

# DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Pre-AP World History

RVHS

# PROBLEMS AT END OF EMPIRE

1. Empire was too big to govern efficiently.
2. Army was not what it used to be. There was corruption in the military: Too many dishonest generals and non-Roman soldiers.
3. Civil war broke out between different political groups.
4. Emperors often selected by violence or by birth, so head of government was not always most capable.
5. Increased use of slaves put many Romans out of work.

# PROBLEMS CONTINUED...

6. Rich became lazy and showed little interest in trying to solve Rome's problems.
7. Poor were overtaxed and overworked. The poor were very unhappy.
8. Prices increased as trade decreased.
9. Population was shrinking due to starvation and disease. This made it difficult to manage farms and government effectively.
10. Empire started shrinking and became overrun by tribes.

# DECLINE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

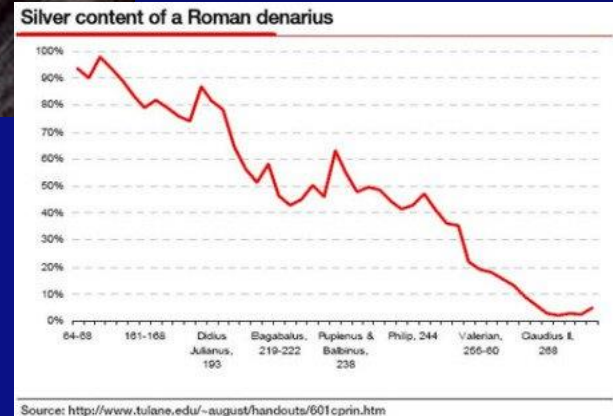
**Essential Question:**  
**What problems weakened Rome?**

- Too large to govern well
- Hard to defend borders



ROMAN EMPIRE AT ITS HEIGHT – 117 C.E.

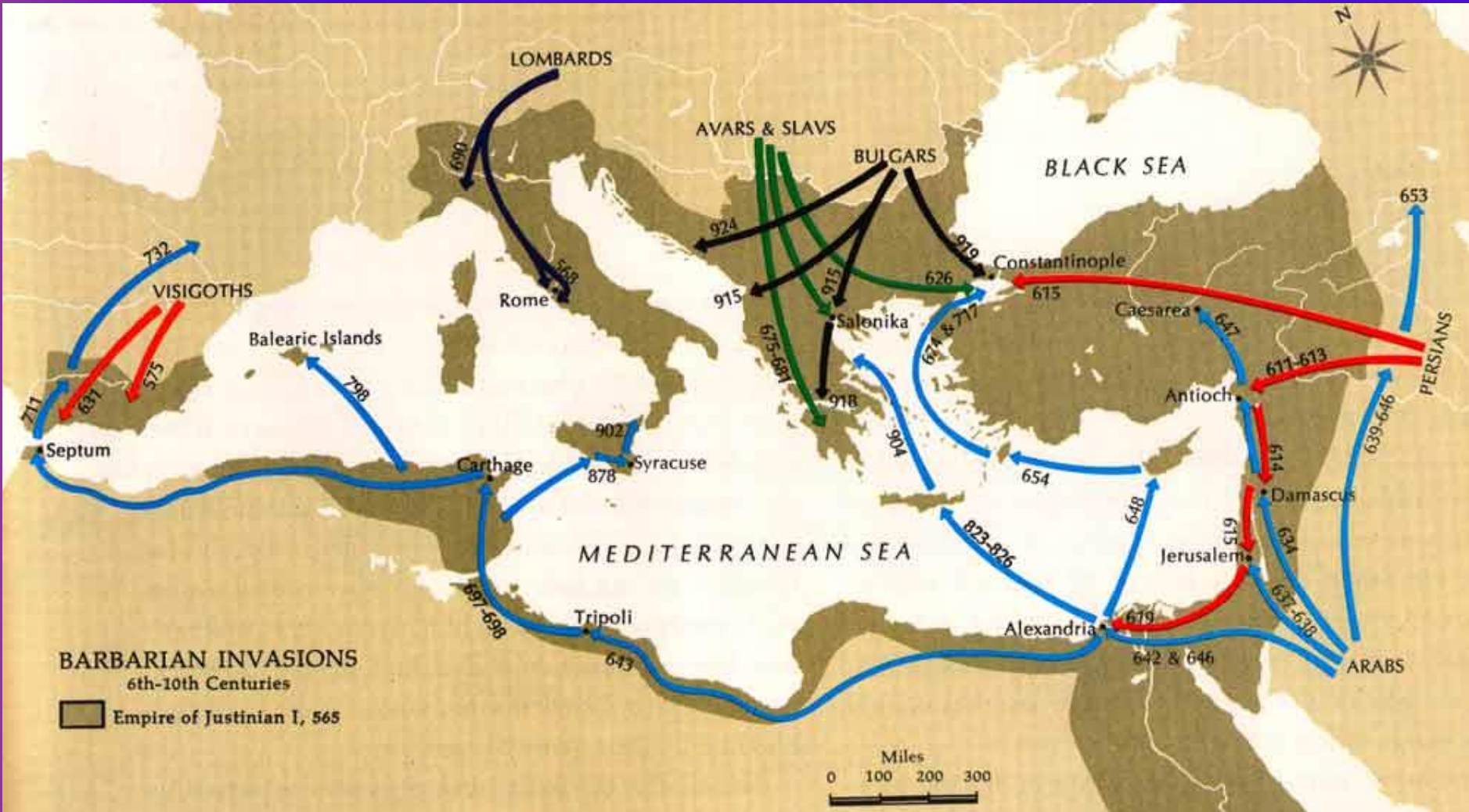
# ECONOMY



# ECONOMIC PROBLEMS



# MILITARY





# MILITARY

## The Barbarians



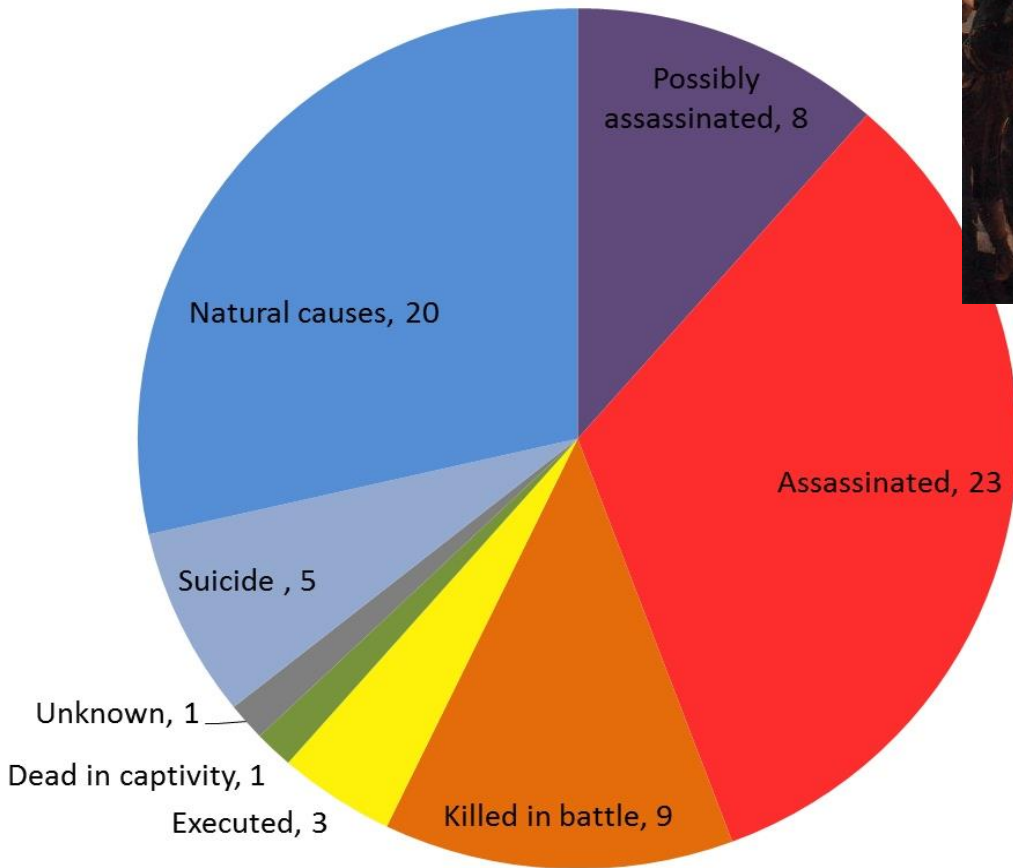
# MILITARY



# POLITICAL

## Causes of death of Roman Emperors

*From 14 AD to 395 AD*



# MORAL DECAY



# MILITARY PROBLEMS



- Rome at constant war in north, northeast, on eastern borders
  - Hired foreign mercenaries: **soldiers for hire**
- **Mercenaries** often loyal to individual leaders instead of empire
  - This created **independent** military powers
- Mercenaries were not as **disciplined** as Roman soldiers
  - Resulted in **less effective** army and **weakened** defense along border

# POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

- Empire's **size** made it hard to **govern**
  - Difficult to get news from regions, and to see problems developing
- **Corrupt, greedy** government officials destroyed sense of citizenship
  - Many Romans no longer felt a **duty to empire**, and chose to get rich instead
- Education costs **increased**, so **poor** Romans often went **uneducated**
- People were **less** informed about civic matters

# REVIEW QUESTION:

What problems weakened  
the Roman Empire?

# DIOCLETIAN DIVIDES THE EMPIRE

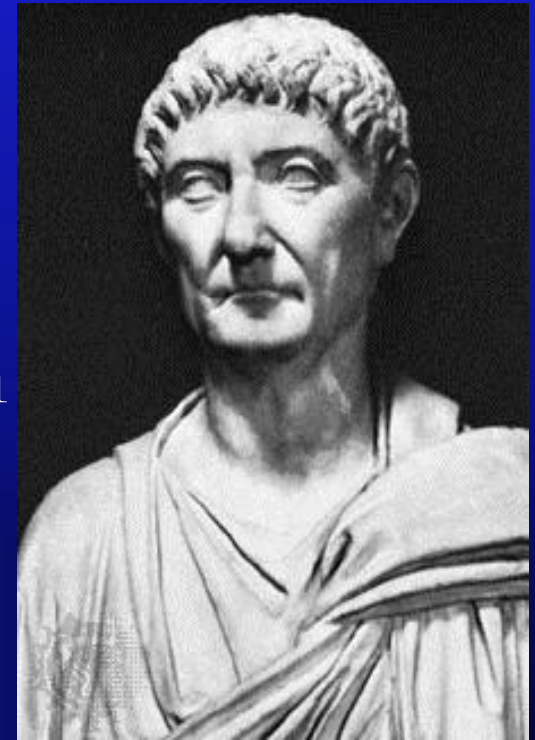
**Essential Question:**

**What steps did Diocletian take to solve the empire's problems?**



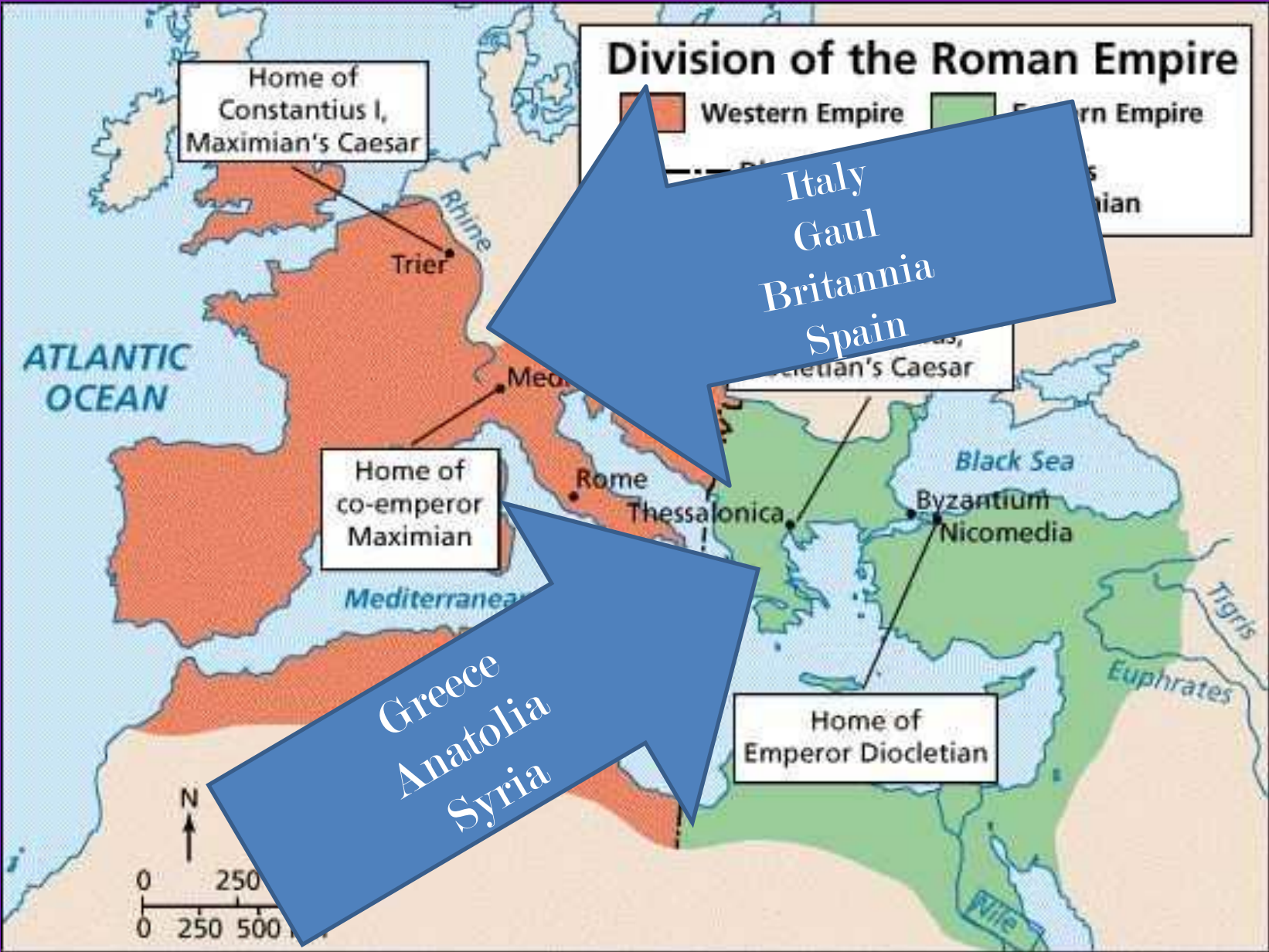
# DIOCLETIAN RESTORES ORDER

- Rapidly changing series of emperors **weakened** government
  - 37 emperors from 235 – 284 C.E.
  - Some were military leaders
  - No sense of orderly rule
- **Diocletian** took power as emperor in 284
  - Put permanent troops on borders, and made economic reforms
  - Was an absolute ruler



# SPLITTING THE EMPIRE

- Diocletian knew he couldn't effectively govern the huge empire
  - Spilt it in two in 285 C.E., ruled wealthy eastern half himself



# Division of the Roman Empire

Western Empire      Eastern Empire

Italy  
Gaul  
Britannia  
Spain

Greece  
Anatolia  
Syria

Home of  
Constantius I,  
Maximian's Caesar

Home of  
co-emperor  
Maximian

Home of  
Emperor Diocletian

Home of  
Emperor Constantine,  
Maximian's Caesar

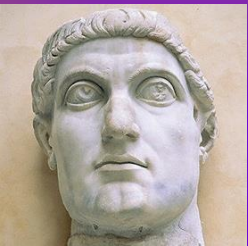
# REVIEW QUESTION:

Why did civil war break out  
in the Roman Empire?

# CONSTANTINE CONTINUES REFORMS

**Essential Question:**

**How did Constantine change  
the empire?**



# A SINGLE EMPEROR

- Became emperor of western half of empire in 312 C.E.



# A NEW CAPITAL

- Constantine moved the capital from Rome to the Greek city of **Byzantium**
  - It was an expanded and beautified city that was well-placed for **defense** and **trade**
  - Renamed the city **Constantinople**
    - Today, it is **Istanbul**, Turkey



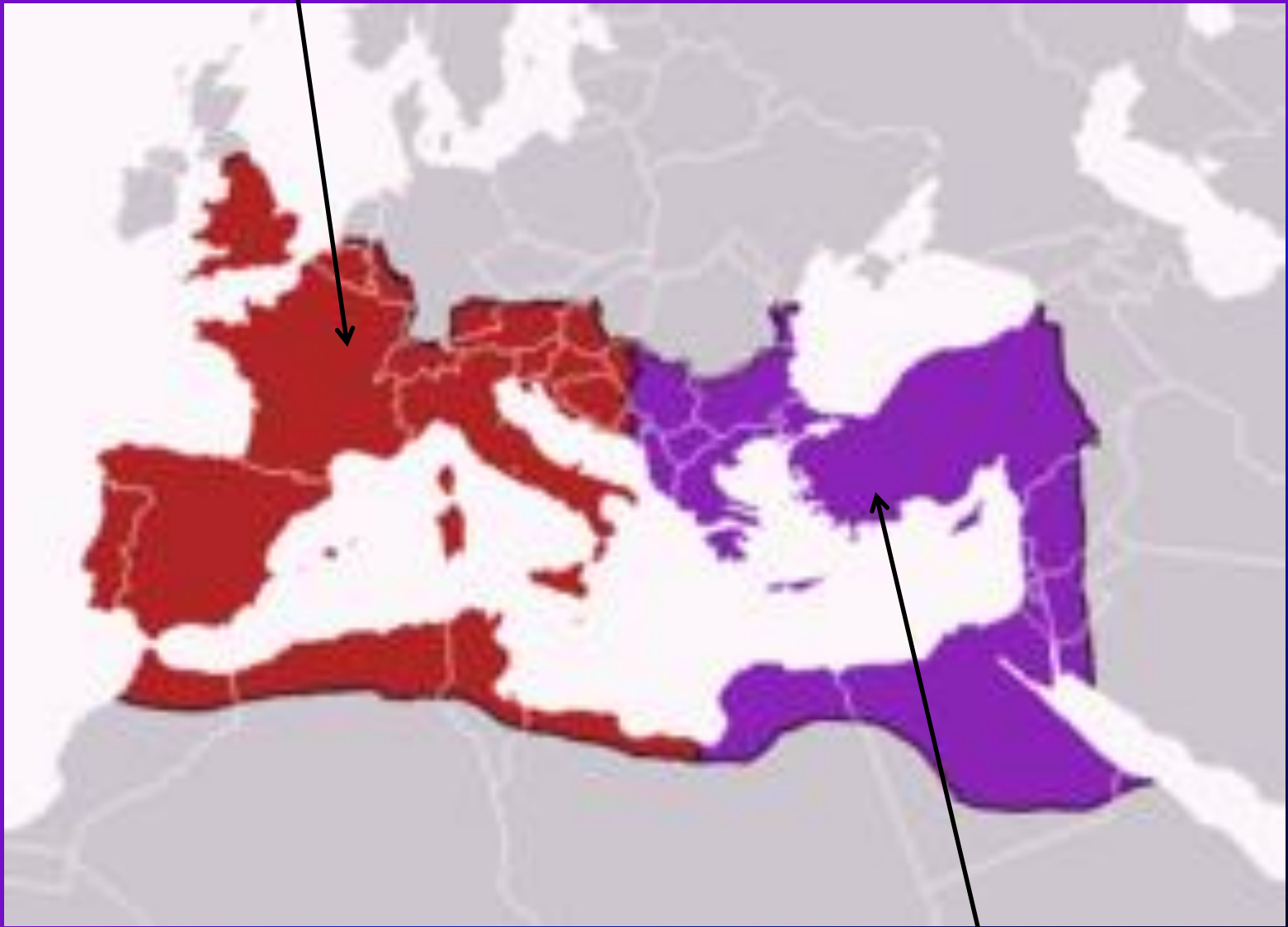
Constantinople



# FINAL DIVISION

- Split in 395 CE
- Reasons:
  - Constantine moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople
  - Eastern part was closer to trade routes
  - Too large to govern well

WESTERN ROMAN EMPIRE



EASTERN ROMAN EMPIRE

# REVIEW QUESTIONS:

How did Constantine reunite  
the Roman Empire?

Why was then divided again  
and how was it divided?

# THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

**Essential Question:**

**Why did the Western Roman Empire  
fall?**

# WEALTHY EAST



- **Eastern Roman Empire** was much stronger than **Western Roman Empire**
- Constantinople traded with Asia, Africa, and Europe
  - Eastern Empire had more **wealth** as a result of **trade**
- Eastern cities were **larger and better fortified**
  - **Black Sea** was a natural barrier against invasions

# WEAKER WEST

- Western Empire cities, **far from trade routes**, were smaller and poorer
- Cities were exposed to **attack** from **invaders along northern border**
  - Defense forces were often **poorly paid**, so less were willing to risk their lives

# INVADERS RAID CITIES

- **Invaders attacked cities**, kidnapped people to sell as slaves
  - As attacks **increased**, the cities' inhabitants often **left to seek safety elsewhere**
  - Less populated cities were even **more vulnerable** to attack

# REVIEW QUESTION:

In what ways was the Western  
Empire weaker than the  
Eastern Empire?



# INVADING PEOPLES

Essential Question:

What groups moved into the  
Roman Empire?

# THE GERMANIC PEOPLE

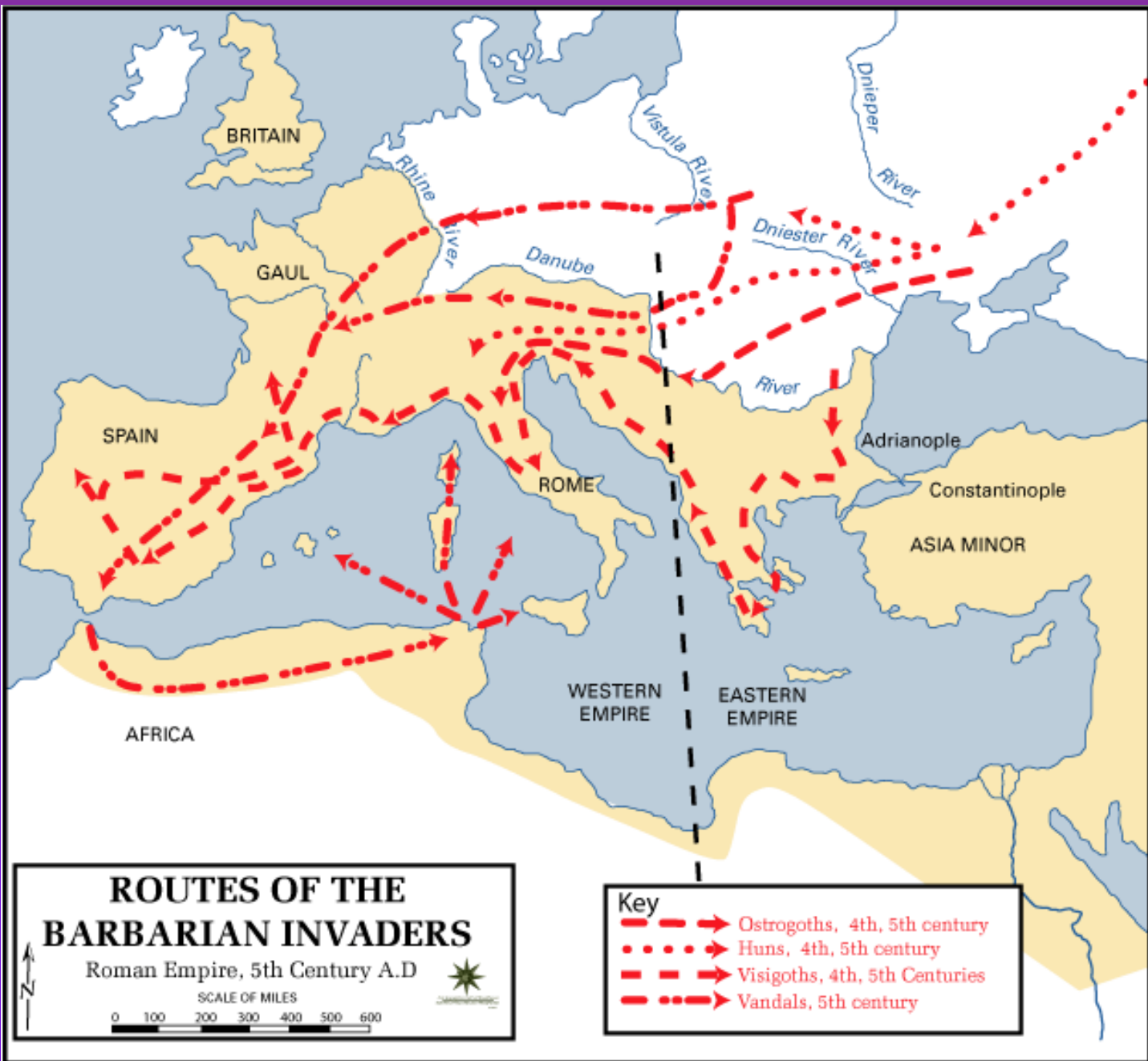
- Defense on the north and northeast borders of Roman Empire were **weakened**
- Towns and cities were attacked by **nomads**: people who move from place to place
- Nomadic groups known as **Germanic people**, or anyone outside the empire, were considered **barbarians**
  - Greek word for people who **speak a language other than Greek**

# GERMANIC PEOPLE (CON'T.)

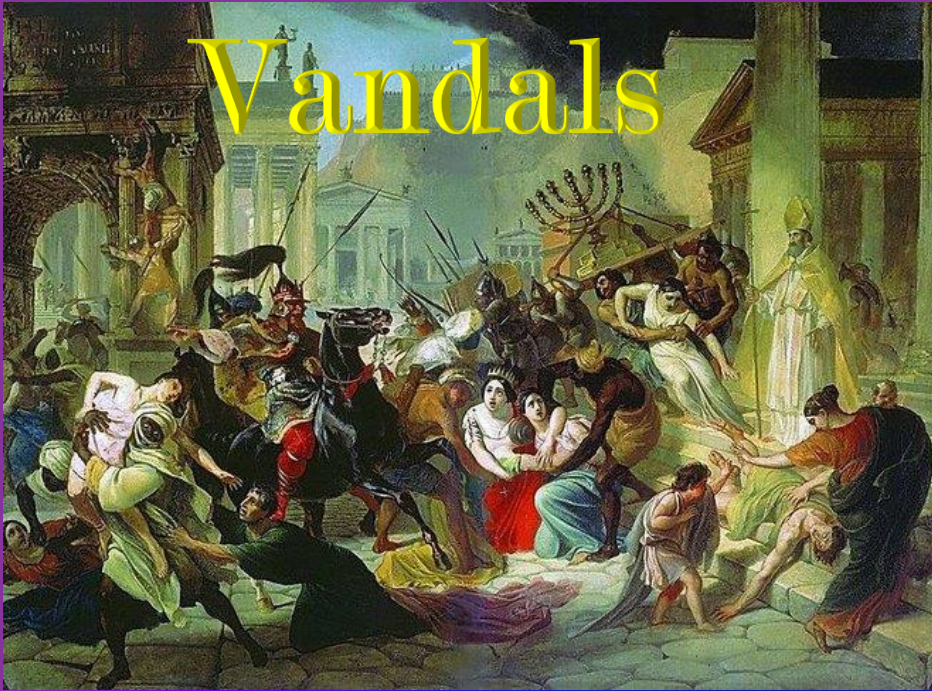
- Despite Roman contempt for them, the Germanic peoples had **complex culture**
  - Were skilled metalworkers and fond of jewelry
  - Some groups had elected assemblies
  - Military organizations were headed by **war chiefs**
- Were very loyal, especially to the chieftains

# THE GERMAN MIGRATIONS

- Nomads moved when **food ran out**, or when driven out of an area
- Groups of well-armed nomads threatened groups on Roman border
  - Border nomads driven into Roman Empire by stronger nomadic groups
- **Huns** were an important group of Central Asian nomads
  - Moved into Germanic border lands, drove people into Roman territory



# Vandals



# Visigoth King Alaric



# The Huns & Attila



# REVIEW QUESTION:

Why did the Germanic peoples move into Roman territory?

# THE FALL OF ROME

**Essential Question:**

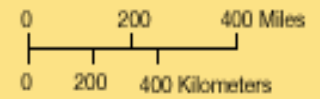
**How did the Western Roman Empire end?**



# INVADERS GAIN GROUND

- Corrupt government, uncaring citizens, and social breakdown greatly hurt empire
- Goths plundered Rome in 410
  - Looted city, took things by force
- Germanic peoples invaded what is now France, Spain, northern Africa
- Huns united under Attila in 445, then entered Eastern Empire
  - Attacked 70 Eastern Empire cities, then moved into Western Empire

400-526



# THE AFTERMATH OF ROME'S FALL

- Western Roman Empire **fell in 476** when the last emperor was removed
- **Life in Western Europe changed** after fall
  - Roads, public structures fell into **disrepair**
  - Trade, commerce **declined**
  - **Germanic** kingdoms **claimed** former **Roman** lands
  - **Roman Catholic Church** became unifying, powerful force

# REVIEW QUESTION:

What caused the continued weakening of the Western Empire?

