

FALL OF ROME - DBQ

Directions: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document in the space provided.

Document 1

Rome is still looked on as the queen of the earth, and the name of the Roman people is respected. But the magnificence of Rome is defaced by the thoughtless conduct of a few, who fall away into error and vice. Some men think they can become immortal by having statues made of them—as if they could be rewarded after death by being cast as bronze figures that have no sense or feeling rather than by striving to perform upright and honorable actions. And they are even eager to have their statues plated with gold.

Others place greater importance on having a couch higher than usual, or splendid clothing. They toil and sweat under a vast burden of cloaks which are fastened to their necks by many clasps.

The whirlpool of banquets and other luxuries I shall pass over lest I go too far. Many people drive their horses recklessly over the flint-paved city streets. They drag behind them huge numbers of slaves, like bands of robbers. As for the lower and poorer classes, some spend the whole night in the wine shops. Some lie concealed in the shady arcades of the theaters. They play at dice so eagerly as to quarrel over them. Such pursuits as these prevent anything worth mentioning from being done in Rome.

SOURCE: The Loeb Classical Library from J. C. Rolfe, translator, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, Vol.1, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1963.37-51 *passim*.

1. Why is Ammianus criticizing many of his countrymen?

2. How are some people in American society today like the Romans he describes?

Document 2

Hence resulted the grievous troubles of his subjects, and the ruinous items of [tariff/taxes] imposts that had been instituted, long continued practice in oppression . . . enfeebled (weakened) and cut the fortunes of rich and poor alike. Finally the burden of tributes (payments) and the repeated increase in taxes compelled some of the most distinguished families, hounded by the fear of the worst, to leave the country; others, crushed by the severity of the tax-collectors, having nothing to give, became permanent inmates of the prisons; and some of these, now weary of life and light; died by the noose (by hanging) as a welcome release.

SOURCE: *Ammianus Marcellinus*, III, 337-39.

1. Why does Ammianus feel that the tax system is to blame for the problems facing Roman society?

2. In your opinion, why were taxes being increased during the 4th century C.E.?

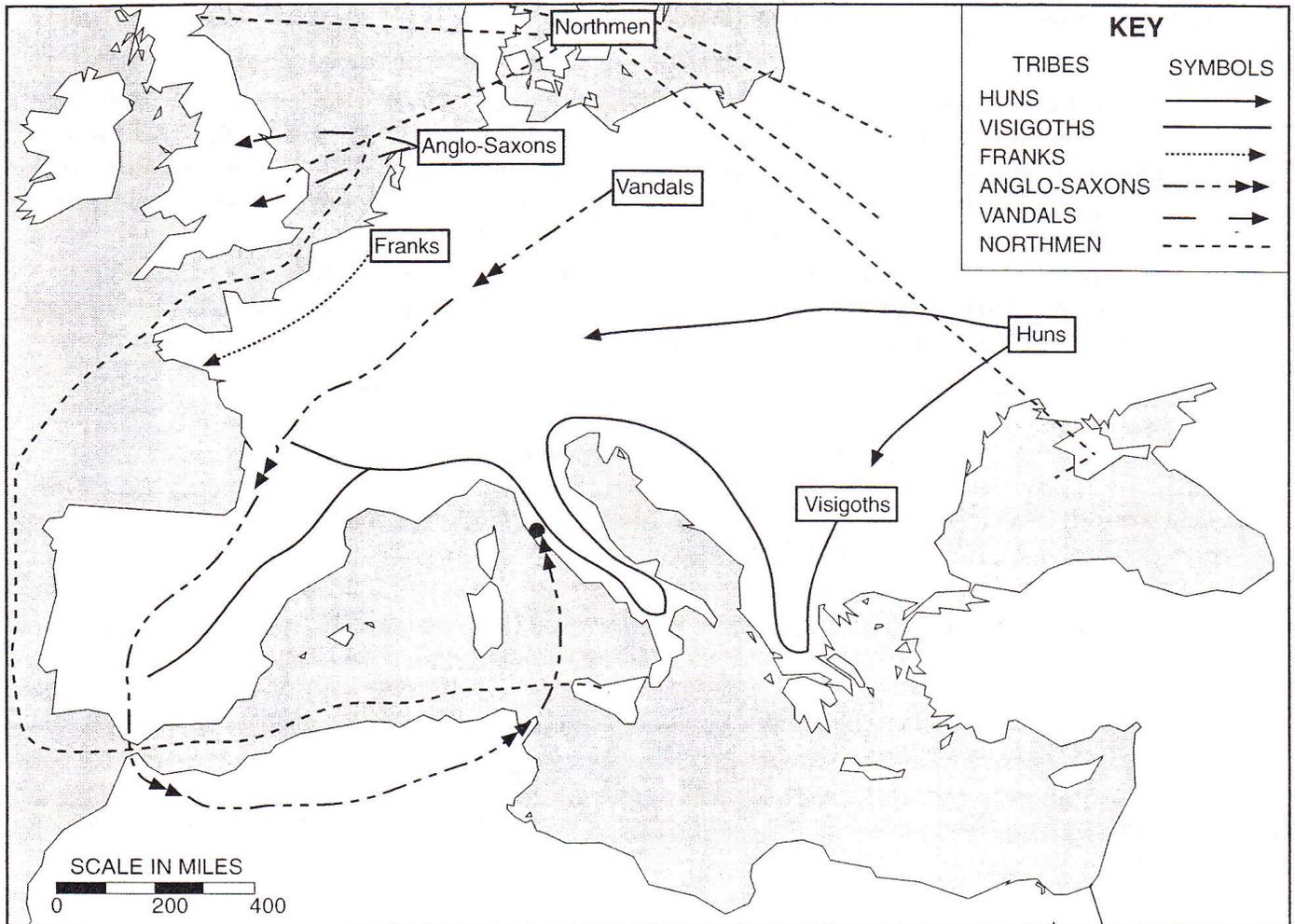
Document 3

In fact the Roman Empire of the West did fall. Not every aspect of the life of Roman subjects was changed by that, but the fall of Rome as a political entity was one of the major events of the history of Western man. It will simply not do to call that fall a myth or to ignore its historical significance merely by focusing on those aspects of Roman life that survived the fall in one form or another. At the opening of the fifth century a massive army, perhaps more than 200,000 strong, stood at the service of the Western emperor and his generals. The destruction of Roman military power in the fifth century was the obvious cause of the collapse of Roman government in the West.

SECONDARY SOURCE: Arther Ferrill, *The Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1986.

1. Why do you think that Ferrill felt it was the destruction of Roman military power in the 5th century that was the reason for the end of the Roman Empire?

Document 4



1. According to the map above, what was the cause of the fall of the Empire?

2. Was this a unified attack?
