

NAME _____

DATE _____

Performance Task – Analyzing Arguments: Geography and Empire Building

Goal of task

Target Concept: I can analyze a causal argument about the relationship between European expansion into the Western Hemisphere and the empire building that changed economies on both sides of the Atlantic.

For this task you will be evaluated on your ability to:

- Read a secondary source text and make inferences about the author’s argument.
- Determine how the author’s argument shapes the text’s focus, organization, and use of evidence.
- Recognize broad generalizations about causation related to European empire building on both sides of the Atlantic.
- Turn your inferences into causal statements in response to a question or a prompt about a larger historical process.

Task summary

You will begin by reading from the Preface of D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800*, about a geographic approach to American history. Then you will read a selection of his text discussing geographic models of the relationship between European expansion into the Western Hemisphere and the empire building that changed societies and economies on both sides of the Atlantic. As you read, you will color code the text, using one color for changes taking place in North America and another for changes taking place in Europe. Based on the color-coding, you will chart the specific effects in America and in Europe. You will brainstorm about the kind(s) of evidence the author might have used to draw such conclusions. After that, you will write a causal summary indicating the large patterns of effects in both places. At the end of the performance task, you will review common text features that help identify a scholar’s argument.

Activity 1: Whole Class Activity

Read the following text, which is from *Atlantic America*. In the text, the author explains how a geographic perspective offers a unique understanding of the American past.

- Read the entire text first to understand the flow of the argument.
- Concentrate specifically on the principles that he says have informed his work. Summarize each one in your words.
- Summarize this reading from the preface by answering this question:
What unique perspective does the author bring to European-American interactions as a geographer?

Preface

Atlantic America...view[s] the United States as a gigantic geographic growth with a continually changing geographic character, structure, and system. It is a historical view but from a different perspective than that commonly taken by historians. The result is a new map of some important features of the American past.

...[B]y geographic growth I...refer to the historical development from a group of precarious European footholds to a transcontinental nation.... And by geographic character, structure, and system I...refer to the human creation of places and of networks of relationships among them. Geography is...a special way of looking at the world...

...*Atlantic America*, with its special attention to localities and regions, networks and circulations, national and intercontinental systems, ...asserts the need for important alterations in scope and emphasis in common understandings of our past....

[I]t may be useful to mention at the outset a few basic principles that have informed this work.

1. Geographic context. Every area is part of a larger mosaic, and its own character cannot be adequately assessed without reference to some encompassing pattern...The United States emerges within an Atlantic World and it everafter must share the continent and adjacent seas with other peoples and powers...
2. Geographic coverage. ...Although the various “peoples” (however defined) of the United States are diverse and uneven in their effect upon major patterns of development, together they constitute “the American people” and each group must be recognized as continuing participants in American history and essential pieces of the American mosaic.
3. Geographic structure. ...Most geographic regions are abstractions and approximations rather than discrete parts, yet it is necessary to give attention to the diverse character and relationships of regions and to the interests and networks that bind them into larger associations.
4. Geographic change. All human geography is subject to change, and...[s]uch alteration...is always uneven in incidence, may be gradual and unappreciated at the time, and can never be fully controlled or predicted. Continual assessment of such internal geographic dynamics is an essential dimension of historical analysis.

... While geography alone cannot provide [a] new version of America, I am convinced that we will never come near to a satisfactory view of this nation and its past until Americans draw far more than they have as yet done upon this venerable but neglected field.

Source: D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800*

1. In your own words, summarize each of Meinig's principles that he says have informed his work...
2. Summarize this reading from the preface by answering this question:
What unique perspective does the author bring to European-American interactions as a geographer?

Activity 2: Group Activity

Read the following text and complete the 3 Steps that follow.

“Geographic Models of Interaction,” Outreach: The Creation of an Atlantic World

The Atlantic World was the scene of a vast interaction rather than merely the transfer of Europeans onto American shores. Instead of a European discovery of a new world, we might better consider it as a sudden and harsh encounter between two old worlds that transformed both and integrated them into a single New World. Our focus is upon the creation of new human geographies resulting from this interaction, and that means those developing not only westward upon the body of America but [also] eastward upon the body of Europe... For it is certain that the geography of each was changed: radically on the American side, with widespread disruption of old patterns and imposition of new ones; [and] more subtly on the European side, with new movements of people, goods, capital, and information flowing through an established spatial system and slowly altering its proportions and directions...

In search of guidance in thinking about so complex a matter, we may...recognize some recurrent general patterns:

1. Exploration: reconnaissance, the search for basic information, the discovery of possibilities.
2. Gathering: exploitation of obvious coastal resources, such as fish, ship timbers, and salt, by extension of routine activities.
3. Barter: commercial opportunism, trade with local populations for exotic goods, testing for further development.
4. Plunder: brigandage, military opportunism, sometimes involving forays into the interior, seizing whatever might have value in European markets.
5. Outpost: fixing a point of commercial exchange; a commitment to overseas investment and assignment of personnel to overseas residence.
6. Imperial Imposition: assertion of formal claim and power over American territory; assignment of governor, soldiers, missionaries, and other agents of European state and society.
7. Implantation: transfer of Europeans as permanent settlers and initiation of self-sustaining colony.
8. Imperial Colony: ...transfer of full complex of institutions, a selected transplant of European culture tending toward expansion and divergence from the home country.

It must be emphasized that this is not a rigid sequence...But the list does offer a useful perspective on a general process in which we can view the first five categories as a prelude, a set of activities that required nothing more than seafaring backed by modest commercial interests and that could be readily discontinued without major loss or disruption...In contrast, subsequent categories clearly imply more substantial encroachment, made possible by conquering and planting to form a firm European nucleus upon lands overseas.

...[I]f we are to stress interaction we must broaden our perspective to bring both sides of the Atlantic into view and try to envision the simultaneous changes in Europe and America through this sequence... The first four phases share fundamental similarities on both sides of the Atlantic: requiring only modest resources, they can be projected from small European ports; and being inherently sporadic and intermittent because of the lack of an obvious commercial infrastructure to connect with on the American side, they result in no fixed point of sustained contact. The commercial outpost marks an important step...Because such a distant outpost required a considerable investment it was likely to be a projection from a major port wherein entrepreneurs had ready access to capital and mercantile connections, although it might well draw upon the energies and earlier experiences of smaller ports as well; and because such an outpost became the focus of a newly constituted economic area it might have widely ramifying social and cultural impact. Imperial imposition expresses a formal link between commercial enterprise and political power, the axis between port and court...On the American side it created a cluster of facilities representing government and church as well as commerce. Implantation begins to draw more fundamentally upon European hinterlands, which become catchment basins for the recruitment of colonists and thereby become bound by ties of kith and kin with these new overseas creations. On the American side such migration will lead inevitably to some degree of disruption of the indigenous population.

We can envision, therefore, general patterns of change spreading inwardly upon each continent as the strands linking them across the Atlantic thicken and multiply. It is a sequence broadly of increasing magnitude of change: in the number of people directly engaged and indirectly affected, in the number and scale of institutions extended across the sea, in the volume of capital invested and goods transported....

Source: D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, Volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800*.

Step 1. After everyone in your group has read the text through once, complete the following chart on butcher paper.

1. How does the title of the reading indicate Meinig's focus?
2. What words or phrases does the author use that tells you that this is an argument about effects of empire building? Identify at least 5 examples. Explain how the larger structure of the text suggests that it is about causation.
3. Using the chart:
 - Provide a 3 to 5 word summary describing each stage.
 - To the right of each summary, provide a concrete example from Spanish colonial period that illustrates that stage - connect last night's homework to today's lesson by providing one example of ecological exchange in each stage
 - Draw a thick line separating the earlier stages from the later stages, based on Meinig's discussion of the key transition.
 - Make a note to the side of the transition explaining why this stage is so important in Meinig's sequence.

Stage	Summary	Example	Evidence of the Columbian Exchange
Exploration			
Gathering			
Barter			
Plunder			
Outpost			
Imperial Imposition			
Implantation			
Imperial Colony			

4. Reread the first paragraph and the last paragraph. Use those sections to write a 25-word summary of his argument.

Step 2. Read the text a second time individually, looking carefully for the effects of contact on both sides of the Atlantic.

- Use one color to identify effects in the Americas
- Use a second color to identify effects in Europe
- Use a third color to identify the relationship between the two regions.

After everyone in the group has finished reading and highlighting, compare your results and attempt to resolve any disagreements. Summarize your findings on the butcher paper using a chart like the one below.

	Developments in the Americas	Atlantic Connections	Developments in Europe
Broad patterns (paragraphs 1 & 5)			
First four phases (first part of paragraph 4)			
Later phases (second part of paragraph 4)			

Step 3: In your group, discuss how Geographic Models of Interaction illustrates what the author said he would do in the Preface to his book. Specifically, talk about:

5. Broad geographic elements of the reading
6. Examples of at least 2 of the 4 principles he introduced in the Preface
7. The ways in which his geographic perspective leads to a different picture of the American colonial period

Check your understanding

- In one sentence, explain how knowing Meinig's geographic perspective helps you to identify his argument.

Activity 3: Apply your understanding

In this activity, you will reflect on what you have read and how to transfer this knowledge to reading other secondary texts.

- Step One:** Write a summary of the author's argument about the large patterns of change on both sides of the Atlantic that resulted from interactions.
 - Begin with a statement that identifies the way his geographic perspective influences his argument.
 - Explain how he provides a "big picture" instead of describing individual European empires and why he does this.
 - Conclude by describing his argument in your own words, though you may want to review his wording in the first and fifth paragraphs.

Step Two: Now it's time to think about how you can use what you've learned from the first two activities to identify an author's argument in secondary texts you read after this. You can also think about what you've learned about how to write history essays as you answer these questions.

- How does the title of the reading indicate an author's focus?
- How can particular words or phrases help you understand what historical thinking skill the author is using?
- What kinds of words or phrases might an author use to let readers know that he/she is presenting the argument?
- How can the overall structure of a text help you understand an author's argument?
- Why is it important to pay particular attention to the beginning and end of a piece of secondary text?

Check your understanding

- Do you recognize what is useful about a scholar's attempt to provide a "big picture"? In general, what is the trend from the beginning of contact to the period of colonization? In broad terms, what is Meinig talking about?