

# Cross-Curricular Connections: Empress Theodora/The Hippodrome

ELA RI.7.2, RI.7.3, ELD PI.7.6, PI.7.10b

**Background** Empress Theodora was a powerful figure at a time when women were socially weak. As the wife of Byzantine Emperor Justinian, she used her influence to protect the weak and defend the empire.

## Setting a Purpose

Read this article to learn about Empress Theodora's unique qualities.

ELA / History  
Day 4

## Empress Theodora

At a time when women had little or no political power, Empress Theodora of the Byzantine Empire was a rare exception. Though from poor and humble beginnings, she helped maintain her husband's empire as Persian forces threatened from the east and Germanic invaders continued attacking from the west. Born in about AD 500, she was the daughter of a bear keeper who worked in Constantinople's Hippodrome, a stadium in which horse races and often violent, bloody performances were held. Her father died when she was young, so Theodora and her sister were forced to support themselves. They became actors, which at the time was considered a low-class **profession**, especially for women.

At age sixteen, Theodora traveled widely, performing throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Six years later she stopped acting, returned to Constantinople, and became a wool spinner. The beautiful and witty young woman met Justinian, the heir to the throne of his uncle, Justin I. Young Theodora fell in love with and wanted to marry Justinian, the future leader of the Byzantine Empire. However, a long-standing law **forbade** high-ranking men from marrying women of lower classes.

**profession** (prə-fesh'ən)  
*n.* a *profession* is a paid occupation.

**forbade** (fər-bād') *v.* If an old law *forbade* an action, that means it was not allowed.

## Influencing Legal and Social Reform

From the beginning of her relationship with Justinian, Theodora promoted freedom and equality for women. She had Justinian ask his uncle to repeal the law that kept the couple from marrying. Justin I agreed, and at age twenty-five, Theodora married Justinian.

Soon after their marriage, Justinian became emperor. Although Theodora was not officially a joint ruler, Justinian treated her as his intellectual equal and sought her opinions and input on many of his important decisions.

## Raising the Status of Women

Under Empress Theodora's influence, Justinian began to examine the empire's laws carefully and make changes to them. Many of these changes were aimed at protecting women and children. Justinian passed laws that raised the status of women higher than it had ever been in the empire. Divorced women were granted rights, such as the ability to remain guardians of their children. He allowed women to own property. The custom of abandoning infants, most

### FAST FACTS ABOUT THEODORA

- born around AD 500
- named empress in 527
- delivered a famous speech that helped stop the Nika revolt
- fought for the rights of women throughout her lifetime
- died in 548

often girls, to die of exposure<sup>1</sup> was outlawed. Other laws established hospitals, orphanages, and care facilities for the needy. Justinian organized existing Roman laws, plus his new ones, into the Justinian Code, which has served as a model for the laws of many later nations.

### Saving the Empire

Theodora used her intelligence and skill as a leader to save and strengthen the Byzantine Empire. In AD 532, as a chariot race was about to begin at the Hippodrome, political rivals there opposed to the emperor joined in a violent protest, now known as the Nika revolt. This riot quickly engulfed the city, and the rebels burned huge areas of Constantinople. Convinced of defeat, Justinian and his advisors prepared to flee the city in ships. With one of the greatest short speeches ever recorded, the empress persuaded them not to flee to the shame of safety but to fight with courage to the death. His confidence bolstered, Justinian roused his generals and crushed the rebellion. Her speech probably saved the city, the empire—and Justinian’s throne.

### Rebuilding the City

After the revolt, Theodora and Justinian worked together to rebuild and improve the ruined city. They added new aqueducts to provide clean drinking water, bridges to **facilitate** transportation, and hostels<sup>2</sup> to shelter the homeless. They also built numerous churches, including the beautiful Hagia Sophia—one of the most famous buildings in the world—which still exists in Istanbul as a museum.

### Leaving a Legacy

Theodora, the daughter of a lowly bear keeper, rose to have a significant impact on the Byzantine Empire as the wife of the emperor. Her intelligence and courage made the empire a safer and fairer place; laws that she initiated influence legal systems that still exist today.

### Collaborative Discussion

With a partner, discuss the personal characteristics that made Theodora different from most other women of her time.

### THEODORA'S SPEECH

If, now, it is your wish to save yourself, O Emperor, there is no difficulty. For we have much money, and there is the sea, here the boats. However consider whether it will not come about after you have been saved that you would gladly exchange that safety for death. As for myself, I approve a certain ancient saying that royalty is a good burial-shroud.

**facilitate** (fə-sil'i-tāt') v. If you *facilitate* something you make it easier.

1. **exposure** (ik-spō' zhər): physical condition resulting from being left open to danger without the protection of clothing or shelter, especially in severe weather.

2. **hostels** (hōs'təl): shelters for those without a home; supervised residences.

## Take Notes

The writer of an informational text may introduce a number of individuals, events, and ideas. They may not all be familiar to you and they might interact in a text in surprising ways. One way to keep track of the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas is by taking logical notes.

### Tips for Taking Logical Notes

- **Find the main ideas.** The **main ideas** are the most important ideas in an informational text. You will find clues for identifying main ideas by reading the subheads in the article as well as the first and last sentences of each paragraph.
- **Be organized.** Use a simple outline to record the most significant information and ideas. (See the box below for a sample outline.)
- **Be brief.** Keep your notes short, simple, and clear. Write only words and phrases that will help you focus on what is important.
- **Underline or circle information.** It may be useful to highlight certain information in the text, but don't do it in a book that doesn't belong to you, and don't get carried away. If everything is highlighted, it will be hard to tell what is most important.

## Outline

**Outlining** helps you uncover the structure that holds the text together. An outline highlights the main ideas and supporting details contained in a text. Look at the example of an informal outline on the right. Think about the structure of the article you just read. What ideas and details would you place in the outline?

<p><b>I. MAIN IDEA</b> A. Supporting detail B. Supporting detail C. [etc.]</p> <p><b>II. MAIN IDEA</b> A. Supporting detail B. Supporting detail C. [etc.]</p>
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## Analyzing the Text

**Practice and Apply** Answer the following questions.

1. A report on this article would state that its **main idea** is
  - A. Theodora had to support herself
  - B. Theodora became a unique and influential force in the Byzantine Empire
  - C. the Justinian Code served as a model for the laws of future nations
  - D. after the riots Justinian and Theodora rebuilt and improved Constantinople
2. Reread the paragraph titled "Saving the Empire." Each of the following would be an important **note** *except*
  - A. Nika revolt is name of protest
  - B. rebels destroyed much of city
  - C. Theodora gave famous speech
  - D. Justinian feared defeat

3. Here is the beginning of an **outline** of "Empress Theodora."

- I. Theodora's early life
  - II. Theodora, wife of Justinian I
    - A. Overcame prejudice to marry
    - B.
    - C. Roused Justinian to save his city
  - III. Theodora—famous today

Which of the following details belongs in the blank space at number II.B.?

- A. Worked as a low-class actor
  - B. Rebuilt the city after the revolt
  - C. Attacked by forces from the east and west
  - D. Protected women with new laws
4. Which of the following details would be the *least* important to include in **notes** taken on this article?
- A. As young women, Theodora and her sister supported themselves as actors.
  - B. Theodora's father was a bear keeper in the Hippodrome.
  - C. Theodora influenced change in the laws of the empire.
  - D. Theodora persuaded Justinian to stay in the city and fight the rioters.
5. Which of the following statements is an *opinion*, not a fact?
- A. Theodora wanted to marry Justinian, the heir to his uncle's throne.
  - B. The custom of abandoning infants to die of exposure was outlawed.
  - C. Justinian and Theodora built numerous churches, including the Hagia Sophia.
  - D. Theodora's intelligence and courage made the empire a safer and fairer place.
6. Reread Theodora's speech. Then, make an inference about Theodora's and Justinian's relationship. Support your inference with two details from the speech.

**Background** The Hippodrome was a massive stadium that played an important social role in the city of Constantinople. Today, only its ruins remain in Istanbul.

### Setting a Purpose

Read this article to learn what made the Hippodrome important.

## The Hippodrome

At the beginning of the third century AD Roman troops destroyed the eastern city of Byzantium, and the new Roman emperor set about rebuilding it larger than before. To provide residents with the type of entertainment popular in Rome, he built the Hippodrome, the largest stadium in the ancient world. A hundred years later the capital of the empire was moved from Rome to Byzantium by the Roman emperor Constantine. He renamed the new capital Constantinople, after himself. One of his major building projects was the **renovation** of the Hippodrome.

The Hippodrome was the center of Constantinople's social life. The Hippodrome's main function was as a horse- and chariot-racing track. (The term *hippodrome* comes from the Greek words *hippos* ["horse"] and *dromos* ["path" or "way"].) Besides a race track, it also was the place to see royal ceremonies, parades of victorious generals, political demonstrations, and executions. Acrobats, plays performed by actors, and fights between wild animals also entertained the crowds.

The stadium's arena is estimated to have been almost 525 yards long (about five football fields) and 129 yards wide. Some say it held as many as 100,000 **spectators**.

Constantine decorated the center of the race track with monuments and statues that could be tilted or removed so they wouldn't block the fans' view of the races. He and later emperors adorned the Hippodrome with artworks and religious items from all over the empire and the "**barbarian**" East.

The races at the Hippodrome were extremely important to the heavy-betting citizens of Constantinople. Loyalty to certain racing teams divided citizens into groups so strong that teams came to represent political differences as well. (Imagine Republicans rooting for one basketball team and Democrats for another.) In AD 532, supporters of two teams, the Blues and the Greens, came together to oppose Justinian I's policies. They began a protest in the Hippodrome that quickly turned into a violent riot. As flames engulfed much of the city, Emperor Justinian and his advisors were considering fleeing to safety. To stop them, Justinian's wife, Empress Theodora, delivered a powerful speech, declaring that she refused to give up her throne. This speech encouraged Justinian, and he sent troops to the Hippodrome to put down the riot. Exits were blocked, and thirty to forty thousand protesters were killed in the stadium. Constantinople lay in ruins, but Justinian and Theodora remained in power.

Over the centuries the Hippodrome declined in importance and beauty. Constantinople was sacked by Crusaders, and in 1453, Ottoman Turks captured the city, changed its name to Istanbul, and used the stones of the Hippodrome as building material. Today, the ruins of the stadium are a public park with few monuments and artworks remaining.

**renovation** (rĕn'ă-văt) *n.* a *renovation* is a restoration of something to a better condition.

**spectators** (spĕk'tă'tər) *n.* *Spectators* are people who watch at an event.

**barbarian** (băr-băr'ĕ-ən) *adj.* The word *barbarian* refers to a group considered uncivilized and inferior by another nation or group.

**Collaborative Discussion**

What made the Hippodrome so important to the people of Byzantium?  
Discuss your ideas with a partner.

**Summarize an Informational Text**

A **summary** of an informational text is a short restatement of the **main ideas**—the central or most important ideas—in the work. Summaries can help you remember the most important points in materials you read. They only include information from a text, not your own opinions. Before you summarize, read the text carefully to determine what details to include and what to leave out. After you have written your summary, ask yourself, “Would a person who has not read the article understand what it is about?” If the answer is no, revise your summary. Study these tips for writing a good summary:

- Cite the author, title, and main point of the text.
- State the main ideas in the order in which they appear.
- Include the most important supporting details.
- Place quotation marks around words from the text that you have quoted exactly.

The text below is a good summary of “Empress Theodora.” The notes alongside it will help you identify the strong points of the summary.

“Empress Theodora” focuses on a remarkable leader of the Byzantine Empire. Born into poverty, Theodora became the respected wife and advisor of Emperor Justinian. Although women had no legal power, she persuaded her husband to pass laws that “raised the status of women higher than it had ever been.” When a violent revolt in Constantinople threatened to drive away Justinian and his generals, Theodora rallied him and his subjects with a courageous speech and saved the throne. Not only did she help rebuild Constantinople so well that some of its beauty still stands, she influenced legal systems that exist to this day.

- ←The summary begins with the title and main point.
- ←The writer uses quotation marks when quoting the text.
- ←Details such as her inspirational speech are very important.
- ←This seems like an important idea.

**Analyzing the Text**

**Practice and Apply** Answer the following questions.

1. Which of these events would *not* be essential in a **summary** of this article?
  - A. The renovated Hippodrome became the center of Constantinople’s social life.
  - B. Justinian ordered that thousands of protesters in the stadium be killed.
  - C. Citizens of Constantinople considered the “barbarians” of the East to be inferior.
  - D. Ottoman Turks used stones from the Hippodrome for building material.

2. Which of the following is the *best summary* of the third paragraph of the article?
  - A. Constantine decorated the impressively large stadium with movable artwork.
  - B. The Hippodrome's track was almost the length of five football fields.
  - C. It is recorded that the Hippodrome could hold as many as 100,000 fans.
  - D. Later emperors also put up artwork from around the empire and other lands.
3. Reread the fourth paragraph, which begins "The races at the Hippodrome . . ." Each of the following details would be important to include in a **summary** of the article *except*
  - A. loyal fans of opposing teams supported opposing political parties
  - B. one team's color was blue and the other's was green
  - C. supporters of two teams met in the Hippodrome to protest Justinian I's policies
  - D. soldiers locked the exits to the stadium and killed the people inside
4. If you were taking notes for a **summary** of this article, which of the following points would you cite in the blank space in the note card below?

Roman emperors built and rebuilt the Hippodrome, the largest stadium of its time.

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It was the site of a violent political riot against Justinian I; he was victorious.

Little is left of the Hippodrome, due to invaders and lack of care.

- A. Besides being a race track, it was used for many social events.
  - B. The Hippodrome was large enough to hold 100,000 spectators.
  - C. Actors performed plays in the Hippodrome to make the city more impressive.
  - D. Emperors decorated the Hippodrome with artwork.
5. The main idea of the article is that the Hippodrome was important to life in Constantinople. Write a summary of "The Hippodrome". Be sure to include three details from the article that support the main idea. Do not include your own opinions.

Science 7  
Day 4

## Key Terms

Use the clues below to identify Key Terms from the chapter. Write the terms below, putting one letter in each blank. When you finish, the word enclosed in the diagonal lines will reveal what Mendel studied.

### Clues

1. The process by which the number of chromosomes is reduced by half in sex cells
2. A chart that shows all possible allele combinations resulting from a genetic cross
3. An organism's physical appearance
4. RNA that copies the coded message in DNA
5. Describes an organism that has two different alleles for a trait
6. Number that describes the likelihood that a certain event will occur
7. An allele whose trait always shows up in the organism when the allele is present
8. Physical characteristic of an organism
9. A factor that controls a trait
10. The scientific study of heredity
11. Offspring of many generations that have the same trait

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

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9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_

11. \_\_\_\_\_