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Free Western Civilization I CLEP Practice Test

10 questions from InstantCert's 480-card Western Civilization I study guide

How to use this PDF

Each of these questions is a sentence with one blank and four choices. Pick the best fit, mark it, and keep going. The answer key with explanations starts after question 10, so do all 10 before you look. No timer. On the real exam you get 45 seconds per question, so if you want a challenge, give yourself 7 and a half minutes for the set. One caveat before you start: this set has two questions on each of five periods and nothing on Early Modern Europe, 1560 to 1648, which is 10% to 15% of the real exam. The real exam also has questions built on a short passage, a map, or a picture, which a blank cannot do.

What your score means

0 to 4 correct

The Western Civilization I CLEP runs on people, terms, and events, and a score in this range usually means the big names are not there yet. Ten questions is a sample, not a diagnosis. Read the explanations all the way through, then take Round 2 on the page linked at the end before you decide how much work is ahead of you.

5 to 7 correct

Right in the middle. Close enough to the line to be worth studying for, and not close enough to walk in cold on an exam that about 1 in 3 civilian test takers and about half of military test takers do not pass. Take Round 2 and see if the number holds.

8 to 10 correct

You know the big names from Mesopotamia to the Reformation. Keep in mind that ten questions with no clock is a sample, that the real exam is 120 questions at 45 seconds each, and that this set has nothing on Early Modern Europe, 1560 to 1648, and nothing on feudalism, Islam, the crusades, or Greek philosophy. Take Round 2, then read the explanation on anything you missed.

Questions

QUESTION 1 OF 10 | ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Large scale irrigation made the expansion of agriculture possible in Mesopotamia and the resulting food _____ provided the material base for the emergence of civilization.

A. taxation
B. redistribution
C. surpluses
D. imports

QUESTION 2 OF 10 | ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Most prominent of the arts which Phoenicians introduced among all the nations with whom they traded was that of _____. It was through them that the Greeks received it; the Greeks passed it on to the Romans; and the Romans gave it to the Germans.

A. mathematics
B. accounting
C. navigation
D. alphabetical writing

QUESTION 3 OF 10 | ANCIENT GREECE AND HELLENISTIC CIVILIZATION

Rugged, mountainous terrain and the fact that so many of the Greeks lived on islands prevented them from creating a single _____.

A. nation
B. race
C. language
D. religion

QUESTION 4 OF 10 | ANCIENT GREECE AND HELLENISTIC CIVILIZATION

Between 490 and 479 BC, the Greeks were invaded twice during what became known as the _____.

A. Punic Wars
B. Persian Wars
C. Peloponnesian Wars
D. Greek Wars

QUESTION 5 OF 10 | ANCIENT ROME

Drafted by a special board of ten men (known as the decemviri) appointed by the Senate in 451 BC, the Law of the _____ formed the basis of all subsequent Roman private law.

A. Twelve Tables
B. Eight Tables
C. Ten Tables
D. Fourteen Tables

QUESTION 6 OF 10 | ANCIENT ROME

In his book, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Edward Gibbon attributed the rise of _____ as the major cause of Rome's eventual collapse.

A. Barbarian tribes
B. Economic troubles
C. Christianity
D. Political instability

QUESTION 7 OF 10 | MEDIEVAL HISTORY

Pope Leo III again sought _____'s help and the king punished the Pope's opposition. In return, the Pope declared him the king of Byzantine. Upon the surrender of the sovereignty of the West into the hands of the emperor of the East, the bishops of Rome became the most important persons in Western Europe.

A. Charlemagne
B. Constantine
C. Augustine
D. Hieronymus

QUESTION 8 OF 10 | MEDIEVAL HISTORY

By 1400, the _____ had conquered almost the entire Byzantine empire; Constantinople stood alone, a capital without a country.

A. Ottoman Turks
B. Hungary
C. Poland
D. France

QUESTION 9 OF 10 | RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

In The Prince, _____ emphasized the acquisition and expansion of political power as the means to restore and maintain order.

A. Medici
B. Erasmus
C. Petrarca
D. Machiavelli

QUESTION 10 OF 10 | RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

Foremost among those who opposed and denounced Tetzel was _____ (1483-1546), an Augustinian monk and a teacher of theology in the university of Wittenberg.

A. Martin Luther
B. Thomas Aquinas
C. Jan Hus
D. John Wycliffe

Answer Key

1. C surpluses

Flood control and irrigation were vital for the farmers who cultivated this land where rain was rare. Only through massive human effort to manage the water supply could an abundant quantity of food be produced. This need to manage the water supply created a need for organization and bureaucracy, which resulted in the creation of cities.

Agricultural surplus comes from technological advances which allow people to grow more food than they or their family can eat. The result of this is that not everyone has to be a farmer--people can start focusing on education, culture, art, and other things which result in civilization.

2. D alphabetical writing

Before or during the rule of the Hyksos in Egypt, the Phoenician settlers in the Delta borrowed from the Egyptians 22 hieratic characters, which they passed on to their Asiatic kinsmen.

3. A nation

Consequently, they created dozens of independent, competing, city states called polis. Key Greek city states included Athens, Sparta, Corinth and Thebes.

A citizen of one city was an alien in any other: he could not marry a woman of a city not his own nor hold property in houses or lands within its territory.

4. B Persian Wars

To the Persians, then at the height of their empire, the divided Greek city-states appeared to offer an easy target for conquest. But the collective defense mounted by the Greeks overcame seemingly impossible odds and defeated the Persians. As a result, Greek culture survived and the myth of Persian invincibility was destroyed.

5. A Twelve Tables

This law code was inscribed upon 12 bronze tablets and publicly displayed in the Forum; it was the first systematic codification of Roman law. Its provisions included legal procedure, debt foreclosure, paternal authority over children, property rights, inheritance, and various major and minor offenses.

The second board of decemviri misused the power in their hands, resulting in the second recession of the plebeians to the Sacred Hill as a protest. The consulate and the tribunate were restored after that.

6. C Christianity

Gibbon's book, published in 1776, argued that Christianity created a belief that a better life existed after death, which fostered an indifference to the present among Roman citizens, thus sapping their desire to sacrifice for the Empire.

7. A Charlemagne

The Byzantine throne was vacant since Empress Irene had deposed her own son Constantine VI and taken out his eyes, but the crown of the Caesars could not be worn by a woman. At the end of 800, Charlemagne went to Rome, and on Christmas Day he was crowned emperor by the pope. The Holy Roman Empire was born.

8. A Ottoman Turks

The Byzantine Empire had served as a buffer between the Muslim Middle East and the Latin West for centuries. In 1453, after a siege of several months, Constantinople fell to the Turks.

9. D Machiavelli

According to Machiavelli, political activity must not be limited by moral considerations. The prince acts on behalf of the state and for the sake of the state must be willing to ignore his conscience. He should do what is right if he can, but if necessary he must be prepared to do wrong.

10. A Martin Luther

In 1510, he had visited Rome and had been shocked at the greed and worldliness of Roman clergy. He was especially affronted by the Church practice of selling indulgences. The Church used indulgences to finance large building projects and the implication of the policy was that sinners could buy God's forgiveness by giving to the Church.

In 1517, Luther drew his famous Ninety-five Theses, or articles, in which he strongly denounced church corruption in general and the practice of selling indulgences in particular. He nailed these theses, written in Latin, to the door of the church at Wittenberg.

Want 10 more? Take Round 2 online

Round 2 is 10 more questions from the same 480 cards. It covers a pharaoh who outlawed every god but one, the historian of the Peloponnesian War, Alexander the Great, Constantine's new capital, the treaty that divided Charlemagne's empire, the investiture controversy, King John against his barons, and the Counter-Reformation. Take Round 1 on the page below, enter your email on the score screen, and the Round 2 link follows.

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The full Western Civilization I study guide

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