



Reading 421

Task 1. Read the following text. Complete the text with five sentences given below. Two of them don't belong in the text. Write down the correct letter.

On August 24, 410 AD, a band of Visigoths entered Rome's Salarian Gate. Even before the other gates were taken and the whole horde came streaming into the city, smoke began to rise above the manicured treetops of the Emperor's gardens. Rome, the imperial city, had fallen.

Although Rome was no longer the capital, it remained the Empire's symbolic heart. No foreign invader had entered the city in eight centuries; and for many Romans, it was almost inconceivable that it could be sacked by barbarians. **1** _____.

By contrast, the event regarded by modern historians as the end of the Western Roman Empire – the overthrow of the last western emperor, in 476 – was virtually unnoticed by contemporaries. **2** _____. Rather, it reflects the fact that the fall of the Western Roman Empire was a process, not a moment; an era, not an event.

The fall of the Western Roman Empire – in the sense of an end to effective imperial authority in a given region – was not perpetually dramatic, or even especially noticeable. The invasions, like the ones experienced in August 410 AD, were quite frequent and cost many Romans their property, freedom, or even their life. **3** _____.

These familiar attributes of life were the first to fade in Britain, the first part of the Western Empire to slip from imperial control. Over the course of a few decades, under the pressure of Germanic raids and the struggles of local warlords, the social structure of Roman Britain collapsed. Cities and villas were abandoned, the production of trade goods ceased, and standards of living sank to their lowest ebb in more than a millennium.

Most of the other frontier provinces were also profoundly affected by the collapse of Roman authority. **4** _____. Once the imperial government stopped paying its troops, the whole provincial economy frayed.

The end of imperial authority tended to be less devastating in the heartlands of the Western Empire. This was especially true of southern Gaul, whose powerful aristocrats struggled against, negotiated with, and finally served under the Germanic invaders with remarkable success.

5 _____. Thanks to their willingness to cooperate with the new Germanic ruling class, the Italian elites preserved most of their wealth, lands, and prestige.

The Senate continued to meet in Rome, consuls continued getting chosen, and games were still staged in the Colosseum and Circus Maximus, financed by the men from the same families who had dominated politics in the final years of the Western Empire.

Sentences:

A But for many others, the fall of the Empire represented nothing more or less than the gradual disappearance of Roman patrols from the roads and Roman pots from the kitchens.

B This is partly a consequence of the scantiness of sources, and partly an acknowledgement that the Western Empire was little more than political fiction by the time it fell.

C Besides the fact that they were the first regions to get overrun with invaders, their economies tended to be heavily dependent on their garrisons.

D Saint Jerome, writing from his monastic cell in Bethlehem, summarised the general feeling: “with one city, the whole world has died.”

E At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Euphrates River in the Middle East, but its grandeur may have also been its downfall.

F Such adaptability was also the strategy pursued by the great Roman magnates of Italy.

G For the first time in nearly a millennium, the city of Rome was in the hands of someone other than the Romans.

Task 2. There are seven notions and five descriptions listed below. Decide which notion corresponds with each description. Two notions do not have a description. Write down the correct letter.

NOTIONS

A Pontiff

B Equestrian

C Plebeian

D Saturnalia

E Auxiliary

F Portent

G Patrician

DEFINITIONS

1 This is a member of a social class originally associated with service in the cavalry. They were not eligible for the Roman senate; however, members of this class played an important part in the Empire’s administration, and held certain key offices, such as the prefectures of Egypt and the praetorian guard.

2 This notion can be defined as a natural occurrence that was interpreted as a sign from the gods. Such signs frequently occurred spontaneously, although they may have been sought out specifically. Romans distinguished two types respectively: signa oblativa and signa imperativa.

3 The term refers to the privileged class of Roman citizens which was made up of those distinguished by the purity of their birth. They came from the old ruling elite and Senatorial families. These citizens controlled the most valuable land as well as held major military and religious positions. They were also members of the Senate whose decisions were treated as law.

4 This is a part of the Roman army that was comprised of noncitizens and fought with the legionnaires. They were lightly armed and fought as specialised troops, often with bows and slings, or as cavalrymen. Rome granted them citizenship when they retired from the army.

5 This is a member of a lower order in Rome. These people were quite different in their income, as some of them did not have land, and some could be considered rich. They initially were deprived of the right to take part in the government of the city-state, but later the decisions made at their counsels were obligatory for everyone. By the time the Empire fell, there were several noble families of the order.

Key

Task 1

D

B

A

C

F

Task 2

B

F

G

E

C