

**Student Handout 3 – Byzantine Chronology: Analyzing Gains, Losses, and Pressures**

*The history of the Byzantine Empire is one of gains and losses as this remaining part of the Roman Empire struggled to regain its old territory and also faced new conflicts with emerging powers in the Middle East. Study the timeline below. This is not a complete timeline, and leaves many events out, but it has many important events in this history.*

*Using highlighters with two different colors, highlight every event you think represents a GAIN for the Byzantine Empire in one color, and everything you think represents a LOSS for the empire in another color. You will not have to highlight every event... you might find some that are not clear examples of either gains or losses.*

*Next, go back through the timeline and find all the examples of PRESSURES being placed on the empire, and label these with a capital I for Internal, or a capital E for external (you did something similar in the last lesson of unit 5). Internal pressures are things causing problems from inside the empire, whereas external pressures are problems that originate outside the empire.*

**A Timeline of the Byzantine Empire (330 CE to 1453 CE)**

*(adapted from <http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/imperialism/notes/byzantinechron.html>)*

**330 CE:** Constantine moves the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to the site of the ancient Greek city of Byzantium and renames it after himself- Constantinople. When the Roman Empire splits, Constantinople stays the capital of the half of the empire that becomes the Byzantine Empire.

**395:** The Roman Empire splits in half, with the Eastern Roman Empire having its capital in Constantinople and the Western Roman Empire staying centered in Rome.

**476:** The Western Empire falls in the face of internal problems and invasions. The Eastern Empire survives; we now call this empire the Byzantine Empire because it was different from the original Roman Empire and was centered in the renamed city of Byzantium.

**502:** A series of conflicts between the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire (of Persia) begins, carried over from previous conflict between the Persians and the Roman Empire. These battles involve losses and victories for both sides, along with treaties and occasional long periods of peace. The conflict continues until 628 when the Sassanids are decisively defeated.

**526:** The famous emperor Justinian takes power of the empire. He works hard to regain territory lost when Rome fell and regains control of parts of northern Africa, Italy, and Spain, although he never gets back all of what was once Rome. He takes previous Roman law and has it put into one document (we now call them the Justinian laws). Constantinople becomes a very large, prosperous city with lots of trade.

**529:** The final Samaritan Revolt... the Samaritans had their own religion and were people from the land of Samaria. They had rebelled against Roman control, but were still under the control of the Byzantine Empire at this time. After a few smaller rebellions, they again rose against the Byzantine empire and tried to form their own state. In the city of Neapolis, Samaritans killed the bishop and the city's priests. Justinian I sent in troops to control the situation and tens of thousands of Samaritans were killed or enslaved, and their religion was then outlawed.

**532:** The Nika riot... members of opposing factions of people in Constantinople are arrested for causing fights and unrest and sentenced to death. Members of both groups, called the Blues and Greens, begin to revolt in protest, setting buildings on fire and fighting soldiers. The protestors call for someone to replace Justinian. The bulk of the protesters gather in the Hippodrome (kind of stadium complex where there were horse races and other contests), where they are later trapped and slaughtered by Justinian's forces.

**568:** A people called the Lombards invade Italy, and they end up taking northern Italy away from the Byzantine Empire.

**610:** A man named Heraclius becomes emperor, and for a time he regains control of Mesopotamia. The official language of the empire becomes Greek. The territories of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt are lost to Arabic caliphates (kingdoms).

**674:** The army of the Umayyad Caliphate, an Arabic kingdom, attacks Constantinople and lays siege for two years before their navy is beaten thanks to the new Byzantine technology of Greek fire.

**690:** Byzantine land in North Africa is taken by the Caliphate armies (part of the developing conflict between the Christian Byzantines and the Muslim Arabs of the Caliphate kingdoms).

**717-718:** A large force from the Umayyad Caliphate again besieges Constantinople by land and sea. The attack is held off.

**721:** The Byzantine Empire wins back some of the land lost in Asia Minor to the Umayyads.

**800:** Charlemagne, king of the Franks, is crowned "Emperor of the Romans" by Pope Leo III in Rome. For the first time in 300 years, there is an emperor of the "East" and an emperor of the "West".

**917:** A people known as the Bulgars take the land of Thrace away from the Byzantine Empire.

**924:** The Bulgars attack Constantinople but are defeated.

**941:** Prince Igor of Kiev tries to attack Constantinople by water, but the Byzantine forces destroy the Russian fleet.

**976:** Basil II becomes the Emperor.

**995:** Basil II takes back Syria from the Arab caliphates.

**996:** Basil II invades Greece and takes it back from the Bulgars.

**1014:** Basil II destroys the Bulgar army and gets the nickname of *Bulgaroktonos* ("Bulgar Slayer").

**1055:** The Normans (people from the north) invade and take over southern Italy.

**1071:** The Byzantine army is defeated in a fight with a Turkish army, and the Byzantine Empire loses most of their land in Asia Minor (what is now Turkey).

**1075:** The territory of Syria is lost again after it is taken back by the caliphates.

**1054:** There is a huge religious conflict within the Christian church. Christians split between two churches, the Roman Catholic church based in Rome and the Greek Orthodox church based in Constantinople.

**1095:** Over the next two centuries, the Byzantine Empire and its capitol Constantinople become involved in armed conflict during the Crusades and the ongoing struggle between Christian and Muslim kingdoms. Land and cities are continually lost and re-taken. Constantinople is, at one point, taken over by Christian crusaders from the west (in 1204).

**1453:** Constantinople is finally captured, this time by the forces of the growing Ottoman Empire, and the Byzantine Empire is destroyed.

***On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following two questions based upon your color and letter coding of key events:***

**1) What is the general pattern of gains and losses in the history of the Byzantine Empire? How would you summarize the gains and losses?**

**2) Do you think that the Byzantine Empire was more in danger from outside or inside problems? Explain your answer with examples.**