

Causation Essay

IMPERIAL 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)

Topic of the Essay

In this essay, you will be exploring and analyzing the methods and tactics by which empires of the Classical Era expanded (took over/grew) and consolidated (kept together/under control/organized) their imperial control. You may use any of the empires from your study of the Classical Era (600 BCE-600 CE), which overlaps with Units 7-12 in your AP World textbook.

Addressing the Prompt

Please note that the prompt asks you to analyze **CAUSES**, as in plural, so that shows us that just one method would not be enough. Technically, you must have at least two, we teach **THE RULE OF THREE**, which means that you should always include one extra, so that, in case there is a problem with one, you will have the other two and still earn full points. Also, going the extra mile could help you earn an additional point on the rubric.

In general, **CAUSES** can refer to Hows or Whys. For this essay, the causes are **HOWS**, specifically, **METHODS**, and not motivations.

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. Since there are many more examples for consolidation, I would like the third method to be another consolidation. Also, please note that you are not required to draw examples from only one empire. You may look at specific evidence of the same type of method or tactic from three different empires. A few empires you could discuss and analyze are **Achaemenid and Sasanian Persia, Mauryan and Gupta India, Qin and Han China, the Macedonian Empire, and the Roman Empire.**

So, simply put, the three methods you choose will become your three body paragraphs, and within each of those body paragraphs, you should include examples of that method from different empires.

Commentary on the Rubric & Organizer

Along with this sheet, you have received the Causation Essay Rubric and an Organizer. Use the organizer to help plan out your essay. Please study the rubric carefully to understand how the essay is graded. On the next page, I have given some deeper explanation of how to address each rubric point.

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. Your thesis also serves to outline the essay from the start, identifying the three methods you will be discussing in each paragraph. So the first thing you should figure out is what possible methods you might want to write about. Then you should decide on a relevant **OVERALL POINT** about imperial expansion and consolidation that can be shown through three of those methods. For example, you might argue in general for the importance of both expansion and consolidation together, that they each need the other to be successful, or you might argue that consolidation is more important to an empire than expansion. The goal is to use your three chosen methods to illustrate the point of your thesis, so that, in the body paragraphs, you aren't just describing three methods, but also making an overall point in the process. Additionally good thesis must be specific, and identify exactly what you will be addressing in the essay. Whatever three causes you are choosing to write about in your body paragraphs, **you must directly identify them in the thesis in order to get credit!**

B. CONTEXTUALIZATION

Contextualization means explaining the larger events and processes taking place around the issues you are discussing, in order to give **context**. While contextualization should be found throughout your essay, the main place for it is in the introduction before you get into your thesis. As the rubric states, it is not enough to just write a sentence or two. You really need to give a good explanation of the context of the topic. It also must be relevant, so think about what the reader would need to know or would find helpful to know about the theme and the events and developments of the period before getting into the essay itself. Set the scene. Try to include the what, when, and where of the topic. Make sure your contextualization is at least three sentences long, and make it clearly separate from your thesis, rather than mashing them together. The contextualization, followed by the thesis, make up your introduction paragraph.

C. USING EVIDENCE

To get the first point on the rubric, you need to provide **THREE (because Rule of Three) SPECIFIC EXAMPLES** for **EACH** of the causes you are discussing and analyzing in D. This is what they mean by evidence. **Evidence has nothing to do with quoting.** You should give detail for each piece of evidence. In order to get the second point on the rubric, you have to go beyond just explaining the examples. You must connect the evidence to the overall argument in the thesis. **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 to what ELA teachers call "justification." The bottom line here is **DO NOT ASSUME** the reader "gets it." It's your job to make the reader "get it."

D. ANALYSIS AND REASONING

For the first point on the rubric, you need to discuss three "causes," which, in this case, are the methods or approaches of expansion and consolidation taken by the empires. These are the broader concepts for which you are giving three evidentiary examples in C. You should divide your paragraphs by each method, or "cause," you are discussing. That would give you three body paragraphs for your main argument. For the second point on the rubric, it is not enough to just identify and describe the causes. You have to go further. For the "cause" itself, explain in depth **WHY** these methods are being used and **HOW** they accomplish their goal. For the specific examples of evidence, explain with detail how and why they functioned and how they relate to the overall concept. To get this point, you must show that you are analyzing and drawing connections. Again, the bottom line here is **DO NOT ASSUME** the reader "gets it." It's your job to make the reader "get it."