

NAME:

DATE:

CLASS:

DBQ FOCUS: Fall of Rome



Document-Based Question Format

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents (The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.) This question is designed to test your ability to work with and understand historical documents.

Write a response that:

- Has a relevant **thesis** and **supports that thesis with evidence** from the documents.
- Cites evidence from included source perspectives.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the author's points of view.

Historical Context: In 376 CE, large numbers of Goths crossed the Danube. They sought admission to the territory of the Roman Empire, a political institution which, despite having both new and longstanding systematic weaknesses, wielded effective power across the lands surrounding the Mediterranean and beyond. The Empire had large numbers of trained, supplied, and disciplined soldiers, it had a comprehensive civil administration based in thriving cities with effective control over public finances, and it maintained extreme differences of wealth and status including slavery on a large scale.^[1] It had wide-ranging trade networks that allowed even modest households to use goods made by professionals a long way away.^[2] Among its literate elite it had ideological legitimacy as the only worthwhile form of civilization and a unity based on comprehensive familiarity with Greek and Roman literature and rhetoric. By 476, when Odoacer deposed the Emperor Romulus, the Western Roman Empire wielded negligible military, political, or financial power and had no effective control over the scattered Western domains that still described themselves as Roman.

Question

What were the primary reasons for the “fall” of Rome?

Document 1

Source: Chart compiled from various sources, Roman Emperors, 235-285 CE.

Emperor	Reign	Cause of Death
Maximinus	235-38 CE	Assassination
Gordian I & II (co-rulers)	238	Suicide; killed in battle
Balbinus & Pupineus	238	Assassination
Gordian III	238-44	Possible assassination
Philip the Arab	244-49	Killed in battle
Decius	249-51	Killed in battle
Hostilian	251	Possible plague
Gallus	251-53	Assassination
Aemilianus	253	Assassination
Valerian & Gallienus	253-60	Died as slave of Persians; assassination
Claudius Gothicus	268-70	Plague
Quintillus	270	Assassination or suicide
Aurelian	270-75	Assassination
Tacitus	275-76	Possible assassination
Florianus	276	Assassination
Probus	276-82	Assassination
Carus	282-83	Assassination
Numerian	283-84	Possible assassination
Carinus	283-85	Killed in battle

Student Analysis

What message might these frequent and violent changes in leadership might have sent to the people of the Roman Empire?

Document 2

Source: An excerpt from the ancient book *Concerning Military matters* by the Roman historian Vegetius, c. 450 CE.

[Before the year 400 CE] foot soldiers wore breastplates and helmets. But when, because of negligence and laziness, parade ground drills were abandoned, the customary armor began to seem heavy since the soldiers rarely ever wore it. Therefore, they first asked the emperor to set aside the breastplates ... and then the helmets. So our soldiers fought the Goths without any protection for chest and head and were often beaten by archers. Although there were many disasters, which led to the loss of great cities, no one tried to restore breastplates and helmets to the infantry. Thus it happens that the troops in battle, exposed to wounds because they have no armor, think about running and not about fighting.

Student Analysis

How did the change in breastplates and helmets contribute to the decline of the Roman Empire?

Document 3

Source: Michael Grant, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A Reappraisal*, Crown Publishing, 1982.

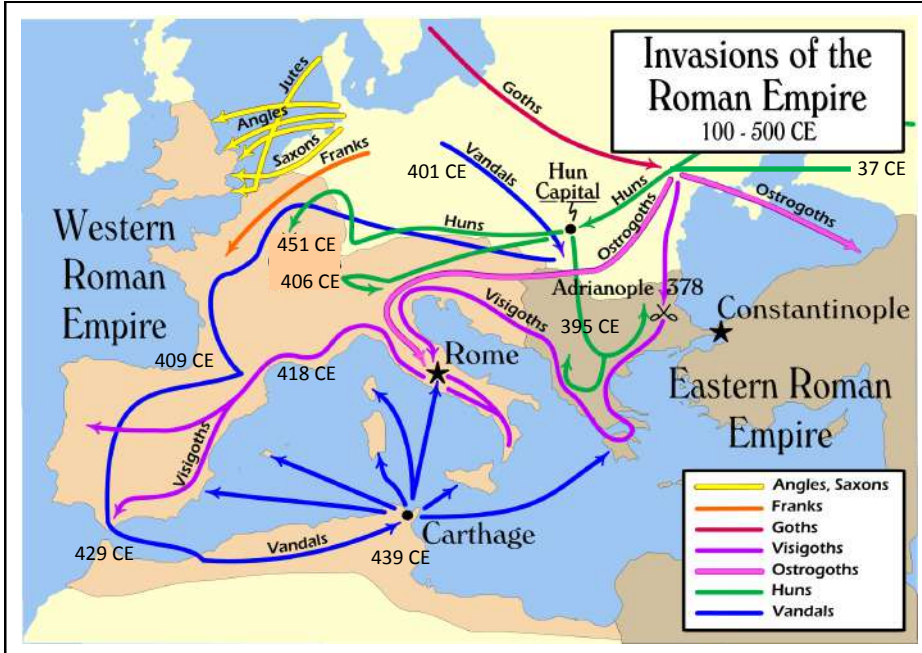
There can be little doubt that the weakness of the late Roman army were largely due to the eventual failure ... to enforce regular conscription [draft of soldiers] ... The exempted categories were ... numerous. Hosts of senators, bureaucrats, and clergymen were entitled to avoid the draft; and among other groups who escaped were cooks, bakers, and slaves.

Student Analysis

In what ways could the failure to enforce conscription weaken Rome?

Document 4

Source: Map created from various sources



Student Analysis

Do the dates on this map suggest an invasion of people or a migration of people?

Document 5

Source: Excerpts about an Asian tribe called the Huns from *Roman History* by the Roman Historian Ammianus Marcellinus, c. 380 CE.

The Huns exceed any definition of savagery. They have compact, sturdy limbs and thick necks... Although they have the shape... of human beings, they are so wild in their way of life that they have no need of fire or pleasant tasting foods, but eat the roots of uncultivated plants and the half-raw flesh of all sorts of animals. This they place between their thighs and the backs of their horses and so warm it a little ... Huns are never sheltered by buildings, but ... roam freely in the mountains and woods, learning from their earliest childhood to endure freezing cold, hunger and thirst ... Huns are not well adapted to battle on foot, but are almost glued to their horses, which are certainly hardy, but also ugly ... Like refugees—all without permanent settlements, homes, law, or a fixed way of life—they are always on the move with their wagons, in which they leave... Like unthinking animals, they are completely ignorant of the difference between right and wrong. Fired with an overwhelming desire for seizing the property of others, these swift-moving and ungovernable people make their destructive way amid the pillage and slaughter of those who live around them.

Student Analysis

What makes the Huns a formidable force for the Roman Empire?

Document 6

Source: An excerpt written by Priscus, Roman ambassador to the Huns, 449 CE.

[He]... considered his new life... better than his old life among the Romans, and the reasons he gave were as follows:... The condition of [Roman] subjects in time of peace [is worse than war]... taxes are very severe, and unprincipled men inflict injuries on others... A [wealthy lawbreaker]... is not punished for his injustice, while a poor man... undergoes legal penalty... The climax of misery is to have to pay in order to obtain justice... [He said] that the laws and constitution of the Romans were fair, but deplored that the governors, not possessing the spirit of former generations, were ruining the state.

Student Analysis

Some Romans embraced Hun occupation. How does this document help explain causes of Rome's fall?

* A conversation with a former Roman citizen whose land had been conquered by the Huns

Document 7

Source: Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Strahan & Cadell, 1776-1788.

In the second year of the reign of Valens (366 CE)... the Roman world was shaken by a violent and destructive earthquake... The shores of the Mediterranean were left dry by the sudden retreat of the sea... but the tide soon returned with the weight of an immense flood which was severely felt on the coasts of Sicily... Greece, and of Egypt... fifty thousand persons has lost their lives in the flood [in the city of Alexandria alone]... this calamity... astonished and terrified the subjects of Rome... and their fearful vanity was disposed to [see a connection between] the symptoms of a declining empire and a sinking world.

Student Analysis

What natural disaster struck the Roman Empire in 366 CE?

Document 8

Source: Peter Stearns, Michael Adas, Stuart Schwartz, Marc Lason Gilbert, *World Civilizations: The Global Experience*, Pearson Education, 2000.

More important in initiating the process of decline was a series of plagues that swept over the empire... which brought diseases [from] southern Asia to new areas like the Mediterranean, where no resistance had been established even to contagions such as the measles. The resulting diseases decimated the population. The population of Rome decreased from a million people to 250,000. Economic life worsened in consequence. Recruitment of troops became more difficult, so the empire was increasingly reduced to hiring Germanic soldiers to guard its frontiers. The need to pay troops added to the demands on the state's budget, just as declining production cut into tax revenues.

Student Analysis

What deadly illness arrived from southern Asia?

**Generic Core-Scoring Guide for AP World History
Document-Based Question**

Basic Core: Competence	Points	Historical Thinking Skills Assessed
1. Has acceptable thesis.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Argumentation ➤ Depending on the topic of the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical Causation ▪ Comparison ▪ Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time
2. Addresses all of the documents and demonstrates understanding of all or all but one.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of Historical Evidence
3. Supports thesis with appropriate evidence from all or all but one document. [Supports thesis with appropriate evidence from all but two documents.]	2 (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Argumentation ➤ Depending on the topic of the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical Causation ▪ Comparison ▪ Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time
4. Analyzes point of view in at least two documents.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of Historical Evidence
5. Analyzes documents by grouping them in two or three ways, depending on the question.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Argumentation ➤ Use of Historical Evidence ➤ Depending on the topic of the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Historical Causation ▪ Comparison ▪ Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time
6. Identifies and explains the need for one type of appropriate additional document or source.	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Argumentation ➤ Use of Historical Evidence
Subtotal	7	Essay as a whole: Synthesis
Expanded Core: Excellence	Points	Historical Thinking Skills Assessed
Expands beyond basic core of 1–7 points. A student must earn 7 points in the basic core area before earning points in the expanded core area. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has a clear, analytical, and comprehensive thesis. ➤ Shows careful and insightful analysis of the documents. ➤ Uses documents persuasively as evidence. ➤ Analyzes point of view in most or all documents. ➤ Analyzes the documents in additional ways — groupings, comparisons, syntheses. ➤ Brings in relevant “outside” historical content. ➤ Explains why additional types of document(s) or sources are needed. 	0–2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Same skills as noted in basic core ➤ Other historical thinking skills may be demonstrated depending on the question and the documents
Subtotal	2	
TOTAL	9	

TOTAL POINTS BASIC CORE	
TOTAL POINTS EXPANDED CORE	
TOTAL POINTS EARNED	
FINAL GRADE	

RUBRIC	PERCENT	POINTS
9	100	50
8	95	48
7	90	45
6	85	43
5	80	40
4	75	38
3	70	35
2	65	33
1	60	30
0	0	0

Comments: