

DBQ SOURCES: THE PARTITION OF AFRICA

Purpose

Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to deepen your understanding of the partition of Africa.

Process

Analyze the following sources. If you are using these sources to respond to an essay prompt, you should underline or **highlight** any evidence that will support your claim. You can also use the Quick Sourcing Tool.

Document 1

This is an excerpt from an 1877 essay by the prominent British politician and businessman, Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902).

I contend that we English are the finest race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race. Just fancy those parts that are at present inhabited by the most despicable specimens of human beings. What a change there would be if they were brought under English influence. Look again at the extra employment a new country added to our dominions provides for us. I contend that every acre added to our territory means the future birth to some more of the English race who otherwise would not be brought into existence. Added to this the absorption of the greater portion of the world under our rule simply means the end of all wars. Having these ideas what scheme could we think of to forward this object.

Source: Cecil Rhodes, “Confession of Faith,” 1877, in John E. Flint, *Cecil Rhodes* (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), 248–249. Text is edited for brevity and clarity.

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Document 2

Jules Ferry (1832–1893) was prime minister of France (1880–1881, 1883–1885) when he delivered these comments as part of a speech in 1884.

The policy of colonial expansion is a political and economic system ... that can be connected to three sets of ideas: economic ideas; the most far-reaching ideas of civilization; and ideas of a political and patriotic sort. In the area of economics, I am placing before you, with the support of some statistics, the considerations that justify the policy of colonial expansion, as seen from the perspective of a need. [This need is] felt more and more urgently by the industrialized population of Europe and especially the people of our rich and hardworking country of France: the need for outlets [exports]. ...

Gentlemen, we must speak more loudly and more honestly! We must say openly that indeed the higher races have a right over the lower races. ... I repeat, that the superior races have a right because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races. ... In the history of earlier centuries these duties, gentlemen, have often been misunderstood; and certainly when the Spanish soldiers and explorers introduced slavery into Central America, they did not fulfill their duty as men of a higher race. ... But, in our time, I maintain that European nations acquit themselves with generosity, with grandeur, and with sincerity of this superior civilizing duty.

Source: Jules Ferry (1832–1893), “Speech Before the French Chamber of Deputies, March 28, 1884,” reproduced in *Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1884ferry.asp>.

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Document 3

Table 1.11. *Value of UK palm oil imports from West Africa, 1817–1854*

Year	Value (£)	Year	Value (£)
1817	58,286.25	1836	479,131.82
1818	93,660.11	1837	347,888.94
1819	173,830.03	1838	579,628.38
1820	33,890.82	1839	691,291.74
1821	171,875.73	1840	557,887.47
1822	87,661.75	1841	663,712.53
1823	85,676.62	1842	662,609.67
1824	93,411.11	1843	605,707.74
1825	112,725.80	1844	553,036.38
1826	116,999.31	1845	NA
1827	124,640.34	1846	576,723.20
1828	162,367.50	1847	844,826.40
1829	229,760.39	1848	824,536.35
1830	261,924.01	1849	760,582.40
1831	250,565.44	1850	651,675.00
1832	367,326.45	1851	818,267.80
1833	431,190.47	1852	736,449.20
1834	350,204.33	1853	1,163,897.90
1835	340,415.54	1854	1,755,982.60

Note:

NA: Figure not available.

Source: Calculated from tables 1.1 and 1.9.

Source: Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 31.

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Document 4



Source: Cartoon, “The Sleeping Sickness: Cutting a Continent out from under Him,” published in Puck, October 25, 1911, and reproduced here: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011649074/>.

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Document 5

This excerpt contains the introduction and a portion of section six from the General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, February 26, 1885.

General Act of the Conference at Berlin of the [representatives] of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Norway, Turkey and the United States respecting: (1) Freedom of trade in the Basin of the Congo; (2) the slave trade; (3) neutrality of the territories in the Basin of the Congo; (4) navigation of the Congo; (5) navigation of the Niger; and (6) rules for future occupation of the Coast of the African Continent, in the Name of God Almighty. ...

CHAPTER VI: Declaration Relative to the Essential Conditions to be Observed in Order that New Occupations on the Coasts of the African Continent May Be Held to be Effective ...

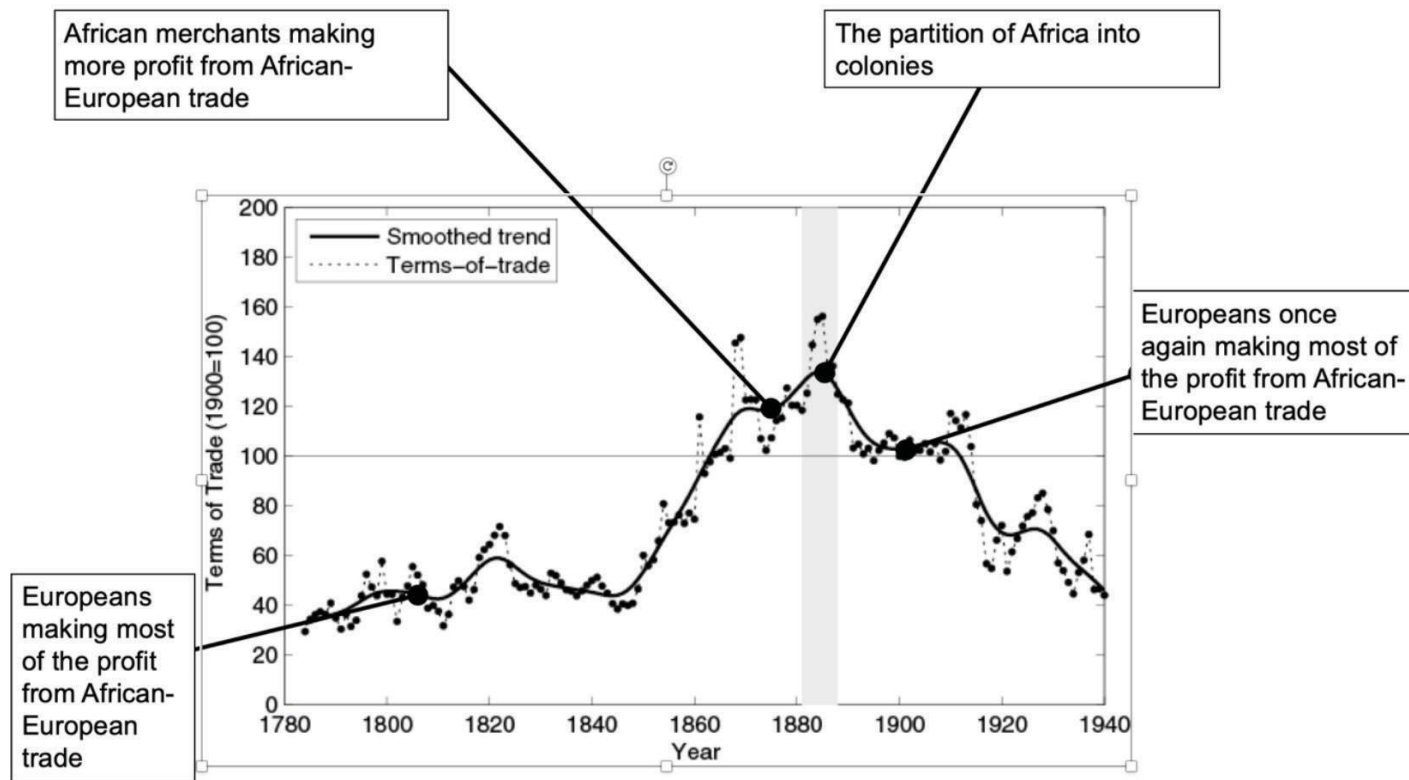
ARTICLE 34: Any Power which henceforth takes possession of a tract of land on the coasts of the African continent outside of its present possessions, or which, being hitherto without such possessions, shall acquire them, as well as the Power which assumes a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a notification thereof, addressed to the other Signatory Powers of the present Act, in order to enable them, if need be, to make good any claims of their own.

Source: “General Act of the Berlin Conference on West Africa, 26 February 1885,” reproduced by Professor Emeritus Brian Loveman, San Diego State University: <https://loveman.sdsu.edu/docs/1885GeneralActBerlinConference.pdf>.

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Document 6

This is a Terms of Trade graph for sub-Saharan Africa, which shows who profited more from trade in different periods.



Source: Ewout Frankema, Jeffrey Williamson, and Pieter Woltjer, "An Economic Rationale for the African Scramble: The Commercial Transition and the Commodity Price Boom of 1845–1885," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 21213, May 2015. <https://voxeu.org/article/economic-rationale-african-scramble>, arrows and annotations added.

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Document 7

Below is a quote from a novel by the English writer Hilaire Belloc. Note: The Maxim gun was the first true machine gun, and was used in numerous wars of colonial conquest.

“Whatever happens, we have got The Maxim gun, and they have not.”

Source: Hilaire Belloc, *The Modern Traveller* (London: E. Arnold, 1898).