

History 101
Assignment 2
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Part I: Interpret

For each of the following sources, answer each of these:

1. **Explain what the passage means.** This should include both specifically what the passage is discussing but also explain why it is important. The latter is what we call significance. You are explaining why someone reading the passage should care about what they are reading. That can include explaining why it is strong evidence for a certain topic; what it reveals about their society; how it shows a distinct change from something else; what is at stake for the person writing the passage; etc.
2. **Explain the author's position and biases.** This means looking at both the editor's introductory section to the source AND the relevant sections on that society in the textbook to determine what might have influenced the author. That can include things such as their social class, position in relation to power, marital status, social position relative to the class they were born into (i.e. did the move up or down socially with marriage or occupation), occupation, education, gender, and major events that might have influenced them. Many times, we do not know who wrote the text, but that does not mean we cannot extrapolate this type of information. Use your deductive skills to make a case for what type of person would have written that source. Similarly, you can do the same types of deductive reasoning for a non-textual source of evidence, like an artifact.
3. **Explain the context.** This means looking at when the source was written to consider what types of social issues it may or may not have addressed or precipitated. Or what cultural value it defends, establishes, undermines, etc. Or how it may or may not respond to a specific historical event or crisis. You are essentially combining the first two parts (explain the passage and explain the author) to establish what we can learn about the specific moment and cultural worldview of the author, specifically, but also the society more broadly.

Source 3.3, The Laws of Manu

“Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire (their own) welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards...Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one’s control. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence.”

Answer:

1. This passage is explaining the general treatment of women within Vedic society. This was meant to serve as guidelines for how women would be kept in dependence to their families. The time frame is meant to encompass entire generations, while specifying the divide between the genders.
2. The authors of the Laws of Manu, who were unknown other than being members of the ruling class, were attempting to convey a positive approach to the oppression of women, as seen in the second sentence of the passage. This demonstrates how they were trying to create a social situation where such oppression is accepted, which ties in with the practices of the Vedic age when the authors lived.
3. This passage comes from a time of strict social structure under the oppressive caste system, and such rules were meant to be an ordinary part of life being placed on citizens. Religious teachings blurred with governmental oversight, creating a social structure that was claimed to be ordained by their ancient deity, Manu, in order to maintain the economic status quo.

Source 4.6, Thucydides, The Peloponnesian Wars

“Our institutions do not emulate the laws of others. We do not copy our neighbors: rather, we are an example to them. Our system is called a democracy, for it respects the majority and not the few; but while the law secures equality to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is generally preferred to the public service, not in rotation, but for merit. Nor again is there any bar in poverty and obscurity of rank to a man who can do the state some service. It is as free men that we conduct our public life, and in our daily occupations we avoid mutual suspicions; we are not angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant.”

Answer:

1. This passage explains the approach and considerations of choosing representatives for the early system of democratic republic in Athens, Greece. It lays out guidelines for how elected representatives can be chosen from the citizenry, specifically mentioning economic level, merit, and claims of excellence. Further, it mentions basic conduct of attitude and action for such eligible citizens.
2. Given that this passage is meant to be a quote from Pericles, the political leader of Athens at the height of Athenian democracy, the author is biased in favor of their described system. They are describing their form of democracy as being one in which those of merit rise to the top, without bearing on wealth or otherwise being obscure. This ignores the drawbacks that might lie in such a system, as the author Thucydides and the speaker Pericles likely were benefiting from their positions.
3. This was written by Thucydides as an early form of historical documentation. Whether or not the quote was ever actually spoken can't be certain, though the passage was important enough for the author to produce and put into words. Both the author and the person being quoted were of high social status, and so were able to transcribe the loftier ideals of their government.

Source: Astronomical Stele of Asurnasirpal II (British Museum), in “Lives and Livelihoods, Mesopotamian Astronomers”, Chapter 4, page 139.



Answer:

1. This picture is of a stele from ancient Assyria, dating back to between 883 – 859 BCE. On it is imagery of the king under the protection of the sun, the moon, and the planet Venus.
2. The author was likely named Assurnasirpal II. The nature of the stele might imply they were an omen reader or an astronomer, though it would seem just as likely that they were a sculptor working under the orders of someone in those professions.
3. This stele comes from ancient Assyria where the study of omens was seen as a necessary part of life. Predicting the future was an important part of reading the stars, which is represented on the stele as the signs above the king. Further, this stele shows the belief that the king would be protected from such omens by way of their station.

Source 5.5, Advice on Proper Behavior, Confucius

“The Master said, Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual, and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord...Chi K’ang-tzu asked whether there were any form of encouragement by which he could induce the common people to be respectful and loyal. The Master said, Approach them with dignity, and they will respect you. Show piety towards your parents and kindness towards your children, and they will be loyal to you. Promote those who are worthy, train those who are incompetent; that is the best form of encouragement.”

Answer:

1. This is a passage explaining general conduct between leadership and the common people. It describes how a leader should handle themselves so as to earn the trust and respect of their citizenry by providing examples of positive behavior and worthy leadership. There is an emphasis on respecting the family and of strengthening weakness rather than using punishments.
2. The author was attributed as Confucius, who started life as the child of a poor aristocrat. This led to their becoming a philosopher who would have had a unique perspective on life. Seeing in detail how the upper social class interacted with the lower classes may have provided important context to the philosophy of the written passage.
3. In Chinese society at the time, there was strict social stratification that could come with abuses from elites on the lower classes. Confucius would have been witness to such abuses coming from a lower aristocratic class, though also in a position to benefit from such strict control of society. This combination helped foster the philosophy of an elite class that relied on the trust and goodwill of their subjects, and the huge successful impact of Confucius demonstrated how much in demand his ideas were with both the upper and lower levels.

Part II: Identify

For the essay component of your midterm and final, you will need to write a short argumentative essay. In this section you will work on building that type of essay and be introduced to some of the key things I am looking for as I grade them.

Identify Themes Across Different Cultures

Skim through Chapters 1-5 and identify four transhistorical themes. A transhistorical theme is one that applies to more than one place at more than one time.

Answer:

Given my best understanding of this question, in my opinion, four transhistorical themes might be:

1. the exploration of the world,
2. the building of organized cultures,
3. the creation of interconnected empires of nations, and
4. the establishment of religions.

Identify Systems and Cultures

In this class, we are defining a system as “a set of things working together, an interconnected network, a prevailing order, and/or a set of principles and procedures.”

First, explain what you think that definition means.

Answer:

I think that definition is referring to how various aspects of the world interplay with one another, possibly being connected in a specific way to achieve a specific result. However, this question is asking my opinion, which leaves me uncertain how I am to answer this correctly.

Second, using the definition, skim through the first five chapters of the textbook and identify four potential systems.

Answer:

Given my best understanding of this question, in my opinion, four potential systems might be:

1. religion,
2. agriculture,
3. empires, and
4. governments.

Third, identify two to three cultures that you think would make good case studies for those systems and explain why.

Answer:

Cultures that might make good case studies for each of these systems might be:

1. Religion:
 - a. Egypt. The long religious history of Egypt is highly detailed and relatively well documented through stone carvings that still survive.
 - b. Rome. The religious history of Rome shows the shift in religions from multitheism into predominant monotheism.
 - c. Uruk. Having an early culture, Uruk's approach to religion would show the radical shift in ideologies over the eras.
2. Agriculture
 - a. Indus valley. The early insights into agriculture from the Indus valley come from a crucial time in development of newer and better techniques for farming.
 - b. Uruk. As one of the earliest cities, how Uruk handled their agriculture would show the progression of techniques through history.
3. Empires
 - a. Rome. As the most famous empire in Western history, it provides valuable insights into how the system of an empire both rises and falls.
 - b. Assyria. The warlike culture of Assyria stood out from other empires due to their aggressive demands of tribute and reluctance to directly govern their conquered

- c. Shang dynasty. The Shang dynasty is responsible for the establishment of systems that would eventually lead to the Qin dynasty and the formation of China.
- 4. Governments
 - a. Iran. An empire that arose after Christianity that maintained power through control of individual nations would demonstrate how empires fell back to monarchies after the fall of Rome.
 - b. Greece. The nation that formed the foundation of democracy as an idea and early formulations of republics that have echoes surviving today.
 - c. Egypt. The incredibly long histories of dynasties that survived through numerous upheavals and shifts in political spectra provide perspective on modern institutions.

Part III: Building an Argumentative Essay

Narrative vs. Argument

When writing a history paper, it can be easy to fall into the trap of reporting rather than analyzing. It can be hard to tell the difference between when you are simply telling a story and when you are actually making a claim. In particular, students often think that they are only making a claim if they use a direct quote, which is not the case. Look at the following passages and identify whether they are narrative or analysis and justify your answer.

1. One of the Persians' most effective administrative measures was the introduction of a coinage. Coins provided an economic standard that simplified trade because they were an official form of legal tender and were small and portable. In their capacity as official legal tender, they also offered Achaemenid kings the opportunity to spread ideological messages. Persian coins were frequently stamped with images that advertised the king's martial prowess with weapons and his control over animals, especially lions and bulls.

Answer:

This passage might be a successful analysis. The speaker first states the claim that coins were an effective administrative measure. Then they provide supporting evidence by identifying features of the coins and providing details about their usage. This demonstrates my understanding of what separates “analysis” and “narrative” in the context of this question.

2. At Persepolis, Darius constructed a magnificent city where he annually celebrated the delivery of tribute. He did so through imperial imagery various subject peoples bringing him offers of gifts that identified their homelands.

Answer:

This passage seems to be more of a narrative. This is a claim of how Darius went about gathering tribute after constructing his city. There is no supporting evidence for the claim about Darius's city, only a further claim being made in the second sentence.

3. Because communication was of utmost importance in administering their colossal empire, Persian kings developed an ~~extension~~ extensive road system to connect the capital to the provinces. The most famous road, the Royal Road, stretched from Susa in western Iran to Sardis, a satrapal capital in western Turkey.

Answer:

This passage seems to be more of an analysis. There is a claim made in stating that roads were for communication were of the utmost importance, and then there is supporting evidence provided in detailing one of the roads produced.

4. In order to defend his right to the throne, which was in question since he was not a direct descendant of the Achaemenids, Darius I developed a language of power, both visual and textual, that was ideologically charged. Darius sought to combine religious symbolism, such as the symbol of the god Ahura Mazda, and ethnic diversity in the form of tribute groups to demonstrate to the Iranian people that he had been chosen by their god to rule over a vast empire.

Answer:

This passage seems to be more of a narrative. It makes a claim and then another claim, simply following the life of Darius without providing supporting evidence. First it claims that he developed a language of power to support his political stability, then it claims that he sought to combine religious symbolism. In neither case does it provide evidence.

Supporting with Evidence

For each of the passages in the previous section, find one piece of primary evidence and one piece of secondary evidence from the textbook, a video, or other course materials (ONLY materials on Perusall). For each piece of primary evidence, explain how you would use it.

1. One of the Persians' most effective administrative measures was the introduction of a coinage. Coins provided an economic standard that simplified trade because they were an official form of legal tender and were small and portable. In their capacity as official legal tender, they also offered Achaemenid kings the opportunity to spread ideological messages. Persian coins were frequently stamped with images that advertised the king's martial prowess with weapons and his control over animals, especially lions and bulls.

Answer:

As a primary source of evidence, I would use the image of the first coins of Lydia on page 145 of Chapter 4 in our textbook. Though they're not Persian coins, they are the only ancient coins in these chapters, and they did serve to inspire Persian coins later on. The image could be used to roughly illustrate how Persian coins may have appeared.

As a secondary source, I would use the caption underneath the picture of the coins, as well as the body text of page 145.

2. At Persepolis, Darius constructed a magnificent city where he annually celebrated the delivery of tribute. He did so through imperial imagery various subject peoples bringing him offers of gifts that identified their homelands.

Answer:

As a primary source of evidence, I would use the image of the view of Persepolis on page 144, Chapter 4 of our textbook. The image would provide context as to the architectural styles of Darius's magnificent city, though from a ruined modern perspective.

As a secondary source, I would use the body text of page 142 into 143, specifically the section under the heading "Administering a Multicultural Empire," which contains the passage and further information about Darius and the Persians.

3. Because communication was of utmost importance in administering their colossal empire, Persian kings developed an ~~extension~~ extensive road system to connect the capital to the provinces. The most famous road, the Royal Road, stretched from Susa in western Iran to Sardis, a satrapal capital in western Turkey.

Answer:

As a primary source of evidence, I would use the image of the view of Persepolis on page 144, Chapter 4 of our textbook. Though the same evidence as the previous passage, this shows also the architectural styles that include ancient Persian roads. It would support the overall goals of infrastructure that the Persians pursued.

As a secondary source, I would use the body text of page 142 into 143, specifically the section under the heading "Administering a Multicultural Empire," also the same as the previous passage, though I would have a different emphasis on what evidence is taken.

4. In order to defend his right to the throne, which was in question since he was not a direct descendant of the Achaemenids, Darius I developed a language of power, both visual and textual, that was ideologically charged. Darius sought to combine religious symbolism, such as the symbol of the god Ahura Mazda, and ethnic diversity in the form of tribute groups to demonstrate to the Iranian people that he had been chosen by their god to rule over a vast empire.

Answer:

As a primary source of evidence, I would use the image of the carved relief of Nubians delivering tribute on page 120, Chapter 4. The relief demonstrates how Darius used imagery and symbolism in the course of his rule, providing supporting evidence for the claims being made.

As a secondary source, I would use the body text of page 142 into 143, specifically the section under the heading “Administering a Multicultural Empire,” also the same as the previous passage, though with a different emphasis on what evidence is taken.

Framing the Argument

Perhaps the most critical part of any history essay is the introduction, because it establishes 1) the scope and context of the argument, 2) why that argument is significant, 3) how the essay will explore the topic, and 4) what that argument is. Writing an effective introduction is quite difficult and typically takes numerous drafts. Below you will practice some of the components of that thesis.

Historical Questions

One of the biggest hurdles for students is figuring out how to write a thesis that isn’t simply a statement, either of fact or intent. They do not make a claim.

Example: *This paper will explore the ideological motivations of Darius I.*

This is a **statement of intent**, telling me what you are going to do. It does not make a claim.

Example: *Women were not considered fit to be independent in Vedic India.*

This is a **statement of fact**. It is just providing information about women in India, it does not make a claim.

One way to set yourself up to avoid these pitfalls is to start with a historical question framed around “why” or “how.”

Example: In the statement of intent thesis, if that were flipped into a question, the question would be a “what” question, i.e. *“What will this paper do?”*

- A better question to ask would be: *“why did Darius I employ ideology in his inscriptions and state art?”*
- A potentially more effective question would be: *“how did Darius I’s ideology change Persian conceptions of power?”*

Example: In the statement of fact thesis, if flipped into a question, that question would be something like “did men think women could have independence?”

- A better question would be: *“why did men think women were unfit for independence?”*
- A potentially more effective question would be, *“how did men use Hinduism to justify their control of women in Vedic India?”*

Writing a Claim Thesis

Even with how and why questions, you can still end up with a statement of intent or fact. So, for each of the sample questions (the better and more effective ones), write an argumentative thesis that makes a clear claim.

Tips:

- Words like despite, nevertheless, although, and even can help signal a claim if you are struggling.
- If possible, avoid a listing thesis, such as “men in Vedic India felt that women were unfit for independence because the gods expected women to be dependent, because women had no control over their sexual desires, and because men needed to honor women.” This is better than a simple statement of fact, but still does not make a strong, provocative claim.

- Try to have your thesis be a narrow claim. You do not need to cover everything about a topic to do well, but rather pick something that is narrow enough to be focused but not so narrow that you will run out of things to say.

The Introduction

Now that you have practiced writing a thesis in response to a historical question, I want you to go back to the other primary sources in Part 1 of this assignment and write a historical question and, using what you compiled in Part 1, write a practice introduction. This introduction should, in 4-7 sentences, establish 1) the scope and context of the argument, such as what the topic is and the parts of the author's context or historical context that are important for establishing the significance of the argument. 2) Why the argument is significant, i.e. what does it teach us, how does it shine a new light on things, or how does it make us question our assumptions, things like that. 3) How the essay will explore the topic. This is like a little roadmap of what you are going to do to establish your point. and 4) what that argument is. That is, what is the provocative claim you are making.

Source 3.3, The Laws of Manu

"Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, brothers, husbands, and brothers-in-law, who desire (their own) welfare. Where women are honoured, there the gods are pleased; but where they are not honoured, no sacred rite yields rewards...Day and night woman must be kept in dependence by the males (of) their (families), and, if they attach themselves to sensual enjoyments, they must be kept under one's control. Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence."

Answer:

Societal inequality during a time of economic and political stability for the ruling classes led to women becoming oppressed during the Vedic age of India. Through surviving texts such as *The Laws of Manu*, there are examples of how women were seen as objects to be protected even against their own desires. Such tight restrictions and guidelines are echoed in many other cultures throughout history, even into the modern age. Thus, through these reflections, we will see how humanity is ultimately intertwined as we further explore into the concepts of varna and the caste system.

Source 4.6, Thucydides, The Peloponnesian Wars

“Our institutions do not emulate the laws of others. We do not copy our neighbors: rather, we are an example to them. Our system is called a democracy, for it respects the majority and not the few; but while the law secures equality to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is also recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is generally preferred to the public service, not in rotation, but for merit. Nor again is there any bar in poverty and obscurity of rank to a man who can do the state some service. It is as free men that we conduct our public life, and in our daily occupations we avoid mutual suspicions; we are not angry with our neighbor if he does what he likes; we do not put on sour looks at him which, though harmless, are not pleasant.”

Answer:

Politicians such as Pericles in ancient Athens used their sway to maintain their positions of power despite ruling over societies that often relied on warfare and aggression to survive. In speeches written down by the earliest historians, we are given examples of guidance given by these leaders over their Greek brethren. Providing brave looks and promises of supporting equality created popularity that allowed charismatic individuals to rise to greater power and enforce their rule over a receptive populace. Through examining sources such as Thucydides, we can see the shaping of ideas that continue to influence cultures across the world well into the modern age.

Source: Astronomical Stele of Asurnasirpal II (British Museum), in “Lives and Livelihoods, Mesopotamian Astronomers”, Chapter 4, page 139.



Answer:

Through objects that have survived from ancient cultures such as this stele from ancient Assyria, we catch glimpses of cultures that placed great value into observing occurrences in nature and applying incorrect beliefs to what they were perceiving. Though reading omens is ultimately an entirely disproven methodology, the reliance on astronomical signs has been a significant feature for cultures throughout history. In ancient Assyria, reading omens was seen as a necessary part of life, and in many ways, such beliefs have not left human thinking. The time and effort of creating such objects could carry a religious fervor, helping support the tasks of omen readers and the king, which can remind of the iconography throughout history.

Source 5.5, Advice on Proper Behavior, Confucius

“The Master said, Govern the people by regulations, keep order among them by chastisements, and they will flee from you, and lose all self-respect. Govern them by moral force, keep order among them by ritual, and they will keep their self-respect and come to you of their own accord...Chi K’ang-tzu asked whether there were any form of encouragement by which he could induce the common people to be respectful and loyal. The Master said, Approach them with dignity, and they will respect you. Show piety towards your parents and kindness towards your children, and they will be loyal to you. Promote those who are worthy, train those who are incompetent; that is the best form of encouragement.”

Answer:

Like the ruling class of other cultures that existed in relative peace, Confucius created a philosophy that promoted a greater understanding between the upper and lower classes. Though these philosophies sought to create a peaceful connection, they nonetheless established a set system of inequality wherein a ruling class presides over the lesser subordinate classes. This approach supported community, especially respect for the family, which helped normalize and promote Confucianism above other philosophies at the time. The ideals of Confucius broke through strict social stratification in Chinese society at the time, using his unique perspective as a lower lord, and we will see how his philosophies echo other cultures across the world as we explore the topic.