

Romans and Barbarians DBQ  
AP World History

**Romans and Barbarians DBQ**

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1-8. (Some of the documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.)

This question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Write an essay that:

- Has a relevant thesis and supports that thesis with evidence from the documents.
- Uses all or all but one of the documents.
- Analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible. Does not simply summarize the documents individually.
- Takes into account both the sources of the documents and the authors' points of view.
- You may refer to relevant historical facts and developments not mentioned in the documents.

1. Analyze the following documents and interpret the actions of the nomadic tribes who conquered the Roman Empire. Can these nomads be called barbarians? Is there any evidence of change over time of the views held about the nomadic tribes? **What kind of additional documents** would help assess how these tribes were seen, especially by the Romans?

**Historical note:** Historians have dated the year 476 CE as the end of the Roman Empire. However, it continued to be ruled according to traditional Roman customs.

## Document 1

**Source: Salvian, a Christian priest writing in his book: Romans and Barbarians, c. 440**

In what respects can our customs be preferred to those of the Goths and Vandals, or even compared with them? And first, to speak of affection and mutual charity (which, our Lord teaches, is the chief virtue, saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another"), almost all barbarians, at least those who are of one race and kin, love each other, while the Romans persecute each other. For what citizen does not envy his fellow citizen? What citizen shows to his neighbor full charity?

## Document 2

**Source: Advice to a 2<sup>nd</sup> century "barbarian king" from his mother**

If you want to accomplish something and make a name for yourself, destroy everything that others have built and massacre everyone that you have conquered; for you are not better able to rebuild monuments than those constructed by your predecessors and there is no more noble accomplishment for you to make your name.

### Document 3

**Source: unknown Roman historian, circa 300 CE**

Barbarians are driven by evil spirits; "possessed by demons", who force them to commit the most terrible acts...incapable of living according to written laws and only reluctantly tolerating kings...Their lust for gold is immense, their love of drink boundless. Barbarians are without restraint...Although generally they are considered good-looking, they are given to gross personal hygiene...They run dirty and barefoot, even in the winter...They grease their blond hair with butter and care not that it smells rancid...Their reproductive energy is inexhaustible; the Northern climate of their native land, with its long winter nights favors their fantastic urge to procreate...If a barbarian people is driven back or destroyed, another already emerges from the marshes and forests of Germany...Indeed, there are no new barbarian peoples--descendants of the same tribes keep appearing."

### Document 4

Source: Roman historian Tacitus: Germania (written c. 98CE) an account of Germanic tribes.

Whenever they are not fighting, they pass much of their time in the chase, and still more in idleness, giving themselves up to sleep and to feasting, the bravest and the most warlike doing nothing, and surrendering the management of the household, of the home, and of the land, to the women, the old men, and all the weakest members of the family.

They are particularly delighted by gifts from neighbouring tribes, which are sent not only by individuals but also by the state, such as choice steeds, heavy armour, trappings, and neck-chains. We have now taught them to accept money also.

## Document 5

**Source: Ammianus Marcellinus (c.330-395 CE):**

The Battle of Hadrianopolis, 378 CE The barbarians spared neither those who yielded nor those who resisted ... the conquerors, like wild beasts rendered still more savage by the blood they had tasted, and allured by the temptations of groundless hope, marched in a dense column upon Hadrianopolis, resolved to run any risk in order to take it ...

## Document 6

**Source: Greek historian Priscus describes the court of Attila king of the Huns (448)  
(Priscus, fr. 8 in Fragmenta Historicorum Graecoru)**

Attila's residence, which was situated here, was said to be more splendid than his houses in other places. It was made of polished boards, and surrounded with wooden enclosures, designed not so much for protection as for appearance' sake. Not far from the inclosure was a large bath built by Onegesius, who was the second in power among the Scythians. The stones for this bath had been brought from Pannonia, for the barbarians in this district had no stones or trees, but used imported material....

[We were invited to a banquet with Attila at three o'clock] When the hour arrived we went to the palace, along with the embassy from the western Romans, and stood on the threshold of the hall in the presence of Attila. The cupbearers gave us a cup, according to the national custom, that we might pray before we sat down.

### **Document 7**

Source: unknown 4<sup>th</sup> century writer commenting on the decision by Emperor Probus to enlist barbarian warriors into the Roman army. He took 16,000 [German] recruits, all of whom he scattered through the various provinces, incorporating bodies of fifty or sixty in the detachments or among the soldiers along the frontier, for he said that the aid that the Romans received from barbarian auxiliaries must be felt but not seen ...he [Emperor Probus] brought over many other tribes ... they all broke faith ... they roamed over well-nigh the entire world on foot or in ships and did no little damage to the glory of Rome.

### **Document 8**

Source: Cassiodorus (ca. 493-526), secretary to the Roman Emperor King Theodoric

A letter written by King Theodoric to Ungis, the Sword-Bearer. We delight to live after the law of the Romans, whom we seek to defend with our arms; and we are as much interested in the maintenance of morality as we can possibly be in war. For what profit is there in having removed the turmoil of the Barbarians, unless we live according to law? ... our purpose is, God helping us, so to rule that our subjects shall grieve that they did not earlier acquire the blessing of our dominion.