

**Imperialism DBQ Activity**  
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Backstory: in 2009 both AP Euro and AP World had DBQs on the "Scramble for Africa." The AP Euro DBQ dealt with causes of European imperialism in Africa, and the AP World DBQ dealt with African reactions to European imperialism. This activity takes both of those DBQs and uses them to have students practice DBQ skills while investigating issues of point of view in how historians construct arguments.

I want to give a big thank you to Aaron Marsh, AP Consultant and AP World teacher at Vashon High School, for helping me coming up with this idea. Thanks as well to the great guys at the On Top of World History podcast, Dave Eaton and Matt Drwenski. I used their modified 2009 AP World DBQ. I modified the AP Euro DBQ to include an image and cut down the documents from 12(!!) to 7. If you want additional documents for this activity, there are several others from the original AP World and AP Euro DBQs on AP Central.

Activity directions:

1. Preparation assignment

Read and annotate the DBQ documents that you are assigned -- either the European causes or African responses DBQ

2. In class activity (we have 45 minute classes)

- a. Students should divide up into two groups, one for each DBQ. Each group takes 10 minutes to review the documents and discuss sourcing, evidence, corroboration, contradiction, etc. Each student should leave this meeting with an idea of a thesis that would work for the prompt.
- b. Students leave their DBQ group and pair up with one student from the other DBQ group. Each person explains their thesis argument to their partner, including an explanation of which documents would support the thesis. The partner listens to the argument and responds with one or two suggestions for corroboration, contradiction or qualification from one of their own documents. This conversation should last about 5 minutes. After 5 minutes, partners should switch roles and complete the same process discussing the other DBQ.
- c. After pairs sharing the class should reconvene as a large group. Students should discuss the following questions as a large group:
  - i. What did you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your documents? Are there any sources you saw as having limitations once you heard arguments from the other DBQ group?
  - ii. To what extent did these documents confirm or challenge your understanding of European imperialism in Africa?
  - iii. Pretend we only read the European causes DBQ documents and not the African reactions one. How would that have influenced our perspective or point of view about the Scramble for Africa? To what extent does including the African reactions DBQ change this perspective?
  - iv. What are the points of view of the historians that wrote these DBQs? Why did they choose some documents and not others?

3. Assignment

Each student should write the DBQ that they DIDN'T read and discuss in the preview assignment. They should attempt to use information from the DBQ they already read for Contextualization, sourcing the documents (especially historical context for the documents), and synthesis. In particular, the synthesis paragraph should focus on how a European or African historian might approach the same topic differently, and why that matters.

## WORLD HISTORY SECTION II

Total Time—1 hour, 30 minutes

### Question 1 (Document-Based Question)

**Suggested reading and writing time:** 55 minutes

It is suggested that you spend 15 minutes reading the documents and 40 minutes writing your response.

**Note:** You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.

**Directions:** Question 1 is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.

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.
- **Argument Development:** Develop and support a cohesive argument that recognizes and accounts for historical complexity by explicitly illustrating relationships among historical evidence such as contradiction, corroboration, and/or qualification.
- **Use of the Documents:** Utilize the content of at least six of the documents to support the stated thesis or a relevant argument.
- **Sourcing the Documents:** Explain the significance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, historical context, and/or audience for at least four documents.
- **Contextualization:** Situate the argument by explaining the broader historical events, developments, or processes immediately relevant to the question.
- **Outside Evidence:** Provide an example or additional piece of specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify the 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)

1. Develop an argument that evaluates the reasons for European involvement in Africa from 1850-1914.

### Document 1

Source: Prince Leopold, heir to the throne of Belgium and future king, conversation, 1861.

Surrounded by the sea, Holland, Prussia and France, our frontiers can never be extended in Europe. . . . [But] the universe lies in front of us; steam and electricity have made distances disappear, all the unappropriated lands on the surface of the globe may become the field of our operations and of our resources. . . . Since history teaches that colonies are useful, that they play a great part in that which makes up the power and prosperity of states, let us strive to get one in our turn . . . let us see where there are unoccupied lands . . . where are to be found peoples to civilize, to lead to progress in every sense, meanwhile assuring ourselves . . . the opportunity to prove to the world that Belgians also are an imperial people capable of dominating and enlightening others.

### Document 2

Source: Joseph Chamberlain, British industrialist, politician, and reformer, speech, 1888.

We have suffered much in this country from depression of trade. We know how many of our fellow-subjects are at this moment unemployed. Is there any man in his senses who believes that the crowded population of these islands [the British Isles] could exist for a single day if we were to be cut adrift from the great dependencies which now look to us for protection and which are the natural markets for our trade? . . . If tomorrow it were possible, as some people apparently desire, to reduce by a stroke of the pen the British Empire to the dimensions of the United Kingdom, half at least of our population would be starved.

### Document 3

Source: George Washington Williams, Baptist minister, lawyer, historian, and legislator, "An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty, Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo," Stanley Falls, Congo Free State, 1890.

Great and Good Friend,

I have the honor to submit for Your Majesty's considerations some reflections respecting the Independent State of Congo. There were instances in which Mr. Henry M. Stanley\* sent one white man, with four or five Zanzibar soldiers, to make treaties with the native chiefs. All the sleight of hand tricks had been carefully rehearsed and he was now ready for his work. A number of electric batteries had been purchased in London and when attached to an arm under the coat, communicated with a band of ribbon which passed over the palm of the white brother's hand, and when he gave the black brother a cordial grasp of the hand, the black brother was surprised to find his white brother so strong that he nearly knocked him off his feet. By such means as these, and a few boxes of gin, whole villages have been signed away to Your Majesty.

\*British-American journalist and explorer sent to Congo by King Leopold of Belgium

#### Document 4

Source: Edward Linley Sambourne, political cartoonist for the British magazine Punch, depicting Cecil John Rhodes, a famous British explorer, after he announced plans for a telegraph line and railroad from Cape Town to Cairo, 1892



Caption: "The Rhodes Colossus Striding from Cape Town to Cairo"

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Rhodes\\_Colossus#/media/File:Punch\\_Rhodes\\_Colossus.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rhodes_Colossus#/media/File:Punch_Rhodes_Colossus.png)

### Document 5

Source: Resolution of the German Social Democratic Party Congress, 1900.

World and colonial policy is pursued for the purpose of capitalist exploitation and for displaying military force . . . [I]t corresponds first and foremost to the greedy desire of the bourgeoisie for new opportunities to invest its ever-increasing capital which is no longer content with exploiting the home market, and to the desire for new markets which each country tries to usurp to itself.

### Document 6

Source: Archibald Philip Primrose, Lord Rosebery, British politician and foreign secretary, letter to the *London Times*, 1900.

An Empire such as ours requires as its first condition an imperial race—a race vigorous and industrious and intrepid. Health of mind and body exalt a nation in the competition of the universe. The survival of the fittest is an absolute truth in the conditions of the modern world.

### Document 7

Source: Martial Henri Merlin, governor general of French Equatorial Africa, speech, 1910.

We went to new territories. We went there by virtue of the right of a civilized, fully developed race to occupy territories which have been left fallow by backward peoples who are plunged into barbarism and unable to develop the wealth of their land. What we exercised is a right, and if anyone denies this, you should firmly maintain that it is a right. We are entitled to go out to these peoples and occupy their territories; but, when we exercise this right, we, at the same moment are charged with a duty towards these peoples, and this duty we must never for one instant forget.

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1. Using the documents and your knowledge of world history, analyze at least two African responses to European imperialism during the last nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### Document 1

Source: Royal Niger Company, commissioned by the British government to administer and develop the Niger River delta and surrounding areas, standard form signed by multiple African rulers, 1886.

We, the undersigned Chiefs of \_\_\_\_\_, with the view to the bettering of our country and people, do this day cede to the Royal Niger Company, forever, the whole of our territory extending \_\_\_\_\_.

We pledge ourselves not to enter into any war with other tribes without the sanction of the said Royal Niger Company. . . . The said Royal Niger Company bind themselves not to interfere with any of the native laws or customs of the country, consistently with the maintenance of order and good government.

The said Royal Niger Company agree to pay native owners of land a reasonable amount for any portion they may require. . . . and to pay the said Chiefs \_\_\_\_\_ measures native value.

The \_\_\_\_\_ chiefs . . . affixed their marks of their own free will and consent. . . .

Done in triplicate at \_\_\_\_\_, this \_\_\_\_\_ day, of \_\_\_\_\_, 188\_\_\_\_.

### Document 2

Source: Menelik II, emperor of Ethiopia, letter to Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, 1891.

I have no intention at all of being an indifferent spectator, if the distant Powers hold onto the idea of dividing up Africa. For the past fourteen centuries Ethiopia has been an island of Christians in a sea of Pagans.

Since the All-Powerful has protected Ethiopia up until now, I am hopeful that He will keep and enlarge it also in the future, and I do not think for a moment that He will divide Ethiopia among the distant Powers. In the past, the boundary of Ethiopia was the sea. Without our use of force and without the aid of the Christians, our boundary on the sea fell into the hands of the Muslims. Today we do not pretend to be able to recover our seacoast by force; but we hope that the Christian Powers, advised by our Savior, Jesus Christ, will restore our seacoast boundary to us, or give us at least a few ports along the coast.

### Document 3

Source: Ndansi Kumalo, African veteran of the Ndebele Rebellion against British advances in southern Africa, 1896.

So we surrendered to the White people and were told to go back to our homes and live our usual lives and attend to our crops. We were treated like slaves. They came and were overbearing. We were ordered to carry their clothes and bundles. They harmed our wives and our daughters. How the rebellion started I do not know; there was no organization, it was like a fire that suddenly flames up. I had an old gun. They—the White men—fought us with big guns, machine guns, and rifles. Many of our people were killed in this fight: I saw four of my cousins shot. We made many charges but each time we were defeated. But for the White men's machine guns, it would have been different.

### Document 4

Source: Ethiopian painting of the Battle of Adowa, in which the Ethiopians were victorious over Italian troops, 1896.

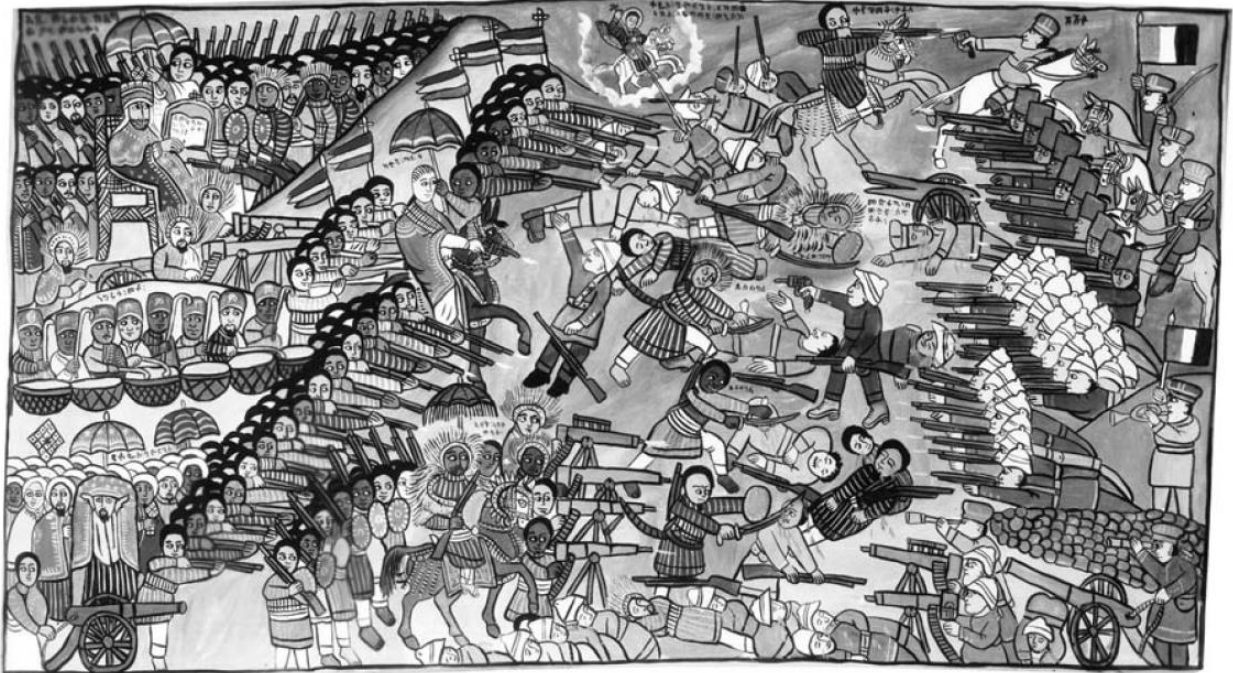


Image #: 322202 Photo by Boltin  
American Museum of Natural History



### Document 5

Source: Yaa Asantewa, Ashanti queen mother, speech to chiefs, West Africa, 1900.

Now I have seen that some of you fear to go forward and fight for our King. If it were in the brave days of old, chiefs would not sit down to see their King taken away without firing a shot. No White man could have dared to speak to chiefs of the Ashanti in the way the British governor spoke to you chiefs this morning. Is it true that the bravery of the Ashanti is no more? I cannot believe it. Yea, it cannot be! I must say this; if you the men of Ashanti will not go forward, then we will. We the women will. I shall call upon my fellow women. We will fight the White men. We will fight until the last of us falls on the battlefields.

### Document 6

Source: Samuel Maherero, a leader of the Herero people, letter to another African leader, German South-West Africa, 1904.

All our obedience and patience with the Germans is of little avail, for each day they shoot someone dead for no reason at all. Hence I appeal to you my Brother, not to hold aloof from the uprising, but to make your voice heard so that all Africa may take up arms against the Germans. Let us die fighting rather than die as a result of maltreatment, imprisonment, or some other calamity. Tell all the chiefs down there to rise and do battle.

### Document 7

Source: German military officer, account of the 1905 Maji Maji Rebellion in German East Africa, German military weekly newspaper, 1906.

The chiefs spread it among their people that a spirit, living in the form of a snake, had given a magic medicine to a medicine man. The medicine guaranteed a good harvest, so that in future people would no more need to perform wage labor for foreigners in order to obtain accustomed luxuries. The medicine would also give invulnerability, acting in such a way that enemy bullets would fall from their targets like raindrops from a greased body. It would strengthen women and children for the flight customary in wartime, with the associated hardships and privations, and protect them from being seized by the victorious attackers, who were accustomed to taking women and children with them as war prizes. The medicine consisted of water, maize, and sorghum grains. The water was applied by pouring it over the head and by drinking.