Late Medieval Cultural Revival DBQ

**Directions:** Examine the documents below and answer the questions that follow.

**Impact of the Crusades on Learning**

“During the Crusades, European contact with Muslims and Byzantines greatly expanded. This contact brought a new interest in learning, especially in the works of Greek philosophers. The Muslim and Byzantine libraries housed copies of these writings. Most had disappeared during the centuries following the fall of Rome and the invasions of western Europe. In the 1100s, Christian scholars from Europe began visiting Muslim libraries in Spain. Few Western scholars knew Greek but most did know Latin. So Jewish scholars living in Spain translated the Arabic versions of works by Aristotle and other Greek writers into Latin. Ibn Rushd (or Averroes), the Spanish Muslim scholar of Aristotle, was known among Europeans as “The Great Commentator” for his analyses of Aristotelian philosophy. All at once, Europeans acquired a huge new body of knowledge. This included science, philosophy, law, mathematics, and other fields. In addition, the Crusaders brought back to Europe superior Muslim technology in ships, navigation, and weapons.”

**Source:** Roger B. Beck, Linda Black et al., *World History: Patterns of Interaction*, McDougal Littell (adapted)

1. **How did the Crusades lead to a revival of learning?**

**Cathedral Schools and Universities**

**Source:** Jerry H. Bentley, *Traditions and Encounters*, McGraw Hill (adapted)

During the High Middle Ages, economic development sharply increased the wealth of Europe and made more resources available for education. Meanwhile, an increasingly complex society created a demand for educated individuals who could deal with complicated political, legal, and theological issues. Beginning in the early eleventh century, bishops and archbishops in France and Northern Italy organized schools in their cathedrals and invited well-known scholars to serve as master teachers [that] attracted students from all parts of Europe.

By the 12th century the cathedral schools had established formal curricula based on writings in Latin, the official language of the Roman Catholic Church. Instruction concentrated on the liberal arts, especially new literature and philosophy. Students read the Bible and writings of the church fathers, such as St. St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Ambrose, as well as classical Latin literature in a few works of Plato and Aristotle that were available in Latin translation. Some cathedral schools also offered advanced instruction in law, medicine, and theology.

About the mid twelfth century, students and teachers organized academic guilds... (A guild is an association of people created for mutual aid or the pursuit of a common goal.) Student guilds... called on teachers to provide rigorous, high-quality instruction. Faculty guilds sought two vest (empower) teachers with the right to bestow (grant) academic degrees, which served as licenses to teach in other cities, and to control the curriculum in their institutions. These guilds had the effect of transforming cathedral schools into universities.
2. What factors led to the development of cathedral schools? What enabled some of them to develop into Europe’s first universities?

**Scholasticism**

"The teachers in medieval universities included some of the greatest scholars of the age. Perhaps the most influential of all these scholars was Thomas Aquinas (uh-KWY-nuhs), a teacher at the University of Paris. Aquinas was keenly interested in the works of ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle. The revival of interest in the Greek philosophers sparked a major controversy in the church over how humans could learn about the world. Aristotle believed that truth could be discovered only through human reason. Christians, on the other hand, believed that truth was revealed by God and depended on faith. Aquinas tried to reconcile (bring together) the two approaches. He argued that both reason and faith were necessary for an understanding of truth. His approach, known as Scholasticism, tried to show that Christian teachings were also knowable and provable through the use of logic and reason. Thus Aquinas ensured that in western Europe human reason would remain a primary element in determining truth."

*Source 1*: Susan Ramirez et al., *World History: Human Legacy*, Holt (adapted)

*Source 2*: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*

3. Why do you think some Christians disagreed with Scholasticism?

4. How does the work Aquinas show a changing attitude toward religion in Medieval Europe?

**Vernacular Literature**

While Latin remained the written language of scholars and churchmen, new writings began to appear in the vernacular, or everyday languages of ordinary people, such as French, German, and Italian. These writings captured the spirit of the High and Late Middle Ages. Medieval literature included epics, or long narrative poems, about knights and chivalry as well as tales of the common people.

*Source*: Elizabeth Gaynor Ellis and Anthony Esler, *World History*, Prentice Hall

5. Why do you think Late Medieval writers wrote in vernacular languages instead of Latin?
In the early 1300s, Italian poet Dante Alighieri wrote the
Divine Comedy, in which Dante himself goes on an
imaginary journey to Hell (Inferno), through
Purgatory (Purgatorio), and into Heaven (Paradiso).
The selections below come from Inferno, through
which he is guided by the Roman poet Virgil.

Canto III: The Sign Above the Entrance to Hell

[The sign reads above the entrance reads as follows:]
“Through me the way to the infernal (fiery) city:
Through me the way to eternal sadness: Through me
the way to the lost people… [E]ternal I endure.
Abandon all hope, you who enter here.”

Canto IV: Limbo (Edge of Hell, Destination of
Good Non-Christians)

I saw Electra with many companions, among whom I knew both Hector and Aeneas, Caesar in armor… and
alone, apart, I saw the Saladin. When I raised my brow a little more, I saw the Master of those who know
(Aristotle), seated amongst the philosophic family… Here I saw both Socrates and Plato… Democritus…
Diogenes, Anaxagoras, and Thales, Empedocles, Heraclitus, and Zeno; and I saw Avicenna (Ibn Sina)… and
Averroës (Ibn Rushd), who made the great commentary (on the works of Aristotle).

Canto XII: The First Ring, The Violent

“But fix your gaze on the valley, because we near the river of blood, in
which those who injure others by violence are boiled... Here is Alexander,
and fierce Dionysius of Syracuse, who gave Sicily years of pain... Divine
Justice here torments Attila [the Hun], the scourge of the earth...”

Canto XXIV: The Seventh Ring, The Thieves

They had their hands tied behind them, with serpents, which fixed (stuck)
their head and tail between the loins, and were coiled in knots in front.
And see, a serpent struck (bit) at one who was near [us], and transfixed
(punctured) him, there, where the neck is joined to the shoulders. Neither
‘o’ nor ‘i’ was ever written as swiftly as he [caught] fire, and burned, and
dropped down, transformed to ashes: and after he was heaped on
the ground, the powder gathered itself together, and immediately returned to
its previous shape.

Canto XXVIII: The Ninth Ring, The Schismatics (Those Who Cause Division in Religion)

“[I saw a man.] cleft (split) from the chin down to the part that gives out the foulest sound: the entrails
(intestines) hung between his legs: the organs appeared, and the miserable gut that makes excrement of what
is swallowed. While I stood looking wholly at him, he gazed at me, and opened his chest with his hands, saying:
‘See how I tear myself: see how Mahomet is ripped! In front of me, Ali goes, weeping, his face split from chin
to scalp, and all the others you see here, were sowers of scandal and schism in their lifetimes: so they are cleft
like this. There is a devil behind who tears us cruelly like this, reapplying his sword blade to each of this crowd,
when they have wandered round the sad road, since the wounds heal before any reach him again.”
6. Who are some of the people that Dante includes in **limbo** that you recognize? If he considers them to be good people who did good things, why are they in this part of hell, rather than in heaven?

7. What do Alexander the Great and Atilla the Hun have in common? How does the way they are being punished relate to their crime?

8. Mahomet is referring to the Prophet Muhammad. Considering Dante’s Catholic perspective, why would Dante imagine him in Hell among those who caused division in religion? (If you can answer this about Ali as well, even better!)

9. Considering your answer to the previous question, do you find it surprising that Dante places Saladin, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd in Limbo? Why might this be the case? What does it show about the Late Medieval European view of Muslims?

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**GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE**

In the Middle Ages, some of the greatest examples of the religious feelings were found in churches like Notre Dame. These churches were built in the new Gothic style. Gothic churches were both taller and brighter than earlier churches had been. The design of Gothic churches was made possible by advances in engineering. The most important of these advances was a new type of support called the flying buttress. Earlier churches had used interior columns and braces to support the roof, which meant that ceilings were low. Flying buttresses supported a church’s walls from the outside, allowing much higher ceilings and largely eliminating the need for columns. This gave churches a much more [wide-open] feeling.... Church builders were [also] able to include much larger windows than ever before. In order to take advantage of this light, church officials hired artists to create panels of stained glass for the windows.

**Source:** Susan Ramirez et al., *World History: Human Legacy*, Holt

10. What were two ways that the flying buttresses on Gothic cathedrals improved the appearance of the building?