

State Building and Innovation

Duration

One or two class sessions of approximately 40 minutes each

Resources

1. Teacher's Handout



2. Student Handout



3. Mini Lecture



4. Homework



Objectives of Lesson

- To identify and analyze the factors that contribute to state formation, expansion, and decline.
- To compare and contrast the factors that contributed to state formation, expansion, and decline among major empires from c. 1200 to c. 1450.

College Board Objectives from the 2019–20 CED

Thematic Focus: Governance

- **Unit 1: Learning Objective A:** Explain the systems of government employed by Chinese dynasties and how they developed over time. (p. 38)
- **Unit 1: Learning Objective E:** Explain the causes and effects of the rise of Islamic states over time. (p. 40)
- **Unit 1: Learning Objective H:** Explain how and why various states of South and Southeast Asia developed and maintained power over time. (p. 42)
- **Unit 1: Learning Objective I:** Explain how and why states in the Americas developed and changed over time. (p. 43)
- **Unit 1: Learning Objective J:** Explain how and why states in Africa developed and changed over time. (p.44)
- **Unit 1: Learning Objective L:** Explain the causes and consequences of political decentralization in Europe from c. 1200 to c. 1450. (p. 45)
- **AP® Historical Thinking Skill 1:** Developments and Processes (p. 14)
- **AP® Historical Thinking Skill 5:** Making Connections (p. 14)
- **AP® Reasoning Process 3:** Continuity and Change (p. 15)

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Student Activities

- Close reading of primary and secondary source materials (either in class or for homework)
- Class discussion of state formation, expansion, and decline across the world from c. 1200 to 1450.
- Practice evaluating information and making inferences

How to Use This Lesson Plan

This is a thematic lesson rooted in ideas of governance found throughout Unit 1. There are several different ways that the AP® World History Modern Exam organizes its content. One of these is its focus on themes, such as governance, which run throughout all of the required content. The College Board emphasizes that themes “serve as the connective tissue of the course” and are important to help students develop “deeper conceptual understanding”. Learning to think in terms of themes will help your students make connections across geographic and chronological spans. Through this lesson, students will practice their AP® Historical Thinking Skills, especially AP® Historical Thinking Skill 1: Developments and Processes and AP® Historical Thinking Skill 5: Making Connections.

The purpose of this lesson is to explore the factors that contributed to the formation, expansion, and decline of states from c. 1200 to c. 1450 CE. As with many lessons for this exam, it focuses on big picture ideas and concepts. AP® World History Modern is not a subject that relies heavily on memorization. Instead, students are encouraged to take in a panoramic view of the past in order to think about connections, continuities, and changes over time.

We have included several components with this lesson plan that you can adapt based on the needs of your course. The first component is a mini-lecture of the historical content in Unit 1 that relates to the theme of governance. This content is included below as well as on a separate file that can be printed on its own.

In order to supplement the mini lecture, we have also provided an engagement activity that asks students to develop their own states. This is a fun and creative lesson that is designed to get students to truly understand the thematic lesson of governance. While it is easy to judge historical states, it is much more challenging to try to think of how they would respond to the same historical challenges in their own states. You can expand this exercise as you see fit for your class.

We have also included a small homework assignment to help reinforce the core concepts covered in class discussion.

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Historical Context for State Building and Innovation from c. 1200 to 1450 CE

From c. 1200 to 1450 CE, all of the major geographic areas covered by the AP World History Modern Exam experienced significant shifts in governance. The empires of the classical era and the postclassical era had disappeared by this point, leaving in their places power vacuums that were gradually filled as new, authoritative empires rose to power. These new empires were built on the remains of previous empires (sometimes literally) and they represented both conscious continuity and change from former states.

The empires that emerged during Unit 1 were often large states that controlled vast geographic terrain and wildly diverse human populations. In the Americas, for example, the Aztec (Mexica) Empire controlled all of the area in and around the Valley of Mexico from 1428 to 1521 CE. The empire was controlled through a Triple Alliance of three city-states (Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan) that had combined forces after serving as allies in a brutal civil uprising against the former government. Each of the three city-states had its own distinct culture, politics, and economies. Eventually Tenochtitlan rose as the dominant city-state, while Texcoco and Tlacopan took on a more tributary role.

The Triple Alliance of the Aztec Empire developed a governance system that effectively used tribute and imperial authority to manage its vast territory. When the Aztecs would conquer a new city-state, they would leave the vanquished leaders in power, require them to pay tribute, and force their vanquished foes to provide military forces when necessary to defend the Aztec Empire. In exchange, the tributary city-states were allowed to maintain local autonomy and authority.

Empires in the Middle East and Asia represent a counterpoint to the political model developed by the Aztecs. Unlike the Aztecs, they were not interested in making complicated systems of tributary governments. Instead, they favored an imperial model that implemented strict control under the auspices of the ruling dynasties. By c. 1200 to 1450 CE, however, many of these expansionist and imperialist empires of the Middle East and Asia were beginning to struggle. In China, for example, the Song Dynasty fell to the Jin Dynasty and eventually the Mongols. The vast Byzantine Empires slowly lost land to the Islamic states. Finally, the once vast Abbasid Dynasty lost its power to the Mamluk Sultanate and then the Seljuk Turks. While there were different internal and external factors that contributed to the fall of all three of these empires, they all shared the fact that their vast terrain and diverse populations were becoming increasingly unmanageable.

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As old empires crumbled, new ones emerged. Many of the new states that rose to power from c. 1200 to 1450 CE gained authority by controlling key points in the trade routes. Many of the most prominent new states took advantage of the easily mappable ocean currents and predictable weather patterns in the Indian Ocean to capitalize on maritime trade. The Sultanate of Malacca, the kingdom of Oman, and the trade hubs of Mombassa and Kilwa on the Swahili Coast were able to gain power by controlling key ports on the Indian Ocean trade routes.

Land based trade was also a factor behind the rise and fall of new states. Long distance land trade routes were especially important to Southeast Asia. The areas now known as Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos were three separate kingdoms. The Khmer Kingdom included much of modern day Thailand and Cambodia. The Champa State included much of modern day Vietnam. Dait-Viet included parts of modern day Vietnam and Laos. The Champa State was particularly important to the economics of the area because it provided agricultural tribute to China. The rich wetlands and fertile farmland made it, and its neighboring kingdoms in Southeast Asia, major agricultural producers and merchants.

The states that developed from 1200 to 1450 CE used belief systems, in addition to the control of trade and geographic territory, to unify their power. Belief systems provided a means of social cohesion, allowing governments to unify their people under a shared spiritual worldview. In Dar al-Islam, for example, non-Arabs were invited to convert to Islam in order to enlarge the Muslim community, or ummah. In Song China, a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoist beliefs stressed social harmony, community values, and the obligations of citizenry in order to unite the population.

Belief systems could also be used as a means to assert power over other groups. In some cases, such as in the Delhi Sultanate, local religious beliefs were forced out in order to make room for the religions of the conqueror. The Qutub Minar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a strong example of this approach to existing religious practices. The Qutub Minar is a minaret that was built on the ruins of a Hindu temple. Stones from surrounding Hindu temples were used in the minaret itself. The Delhi Sultanate fostered Islam as its official religion, displacing Hinduism. Some Hindus responded the encroachment of Islam with their own faith revival. Called the Bhakti Movement, this religious revival movement emphasized individual spirituality over ritual or collective religious practice.

Empires that prospered during this time period were often innovative empires that found unique ways to respond to challenges in order to turn disadvantages into ways to gain

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political and economic power. In Tenochtitlan, for example, the geographic environment posed a challenge. The city was built on marshland that was not inherently conducive to large scale agriculture. In response, the city developed a system of bridges and floating agricultural islands, called chinampas, that allowed the city to both provide for its residents and produce a surplus for trade. Not all innovations were so benevolent. The Inca's innovative terrace farming system, for example, was built using the newly formed mit'a system that required all citizens to perform unpaid, hard manual labor for the government for long periods of time.

Many empires also innovated intellectually. In Song China, the newly developed urban trade centers were bustling metropolises where people exchanged both ideas and goods. In the capital city of Kaifeng, people could move freely. Without a curfew or restrictions on movement, people from different parts of the world began to participate in the global exchange of ideas. Similarly, Baghdad became a major intellectual center as it simultaneously grew as the heart of new economic and political state. At the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, scholars worked to translate the classic works of the ancient Greeks in Arabic in order to debate their contents. The development of strong states allowed these intellectual innovations to occur, making innovation one of the defining characteristics of Unit 1: The Global Tapestry.

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State Building and Innovation

Instructions

In order to better understand the challenges of state building and innovation from c. 1200 to 1450 CE, you will be asked to form an imaginary state working in a small group of your peers. In the initial part of this exercise, you will establish the conceptual foundations for your new state, just like the emergent states in Unit 1 had to define their own economic, political, and intellectual values.

State Formation

①

Name of the state

Population of the state

State motto

State Flag

Describe the geography of the state

Write or type your response in this area.

What are the natural resources available in your state?

Write or type your response in this area.

Commentary

This lesson is designed to help develop the following

College Board Objectives from the 2019-20 CED

Thematic Focus: Governance

AP® Historical Thinking Skill 1: Developments and Processes (p. 14)

AP® Historical Thinking Skill 5: Making Connections (p. 14)

AP® Reasoning Process 3: Continuity and Change (p. 15)

① You can expand this section as appropriate for your class. Some students really enjoy the opportunity to do something fun and creative in an AP® class. It can be fun to encourage students to really get into various aspects of their state. It is often surprising to see what students could value in a state!

Does the state have an official religion? If so, what is it and why? If not, why not?

Write or type your response in this area.

Describe the government structure of your state. Who is in power? Why?

Write or type your response in this area.

State Expansion

Your state has conquered a neighboring state in order to access valuable natural resources. How do you treat the state you have conquered? Explain both your actions and the rationale behind them.

Write or type your response in this area.

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You have valuable natural resources in your state that you would like to trade. Based on the geography of your state, how can you best engage in trade? How can you effectively engage with other trade hubs near you?

Write or type your response in this area.

There is a small religious sect in your state that is propagating ideas that are seen by many to be challenging, even borderline blasphemous. How do you respond? Why?

Write or type your response in this area.

As a result of your success in trade, your state has developed several cosmopolitan urban centers. In these urban centers, people from all different places get together to exchange ideas. Some of these ideas are challenging to the principles of your government. How do you respond? Why?

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State Building and Innovation

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This homework exercise builds from the class lesson on state building and innovation. For this assignment, you will be asked to review the development and growth of your imaginary state in light of one of the historical states that emerged in this time period.

Based on the initial aspects that went into forming your state, which historical state from c. 1200 to 1450 is your state most similar to? Why?

Write or type your response in this area.

Based on the your responses to challenges in governance, trade, and religious belief, which historical state from c. 1200 to 1450 is your state most similar to? Why?

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