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1. The Fall of the Roman Empire

Ancient Roman civilization is arguably one of the most important societies for the Western world. Roman contributions in language, law, art, architecture, religion, and other facets of life are still felt in countries such as France and the United States. During its zenith, the Roman Empire spanned as far west as Britannia, east into Asia, north into present-day Germany, and south into Africa. It is hard not to overstate Roman influence in the development of Western civilization.

Like many great civilizations ancient Rome fell. The Western Roman Empire finally collapsed in A.D. 476. (The Eastern Roman Empire, known as Byzantium, continued until A.D. 1453)

Based on the evidence you research, what were the two most important reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire?

This essay has six assignments:

| Assignment | Due Date | | Due Date |
|--------------------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| 1. Prewriting Activities | _____ | 4. Works Cited | _____ |
| 2. Thesis Statement | _____ | 5. Rough Draft | _____ |
| 3. Outline | _____ | 6. Final | _____ |

Prewriting Activities for Essay #1

A. Reasons for the Fall of the Roman Empire

| |
|---|
| 1. In A.D. 395, the empire permanently split into two separate entities. This was one reason the Western Roman Empire fell in A.D. 476. |
| 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ |

B. Explain Your Reasons for the Fall of the Roman Empire

| |
|---|
| 1. The two empires split resources and became weaker. |
| 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ |
| 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ |
| 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ |

C. Rating the Reasons for the Fall of the Roman Empire

| Reasons for the Fall | Rating (1-10)* | Reason for the rating |
|--|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Split in two | 1. 3 | 1. West and East didn't cooperate |
| 2. | 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. | 5. |
| 6. | 6. | 6. |
| 7. | 7. | 7. |
| *A score of 1 means this reason is the most important. | | |

D. Class Discussion

When you share ideas with other students, your ideas may be reinforced, rejected, or slightly changed. Listening to your classmates' ideas will help you form your own judgment.

Each student must interview at least three classmates who do not sit next to one another. The answers to the following questions must be written down on a piece of paper.

1. What is your name?
2. What do you think were the two main causes of the fall of the Roman Empire?
3. Which evidence do you have that supports what you think?

Reflection

After you have written down all your classmates' responses, think about them and ask yourself the following questions. Write down your answers under your classmates' responses.

1. What do I think of my classmates' answers?
2. Which two reasons are the main reasons why the Roman Empire fell?
3. Did my answers change after I spoke with my classmates?
4. If they changed, why did they and how did they?

You should now have a chance to present your ideas in a classroom discussion. If somebody says something with which you disagree, speak up! In your discussion, you may find out they are actually right and you are wrong. All possible viewpoints should be stated and defended out loud. Test your ideas in class.

2. Judgment

Judgment in social studies means a person's evaluation of facts. For example, if we use the fact that the Romans believed citizens could vote, we can judge from this that the Romans looked somewhat favorably on democracy. Good judgment is very persuasive but bad judgment is not.

Write facts and judgments in the spaces provided. Discuss your judgments in class.

| |
|--|
| Fact: 11-year-old Maria Perez won the gold medal in the city 800-meter sprint. |
| Judgment: Maria is a fast runner. |
| |
| Fact: Private Smith was killed in war and had one wife and 7 children. |
| Judgment: Private Smith's death was a tragedy. |
| |
| Fact: Thursday's temperature in Santa Ana was 105 degrees Fahrenheit. |
| Judgment: Thursday was very hot. |

Make your own.

| |
|-----------|
| Fact: |
| Judgment: |
| |
| |

| |
|-----------|
| Fact: |
| Judgment: |
| |
| |

| |
|-----------|
| Fact: |
| Judgment: |
| |
| |

3. Supporting Evidence

Supporting evidence refers to everything you use to support your thesis. These include, but are not limited to, the following.

1. Diaries and journals
2. Government documents such as birth certificates
3. Songs and stories
4. Coins, medals, jewelry
5. Artistic works such as pictures and paintings
6. Tools and pottery
7. Documents such as the Declaration of Independence
8. Weapons
9. Burial remains
10. Literature and customs

Good writers overwhelm the reader with so many pieces of supporting evidence that the writing will be quickly accepted. Also, the writer has a duty to explain carefully and logically the meaning of the evidence, showing how it supports the thesis. A writer must be careful, however, not to include unnecessary evidence. For example, the fact that Lincoln was born in a log cabin isn't evidence that he was a good president. Also, the dates a president was born and died may be evidence, but they would not support a thesis arguing who was the best president.

Practice

With your teacher discuss which of the following is evidence for the topic "Explain what daily life was like in the Roman Empire in the third century A.D."

1. A diary from 1984
2. A newspaper article from A.D. 245
3. Your friend likes the subject
4. A movie about life in the third century
5. A song Romans sang in 201 A.D.
6. The date Julius Caesar was born
7. A painting of a Roman slave working in 299 A.D.