Cause of Death
Claudius Gothicus	268-70	Plague
Quintillus	270	Assassination or Suicide
Aurelian	270-75	Assassination
Tacticus	275-76	Possible Assassination
Florianus	276	Assassination
Probus	276-82	Assassination
Carus	282-83	Assassination
Numerian	283-84	Possible Assassination
Carinus	283-85	Killed in Battle

According to the chart, what were the *two* most common reasons for changes of leadership during the third century?

***History of Rome from Constantine to Valens,
by Ammianus Marcellinus (380 CE)***

The Huns were a nomadic people from Central Asia who invaded the Roman Empire from 370-451 CE. Ammianus Marcellinus was a Roman historian who wrote about the Hun invasion.

The Huns exceed any definition of savagery. They have compact, sturdy limbs and thick necks...Although they have the shape [...] of human beings, they are so wild in their way of life that they have no need of fire or pleasant tasting foods, but eat the roots of uncultivated plants and half-raw flesh of all sorts of animals [...] Huns are never sheltered by buildings, but . . . roam freely in the mountains and woods, learning from their earliest childhood to endure freezing cold, hunger, and thirst. . . Fired with an overwhelming desire for seizing the property of others, these swift-moving, and ungovernable people make their destructive way amid the pillage and slaughter of those who live around them.

Roman villa in Gaul sacked by the hordes of Attila the Hun



According to Marcellinus, who were the Huns & what impact did the Huns have on those who lived around them?

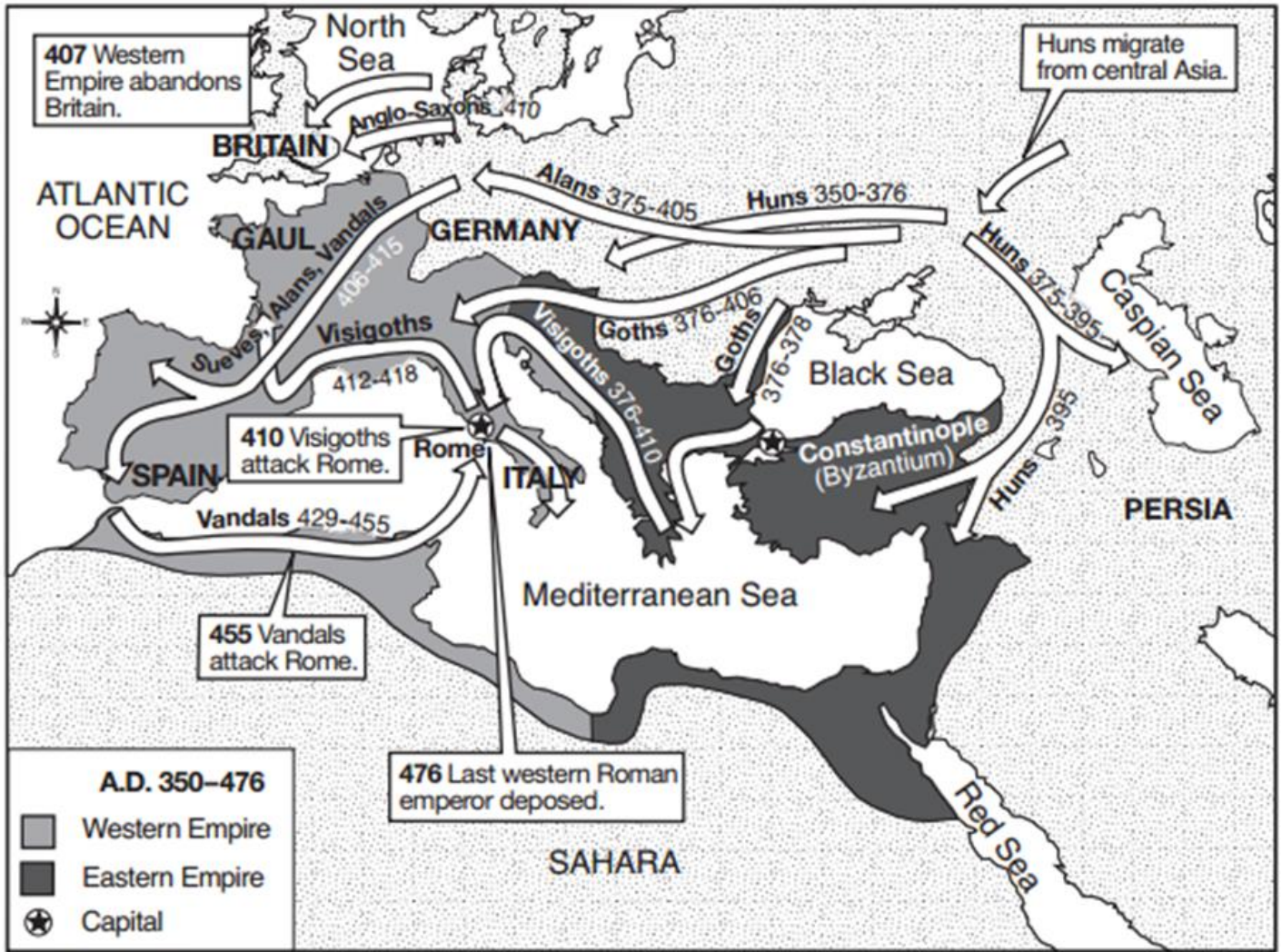
Priscus at the Court of Attila [King of the Huns], by Priscus (449 CE)

The Greek writer Priscus visited the Huns and spoke with a Greek merchant who was captured by the Huns. Below is a description of the conversation.

He [The Greek merchant] considered his new life [...] better than his old life among the Romans, and the reasons he gave were as follows: ...the condition of the subjects [in Rome] in time of peace is far more grievous than the evils of war, for the the taxes [are] very severe, and unprincipled men inflict injuries on others, because the laws are practically not valid against all classes. A transgressor who belongs to the wealthy classes is not punished for his injustice, while a poor man, who does not understand business, undergoes the legal penalty [...] The climax of the misery is to have to pay in order to obtain justice. For no one will give a court to the injured man unless he pay a sum of money to the judge and the judge's clerks."

According to Priscus' account, what are *three* reasons why the Greek merchant disliked the Roman Empire?

Roman Empire A.D. 350-476



Based on the information shown on this map, state *one* problem that helped bring about the decline of the Roman Empire.

A Roman soldier being dismissed or discharged, etching by William Hogart



Concerning Military Matters, by Vegetius (c. 450 CE)

Concerning Military Matters was written by Latin writer Publius Flavius Vegetius Renuatus about Roman warfare and military principles as a presentation of methods and practices in use during the height of Rome's power.

... [N]egligence and sloth [...] introduced a total relaxation of discipline [and] the soldiers began to think their armor too heavy, as they seldom put it on [...] In consequence of this, our troops in their engagements with the Goths were often overwhelmed with their showers of arrows [...] Troops, defenseless and exposed to all the weapons of the enemy, are more disposed to fly than fight. What can be expected from a foot-archer without [armor], who cannot hold at once his bow and shield; or from the ensigns whose bodies are naked, and who cannot at the same time carry a shield and the colors? [...] But it seems these very men, who cannot support the weight of the ancient armor, think nothing of exposing themselves without defense to wounds and death, or, which is worse, to the shame of being made prisoners, or of betraying their country by flight; and thus to avoid an inconsiderable share of exercise and fatigue, suffer themselves ignominiously to be cut in pieces.

According to Vegetius, what is *one* military problem experienced by the Roman Empire?

The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Edward Gibbons (1789)

Early in Pax Romana, a new religion called Christianity arose in the Roman empire. At first, Christianity was not accepted. Christians were persecuted and killed. "However, throughout the 380s and 390s CE, Christianity became a major religion in the Roman Empire. In 313, emperors Constantine and Licinius created the Edict of Milan and this law ended persecution of Christians and encouraged tolerance of Christianity. In 380, Emperor Theodosius I issued the Edict of Thessalonica, declaring Nicene Christianity as the state church of the Roman Empire.

Christianity had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity [cowardliness]; the active virtues of society were discouraged; and the last remains of the military spirit were buried in the cloister [where nuns live]; a large portion of public and private wealth was consecrated to the [...] the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions, whose conflicts were sometimes bloody [...]; the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods [assembly of church officials].

According to Gibbons, what impact did Christianity have on the Roman Empire?

