



## LESSON 2.2.6 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #12 Fall of the Roman Empire

### PREVIEW

In which John Green teaches you about the fall of the Roman Empire, which happened considerably later than you may have been told. While the Western Roman Empire fell to barbarians in 476 CE, the Byzantines in Constantinople continued the Eastern Empire nicely, calling themselves Romans for a further 1000 years. Find out what Justinian and the rest of the Byzantine emperors were up to over there, and how the Roman Empire dragged out its famous Decline well into medieval times. In addition to all this, you'll learn about ancient sports riots and hipster barbarians, too.

### PURPOSE

In Crash Course World History #12, students examine the decline of the Western Roman Empire. Once Rome stopped expanding in the 2nd century CE, loyalty to the empire began to fail as citizens of the empire were burdened with high taxes and debt. The rise of Christianity contributed as one of the factors that led to the death of the empire along with the reliance on mercenaries. Other causes that played a role in the fall of Rome were a series of rather awful emperors during the 3rd century CE when 21 men ascended to power in the course of 50 years, along with an increase in plagues brought forth by trade exchanges along the Silk Road. The Western Roman Empire serves as a prime example of how great empires come to an inevitable end, though it did flourish for another thousand years before the Ottoman Turks conquered it in 1453 CE.

### PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, assign students to watch the video before class. The first time through, have students just try to capture the gist of the video. The next time, have them try to determine important facts and information. Remind students of John's fast-talking and play the video with captions. Pause and rewind when necessary. As students watch the video, have them consider what causes and forces bring an empire

to fail. Are empires pushed or pulled into collapse? And in what ways is the Roman Empire still alive today?

### LINK

- [Crash Course World History #12 – Fall of the Roman Empire](#)

Video questions for students to answer during their viewing.



## LESSON 2.2.6 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Use these questions and prompts at the appropriate stopping points to check in with students and ensure they are getting the key concepts covered in the video.

1. (:30) What is the “traditional” view of how the Roman Empire fell?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** “Barbarians at the gates.” - The city of Rome was conquered by barbarians (Goths) in 476 CE.

2. (2:20) What decision led to the decline of the Roman legions?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** The decision to incorporate Germanic warriors into the Roman army.

3. (3:45) In the 49-year span from 235 to 284 CE, how many people were or claimed to be emperor of Rome?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** 41 different men claimed to be emperor, while only 21 actually were emperor.

4. (5:10) Earlier in the video, John claims the Roman Empire survived until the 15th century CE - what does he mean by this?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** John was referencing the Eastern Roman Empire, commonly known as the Byzantine Empire, although not by the people who lived in it who called themselves Romans, whose capital was Byzantium, a city on the Bosphorus Strait that Constantine will later rename Constantinople.

5. (6:20) Where and when did Constantine hold the first church council for Christianity?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** Nicea in 325 CE.

6. (8:00) During the Thought Bubble, John lists a number of similarities between Eastern and Western Roman Empire. What, perhaps, is the most consistently Roman aspect of Byzantine society?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** That they followed Roman law. Eastern Roman Empire’s codification of Roman laws was one of its greatest achievements and still has huge influence on law in Europe.

7. (9:00) What building became a symbol for the wealth and opulence of the Eastern Roman Empire?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** The Hagia Sophia or Church of Saint Wisdom, which had the world’s largest dome that wouldn’t be rivaled for another 500 years upon its completion.

8. (10:00) How did Emperor Justinian’s wife, Theodora, expand the rights of women in the empire?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** She fought to protect their rights in divorce and property ownership matters, and even had a law passed that adulterous women should not be executed.



9. (10:30) In what major way were the Byzantines not like the rest of the Roman Empire?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** The two sides had different forms of Christianity they followed. The Byzantine branch of Christianity is called Eastern or Greek Orthodox.

10. (11:00) What are the main differences between the two sides of the Christian churches?

**SAMPLE ANSWER:** There are doctrinal differences like the dates of Easter are different between the sides, and there are political differences like who oversees the church. In the west, the Pope rules over the church - in the east, there is a patriarch appointed by the emperor.