Causation Essay

IMPRESS Expansion & CONSOLIDATION

Long Essay Prompt:
Using specific examples, analyze causes of imperial expansion and consolidation in the period circa 600 B.C.E. to 600 C.E. (Historical thinking skill: Causation)

Commentary from Casey
In this essay, you will be exploring and analyzing the methods and tactics by which empires of the Classical Era expanded and consolidated their imperial control. You may use any empire or empires from your study of the Classical Era (600 BCE-600 CE), which overlaps with Units 7-12 in your AP World textbook. Please note that the prompt asks you to analyze CAUSES, as in plural, so you cannot discuss only one method. On the organizer, I have given you space to focus on THREE CAUSES. While two is technically enough, we teach THE RULE OF THREE, which means that you should always include one extra, so, in case there is a problem with one, you will have the other two and still earn full points. While you could theoretically write about four or even more, you do not want your essay to get too long, and you should be practicing how much you would realistically be able to write on an AP exam, so more than three would be excessive. Also, note that it mentions EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION. It does not say OR. While the two are related, they are not the same. Expansion is how the empire successfully acquires new territory, while consolidation is how that territory is brought together under the control of the empire. You will need at least one example of both. Also, please note that there is no specific number of empires required, so you may choose to go in depth analyzing a single empire, or you may choose to look at one method or tactic from three different empires. A few empires you could discuss and analyze are the Roman, the Han Chinese, the Achaemenid Persian, and the Mauryan. Just below, you will find the overview of the essay directions as they would be written on the AP exam.

Suggested writing time: 35 minutes
Directions: In your response you should do the following.

• **Thesis:** Present a thesis that makes a historically defensible claim and responds to all parts of the question. The thesis must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion.

• **Application of Historical Thinking Skills:** Develop and support an argument that applies historical thinking skills as directed by the question.

• **Supporting the Argument with Evidence:** Utilize specific examples of evidence to fully and effectively substantiate the stated thesis or a relevant argument.

• **Synthesis:** Extend the argument by explaining the connections between the argument and ONE of the following.
  - A development in a different historical period, situation, era, or geographical area.
  - A course theme and/or approach to history that is not the focus of the essay (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual history).
  - A different discipline or field of inquiry (such as economics, government and politics, art history, or anthropology).
Commentary on the Rubric & Organizer
Along with this sheet, you have received the Causation Essay Rubric. You will find that it is very similar to the one you received for your Comparative Essay, and they follow the same structure. Please read over the rubric and organizer, and then read the commentary below.

A. THESIS
Your thesis is the foundation of your essay. All of your arguments and evidence will be built upon it. Therefore, it’s important to have a strong, clear thesis, and to stay aligned to that thesis throughout the paper, always connecting back to it as you write. The thesis is the point you are trying to make, so the first thing you should do is consider the information you have about your topic and decide on a relevant point or understanding about imperial expansion and consolidation that can be drawn from that information. An acceptable thesis might present a comparative/general statement that identifies significant factors found to be common to the expansion or consolidation of more than one empire. Alternatively, it would also be acceptable to address only a single empire, as long as two or more causes are identified. A good thesis must be specific. It is not enough to say that “there are many causes” or “there are economic and political causes.” You must specify what they are in the thesis.

B. HISTORICAL THINKING
For the main point in B, you need to discuss the broader concepts, the approaches to expansion and consolidation taken by the empires. These are the “causes.” You may want to divide your paragraphs by each general concept, or “cause,” you are discussing. That would give you three body paragraphs for your main argument. Pay close attention to the second point of B. This was one of the two components on which most of the class struggled last time. For B, it is not enough to just identify and describe the causes. You have to go further, explaining in depth the reasons for the cause, analyzing and drawing connections. Refer to your Historical Thinking Skills chart for clarification as needed. The bottom line here is DO NOT ASSUME the reader “gets it.” It’s your job to make the reader “get it.”

C. USING EVIDENCE
For the main point in C, you need to provide THREE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES for EACH of the causes you are discussing and analyzing in B. Please note that this does not mean one is written first and then followed by the other. As stated above, you can use the B concepts to divide your paragraphs, and use the C evidentiary examples to support them within those same paragraphs. Again, as above, pay close attention to the second point of C. This was the other one of the two components on which most of the class struggled last time. For C, it is not enough to present specific examples that YOU KNOW relate to the broader concepts in B. You have to go further, actually going out of your way to SHOW AND EXPLAIN HOW that evidence ties back to the broader concept and WHY it helps to support your thesis. You have to “link” it all back to the main point. This is similar, I believe, to what ELA teachers call “justification.” Refer to your Historical Thinking Skills chart for clarification as needed. Again, the bottom line here is DO NOT ASSUME the reader “gets it.” It’s your job to make the reader “get it.”

D. SYNTHESIS
The synthesis paragraph, your fourth body paragraph, is all about taking your argument to the next level by testing it out in another situation, one that is related but yet different in an important way. The different directions you can go with Synthesis are detailed on the Rubric. While A, B, or C are all allowed, A is usually the clearest choice. Keep in mind that, while on the actual AP exam, you will have two years worth of content knowledge from which to pull all kinds of different examples and connections, at this point, you are limited to what you have already studied. In the case of this essay, you are further limited by the broad nature of the essay prompt. As you may recall, on the last essay, you were restricted to comparing two regions during a certain time period, so you had the option for Synthesis of simply discussing a third region from that same time period. This time, however, your Synthesis CANNOT connect to another empire from the same time period. Probably the easiest option would be to apply your thesis to an empire from before 600 BCE, such as the Babylonian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, or the New Kingdom Egyptian Empire. Of course, the choice is yours!

WHAT TO DO TODAY: Using Chapters 7-12 in the textbook, revisit the Classical Empires, identify their methods of Imperial Expansion and Consolidation, and decide on your direction for the essay. You will have the rest of the period to work, alone or with others, to develop your thesis and to work on the Essay Organizer. Your HOMEWORK tonight is to fully complete the organizer and be ready to begin writing the essay in class Wednesday. A complete draft of the essay will be due Thursday in class.