

Civilizations: Fall of Power: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9-10

Curriculum Focus: Ancient History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

Rome's Ruins (35 min.) – Surveys the legacy of art, culture, politics, and medicine from this colossal empire. *Lost City of Shang* (5 min.) – Investigates China's first great dynasty and the cause of its demise. *Behind the Great Wall* (7 min.) – Explores the legacy of the Silk Road and the dynasty of Qin Shi Huangdi. *Merchants of China* (2 min.) – Looks at how Kublai Khan's conquest helped make merchants a powerful group.

Onscreen Questions

- What conditions led to the fall of Rome?
 - How did Rome continue to influence the world, even after the fall of its Western Empire?
 - What conditions led to the fall of the Shang and Qin dynasties?
 - What positive consequences can come with a change in leadership?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Understand the major events that occurred in the final centuries of the Roman Empire.
- Explore the different reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire.
- Write an editorial about one reason for Rome's fall.
- Discuss the legacies of ancient Rome.

Materials

- *Civilizations: Fall of Power* video and VCR, or DVD and DVD player
- Internet access

Procedures

1. After watching the video, remind students that Rome had one of the most stable empires in history. It stretched from Britain to the Sahara Desert, from the Atlantic to the Euphrates. For centuries, the empire was united and prosperous. Then discuss the final centuries of the Roman Empire. In A.D. 285, the empire was split in two, East and West. In 312, Constantine became emperor. He eventually moved the capital of the empire from Rome to the city of Byzantium and renamed the new capital Constantinople. In 410 the Visigoths sacked Rome, and in 476 the last Roman emperor was overthrown. The Eastern part of the empire became known as the Byzantine Empire and remained powerful for several hundred years.
2. Explore some of the reasons that the Western Roman Empire fell. Ask students to share some of the reasons discussed in the video, such as:
 - Increasing attacks by barbarians
 - Moral and cultural decay
 - Corrupt emperors, such as Commodus
 - Plague
 - Social hierarchy; gap between very wealthy and very poor and oppressed (class conflicts and economic problems)
 - Civil wars between legions
 - The rise of Christianity
 - Size of empire became unmanageable
 - Division of the empire into East and West
3. Have students write short editorials as if they're writing during the time of Rome's decline. Citing one of the reasons listed above, or one from their own research, the editorial should warn the leaders and the people of the danger to the empire.
4. Provide students with print and online resources. The following Web sites may be helpful:
 - Illustrated History of the Roman Empire: FAQ (See "Why did Rome fall?")
<http://www.roman-empire.net/diverse/faq.html>
 - Fall of Rome: Decline of the Roman Empire
<http://ancienthistory.about.com/cs/romefallarticles/a/fallofrome.htm>
 - The Fall of Rome
http://ancienthistory.about.com/library/bl/uc_dorrington1.htm
 - Roman Empire: The Fall of Rome
<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/romans/history/fall.htm>
 - Malaria and the Fall of Rome
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/romans/malaria_01.shtml

- Why Rome Fell

<http://mars.acnet.wnec.edu/~grempel/courses/wc1/lectures/14romefell.html>

5. Once students have completed their editorials, discuss the details of different reasons for Rome's fall. Which reasons seem to be most plausible to the class? Do they think it would have been difficult to convince Roman citizens that their long-lived empire would someday fall? Which dangers faced by the Roman Empire might be faced by nations today? How would students react if they read an editorial about the decline of the U.S. government?
6. End the lesson with a discussion of the legacy of ancient Rome. (You may want to help define the term *legacy* for the class. A legacy is something that's handed down from a previous generation or time.) For example, the video discusses one legacy of the Roman Republic as their constitution, which has inspired democracies to the present day. How was the legacy of the Roman Empire different from that of the Republic?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were active in class discussions; showed strong research skills; editorials reflected a clear understanding of the fall of the Roman Empire.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; showed strong on-grade skills; editorials reflected a satisfactory understanding of the fall of the Roman Empire.
- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; showed weak research skills; editorials reflected a vague or inaccurate understanding of the fall of the Roman Empire.

Vocabulary

dynasty

Definition: A family or group that maintains a position of power over several generations

Context: There were more than 30 kings during the Shang dynasty.

empire

Definition: A large territory governed by a single authority, such as an emperor

Context: Rome's army created the most stable empire the world has ever known, stretching for over two million square miles.

legacy

Definition: Something that is handed down from a previous time

Context: Great Wall of China is Emperor Qin's legacy.

merchant

Definition: A person who buys and sells goods.

Context: From the days of Kublai Khan to the present, merchants have been an integral part of Chinese life.

plague

Definition: A disease that spreads quickly, infecting and killing large numbers of people.

Context: A deadly plague ravaged the empire, killing a quarter of Rome's population.

Academic Standards**Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)**

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Historical Understanding— Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns
- World History: Era 3— Understand the Imperial crises and their aftermath in various regions from 300 to 700 CE
- Language Arts: Viewing— Uses a range of strategies to interpret visual media

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

NCSS has developed national guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of NCSS, or to view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
 - People, Places, and Environments
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the DiscoverySchool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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