The Middle Ages

An Introduction

The fall of the Western Roman Empire
Once there was a powerful empire.

It included Europe, northern Africa and the Middle East.

Can you remember its name?

This empire was both “ingenious and brutal” (a phrase from the BBC Website).

Can you explain this in other words?

Photo by John Bayley
Pick out some countries you can recognise, despite their Latin names.

The Roman Empire
Words

empire: a large group of states or countries ruled over by another state

brutal: savagely violent

ingenious: clever, original and inventive

What was so “ingenious” about the Romans?
Ancient Roman ingenuity
- a few examples -

Aqueducts to carry clean water long distances - a feat of engineering

The Roman road - another feat of engineering. Not to be equalled until the 19th century.

Order.
Administrative system.
Government.
Law.
Military structure.

Photo by John Bayley
“What have the Romans ever done for us?”
A MONTY PYTHON INTERPRETATION
Another legacy of the Romans...

See if you can guess which one this is. Here are some hints:

• It’s something you are all experts at deciphering.
  • It is curly, not angular.

• It can be used to convey a multitude of meanings and sounds.

• It is used by more countries and peoples than any other of its kind.
  • It is made up of many simple symbols.

• It is the basic currency of learning and education all over the world.
What is a legacy anyway?

A legacy in this context means a special contribution that a civilisation leaves behind. It is something that later societies admire, use or imitate, such as:

- words and stories, such as *Beowulf*
- art works, such as this sculpture
- scientific knowledge
More legacies...

- an invention
- great architecture
- a special way of dealing with a problem
- a skill or brilliant idea

Photo from Mrs McQueen
The Romans might have imposed peace on a massive empire, but their human rights record was atrocious.

On the Appian Way, for instance, thousands of slaves were crucified for mounting an embarrassingly effective rebellion. Great road, horrific cruelty.
• The same people who could build roads and aqueducts could crucify people and bay for blood at the Colosseum.
Words to describe the Roman Empire

- powerful
- huge
- decadent
- corrupt
- inventive
- all-conquering
- peace-inducing
- war-like
- slave-dependent
- influential
- internal contradictions...
• This kind of odd contradiction is called a **paradox**.

• Even though the Romans were in many ways warlike and vicious, they imposed an enforced peace upon their massive empire.

• When the western part of the Roman Empire fell, that peace, such as it was, was lost.

When a powerful state falls, what is likely to happen?
• There is no longer a single, unified power.

• This is sometimes called a power vacuum.

• A period of reshuffling occurs.
• In other words, there may be an ongoing struggle for power.

• This can lead to many wars, including civil wars.

• Not to mention many invasions...

• Some groups of people decide to find better places to live...
• New peoples and regimes rise to power, taking advantage of the disintegration of the old regime.

• Powerful kings and leaders figure out new ways to hold on to power and control people.

The Tower of London
Charlemagne became the King of the Franks and the Holy Roman Emperor.

Germanic tribes invaded Britain - and gave us our language.
Essential Vocabulary
Nouns (from John Green’s Video 4 slides on)

a The ________________ are at the gates!
b The Roman army companies, otherwise known as ____________, agreed to allow German ______________ into their ranks.
c A civilisation that is torn by internal conflict is experiencing a ________________.
d After the second century AD, the Western Roman __________ was governed by many different ____________, many of them generals, a situation that betrayed a general lack of ________________.
e One of the Western Empire’s greatest ________________ was the Latin language.
Essential Vocabulary
barbarians • civil war • empire • emperors • legacies • legions • mercenaries • stability

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e One of the Western Empire’s greatest **legacies** was the Latin language.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PszVWZNWVA
The Normans invaded England, with long-term consequences for the English language and the balance of power in Europe.

The north men (Vikings) invaded countries all over Europe.
Change

One superstate

Many smaller states

VERBS
• to cause
• to lead to
• to influence
• to bring about
• to generate
• to induce
• to provoke
• to trigger
• to give rise to
• to have the effect of
• to be a factor in
• to play a role in
• to contribute to
Change

Decisions in a government setting

Decisions made through warfare

NOUNS
- impact
- consequence
- result
- catalyst
- trigger
- outcome
- influence
- effect
Elite landowners developed their own bands of soldiers. Increased skirmishes and conflict.
Pax Romana (or at least its vestiges) became the standard way of making political decisions.

ADJECTIVES
• profound
• substantial
• lasting
• short-term
• long-term
• sudden
• influential
• catastrophic
Change

More difficult for common people to survive

Reduced population

ADJECTIVES
• profound
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Change

Roman superstate          Many smaller states emerge
falls

ROME
Superstate and
Superpower
Since Rome had been a superpower that had dominated the political landscape, its collapse led to a power vacuum in which several new states began to emerge.
**VERBS/PHRASES**
to cause, to lead to, to influence, to bring about, to generate, to induce, to provoke, to trigger, to give rise to, to be a factor in, to play a role in, to contribute to

**NOUNS**
impact, consequence, result, catalyst, trigger, outcome, influence, effect

**ADJECTIVES**
profound, substantial, sudden, long-term, influential, catastrophic
The murder of Archduke Ferdinand __________ the outbreak of the First World War.
Later called the Great War and erroneously described as “the War to end all wars”, this conflict had _______________ and ___________ effects.
Over-crowded English gaols ______ the English government’s decision to send convicts to Australia.
The arrival of the First Fleet in Australia was to have _______ and ________ effects on the indigenous people of Australia.
High unemployment and poverty in Germany between World War I and World War 2 ___________ Hitler’s rise to power.