

Name: Victoria McNeil

PA2 DBQ Lesson Title: Did Christianity Threaten the Power of the Roman Government?

Course Name: Social Studies - World History 3500 BCE - 600 CE

Date: 10/3/2020

Grade Level: 6th Grade

Unit Name: Rome

Directions:

•Create or modify an inquiry for an upcoming unit and share lesson.

•Criteria for lesson:

1. Must have at least 3 sources
2. Cannot be a DBQ Project Lesson
3. Must incorporate a hook exercise, short background reading, bucketing, and chickenfoot.
4. Students can communicate their claim through writing, debate, etc. (6A or 6B)
5. Can be a PDF, PPT, etc.

Step 1: The Hook Exercise Engages students and orients them to the question.	<p>Depends on time:</p> <p>If you have a lot of time, Watch clip or episode from the Story Keepers (This is a cartoon TV Show that shows how Christians in Rome went into hiding & were spreading their faith underground. All the while, the government was hunting them down and persecuting them.) After the episode or clip, discuss the lengths the Story Keepers went to to protect their faith & why students think the government was so threatened by their faith.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>If you are trying to get through DBQ more quickly, Discuss a time when you or someone you know got into trouble for something that you (or they) believe.</p>
Step 2: The Background Essay Further orients students to the question and provides essential context that helps make sense of the documents.	<p>During the time of the Roman Empire, Christians were often subjected to brutal punishments for practicing their faith. The practice of persecuting Christians continued under the rule of 9 different Roman Empires.</p> <p>As Christianity spread through the Roman world, some local officials feared that Christians were conspiring against them. As a result, they arrested and killed many Christians. However, those killed were seen by the early Christians as martyrs, people who die for their faith and thus inspire others to believe. Even many nonbelievers were impressed by the martyrs' faith. Although Christians often were persecuted at the local level, large-scale persecution by the Romans was rare during the first two centuries after Jesus's life. As it grew, however, some rulers came to see Christianity as a threat and began persecuting those who practiced it.</p>

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	Source: World History: Human Legacy, written by Ramirez, Stearns, & Wineburg in 2008 and published in Texas.
Step 3: Understanding the Question and Pre-bucketing Helps students plan so they can target their investigation of the documents. Clarifying the question motivates students to start reading their sources to find answers.	<p>Did Christianity threaten the power of the Roman Government?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sources A, F, & G show the general attitude towards Christians in Rome. What is the general attitude & why do you think this is?2. Source B discusses myths that many Romans believed about Christians. What were these myths and where did they come from?3. Look at Sources C, D, & E which all discuss the laws laid down by the Roman Empire & the Christians. On what subject(s) does/do these laws agree?4. Look at Sources C, D, & E which all discuss the laws laid down by the Roman Empire & the Christians. On what subject(s) does/do they disagree?

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Step 4:

Analyzing the Documents

It's like you're a detective! The documents provide clues and evidence students need to support their thesis or claim. They provide the knowledge and information students need to answer the question

In 64 CE, during the reign of the unpopular emperor Nero, a great fire destroyed Rome. The following is an excerpt from The Annals, a history of the Roman Empire written by the Roman historian Tacitus in 116 CE. Tacitus wrote and lived during a time period when Christians were persecuted in large numbers.

All human efforts and all the lavish gifts of Emperor Nero did not **banish** the belief that the great fire was the result of Nero's order. To get rid of the report, Nero placed the guilt and the most exquisite tortures on a group hated for their **abominations**. This group was called Christians by the people.

An arrest was first made of all those who pleaded guilty. Then, upon their information, an immense multitude of Christians was convicted, not for the crime of setting the city on fire, but for the crime of hatred against mankind. **Mockery** of every sort was added to their deaths. They were torn by dogs and eaten, or were nailed to crosses, or were thrown into the flames and burnt alive.

Source: The Annals, written by Tacitus in 116 CE.

Vocabulary

banish: to send someone away from a place as a punishment

abominations: shameful, disgusting habits or actions

multitude: a large gathering of people

mockery: to make something seem foolish or absurd

Document A

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The following is an excerpt from an article written by David Cassel in 1998 and published in Christian History and Biography, a journal on Christian history. Cassel is a Professor of Theological Studies at Hanover College in Indiana.

Romans incorporated many religions into their empire. As long as devotees continued to observe Roman religious **rites**, they were free to worship any god they wished. Christians, however, refused to acknowledge any god but their own . . . [and] refused to participate in any non-Christian religious rites, to serve in the army, or to accept public office. . . .

A stranger complaint of Roman critics of Christianity was this. . . . They were thought to be involved in bizarre and terrible religious rituals such as Thyestian feasts and Oedipean [practices]. . . . In these two myths, Thyestes eats his own children, and Oedipus kills his father and marries his mother.

How could Romans associate these myths with Christianity? Most likely the critics misread the Christian Scriptures. New Testament writers referred to their fellow Christians as brothers and sisters . . . and encouraged them to greet one another with a "holy kiss." . . . This could have been misunderstood . . . especially if a married couple were referred to as a brother and sister in Christ. This perspective may have been intensified by the secrecy of early Christian religious services, which were open only to baptized Christians.

The charge of **cannibalism** could also have arisen from a false understanding of the Christian Scripture and **liturgy**. The very words of the **Eucharist**, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you," could be misread in a literal, cannibalistic sense by a reader that did not understand the metaphor.

Source: "Defending Cannibals," written by David Cassel in 1998.

Vocabulary

rites: religious or social custom

cannibalism: the act of eating human flesh

liturgy: ways of worshiping

Eucharist: a Christian ritual

Document B

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Document C - The 10 Commandments (from the Christian Bible King James Version)



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Source D - "On this day in History..." History.info



On this day in 42 BC Julius Caesar was declared a god by the Roman Senate. It was the first time in history that a Roman citizen was officially deified. Interestingly, Caesar was officially declared a god only after his death (he was assassinated approximately 14-and-a-half months earlier). As a Roman deity, Caesar was

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given the title **Divus Julius (The Divine Julius)**. A temple to him was built next to the Roman Forum (Forum Romanum), adjacent to the famous Temple of Vesta. Later, temples in his honor were built in other cities of the Roman Empire. The first Roman emperor – Octavian Augustus – was the adopted son of Julius Caesar and was allowed to carry the title of **Divi Filius (Son of the Divine)**.

Source E - Select Excerpts from The 12 Tables of Roman Law, dated 450 BCE

The earliest codification of Roman law is found in the Twelve Tables. It was a compilation of new laws and existing customs which was to be enforced impartially by the magistrates. It was inscribed ultimately on twelve bronze tablets.

Table 8, 3. If one is slain while committing theft by night, he is rightly slain.

Table 8, 23. A person who had been found guilty of giving false witness shall be hurled down from the Tarpeian Rock.

Table 9, 6. Putting to death of any man, whosoever he might be unconvicted is forbidden.

Source F - Lucian, Passing of Perigrinus, 165 CE

This is an excerpt from a satire written by Lucian, in which the lead character takes advantage of Christians

It was then that he [Perigrinus] learned the wondrous lore of the Christians by associating with their priests and scribes in Palestine. And- how else could it be? He made them all look like children; for he was prophet, cult-leader, head of the synagogue, and everything, all by himself. He interpreted and explained some of their books and even composed many, and they revered him as a god...

The poor wretches have convinced themselves first and foremost, that they are going to be immortal and live for all time, in consequence of which they despise death and even willingly give themselves into custody, most of them. Furthermore, their first lawgiver persuaded them that they are all brothers of one another, after they have transgressed once for all by denying the Greek gods, and by worshipping that crucified sophist himself

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and living under his laws. Therefore they despise all things indiscriminately and consider them common property-receiving such doctrines traditionally without any definite evidence. So if any charlatan or trickster able to profit from them comes along and gets among them, he quickly acquires sudden wealth by imposing upon simple folk.

Source G: The Christian Martyrs' Last Prayer by [Jean-Léon Gérôme](#) (1883)



Step 5:
Bucketing and
Chickenfoot
Helps students get
organized. Buckets
become containers

Decide whether each document supports the claim that “Christians threatened the power of the Roman Government” or if it refutes this claim (disagrees with it). Label each bucket with appropriate evidence.

Bucket 1: Christianity did indeed threaten the power of the Roman Government.

Bucket 2: Christianity did not threaten the power of the Roman Government.

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for evidence that students use to categorize or group evidence from the documents.	<p>Bucket 3: Neutral. "This source is purely informative and can not be used to support a claim." OR "I can not decide where this source belongs. I NEED HELP."</p> <p>Next decide whether or not you believe that Christianity threatened the power of the Roman Government. Come up with three reasons that support your claim (using evidence from documents). All three circles should be the same (either did or did not, NOT a mixture of both).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Christianity did / did not (circle one) threaten the power of the Roman Government because.....2. Christianity did / did not (circle one) threaten the power of the Roman Government because.....3. Christianity did / did not (circle one) threaten the power of the Roman Government because.....
Step 6A: The Thrash-Out and Preparing to Write Students prepare to write by debating or "thrashing-out" their answer to the question. Students practice using evidence from the documents to support and verbally validate their claims. They use what they learn to outline their essays.	
Step 6B: Writing the Essay Students write	

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multi-paragraph, evidence-based essays using their documents, buckets, and outlines to support and explain their reasoning.	
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