

**Directions:** Read the document and answer the following question. Remember to restate and use complete sentences.

## Byzantine Influence on Early Russia

*Although many Russians are ethnically Slavic, the country itself and many of its people have Nordic origins. Vikings from Scandinavia settled in the area and set up major trading centers, primarily in the city of Kiev on the Dnieper River. The people of the area were known as the Rus, from the Scandinavian word for "Red," as most of them had red or blondish red hair. The name is still used by the Russian people as the official name of their country. A substantial portion of their trade was in slaves whom they captured from the Slavic peoples; in fact the word "slave" originates from "Slav." As Kiev grew wealthier and more important, Russian merchants visited Constantinople and became acquainted with Byzantine society. Russian princes expressed an interest in Orthodox Christianity and also sought alliances with the rulers in Constantinople.*

*Christianity became the official religion of Russia in 989 when Prince Vladimir of Kiev converted to Christianity and ordered his subjects to follow suit. Vladimir did not convert for virtuous reasons. He had expressed interest in several religions, including Islam and Roman Catholicism, but found Orthodox Christianity more to his taste. He himself could hardly be described as "Christian," as he often spoke of the virtues of drunkenness, and kept a harem with over eight hundred girls. However, with the adoption of Orthodox Christianity, Byzantine influence spread rapidly in the land. Cyrillic writing and Orthodox missions rose quickly. Teachers from Byzantium traveled to Russia and established schools and conducted services for Russian converts. For 200 years, Kiev was the conduit for the spread of Byzantine religious and cultural influence into Russia.*

*Byzantine Art and architecture was predominant in Kiev and other Russian cities. Icons encouraged piety, and religious images became a principal form of Russian artistic expression. The onion domes of early Russian churches were an attempt by Russian architects to imitate the domed structures of Constantinople using wood as the primary building material.*

*The Princes of Kiev exercised firm control over the Russian Orthodox Church. They drew inspiration from the Byzantines, and compiled a written legal code, and controlled trade with Byzantium and other areas. They gradually gained control of a large and wealthy society. By the eleventh century, Kiev had over four hundred churches and eight large marketplaces. By the early twelve century, the population was greater than thirty thousand. Sadly, a major fire in 1124 destroyed six hundred churches there.*

*As noted earlier, Moscow became known as the third Rome, after the first Rome fell to Germanic invaders and the second Rome, Constantinople, fell to the Turks. It became the cultural and religious beacon of Orthodox Christianity. During later centuries, Siberia was embraced by the Church, and missions were even established in Russian Alaska. Long after the collapse of the eastern Roman Empire, the Byzantine legacy lived on through the Russian Orthodox Church.*

**According to the document, list two aspects of Byzantine culture that was adopted by the early Russians.**

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