

Name _____

The Twilight of an Empire: The Fall of the Western Roman Empire

Short Answer Key

1. Some of the challenges faced by the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century CE included economic troubles (high taxation, devaluation of currency), political instability (corrupt leadership, lack of effective governance), and military threats from invading barbarian tribes. The empire's vast borders and inability to defend them also contributed to its decline.
2. The Visigoths, led by Alaric, sacked Rome in 410 CE, which had a profound impact by shaking the empire's prestige and exposing its vulnerability. The event demonstrated the empire's inability to protect its capital, and Rome, a symbol of Roman power, was plundered, causing shockwaves throughout the empire.
3. The year 476 CE is often seen as the symbolic date of the Western Roman Empire's fall because it was when the Germanic chieftain Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor, Romulus Augustulus. This marked the end of Roman imperial rule in the west, as there was no longer an emperor to govern the western territories.
4. The Byzantine Empire differed from the Western Roman Empire in several ways. The Byzantines had a more stable and prosperous eastern half with its capital in Constantinople, where they preserved many aspects of Roman culture, law, and administration. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire continued to thrive for nearly a millennium, serving as a bridge between the classical world and the medieval era.
5. The fall of the Western Roman Empire offers several lessons, including the complexities of empire and the challenges of governance. It underscores the impermanence of even the mightiest civilizations, emphasizing that no empire or civilization is immune to decline and collapse. Additionally, it highlights the importance of effective leadership, economic stability, and adaptability in maintaining the long-term viability of a society or state.

