The Crusades: Document-Based Question & Argumentative Essay Task

Task: Historians have explained the causes for the crusades in varied ways. Using the documents provided and your background knowledge on the crusades, write an argumentative essay in which you answer the question below.

Essay question: Were the Crusades caused primarily by religious devotion or by the desire for political and economic gain?

Guidelines: In your essay be sure to:
• create a thesis statement.
• use evidence from the primary sources documents and outside information to support your thesis.
• provide analysis of how each piece of evidence helps to support your position.
• consider an alternative or counter claim.
• cite each document you use.
• include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

### Historical Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th century</td>
<td>The feudal system takes hold in Europe, a loosely-organized system of rule in which lords divided their landholdings among lesser lords, in exchange for military service and crops. At the bottom were serfs who worked in the fields. Feudal or Medieval Europe is considered by historians to be a period of little wealth, learning or technological advance. At the same time, the Muslim world is led by the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258 CE), extending from current-day Pakistan through the Middle East, northern Africa, and southern Spain. The Abbasid’s “Golden Age” of technological and scientific advance, as well as wealth and culture, takes place between 750-945 CE.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1054</td>
<td>The Great Schism takes place splitting Greek-speaking Eastern Orthodox Church centered in Constantinople from the Latin-speaking Roman Catholic Church centered in Rome.</td>
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<td>1071</td>
<td>The Seljuk Turks, who were Sunni Muslims, take over most of Asia Minor (from the Byzantines) and Jerusalem</td>
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<td>1073-1085</td>
<td>Pope Gregory VII argues for a new role for the Catholic Church in the world with rule over secular leaders and over clergy. He urged Christian princes to reclaim lands from Muslims in Spain.</td>
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<td>November 1095</td>
<td>Pope Urban II preaches the First Crusade. The aim was to assist Byzantine Christians from attack by Seljuk Turks and to return Jerusalem to Christian control.</td>
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<td>1095-1099</td>
<td>The First Crusade. The first crusade included 4,000 knights and 25,000 infantry from different parts of Western Europe (mainly France). About 40,000 peasants also participated led by Peter the Hermit, with most killed by the Turks in Asia Minor. Jerusalem was captured by the crusaders in 1099; the Jewish and Muslim population of the city was massacred. Four crusader states were established.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1124</td>
<td>Crusaders take Tyre and occupy all of the coast except for Ascalon.</td>
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<td>1144</td>
<td>Zangi, the Muslim ruler of Damascus, takes Edessa, one of the four Crusader states.</td>
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<td>1144-1155</td>
<td>The Second Crusade; crusaders hope to take Edessa but fail.</td>
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<td>1169</td>
<td>Saladín controls Egypt for Nur al-Din, and then seizes Damascus after Nur al-Din dies in 1174.</td>
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<td>1187</td>
<td>Saladín-led Islamic forces capture Jerusalem.</td>
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<td>1187-1192</td>
<td>The Third Crusade; under the leadership of Richard the Lionhearted, the crusaders recover several cities including Jaffa and Acre, but not Jerusalem. Richard negotiates for the right for Christian pilgrims to enter Jerusalem.</td>
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<td>1202-1204</td>
<td>Crusaders plan to attack Egypt. The crusaders contracted Venetian merchants to transport the knights, their horses and foot soldiers. When the crusaders could not pay the Ventians, the Venetian Doge Dandalo offered a deal: attack the Christian city of Zara on the Adriatic Coast instead. Zara-a Catholic city- had revolted against Venetian domination. The crusaders went on to invade Constantinople-capital of the Byzantine Empire- at the request of Alexius, a prince with a claim to the throne. The crusaders invaded Constantinople in 1203 and again in 1204. The city was sacked for several days before the Pope ordered an end. The treasure was split between the crusaders and the Venetians.</td>
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<td>1218-1270</td>
<td>The fifth, sixth and seventh crusades plan to invade Egypt. They each fail.</td>
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<td>1258</td>
<td>The Mongol chief Hulegu, grandson of Genghis Khan, sacks Baghdad, massacring the population and killing the last Abbasid caliph.</td>
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<td>1291</td>
<td>The Mamluk sultan Khalil, son of Qalawun, takes Acre, putting an end to two centuries of crusaders presence in the Middle East.</td>
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**Student background reading**

The Holy Crusades by The History Guide (last revised 2009)

**Maps**

The Crusades in the Holy Lands by the Historical Atlas of the Mediterranean

Christian States in 1100
[http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/maps/crusaders2.jpg](http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/maps/crusaders2.jpg)
In 1094 or 1095, Alexios I Komnenos, the Byzantine emperor, sent to the pope, Urban II, and asked for aid from the west against the Seljuq Turks, who taken nearly all of Asia Minor from him. At the council of Clermont Urban addressed a great crowd and urged all to go to the aid of the Greeks and to recover Palestine from the rule of the Muslims. The speech was not preserved, but below is one of the five accounts of the speech. Robert the Monk wrote this perhaps 25 years after the speech, but he may have been present at the council.

Oh, race of Franks, race from across the mountains, race chosen and beloved by God as shines forth in very many of your works set apart from all nations by the situation of your country, as well as by your catholic faith and the honor of the holy church! To you our discourse is addressed and for you our exhortation is intended. We wish you to know what a grievous cause has led us to Your country, what peril threatening you and all the faithful has brought us.

From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God, a generation forsooth which has not directed its heart and has not entrusted its spirit to God, has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; it has led away a part of the captives into its own country, and a part it has destroyed by cruel tortures; it has either entirely destroyed the churches of God or appropriated them for the rites of its own religion. They destroy the altars, after having defiled them with their uncleanness...

But if you are hindered by love of children, parents and wives, remember what the Lord says in the Gospel, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life." Let none of your possessions detain you, no solicitude for your family affairs, since this land which you inhabit, shut in on all sides by the seas and surrounded by the mountain peaks, is too narrow for your large population; nor does it abound in wealth; and it furnishes scarcely food enough for its cultivators. Hence it is that you murder one another, that you wage war, and that frequently you perish by mutual wounds. Let therefore hatred depart from among you, let your quarrels end, let wars cease, and let all dissensions and controversies slumber. Enter upon the road to the Holy Sepulchre; wrest that land from the wicked race, and subject it to yourselves. That land which as the Scripture says "floweth with milk and honey," was given by God into the possession of the children of Israel Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights. This the Redeemer of the human race has made illustrious by His advent, has beautified by residence, has consecrated by suffering, has redeemed by death, has glorified by burial. This royal city, therefore, situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathens. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated, and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor, because, as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all nations great glory in arms. Accordingly undertake this journey for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven...

SOURCE: Pope Urban II, 1095 as recorded by Robert the Monk.

Vocabulary:
Franks- Germanic tribes who settled in what is now France and Germany. Some Muslim writers called all European crusaders “Franks.”
Defile-to make unclean or impure.
Solicitude- attentive care or protectiveness.
Holy Sepulchre- the tomb where Jesus is buried.
Succor-assistance or help.
Document 2

**Context:** Ekkeherd was a monk and German historian who wrote Hierosolymita, a world history in 1099.

“[After Urban had aroused the spirits of all by the promise of forgiveness to those who undertook the expedition with single-hearted devotion,] toward one hundred thousand men were appointed to the immediate service of God from Aquitaine and Normandy, England, Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Galicia, Gascony, France, Flanders, Lorraine, and from other Christian peoples, whose names I no longer retain. It was truly an army of ‘crusaders,’’ for they bore the sign of the cross on their garments as a reminder that they should mortify {severely discipline} the flesh, and in the hope that they would in this way triumph over the enemies of the cross of Christ, as it had once come to pass in the case of the great Constantine. Thus, through the marvelous and unexampled working of divine dispensation {release}, all these members of Christ, so different in speech, origin, and nationality, were suddenly brought together as one body through their love of Christ.”

**Source:** Ekkehard’s Hierosolymita, a history, 1099.

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Document 3

**Context:** A hostile view of the 2nd Crusade, by an anonymous writer from Würzburg, Germany.

God allowed the Western church, on account of its sins, to be cast down. There arose, indeed, certain pseudo prophets, sons of Belial, and witnesses of anti-Christ, who seduced the Christians with empty words. They constrained all sorts of men, by vain preaching, to set out against the Saracens in order to liberate Jerusalem. The preaching of these men was so enormously influential that the inhabitants of nearly every region, by common vows, offered themselves freely for common destruction. Not only the ordinary people, but kings, dukes, marquises, and other powerful men of this world as well, believed that they thus showed their allegiance to God. The bishops, archbishops, abbots, and other ministers and prelates of the church joined in this error, throwing themselves headlong into it to the great peril of bodies and souls.... The intentions of the various men were different. Some, indeed, lusted after novelties and went in order to learn about new lands. Others there were who were driven by poverty, who were in hard straits at home; these men went to fight, not only against the enemies of Christ's cross, but even against the friends of the Christian name, wherever opportunity appeared, in order to relieve their poverty. There were others who were oppressed by debts to other men or who sought to escape the service due to their lords, or who were even awaiting the punishment merited by their shameful deeds. Such men simulated a zeal for God and hastened chiefly in order to escape from such troubles and anxieties. A few could, with difficulty, be found who had not bowed their knees to Baal, who were directed by a holy and wholesome purpose, and who were kindled by love of the divine majesty to fight earnestly and even to shed their blood for the holy of holies.

**Source:** Annales Herbipolenses, s.a. 1147

**Vocabulary:**

- Prelate: a high ranking member of the clergy.
- Baal: a false god.
Document 4

**Context:** Fulcher, who may have been a French priest, accompanied Count Stephen of Blois and Robert of Normandy on the first crusade.

Consider, I pray, and reflect bow in our time God has transferred the West into the East. For we who were Occidentals now have been made Orientals. He who was a Roman or a Frank is now a Galilaean, or an inhabitant of Palestine. One who was a citizen of Rheims or of Chartres now has been made a citizen of Tyre or of Antioch. We have already forgotten the places of our birth; already they have become unknown to many of us, or, at least, are unmentioned. Some already possess here homes and servants which they have received through inheritance. Some have taken wives not merely of their own people, but Syrians, or Armenians, or even Saracens who have received the grace of baptism....Our parents and relatives from day to day come to join us, abandoning, even though reluctantly, all that they possess. For those who were poor there, here God makes rich. Those who had few coins, here possess countless besants {gold coins} ; and those who had not had a villa, here, by the gift of God, already possess a city. Therefore why should one who has found the East so favorable return to the West? God does not wish those to suffer want who, carrying their crosses, have vowed to follow Him, nay even unto the end....

**SOURCE:** Chronicles of Fulk of Chartres, late 11c.

Document 5

**Context:** Solomon ben Samson was a Jewish scholar in Worms. His account tells the story on an attack on the Jewish community in Mainz in 1096. Crusaders killed thousands of Jews on their way to Jerusalem in large German cities like Speyer, Worms, Mainz and Cologne.

It was on the third of Siwan.... at noon [Tuesday, May 73], that Emico the wicked, the enemy of the Jews, came with his whole army against the city gate, and the citizens opened it up for him. Emico a German noble, led a band of plundering German and French crusaders. Then the enemies of the Lord said to each other: 'look! They have opened up the gate for us. Now let us avenge the blood of 'the hanged one' [Jesus].'

… The foe Emico proclaimed in the hearing of the community that the enemy be driven from the city and be put to flight. Panic was great in the town. Each Jew in the inner court of the bishop girded on his weapons, and all moved towards the palace gate to fight the crusaders and the citizens. They fought each other up to the very gate, but the sins of the Jews brought it about that the enemy…

hen those in the chambers saw the deed of these righteous ones, how the enemy had already come upon them, they then cried out, all of them: "There is nothing better than for us to offer our lives as a sacrifice." [The outnumbered Jews had no chance to win: Emico is reported to have had about 12,000 men.]

The women there girded their loins with strength and slew their sons and their daughters and then themselves. Many men, too, plucked up courage and killed their wives, their sons, their infants. The tender and delicate mother slaughtered the babe she had played with, all of them, men and women arose and slaughtered one another. The maidens and the young brides and grooms looked out of the Windows and in a loud voice cried: "Look and see, O our God, what we do for the sanctification of Thy great name in order not to exchange you for a hanged and crucified one...."

**SOURCE:** The Jewish chronicler, Solomon bar Samson, 1096.

**Vocabulary:**
- Siwan-a month in the Hebrew calendar.
- Plundering-robbing or taking by force.
- Girded their loins-prepared themselves.
And so the streets, squares, houses of two and three stories, sacred places, nunneries, houses for nuns and monks, sacred churches, even the Great Church of God and the imperial palace, were filled with men of the enemy, all of them maddened by war and murderous in spirit, all clad in armor and bearing spears, swords and lances, archers and horsemen boasting terribly, barking like Cerberus and exhaling like Charon, as they sacked the sacred places and trampled on the divine things [and] ran riot over the holy vessels. ... Moreover, they tore children from their mothers and mothers from their children, and they defiled the virgins in the holy chapels, fearing neither God's anger nor man's vengeance. They searched breasts of women to find out whether some womanly ornament or gold was attached or hidden in the body; hair was loosened and head-coverings removed, and those without homes or money were struck down.

Source: Nicholas Mesarites, 1204.

Vocabulary:

Cerberus—a multi-headed hound in Greek mythology.

Charon—the ferryman who takes souls to Hades in Greek mythology.