Constantinople was located on the Bosporus Strait, in modern day Turkey. It was put there for several reasons.
I. Location

- First, protection. It was located on an easily fortified site on a peninsula bordered by natural harbors. This meant that it could only be attacked by land from one side, and that side was protected by a giant wall. Constantinople was, in many ways, an invincible city.
I. LOCATION

- Second, **distance** from the **Western Empire**. Constantine, the Roman emperor who built Constantinople, wanted it in a location where it could defend the **Eastern Empire’s** frontier and stay far away from the barbarians attacking the **Western Empire**.

- Most importantly, **Constantinople** sat near many **trade routes**. This made it a center of trade, and thus one of the richest cities in the world.
II. ROLE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

- Though it began as the capital of the Roman Empire, it became the capital of the Byzantine Empire after the Roman Empire split and fell. It remained the capital of the Byzantine Empire until it was conquered by the Ottoman Turks.
With the barbarians conquering the Western Roman Empire, a lot of Roman culture was destroyed. Constantinople was one of the few places in the world where Roman culture survived. Many of the great plays, poems, and pieces of art from ancient Greek and Roman culture survived. This was a result of Constantinople’s desire to protect Greco-Roman culture.
THOUGHT QUESTION

- Why was it important the Byzantines were able to save Greco-Roman culture?
- Would your life be any different today if their culture had not been saved?
The inspiration for Byzantine art tended to come from either Christianity or the Emperor. Common subjects for artwork included Bible stories, such as David and Goliath or Jesus being crucified. Pictures of the Emperor were also common.
III. BYZANTINE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

- Byzantine Emperors had a soft spot for the arts. This **Imperial Patronage** or support from the Emperor helped fund the many famous works of art and architecture left behind by the Byzantines.
The Byzantines believed in the use of Icons or religious images.

One unique Byzantine form of artwork was called a mosaic. In it, an artist would use lots of little stones of different colors to make a picture.
Undoubtedly the most famous piece of Byzantine artwork is the Hagia Sophia, seen at right. It was built by the emperor Justinian to be the greatest church in the world.
It was originally built to be used as a Christian Church specifically for Greek Orthodox Christianity.

That changed when the Byzantines were conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453.

The Ottoman Turks converted the Hagia Sophia to a Muslim Mosque and added the minarets (the four towers).

It is still standing, and is still used as a Muslim Mosque.
Notice the Difference between the original Christian Hagia Sophia and the latter Muslim Hagia Sophia.
Notice the Difference between the original Christian Hagia Sophia and the latter Muslim Hagia Sophia.
What else do you notice about the Hagia Sophia? Who did they copy?
IV. BYZANTINE CULTURE

- Even though the Byzantines were essentially the ex-Romans, they spoke Greek rather than Latin. This is because they were so far east that they were actually closer to Greece than they were to Italy.

- The Byzantines, through their libraries and their culture, helped to preserve the legacy of both ancient Greece and ancient Rome.
Because of how far east they were, the Byzantines began to trade with a relatively unimportant people called the Rus. The Rus, as you might guess, later became the Russians.
This exchange of culture between the Russians and the Byzantines happened along trade routes between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea.
IV. BYZANTINE CULTURE

- The Byzantines had a great deal of impact on Russia, much of which can still be seen today. The Byzantines wanted to convert the Russians to Orthodox Christianity. St. Cyril created the Cyrillic alphabet, in order to translate Greek religious text into the Slavic language. He believed the Russians would be more willing to accept the Orthodox religion if it was in a language they understood.
IV. Byzantine Culture

- The Russians practiced Orthodox Christianity, the same religion the Byzantines practiced. Even today, many Russian buildings look like old Byzantine buildings because they copied the Byzantines architectural designs.