Year 7
Subject: History
Topic/Unit: Alexios and the First Crusade
When: Autumn Half Term 2

Huntington School
Learn and succeed

Overview: In 1081, the Byzantine Empire was on the brink of total collapse. It faced terrifying threats from all directions. This unit examines the reign of **Alexios I**, a general who seized the throne during this crisis. Students will investigate the central enquiry: did the empire survive because of the military genius of Alexios, or was it saved by the help of his allies?

Why this? Why now? Students have built up a sense of Medieval Europe. This unit takes students out of Europe into the Byzantine Empire and Islamic Medieval world. It also develops student's oracy skills.

Building on…building to: This unit builds upon prior knowledge of the power of the Normans. It helps students develop their historical religious understanding. Also, helps students when studying Mali in Year 7, and the British empires in Year 8. This unit also helps students build their debating and oracy skills.

Sequence summary:

- **Medieval Sicily:** investigates its connections to Rome, Constantinople, and North Africa. It explores Sicily as one island of many worlds, including evidence of Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew speakers living together, and those of different faiths peacefully co-existing in a world of ideas, scholarship and trade.
- **1081: Trouble at Home:** Alexios takes power in a city filled with smoke and chaos, immediately needing to secure the loyalty of the nobles.
- **1081-1095: Help from the South and East:** Alexios makes a strategic deal with the Seljuk general Sulayman to protect trade and provide soldiers to help defeat the Norman invasion. Following Sulayman's death, Alexios forms an alliance with Malik-Shah. Together, they restore stability in Asia Minor and eventually massacre the Pecheneg threat at the Maritsa River.
- **1094-1099: Help from the West:** Facing new Seljuk attacks, Alexios gambles by asking Pope Urban II for help. This leads to the arrival of 80,000 "crusaders" who capture Jerusalem but cause new tensions for the emperor.
- **Security Restored:** By the end of his reign, Alexios used his wealth and alliances to bring the empire back from disaster.
- **Explaining your answer:** Students will answer the main enquiry (*did the empire survive because of the military genius of Alexios, or was it saved by the help of his allies?)* through a debate.

Key Vocabulary: Byzantine Empire, Constantinople, Alexios Komnenos, Normans, Seljuk Turks, Pechenegs, Crusade

Assessments: Frequent whiteboard checks to test factual recall and understanding of the story. Students engage in a series of mini debates between "Team Alexios" and "Team Alliance" to build their arguments. The unit concludes with a debate. Knowledge from this unit will be used and assessed in History assessment 2.

Able and interested: Students are encouraged to engage in debate. The most able will be able to explore how the sides combine.

Inclusion, Personal Development and Wider Skills: The unit develops oracy and critical thinking through collaborative debates. Learners are supported in their encounters with a wide range of authentic mosaics and paintings. Students also reflect on the religious and cultural diversity, including the interactions between Christian and Muslim leaders.