

Writing Activity: Fall of Constantinople

Source 1- eye witness on the sacking of Constantinople, 1453

“The enraged Turkish soldiers . . . gave no quarter. When they had massacred and there was no longer any resistance, they were intent on pillage and roamed through the town stealing, disrobing, pillaging, killing, taking captive men, women, children, old men, young men, monks, priests, people of all sorts and conditions . . . There were people who awoke from troubled sleep to find those brigands standing over them with bloody hands and faces full of abject fury. This medley of all nations, these frantic brutes stormed into their houses, dragged them, tore them, forced them, dishonored them at the cross-roads and made them submit to the most terrible outrages.”

-Unnamed eye witness

1. How did the Ottoman Turks treat the people of Constantinople?

Source 2 - eye witness on the sacking of Constantinople, 1453

“Temples were desecrated, ransacked and pillaged . . . sacred objects were scornfully flung aside, the holy icons and the holy vessels were desecrated. Ornaments were burned, broken in pieces or simply thrown into the streets. Saints' shrines were brutally violated in order to get out the remains which were then thrown to the wind. Chalices and cups for the celebration of the Mass were set aside for their orgies or broken or melted down or sold. Priests' garments embroidered with gold and set with pearls and gems were sold to the highest bidder and thrown into the fire to extract the gold. Immense numbers of sacred and profane books were flung on the fire or tom up and trampled under foot. The majority, however, were sold at derisory prices, for a few pence. Saints' altars, torn from their foundations, were overturned. All the most holy hiding places were violated and broken in order to get out the holy treasures which they contained . . .”

-unnamed eye witness

2. Why did the invaders of Constantinople destroy religious items?

Source 3: Kristovulus, history of Mehmed the conqueror

“ After the sultan entered the city and looked about to see its great, its situation, its grandeur and beauty, its teeming population, its loveliness, and the costliness of its churches and public buildings and the private houses and community houses and those of the officials...

When he saw what large numbers had been killed and the ruins of the buildings, and the wholesale ruin and destruction of the city, he was filled with compassion repented not a little at the destruction and plundering. Tears fell from his eyes and he groaned deeply and passionately: ‘What a city we have given over to plunder and destruction’.”

3. How did Mehmed the Conqueror feel about how the invaders treated Constantinople?

Social Studies Rubric

3	2	1
Mastery	Near Mastery	Remedial
Student understands and is able to explain vocabulary and concepts	Student requires some prompting to identify vocabulary and concepts	Student does not display understanding of vocabulary and concepts