

# The SAT Subject Tests™

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# Answer Explanations

TO PRACTICE QUESTIONS FROM  
*THE SAT SUBJECT TESTS STUDENT GUIDE*

World History

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# SAT Subject Test in World History

This document gives detailed answer explanations to world history practice questions from *The SAT Subject Tests™ Student Guide*. By reviewing these explanations, you'll get to know the types of questions on the test and learn your strengths and weaknesses. Estimated difficulty level is based on a 1–5 scale, with 1 the easiest and 5 the most difficult.

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**1. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (B)* is correct. According to *The Analects*, the foundational text of Confucianism, filial piety (*xiao*) is considered to be one of the key qualities that all humans should seek to cultivate. As described by Confucius, filial piety entails being obedient and caring toward one's parents and elder siblings, supporting them in their old age and performing prescribed rituals for their spirits after their death. Confucius argued that the universal practice of filial piety is one of the requirements for the establishment of a harmonious society.

**2. Difficulty: 5**

*Choice (D)* is correct. The monastic tradition in Christianity originated in the late third and early fourth century of the common era in the eastern Mediterranean region, especially in and around Egypt. The earliest Christian monks, collectively known as the Desert Fathers, advocated physical withdrawal from society and leading a life of meditation and prayer. Some of the early practitioners of monasticism followed the example of Saint Antony of Egypt (251–356 C.E.) and led a solitary (eremitic) lifestyle, whereas others followed the example of Saint Pachomius (290–346 C.E.) and settled in communal (cenobitic) dwellings. Both groups, however, saw the pursuit of riches and earthly pleasures such as rich food and elaborate clothing as a major obstacle to leading a good Christian life. Answer choices (A) and (E) are incorrect because the Christian monastic ideal generally developed after the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire under Constantine I in 313 C.E.

**3. Difficulty: 3**

*Choice (A)* is correct. The Silk Routes (also known as the Silk Roads) were a series of overland trade routes stretching from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the northern shores of the Black Sea, through central Asia, to China. There is evidence of long-distance travel and trade along the Silk Routes from as early as the second century B.C.E., but their prominence in the history of Eurasia increased in the first two centuries of the common era, when both the western and the eastern terminus were under politically stable imperial rule (by the Roman Empire and Han dynasty China, respectively).

In this period, the Silk Routes became an important conduit for the exchange of both trade goods (such as silk and spices from East and southeast Asia, glassware from the Roman Empire, and horses from Central Asia) and ideas (such as the spread of Buddhism from Central Asia to China and of Nestorian Christianity from the Eastern Mediterranean to Central Asia).

**4. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (D)* is correct. Cast bronze or brass plaques decorated in the characteristic style shown in the image are a well-known art form from the Kingdom of Benin—an African state that existed in parts of present-day Nigeria between the 15th and 19th centuries C.E. Many of these so-called Benin Bronzes were seized from the Kingdom of Benin by a British occupation force in the late 19th century and are currently on display in museums in Great Britain.

**5. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (E)* is correct. The earliest river-valley civilizations in the Near East arose in Lower Mesopotamia, the alluvial plain of the lower Tigris, and Euphrates rivers in present-day Central and Southern Iraq. The region lies outside the Near East's "Fertile Crescent" and is one of very low precipitation receiving on average between 4 and 10 inches of rainfall per year. On the other hand, with the development of early irrigation techniques and irrigation canal infrastructure (beginning circa 3,000 B.C.E.), Lower Mesopotamia could be transformed into an extremely productive agricultural environment, as the region's rivers could provide not only sufficient water for irrigation but also fertile silt to improve the fertility of the soil.

**6. Difficulty: 2**

*Choice (A)* is correct. The *taiji* or *yin-and-yang* symbol shown represents an important principle in Daoism and in East Asian thought in general. It is a visual representation of the idea that the universe achieves harmony through the interplay of and balance between the two complementary forces or principles of *yin* (the passive principle symbolizing earth and the female) and *yang* (the active principle symbolizing heaven or the sky and the male).

**7. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (B)* is correct. After the death of Muhammad in 632 C.E., the early Islamic state continued to expand under the first four Caliphs (the *Rashidun* caliphs, 632–661 C.E.) and the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750 C.E.). By 750 C.E., the world of Islam stretched from east to west from Khurasan—the easternmost province of the former Persian Sassanid Empire—in central Asia (represented on the map by numbered dot 1, indicating the location of the city of Merv, in present-day Turkmenistan), to the Atlantic Seaboard of North Africa (represented on the map by numbered dot 9, indicating the location of the city of Casablanca, in present-day Morocco). The correct answer is therefore (B), 1 and 9.

**8. Difficulty: 3**

*Choice (D)* is correct. The *encomienda* system, as established in the Spanish colonies in the Americas and in the Philippines, shared many important features with manorialism, the economic, political, and legal system of medieval Europe that regulated relations between enserfed peasants and their feudal lords. The similarities between the two systems are not coincidental; in fact, the *encomienda* grew out of a number of practices that arose during the Christian reconquest of Spain—practices which, in turn, represented an attempt to establish a quasi-manorial system in the newly conquered areas of Spain. An example of a similarity between manorialism and the *encomienda* system is the paternalistic relationship which both established between the lord and his serfs, and the *encomendero* and the Native Americans placed under his charge. Both the manorial lord and the *encomendero*, could extract taxes/tribute, or various services from their subjects, and both were given certain judicial powers over serfs and Native Americans, respectively. Although Native Americans attached to *encomiendas* remained technically the owners of their land, in practice their ability to leave the *encomienda* was severely limited and they often became, like manorial serfs in Europe, bound to the land.

**9. Difficulty: 3**

*Choice (E)* is correct. Mercantilism was the dominant economic philosophy in Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries, and most European countries adopted economic policies that could be described as mercantilist during this period. Mercantilists argued that the total amount of wealth circulating in the world economy is constant and that a country's economic strength is directly proportional to the amount of precious metals controlled by its government and its merchants. Consequently, mercantilists argued that a country's trade policies ought to be crafted in such a way as to always maintain a positive or "favorable" balance of precious metal flows. In other words, to ensure that the amount of gold and silver entering the economy as foreign payments for exports was always greater than the amount of gold and silver leaving the economy as domestic payments for imports.

**10. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (A)* is correct. It can be deduced from the quote that its author believes that politics should always be approached dispassionately and from a position of the national interest. The author rules out ethical or moral reasoning directly, and religious reasoning indirectly, as being of any use in political decision making, stating that "the welfare of our country" must always take precedence over "considerations of justice or injustice, or mercy or cruelty." He also rejects social convention as a principle that should guide policy, stating that considerations of "praise or ignominy" must likewise be set aside. These views were famously articulated by Niccolò Machiavelli in his treatise *The Prince* (first published in 1532).

**11. Difficulty: 2**

*Choice (C)* is correct. Social Darwinists, such as Herbert Spencer, argued that the history of human societies and races has been shaped by the same principles as those that Charles Darwin had postulated for biological evolution, namely the principles of natural selection and survival of the fittest. Social Darwinists, therefore, tended to interpret the geopolitical dominance of Europe (and people of European birth or ancestry) in their late-19th- and early-20th-century world as both proof for the argument that Europeans were more highly evolved than other races and as a justification for continued European colonial rule worldwide.

**12. Difficulty: 1**

*Choice (C)* is correct. By the end of the Second World War, British India had a large Muslim minority (in addition to the Hindu majority and smaller Sikh, Buddhist, and Zoroastrian minorities), representing between a quarter and one-third of the population. The Muslim population was largest in the wide band of territory across northern India, and Muslims were the majority in the important provinces of Punjab, Sindh and East Bengal. Although the Indian National Congress of Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru strongly opposed sectarian divisions within the independence movement, many Indian Muslims felt that Indian National Congress was dominated by Hindu political interests and that, should India remain unified after the British withdrawal, it would inevitably become a Hindu state. As a result of these fears, the Muslim League of Muhammad Ali Jinnah began supporting the "Two Nation Theory" and the idea of creating a separate state of Pakistan. During the hastily conceived and executed British withdrawal from India in 1947, the two-state solution became a reality and the former British India was partitioned into a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority Pakistan (which at the time included both present-day Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh). The partition was accompanied by widespread violence and population displacement, and unresolved issues from the partition have continued to plague Indo-Pakistani relations since 1947, especially regarding the status of Kashmir.

**13. Difficulty: 4**

*Choice (B)* is correct. Most of the immigrants or descendants of immigrants to Western Europe who settled there in the period between 1950 and 1980 came as economic migrants. Although economic immigration was a significant factor in most Western European countries during this period, the more restrictive naturalization laws of countries such as Germany, Austria, and Switzerland resulted in a smaller percentage of immigrants to these countries being able to obtain full citizenship than immigrants elsewhere in Western Europe. Germany, in particular, pursued a policy of active recruitment of foreign guest worker immigrants during its period of strong economic growth in the 1960s, coupled with fewer opportunities (at least before the mid-1990s when citizenship laws were relaxed) for these immigrants or their children to become German citizens.