

The Western Roman Empire in the Fifth Century

Shortly after the death of emperor Theodosius in 395 A.D., the Roman Empire was permanently divided into Eastern and Western empires. By the fifth century A.D., the power of the Western Roman Empire had declined considerably, though the Eastern Roman Empire centered in Byzantium continued to flourish. Various problems contributed to this undermining of the West.

The accessions of Arcadius and Honorius, sons of Theodosius, as emperors in the East and West, respectively, illustrate the unfortunate pattern of child heirs that had unfavorable effects for both empires. When Arcadius died in 408, he was succeeded by his seven-year-old son, Theodosius II. Reigning until 423, Honorius was succeeded by his nephew Valentinian III, who was only five. Because of their young ages, Theodosius' sons and grandsons could not rule without older advisors and supervising regents upon whom they naturally became dependent and from whom they were unable to break away after reaching maturity. As powerful individuals vied for influence and dominance at court, the general welfare was often sacrificed to private rivalries and ambitions. Moreover, it was the women of the dynasty who were the more capable and interesting characters. Holding the keys to succession through birth and inheritance, they became active players in the political arena.

1. The word “unfavorable” in the passage is closest in meaning to
A. negative B. uncontrollable C. unexpected D. long lasting

2. According to paragraph 2, which of the following was one result of the pattern of rule by child emperors
A. The common people lost respect for the position of emperor.
B. Regents and advisors attempted to put an end to traditional rivalries for dominance within the court.
C. Women within the dynasty gained increased influence and power.
D. Traditional rules of succession by inheritance were changed.

3. Which of the sentences below best expresses the essential information in the highlighted sentence in the passage? Incorrect choices change the meaning in important ways or leave out essential information.

- A. As young rulers, the sons and grandsons of Theodosius necessarily depended on older advisors, and as adults, they were unable to rule independently of these advisors.
- B. The sons and grandsons of Theodosius were too young when they came to power to rule without the assistance of older advisors.
- C. On reaching maturity, the sons and grandsons of Theodosius attempted to break away from the older officials who had advised them since childhood.
- D. Because the sons and grandsons of Theodosius were young when they became rulers, older advisors were able to prevent them from breaking away.

ANS: 1. ACA