

Assigned Reading

- “New Rome” (pp. 556–576)

Major Themes

- The Meaning of History
- Citizenship, Rule, and the Regime

The Loom

- Why did Christianity succeed?

Key Concepts

- 6.4 Christianity as the Last, Best Hope
- 6.5 Servile Romans and Autocratic Emperors
- 6.8 Where the head goes...

Essential IDs

- 6.1 Battle of the Milvian Bridge
- 5.28 Constantine
- 6.5 Constantinople
- 6.8 Edict of Milan
- 6.9 East Rome
- 6.10 Hippodrome

Major Themes

The Meaning of History

Properly understood, history (*historia* in the Greek) is an inquiry or investigation into the past rather than a subject requiring the memorization of dates and events. As an activity of the mind, history in a classical sense focuses on the reading of biographies, especially the biographies of the great men of the past, so as to understand how best to live now. With this in mind, Chapter Six focuses in on two men in particular:

Constantine, the Augustus of the New Rome (**ID 6.5**), and Theodosius (**ID 6.19**), the Founder of the first confessional state and, by extension, Christendom (**KC 9.22, ID 6.2**). Both men are what Machiavelli (**ID 10.34**) would have called “new princes” who acquired their principalities through their own arms and virtue, for they gained their rules and secured the rise of Christianity through their own military and political genius. What is more, Chapter Six also covers *the* transition between the ancient and medieval worlds, as Constantine’s victory at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312 (**ID 4.36**) marked the final stage in the replacement of paganism and the classical spirit by Christianity (**KC 4.36, KC 8.13**).

The Loom

Why did Christianity succeed?

Following the questions above, students should investigate any and all factors that caused Christianity to triumph. What did Christianity get right? Why was it more worthy of belief? Does it correspond better to human nature or the truth? Was its success only due to the weakness of paganism, or is there something innately superior about Christianity? What is more, why did the Christian revolution succeed where so many other moral and political revolutions failed? **(KC 8.13)**

Reading Comprehension Questions

New Rome (pp. 556–576)

- What was the Edict of Milan?
- What was Constantine's religious policy?
- Why did Constantine choose Constantinople as his new capital?
- Which popular activity did Constantine ban quickly after his conversion?
- What was the character of the Roman people during Constantine's reign? What was the character of the government?
- How did Constantine adorn and populate Constantinople?
- What was the Hippodrome, and what did it reveal about the nature of New Rome?
- Which ruler solidified Constantinople's preeminent position as the capital of New Rome?
- What controversial law of church governance came from the First Council of Constantinople?
- What are some ways in which East Rome blended Christianity and the classical heritage into a harmonious blend?

Map Study: 6.2–4 Constantinople

Constantinople (**ID 6.5**) sits on the Bosphorus, the strait separating Europe from Asia, and the Mediterranean from the Black Sea. In this way, Constantinople commands trade between two continents, granting great wealth to the city and the imperial coffers, as well as access to the rich grain-producing regions of what is now Ukraine. What is more, the city's location on a peninsula protects it with water on three sides. At this time, the landward approaches were guarded by the formidable Theodosian Walls (see **ID 6.19 Theodosius**). The city was impregnable to assault for nearly nine centuries until it fell first by sea during the Fourth Crusade in 1204 (**ID 10.4**) and later by land to the Turks in 1453 (**ID 10.6**). During the Byzantine era, Constantinople was more often called in Greek simply ἡ Πόλις (hay POH-liss), “The City.” This is likely the source of the name it acquired under Muslim rule: “Istanbul,” from the phrase εἰς τὴν Πόλιν (ayss tayn PÓH-lin), or “to the city.” Despite the long use of this name, it was still more typically called “Constantinople” in the West until the 1930s.

— See **Map 6.2**, *The City of Constantinople and Its Environs, sixth century*, p. 560; **Map 6.3**, *The City of Constantinople during the Byzantine Period, fourth and fifth centuries*, p. 561; and **Map 6.4**, *The Center of Late Ancient Constantinople*, p. 562.