Objective:

How did Justinian and Theodora gain, consolidate, and maintain power in the Byzantine Empire?

- **Describe** how Justinian and Theodora gained, consolidated, and maintained power.

**Introduction**

Directions: In the spaces below, write out at least two methods that empires you have already learned about used to gain, consolidate, and maintain their power.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GAIN</th>
<th>CONSOLIDATE</th>
<th>MAINTAIN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaining power</td>
<td>Consolidating power</td>
<td>Maintaining power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is the process of getting it and expanding it.</td>
<td>is the process of taking control from other people who also have power.</td>
<td>is the process of keeping one’s power.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The western and eastern provinces of the Roman Empire drifted apart in the fourth century when Diocletian and Constantine began making reforms. As invasions increased, the western Roman Empire finally fell to Germanic invaders in 476 CE. Even though the western province collapsed, the eastern province survived and grew into the great Byzantine Empire.

There were many leaders of the Byzantine Empire, but the empire reached its height under Emperor Justinian and his co-ruler and wife Theodora in the sixth century. Unlike the fallen Western province of the Roman empire, Justinian and Theodora developed a centralized government where all power and decision-making was concentrated in one unit instead of having power in the hands of many different people in different locations. Justinian and Theodora were autocrats, sole leaders with complete authority. They had political and religious power. Justinian appointed leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Also, as emperor, he was considered Jesus’ co-ruler on earth.

The goal that drove Justinian and Theodora’s actions was to reconquer Rome and restore its glory under their rule.

Following the fall of the Western province of the Roman Empire, divergent societies emerged in Europe.

1. How was Justinian and Theodora’s Byzantine Empire different from Western Europe during the same time period?

2. What title did Justinian give Theodora when he became the ruler of the Byzantine Empire? Based on this, what can you infer about their relationship and her power?
How did Justinian and Theodora gain, consolidate, and maintain power in the Byzantine Empire?

Annotate

➡ Directions: Use the annotation key below while reading the documents that follow to gather evidence to answer the questions: How did Justinian and Theodora gain, consolidate, and maintain power in the Byzantine Empire?

Annotation Key

Place a “G” next to evidence of how Justinian and Theodora GAINED power

Place a “C” next to evidence of how Justinian and Theodora CONSOLIDATED power

Place an “M” next to evidence of how Justinian and Theodora MAINTAINED power

Circle words that are unclear and identify possible meanings.

Write questions in the margins to clarify misunderstandings.
### Timeline of Military Campaigns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Range</th>
<th>Campaign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>527-532</td>
<td>War with the Sassanid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>533-534</td>
<td>Conquest of North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>535-540</td>
<td>War in Italy, first phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>540-562</td>
<td>War with Sassanid Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>541-554</td>
<td>War in Italy, second phase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Map of Byzantine Territory at the end of Justinian and Theodora's Reign (527-565)

The red represents the land controlled by the Byzantine Empire in 527 when Justinian and Theodora started their rule. The orange represents land they conquered.

*Images created by Neuceu is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license.*
Document 2: Nika Riots

Watch this excerpt of the History Channel’s Engineering an Empire (23:42- 25:23, 26:00-29:40) about the Nika Riots and read the text below.

As a result of increased taxes and harsh laws, the people of Constantinople came together against Justinian and Theodora in 532 CE in an event known as the Nika Riots. The riots started in a stadium called the Hippodrome, where up to 100,000 people gathered regularly to see chariot races and to root on their favorite chariot teams like the Blues, Greens, Reds, and Yellows.

Often where people lived, their political beliefs, and their favorite chariot teams were similar. For example, Emperor Justinian supported the Blues and most of his political supporters and trusted friends rooted for the Blues too. People in Constantinople were usually divided among these lines, but came together in opposition to Justinian and Theodora in 532 CE. They violently protested, burned the city, and tried to crown someone else emperor.

The excerpt below was written by Procopius, a Byzantine historian who traveled with Justinian’s general Belisarius as his legal adviser and was present during the Nika Riots. In the excerpt below, Procopius describes what happened after Theodora convinced Justinian to stay and fight rather than flee the city. Justinian sent his general Belisarius to the Hippodrome to stop the rioting.

. . . . Belisarius, with difficulty and not without danger and great exertion, made his way over ground covered by ruins and half-burned buildings, and ascended to the stadium. . . . Concluding that he must go against the populace who had taken their stand in the hippodrome-a vast multitude crowding each other in great disorder-he drew his sword from its sheath and, commanding the others to do likewise, with a shout he advanced upon them at a run. But the populace, who were standing in a mass and not in order, at the sight of armored soldiers who had a great reputation for bravery and experience in war, and seeing that they struck out with their swords unsparingly, beat a hasty retreat. . . . [Mundus, another of Justinian’s generals] straightway made a sally [sudden charge] into the Hippodrome through the entrance which they call the Gate of Death. Then indeed from both sides the partisans of Hypatius were assailed with might and main and destroyed. . . . There perished among the populace on that day more than thirty thousand. . . . The soldiers killed both [of the leaders of the riots] on the following day and threw bodies into the sea. . . . This was the end of the insurrection in Byzantium.

At the core of Justinian and Theodora’s goals as leaders was reestablishing the greatness of the Roman Empire. One of their methods was to draft a new law code called *Corpus Juris Civilis*, or *Justinian’s Code*. Justinian set up a commission to collect and revise all of the Roman laws. In 529 CE, Justinian published his first set of laws known as the “Body of Civil Law.” The work of compiling and editing Justinian’s Code was directed by Tribonian, an official in Justinian’s court. The code included laws on marriage, slavery, property ownership, women’s rights, and criminal justice. Justinian used the law to unify his empire under his control and provide a sense of stability for his people. Justinian’s Code did not only have an effect of the Byzantine Empire. Over the centuries, it became the basis of legal systems in Europe.

### Justinian’s Code: Book I, Of Persons

#### I. Justice and Law

3. The *maxims* of law are these: to live honestly, to hurt no one, to give everyone his due.

4. The study of law is divided into two branches; that of public and that of private law. **Public law** regards the government of the Roman Empire [the Byzantines and most other groups of people at the time referred to themselves as “Romans.” Historians started using the term Byzantines to separate this empire from the western Roman Empire]; **private law**, the interest of the individuals.

#### VIII. Slaves

We now come to another division relative to the rights of persons; for some persons are independent, some are subject to the power of others. Of those, again, who are subject to others, some are in the power of parents, others in that of masters. Let us first treat of those who are subject to others; for, when we have ascertained who these are, we shall at the same time discover who are independent. And first let us consider those who are in the power of masters.

1. Slaves are in the power of masters, a power derived from the law of nations: for among all nations it may be remarked that masters have the power of life and death over their slaves, and that everything acquired by the slave is acquired for the master.

Source: Excerpt is from *The Institutes*, 535 CE which is published on the Internet Medieval Sourcebook.
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IX. The Power of Parents
Our children, *begotten* in lawful marriage, are in our power.

1. Marriage, or matrimony, is a binding together of a man and woman to live in an indivisible union.

2. The power which we have over our children is peculiar to the citizens of Rome; for no other people have a power over their children, such as we have over ours.

3. The child born to you and your wife is in your power. And so is the child born to your son of his wife, that is, your grandson or granddaughter; so are your great-grandchildren, and all her descendants. But a child born of your daughter is not in your power, but in the power of its own father.

Book II, Of Things
X. The Making of Wills

6. [...] But women, persons under the age of puberty, slaves, madmen, dumb persons, deaf persons, prodigals [people who waste their money] restrained from having their property in their power, and persons declared by law to be worthless and incompetent to witness, cannot be witnesses.

14. Thus much may suffice [enough] concerning written testaments [wills]. But if anyone wishes to make a testament, valid by the civil law, without writing, he may do so, in the presence of seven witnesses, verbally declaring his wishes, and this will be a testament perfectly valid according to the civil law, and confirmed by imperial constitutions [laws of the empire].

Source: Excerpt is from *The Institutes*, 535 CE which is published on the Internet Medieval Sourcebook.
Document 4: Religious Order and Persecution

Justinian, as the emperor of the Byzantine Empire, appointed leaders of the Eastern Orthodox Church and he was considered Jesus’ co-ruler on Earth. He persecuted and oppressed other Christian sects and other religions. Paganism was outlawed in Justinian’s Code and his government took actions to destroy it. He closed a school that taught Plato’s philosophy in Greece, abolished the worship of the god Amun at an oasis in the Libyan desert and the worship of Isis in Egypt.

In addition, the civil rights of Jewish people were restricted in Justinian’s Code.

As a result, people from many different religious and ethnic groups converted to Eastern Orthodox Christianity to avoid persecution.

Justinian was one of the first emperors pictured holding the cross, a symbol of Christianity, as he is in the coin pictured above.

Image was created by Panairjide and is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.
SQ 7. How did Justinian and Theodora gain, consolidate, and maintain power in the Byzantine Empire?

Directions: Use the information you learned in the documents above to then write a claim that addresses the prompt below and supply three pieces of evidence that supports it.

Task: Read through the Enduring Issues Essay introduction below, then write a topic sentence for the first body paragraph and identify the evidence from the documents you read about the Byzantine Empire that you would use to support that topic sentence.

Introduction

One enduring issue throughout history is that people and governments have tried to gain, consolidate, and maintain power. This desire to get and keep power is a significant enduring issue because individuals and states since the beginning of human history to today have sought power and people all over the world have been impacted by the short and long term effects of the methods used to gain, consolidate, and maintain power. Evidence of the people’s thirst for power and the strategies they have used to keep it can be seen in the **Byzantine Empire under the reign of Justinian and Theodora**, the British Empire, and the Russian Revolution.

Body Paragraph 1:

**Topic Sentence:**

**Evidence 1:**

**Evidence 2:**

**Evidence 3:**