

The Siege of Constantinople and Early Islamic Expansion

History · Answer Key · 20 Questions

1. According to the text, what was a traditional Hadith asserting about Prophet Muhammad's desire?

- A) To conquer Rome
- B) To conquer Constantinople**
- C) To expand into Persia
- D) To establish peace with Byzantium

2. What extreme conditions did the besieging Arabs face during the siege of Constantinople in AD 717, according to Michael the Syrian?

- A) Plentiful food and water
- B) Overwhelming Byzantine naval power
- C) Severe hunger leading to cannibalism and eating of refuse**
- D) A swift and decisive victory

3. Who was the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople during the summer of the seventh century AD when Arab forces attacked?

- A) Justinian II
- B) Heraclius
- C) Leo III
- D) Constans II**

4. How many ships were part of the Arab navy that attacked the islands of Cyprus, Kos, Crete, and Rhodes?

- A) Around 100
- B) Around 200**
- C) Around 300
- D) Around 500

5. What was a popular Arabic street phrase mentioned in the text that described the Arabs' perception of the sea and religious practice?

- A) The sea is a gift from Allah
- B) The flatulence of camels is more pleasing than the prayers of the fishes**
- C) We conquer the seas with faith
- D) The ocean remembers our prayers

6. What was the traditional maritime advantage of Constantinople before the Arab attacks?

- A) A recent naval innovation
- B) A tradition stretching back to its founding by sailors**
- C) Reliance on foreign naval powers
- D) A small but highly trained fleet

7. How did Emperor Constans II escape after the initial Arab-Byzantine conflict?

- A) He surrendered to the Arabs
- B) He was captured and imprisoned
- C) He jumped overboard dressed as a common sailor and fled**
- D) He led a counter-attack

8. What was the Muslim name for the Battle of the Masts?

- A) The Battle of the Golden Horn
- B) The Battle of the Straits
- C) The Battle of the Masts**
- D) The Battle of the Dromons

9. What new models of boats were mentioned as being used in the Battle of the Masts, which were roped together for hand-to-hand fighting?

- A) Triremes and Quinqueremes
- B) Dromons and Shalandiyat**
- C) Galleys and Caravels
- D) Biremes and Liburnians

10. For how long was Constantinople physically and psychologically besieged after the Battle of the Masts?

- A) A decade
- B) Half a century**
- C) A century
- D) Two centuries

11. What was Constantinople's belief about its own invincibility?

- A) It would be conquered by the end of the world
- B) It was divinely favored and would remain unconquered until the end of the world**
- C) It would fall within a generation
- D) It was protected by its formidable walls alone

12. Who was considered the 'commander in chief' of Constantinople due to the people's faith?

- A) Emperor Constans II
- B) The Virgin Mary**
- C) The Archangel Michael
- D) The Pope

13. After fleeing Constantinople, where did Emperor Constans II eventually travel for security?

- A) Constantinople
- B) Sicily**
- C) Alexandria
- D) Syria

14. Within a few years of Prophet Muhammad's death in AD 632, which Byzantine territory had Arab forces conquered?

- A) Egypt
- B) Syria**
- C) Persia
- D) North Africa

15. What event, starting from AD 661, is mentioned as a world-shaping split within the Muslim community?

- A) The First Fitna**
- B) The Battle of the Masts
- C) The conquest of Egypt
- D) The rise of the Umayyad Caliphate

16. What was the name of the mutilating punishment introduced by the imperial dynasty, involving splitting noses?

- A) Decapitation
- B) Rhinotomy**
- C) Crucifixion
- D) Imprisonment

17. In which region did Byzantine populations fortify themselves by burying their settlements into soft rock?

- A) Peloponnese
- B) Cappadocia**
- C) Sicily
- D) Asia Minor

18. What was Constantinople's 'diabolic secret weapon' used to hold back the Arab attacks?

A) Greek Fire

B) A superior navy

C) Fortified walls

D) A large standing army

19. From where did the Arabs launch their attacks each spring on Constantinople?

A) Gibraltar

B) Alexandria

C) Cyzicus

D) Sicily

20. In AD 717, Muslim armies returned to Constantinople, having secured a base in which part of Europe?

A) Italy

B) Gibraltar

C) Sicily

D) Greece