

An Irresistible Offer?

Topic

The Byzantine Empire

Objective

Students will identify inducements the emperor Constantine offered people to move to his fledgling capital city of Constantinople and compare similar situations offered by the American government in our history and by local governments for business purposes today.

Materials

- the accompanying Team Goal Contract (page 52)
- one bag of candy or multi-pack of gum

(*Note:* Food rewards need not be employed. Bonus points or other reinforcers may be used.)

Preparation

1. Make one copy of the contract for each team in the class.
2. Obtain the reward.

Procedure

1. Have students divide into cooperative learning teams of about four students each. Lay out the bag of candy or gum in plain view of the entire class. (You may even partake of it in order to better set the tone of your announcement.) Explain to the class, “I’m going to make a deal with each team today. The team that follows through on their deal with me will walk away with this goodie bag.”
2. The “deal” is this. Each team is to discuss what it thinks each member could possibly score on the next chapter or unit test. Prompt students by pointing out that individual goals should be relatively high but realistically attainable. The team should then use the Team Goal Contract to list each individual member’s name, his or her goal, and the team’s subsequent average goal.
3. The teacher is to collect the Team Goal Contract from each team and announce what each team has offered in return for the reward. It is important to stress that what is offered is not a deal until the goal has actually been met. The team that meets the highest goal will be rewarded.
4. After all student questions concerning the deal have been discussed, the teacher will use the offer as an introduction to the Byzantium Empire. Discuss Constantine’s founding of Constantinople and see if students are able to compare his offers (See Background.) to events in our nation’s past or present.

An Irresistible Offer? *(cont.)*

Procedure (cont.)

5. Encourage student teams to form study groups outside of class as much as possible and to use class time to its fullest in order to reach their desired goal. Remind them that it makes no difference if another team has a higher goal if that group of students doesn't reach it. Emphasize that team members should encourage each other. Each individual can control how much effort he or she puts into preparing for the chapter or unit test.

Background

In 330 A.D., the Roman emperor Constantine moved his capital out of Rome and into the old Asia Minor city of Byzantium along the Bosphorous Strait, which connects the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara and, ultimately, the Aegean Sea. He quadrupled the size of old Byzantium and renamed it Constantinople in his honor. Constantine, who was the first emperor of Rome to embrace Christianity, did build a few churches in his new city. However, numerous other reasons could be given to explain his abandonment of Rome. His new location was along established and well-protected trade routes; the eastern half of the Roman Empire was materially better off than the west; Germanic invaders were more prevalent in the west; political intrigue was rampant in Rome.

To help build his city and give it credibility, Constantine offered inducements for many to follow him to Constantinople. He offered to build palaces for wealthy patricians if they relocated to Constantinople. He also offered large tracts of land and annual payments of grain for numerous years to come.

Although Constantine's offer met with very limited success, Constantinople grew into an extremely prosperous city, which remained the secure headquarters of the eastern Roman Empire (later named the Byzantine Empire) until its fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Noted for a variety of trading enterprises and other businesses, its populace was well educated. Meanwhile, Rome, having been sacked several times by barbarians in the fifth century A.D., retreated into the backwater of history.

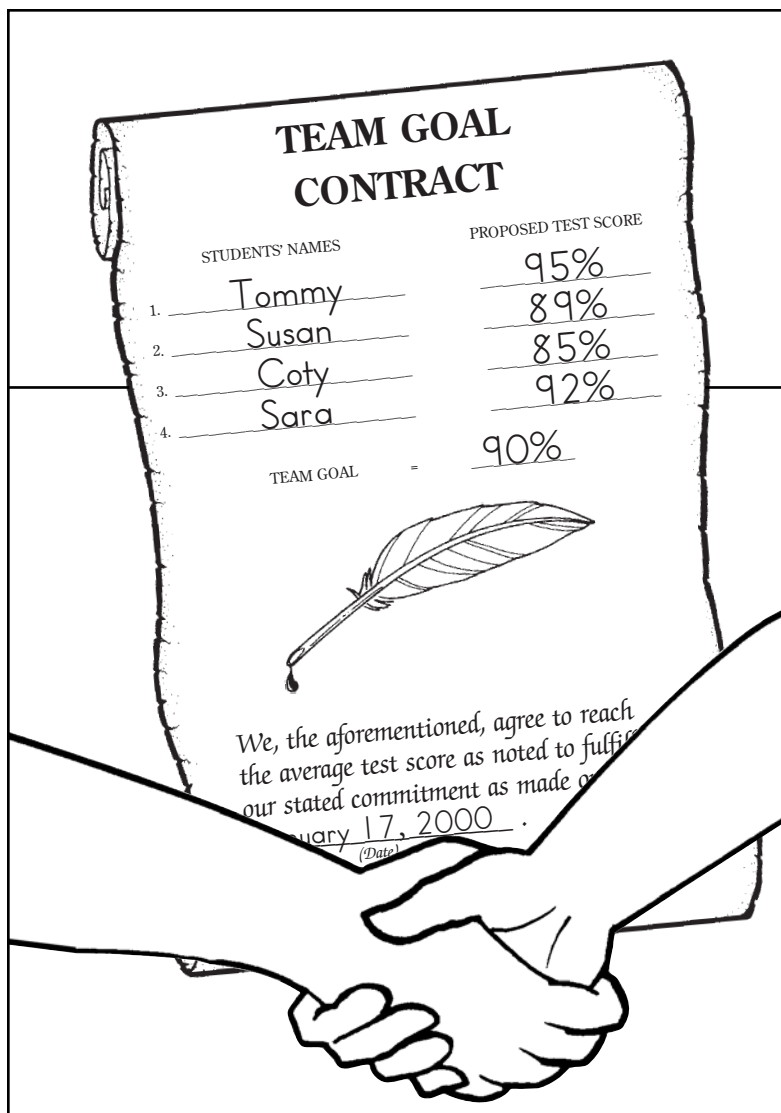
Much of the United States was settled in a somewhat similar fashion through the Homestead Act of 1862, which opened up vast areas of the Great Plains. One notable difference is that those that homesteaded the American frontier were usually of a lower economic class who would not normally have been able to afford the land.

In the present day, however, a different sort of deal is often reported in newspapers nationwide. Tax abatements are offered by municipal and county governments to lure various industries and their employment opportunities into their communities. Derided by some as "corporate welfare" and praised by others who view the jobs created or saved by such practices as absolutely necessary, tax abatement is somewhat analogous to Constantine's offer of almost two thousand years ago. Constantine counted upon relocating wealthy Romans to add to the stature and economic stability of his new capital.

An Irresistible Offer? *(cont.)*

Extensions

- Have students research the Homestead Act. They may write a report or create a display board. This may be very appropriate if students live in that part of the country where the Homestead Act was the means for settling the frontier.
- Students may also focus on current events. Interested students could bring in newspaper articles about local tax abatement issues. Perhaps informed speakers could offer pro and con arguments on the issue. Students themselves might be able to research the topic (if it is newsworthy enough in their area) and have a classroom debate on it.



TEAM GOAL CONTRACT

STUDENTS' NAMES

PROPOSED TEST SCORE

1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____

TEAM GOAL = _____



We, the aforementioned, agree to reach
the average test score as noted to fulfill
our stated commitment as made on

(Date)