

World History
Unit 2: Classical Empires
Skill: Historical Argumentation

Defining “Empire:” Examining the Evidence

This week, we are going to examine the ways in which city-states politically evolved to become empires, and how that influenced social, cultural, and economic life for people within those empires. The term “empire” is one most people are familiar with, but we need to create a historically exact and accurate definition of the term in order to study them over the next five weeks.

First, let’s examine what we already know and associate with the term “empire.” In your groups, brainstorm a full definition, or a list of associated terms (or both) for the term “empire.”

Empire:

Our goal today is to correct, modify, and expand our prior understanding of “empire” to make it historically accurate and specific. To do this, your groups will examine a selection of primary and secondary source evidence from the period of classical empires.

As you examine the sources posted on Showbie look for patterns. Your goal is to generate a list of 7-10 characteristics of all empires based on the evidence provided. Remember, that your list has to be different from characteristics of civilization, as empires are a specific type of civilization.

List the possible characteristics of empire:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

The Characteristics of Empire, and the Accomplishments of Alexander the Great

Objective: Using the primary and secondary source documents below, identify the accomplishments of Alexander the Great as an empire-builder and evaluate how well the Greeks overcame the challenges characteristic of all empires.

Directions:

1. In groups, read/analyze ***(and annotate!!!)*** the following documents and identify the specific historical accomplishments of Alexander the Great as an empire-builder by looking for patterns. Use the characteristics of empires we brainstormed as a class to help you determine those accomplishments, and list your top five down the left column of the chart below.
2. As a group, go back to the evidence specific to each accomplishment. Examine the evidence more closely to assess ***how well Alexander overcame the challenges of empire building.*** This is your own historical opinion. Bullet-point evidence in the appropriate boxes to support your claim.
3. When your chart is complete, take a step back and assess Alexander's strengths and weaknesses as a whole. Can you write a thesis that states your argument?

	0 – Poor	1 – Fair	2 – Good	3 – Strong	4 - Excellent
Accomplishment #1					
Accomplishment #2					
Accomplishment #3					
Accomplishment #4					
Accomplishment #5					



Map 4.1 Alexander's Conquests, 336-324 B.C.E.
 Chapter 4, *A History of Western Society*, Tenth Edition
 Copyright © 2011 by Bedford/St. Martin's
 Page 92

Overall, what is the main idea of the map?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 2

Source: Plutarch, "Life of Alexander"

Then Alexander must have been an unthinking hothead to challenge such a formidable power with his meager resources? Not at all. Did anyone ever start out for war with greater or better preparation for succeeding than nobility of character, intelligence, self-mastery and courage – with which philosophy had equipped him for his journey? He crossed over against the Persians with greater resources furnished by his teacher Aristotle (the philosopher) than by his father Philip (the conqueror)...

...For he did not cross Asia like a robber, nor did he have it in mind to ravage and despoil it for the booty and loot presented by such an unheard-of stroke of fortune... Instead he conducted himself as he did out of a desire to subject all the races in the world to one rule and one form of government, making all mankind a single people. Had [Alexander not died so soon] there would have been a single law, as it were, watching over all mankind, and all men would have looked to one form of justice a their common source of light.

...Alexander established more than seventy cities among savage tribes, and sowed all Asia with Greek magistracies, and thus overcame its uncivilized and brutish manner of living.... Those who were vanquished by Alexander are happier than those who escaped his hand; for these had no one to put an end to the wretchedness of their existence, while the victor compelled those others to lead a happy life... Thus Alexander's new subjects would not have been civilized, had they not been vanquished...

Annotations:

Underline the main idea

Circle unknown words

Squiggly line under location

Box around names

Write short summaries in the margin

Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 3

Source: E.L. Skip Knox, "The Organization of the Empire," History of Western Civilization at Boise State University (<http://boisestate.edu/courses/westciv/alexander/>)

Upon his return, Alexander entered into a frenzy of administrative activity. This period of his life has exercised as much fascination for historians as his military exploits. A few examples will suffice.

He took a Persian wife, and encouraged his officers to do likewise, arguing against the traditional Greek parochialism. He had already founded many Greek cities and now founded many more, giving land to his veterans. He instituted a common currency throughout his lands. And he spoke of all his peoples being united under him.

These and other actions, combined with certain speculations and assertions made by ancient writers, have led some modern historians to believe that Alexander was somehow aiming at some sort of universal brotherhood - the famous phrase is "the intermingling of peoples."

Not only are the sources for this slim and speculative, evidence from other parts of Alexander's life show it to be most unlikely. That he aimed at world domination is undoubted. But he probably sought no more than to be king of it all, and sought only to govern as he thought best.

Annotations:

Underline the main idea

Circle unknown words

Squiggly line under location

Box around names

Write short summaries in the margin

Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 4

Source: Geoffrey Blainey, "The City by the Lighthouse," in A Short History of the World (2002).

Alexander the Great conquered terrain as far away as India and central Asia, but he spread urban Greek ways rather than rural Macedonian culture. A new city in Egypt, named Alexandria in his honor, was to become the chief inheritor of the Athenian tradition...

The city, designed to be the new Athens of North Africa, became the intellectual dynamo of the western world. A remarkable library and museum were built. Brilliant Greek scholars such as Euclid arrived to pursue their thinking; medical research was advanced by the anatomist Herophilus...and a quarter-century later a famous medical school was born. Jews came to the city in numbers to trade, and Jewish scholars accompanied them and translated their Old Testament in to Greek...

The powerful Hellenic civilization, now centered on Alexandria as well as the old Greek heartland of Europe and Asia Minor, was not lacking in self-esteem. It was often imitated. More than 2,000 years later the map of the world, including lands never known the Greeks, were sprinkled with Greek echoes and reminders. In the United States the early capital city, Philadelphia, carried a Greek name... |

Annotations:

Underline the main idea

Circle unknown words

Squiggly line under location

Box around names

Write short summaries in the margin

Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 5

Source: Map of Alexander's Empire and the cities of Alexandria



Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i><u>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</u></i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 6

Source: Harrison, Sullivan, and Sherman, "Hellenistic Culture: An Overview," in *A Short History of Western Civilization* (1990)

Hellenistic cultural life was animated by a powerful urge to continue the thought and expression that had developed in Greece during the Classical Age. The Greeks who fought in Alexander's armies and who migrated to populate the cities founded by him and his successors were convinced that they had conquered the "barbarians" whose cultural life was not fit for Hellenes (Greeks). As a consequence, the Greeks felt compelled to take their culture with them into their new world in the Near East and to preserve it in as pure a form as possible. As a result of such feelings, Greek literary, artistic, philosophical, and scientific concepts and forms were implanted across the Near East as dominant cultural modes.

However, bringing the chief ingredients of Hellenic culture into a new geographical, political, and social setting was not a simple task. In fact, it turned out to be unrealistic, for Hellenic culture began to be transformed almost from the moment of its transplantation. The culturally dominant Greeks found themselves separated from the intimate, tightly knit city-state environment that had originally nourished their culture... Moreover, the Greeks soon found that the "barbarian" Egyptians, Syrians, Mesopotamians, Persians, and Indians possessed knowledge, techniques, and ideas that were both new and attractive to the conquerors. These tensions and pressures produced an outburst of activity in literature, art, philosophy, and science, which transformed the old modes of thought and expression in ways that broadened and enriched the classical Greek culture.

Annotations:

Underline the main idea

Circle unknown words

Squiggly line under location

Box around names

Write short summaries in the margin

Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 7

Source: Chris Butler, "Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Era," from The Flow of History

(www.flowofhistory.com)

Hellenistic Civilization differed in several respects from that of the preceding age of the polis and was characterized by three features. First of all, Hellenistic civilization was on a much larger scale than that of the polis. For example, Hellenistic armies were much larger than the armies of the old Greek city-states. Whereas before, a Greek army of 10,000 hoplites was considered large, Hellenistic armies often totaled 60-70,000 men. There were also many non-Greek elements in Hellenistic armies, in particular large stables of war elephants whose purpose was to overpower and trample enemy formations much like modern tanks do. However, the heart of the Hellenistic army was still a phalanx of Greek and Macedonian troops. Navies were also larger in size and number. The limited numbers of skilled rowers led to a return to boarding and grappling tactics that required less skill and finesse than ramming and clipping.

Along these lines, trade was on a much larger scale than in the old Greek world centered around the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas. Alexander's conquests largely fused the Greeks' Mediterranean centered economy with the Asian centered economy of Persia. Commerce flourished between the Greek and Persian worlds, with trade links being established as far east as India and China, creating a virtual world economy. The volume of trade was also large. Ptolemaic Egypt was able to export an estimated 20,000,000 bushels of grain each year. This made Hellenistic civilization much richer than the older Hellenic civilization, which made much more money available for the patronage of cultural pursuits. The best example of this was in Alexandria, the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, already discussed above.

Annotations:

Underline the main idea

Circle unknown words

Squiggly line under location

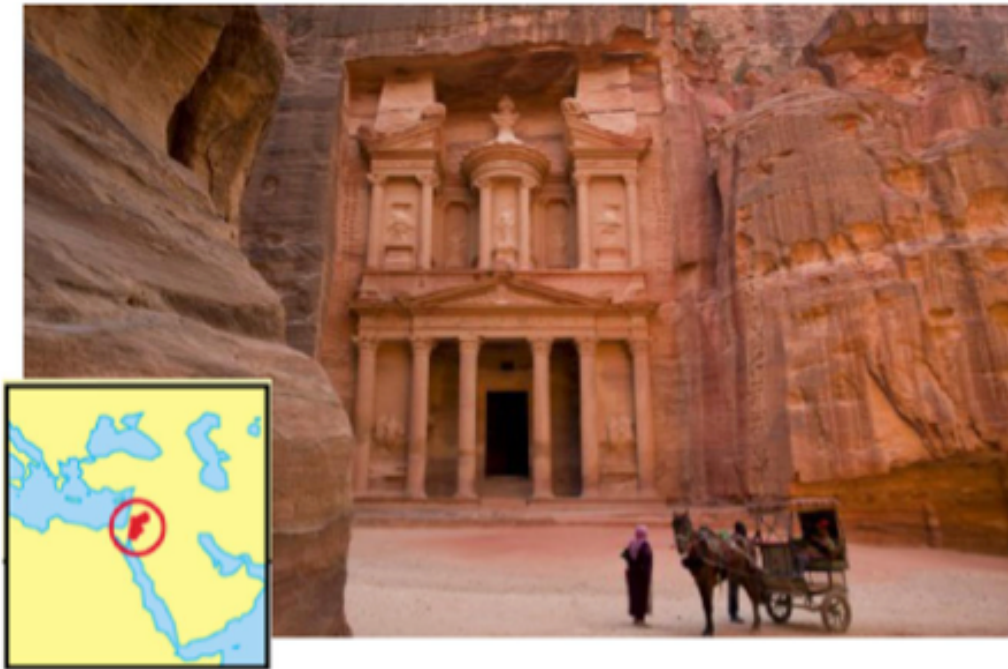
Box around names

Write short summaries in the margin

Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Document 8

Source: The treasury at Petra, Jordan carved by Hellenistic architects in the 1st century BC



Overall, what is the main idea of the document?	How does this document <i>help support me to answer</i> the essential question? <i>How well did Alexander the Great overcome the challenges of building an empire?</i>	What <i>specific supporting details can I pull from this document</i> to support my response to the essential question?	What are two questions I have about the document?	What is the perspective of the author? (i.e. is there a bias?)
			1. 2.	

Thesis Statement!!!!

Creating a basic thesis statement:

Write one sentence that states whether or not Alexander the Great overcame the challenges of empire building.

Three pieces of evidence that supports your basic thesis statement:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Create a proficient thesis statement that combines your basic thesis with your evidence!

Create an advance thesis statement!

To move from *proficient* to *advanced*, you need to enhance your argument with historical context and an elevated vocabulary. You can do this by:

- Adding important historical facts that situate the argument in the correct time period.
- Add a contrasting element (a counter-argument).
- Rank-order the evidence, or state which point it most significant to the thesis as a whole.
- Adds significance to your argument.
-

This may expand your thesis to two sentences, and that is OK! Write your *advanced* thesis in the space below:
