The Calamitous 14th Century: Was it that bad? (AP)

Directions: In *A Distant Mirror*, Barbara Tuchman describes "a violent, tormented, bewildered, suffering and disintegrating age" known as the Dark Ages. Read about the various events associated with the Late Middle Ages and rank them in order of importance from 1 to 8 in creating a dark period in European History.

**The Babylonian Captivity (1309-1378):** During this time period, the Pope moved from Rome (Italy) to Avignon (France) known as the Avignon Papacy. This initiated a series of seven French popes who reigned from Avignon, and who generally favored France. The city of Rome was left destitute. A contemporary account noted: "...living in [Avignon], in the Babylon of the West... Here reign the successors of the poor fishermen of Galilee [who] have strangely forgotten their origin...to see these men loaded with gold and clad in purple, boasting of the spoils of princes and nations; to see luxurious palaces and heights crowned with fortifications, instead of a boat turned downwards for [their] shelter..."

**Hundred Years War (1337-1453):** During most of the middle ages, wars had been short and small in scale. In the 14th century, a new trend developed as a series of conflicts between the English and the French known as the Hundred Years’ War (1337 to 1453) occurred. In 1328, Charles IV, the son of Philip the Fair, died. An assembly of French barons gave the crown to Philip VI of Valois, the nephew of Philip the Fair. Edward III, King of England, asserted that he had a superior claim to the throne because his mother was Philip the Fair’s daughter making him Philip the Fair’s grandson. However, the French did not want an English king on their throne. Hence, the war began and both European monarchs imposed high taxes upon the people. The French taxed salt, bread, and wine. The war, fought entirely on French soil, raged off and on for more than 100 years. English victories were followed by French victories, then a period of stalemate would ensue, until the conflicts again rose to the surface. This war marked the end of English attempts to control continental territory and the beginning of its emphasis upon maritime supremacy. By the end of the Hundred Years War, the French population had been cut in half because warfare and disease (i.e. Black Death).

**Black Death (1347 to...):** In the early 1330s an outbreak of deadly bubonic plague occurred in China. In October of 1347, several Italian merchant ships returned from a trip to the Black Sea, one of the key links in trade with China. When the ships docked in Sicily, many of those on board were already dying of plague. Once people are infected, they infect others very rapidly. Within days the disease spread to the city and the surrounding countryside. Plague causes fever and a painful swelling of the lymph glands called buboes, which is how it gets its name. The disease also causes spots on the skin that are red at first and then turn black. After five years, 25 million people were dead—one-third of Europe’s population. Medieval society never recovered from the results of the plague. So many people had died that there were serious labor shortages all over Europe. European Christians prayed devoutly for deliverance from the plague but their prayers were not answered. The Italian writer Boccaccio said: “its victims often "ate lunch with their friends and dinner with their ancestors in paradise... No doctor’s advice, no medicine could overcome or alleviate this disease... Many ended their lives in the streets both at night and during the day; and many others who died in their houses were only known to be dead because the neighbours smelled their decaying bodies. Dead bodies filled every corner.”

**Great Schism (1378-1415):** In the year 1378, the Roman Catholic Church split when the King of France decided that he did not like the Italian Pope and elected one of his own. During the Great Schism, there were two popes claiming authority over the Catholic Church. (The "Babylonian Captivity" was one of the main factors causing the Great Schism). In 1377, Pope Gregory XI made a significant move and returned the papacy to Rome. After Pope Gregory XI died, an Italian Pope was elected. However, the French did not like him. Therefore, they elected their own pope who ruled from Avignon where the pope had been living. Western Europe was politically divided over which pope to support. France, Sicily, Scotland, Castile (Spain), Aragon (Spain) and Portugal supported the Avignon pope while Rome, Flanders (Belgium), Poland, Hungary, and Germany supported the Roman pope. Many citizens were confused over this split. The effects of this split on the general population can be summarized as follows, "The papal office suffered the most; the pope’s authority diminished as pious Christians became bewildered and disgusted." (The schism ended with the election of a single pope, Pope Martin V, in 1417.)
English Peasant Revolts of 1381: The peasants who survived the Black Death wanted to improve their lifestyle. Feudal law stated that peasants could only leave their village if they had their lord's permission. However, after the Black Death, lords actively encouraged peasants to leave the village where they lived to come to work for them. Peasants could demand higher wages as they knew that a lord was desperate to get in his harvest. So the government faced the prospect of peasants leaving their villages to find a better ‘deal’ from a lord thus upsetting the whole idea of the Feudal System which had been introduced to tie peasants to the land. To curb peasants roaming around the countryside looking for better pay, the government introduced the Statute of Labourers in 1351 that stated: No peasants could be paid more than the wages paid in 1346. No lord or master should offer more wages than paid in 1346. No peasants could leave the village they belonged to. In 1381, Wat Tyler and peasant supporters marched to London in order to present a petition to the king. 60,000 strong, the petitioned called for the abolition of serfdom and end to heavy taxation. Workers in the cities, especially London, rose in support of the peasants and their demands. King Richard II, then only fourteen years of age, offered to meet the peasant demands. Before the meeting, the rebels plundered Lambeth Palace and burned books and furniture. King Richard II agreed to meet with Wat Tyler and his peasant followers. At the meeting, Wat Tyler was knocked off his horse and stabbed in the stomach, killing him. The rebellion was over. Wat Tyler’s head was cut from his corpse and displayed on London Bridge.

Other Peasant Revolts:
Bulgaria, 1277-1280
Flanders, 1323-1328
Estonia, 1343-1345
Hungary, 1382
Kent, 1450
Cornish, 1497

Little Ice Age (1250 - 1850) and the Famine of 1315: Around 1250, glaciers began expanding and ice flows crept southward across the globe. By 1300, summers grew cold and wet. Torrential rains plagued the globe and weather became unpredictable. Winters brought unprecedented snowfall. The resulting weather changes made agriculture difficult. Massive rainfall and cooler temperatures ruined crop yields in Europe. The poor weather killed crops and other plants. Throughout the fourteenth century, Europe experienced a number of famines leading to mass starvation. Climate change wiped out crops leaving people with less to eat. The worst of the famines began in 1315. In spring 1315, rain fell especially heavy and continued into summer while the temperatures remained cool. Crops failed and there was little straw or hay for animals. Scarcity led to a spike in food prices. Wheat prices rose by as much as 300% in parts of Europe making it impossible for many to buy. People began to starve to death. As people died, life expectancy dropped from 35 to 30 years. People ate their animals, seeds, grass, and each other. The elderly intentionally starved themselves to death to save food for others. Parents abandoned their children. The famine killed up to 25% of the population. Real numbers are difficult to determine. The poor weather let up in 1317, but Europe did not recover until 1325.

Population Growth and Decline Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000-1050</td>
<td>109.5</td>
<td>1500-1550</td>
<td>113.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1050-1100</td>
<td>104.3</td>
<td>1550-1600</td>
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<td>1100-1150</td>
<td>104.2</td>
<td>1600-1650</td>
<td>112.4</td>
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<td>1150-1200</td>
<td>122.0</td>
<td>1650-1700</td>
<td>115.0</td>
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<td>1200-1250</td>
<td>113.1</td>
<td>1700-1750</td>
<td>121.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1250-1300</td>
<td>105.8</td>
<td>1750-1800</td>
<td>134.3</td>
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<td>1300-1350</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>1800-1850</td>
<td>141.5</td>
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<td>1350-1400</td>
<td>88.2</td>
<td>1850-1900</td>
<td>150.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1450</td>
<td>133.3</td>
<td>1900-1950</td>
<td>136.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The indices are based on the figures for 100 (that is 1000 = 100). These figures are estimates only.

Rank:

Babylonian Captivity
Hundred Years Year
Black Death
Great Schism
Peasant Revolts
Little Ice Age
Famine of 1315
Population Change

Rationale: (explain why you chose what you did for the most impactful)
The AP European History course seeks to apprentice students to the practice of history by explicitly stressing the development of historical thinking skills while learning about the past. We will focus on developing the following nine skills throughout the school year.

**Skill 1: Historical Causation**

- Historical Thinking involves the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationships among multiple historical causes and effects, distinguishing between those that are long-term and proximate, and among coincidence, causation and correlation.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Compare causes and/or effects, including between short-term and long-term effects.
  - Analyze and evaluate the interaction of multiple causes and or effects.
  - Assess historical contingency by distinguishing among coincidence, causation, and correlation, as well as critique existing interpretations of cause and effect.
- Activity:

  Use this site: [http://www.sjsu.edu/people/patricia.backer/history/middle.htm](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/patricia.backer/history/middle.htm)
  (You may look at the other links in that article; the main article should give you enough information to complete the table below.)

  - Explain the impact of the technological advancements during the Middle Ages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSE (what is the advancement)</th>
<th>EFFECT (how did that effect society)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Which technological advancement had the greatest impact? Choose one and explain why you believe that to be so.
Skill 2: Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time –

- Historical thinking involves the ability to recognize, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time of varying length, as well as the ability to relate these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Analyze and evaluate historical patterns of continuity and change over time.
  - Connect patterns of continuity and change over time to larger historical processes or themes.

**Activity (complete on a separate piece of paper):**
- Make a time line of your life with at least 10 events listed from your birth until now.
- Answer the questions below.
  1) What in your life has remained the same?
  2) What in your life has changed?
  3) How can you explain why some things changed and others have not?
  4) Can you point to a turning point in your life? That would be a significant event that was pivotal in any change in your life?

Skill 3: Periodization –

- Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct models that historians use to divide history into discrete periods. To accomplish this periodization, historians identify turning points, and they recognize that the choice of specific dates accords a higher value to one narrative, region, or group than to another narrative, region, or group. How one defines historical periods depends on what one considers most significant in society – economic, social, religious, or cultural life – so historical thinking involves being aware of how the circumstances and contexts of a historian’s work might shape his or her choices about periodization.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Explain ways that historical events and processes can be organized within blocks of time.
  - Analyze and evaluate competing models of periodization of European History.

**Activity:**
- Complete DBQ activity (below): Middle Ages or Early Renaissance: Differing Interpretations

**DBQ Activity: Middle Ages or Early Renaissance? Differing Interpretations**

**Historical Context:**

According to the humanist writers and thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Middle Ages were a thousand years of ignorance and superstition. These Renaissance men who saw themselves as leaders in an era of rebirth and learning looked to the ancient Greeks and Romans for models in literature and art as their view of man and his world. Some historians questioned this interpretation, with its sharp division between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Instead they pointed out evidence of increased intellectual activity starting in the medieval universities. The debate centers around whether the Renaissance was a unique age of a continuation of the Middle Ages.

**Question:** Was the Renaissance, with its unique advances, a period distinct from the Middle Ages or was it a continuation – the high point – of the Middle Ages?
Part A: Examine each document below carefully, and answer the questions that follow.

- Carefully read the document based question
- Read each document carefully, underlining key phrases and words that address the DBQ. You may also use the margin to make notes. Answer the questions that follow each document before moving onto the next document. As you answer the questions that follow, be sure to consider HOW the document relates to the question and include that connection in your response.
- Put the document into “buckets” – categories that share a common theme. You should be able to sort the documents into at least two categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bucket 1: Documents that support the Renaissance as a distinct period.</th>
<th>Bucket 2: Documents that support the Renaissance as continuation of the Middle Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document #______</td>
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<td>Document #______</td>
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</table>

Your Position: Do you think the Renaissance was a continuation of the Middle Ages, or do you think it was a distinct period?

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**Document 1**

This excerpt is from *The Renaissance* by Wassae K. Ferguson (New York: Holt, 1940, pp. 1–3).

The idea that there was a great revival or rebirth of literature and the arts, after a thousand years of cultural sterility, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries originated with the Italian writers of the Renaissance themselves. Finding the feudal and ecclesiastical literature and Gothic art of the Middle Ages uncongenial to their taste, they turned for inspiration to the civilization of Roman and Greek antiquity. . . . Thus, from the beginning, the double conception of medieval darkness and subsequent cultural rebirth was colored by the acceptance of classical standards.

According to Ferguson how did writers and thinkers of the 15th and 16th centuries view themselves? Were they part of the Middle Ages or of a different era – the Renaissance?
Document 2

This excerpt is from The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy, (1878) by Jacob Burckhardt.

In the Middle Ages both sides of human consciousness lay dreaming or half awake beneath a common veil. The veil was woven of faith, illusion, and childish prepossession. . . . Man was conscious of himself only as member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation—only through some general category. In Italy this veil first melted into air . . . ; man became a spiritual individual, and recognized himself as such. In the same way the Greek had once distinguished himself from barbarian. . . .

When this impulse to the highest individual development was combined with a powerful and varied nature, . . . then arose the “all-sided man”. . . . in Italy at the time of the Renaissance we find artists who in every branch created new and perfect works, and who also made the greatest impression as men.

According to historian Jacob Burckhardt, was there a difference between the people of the Middle Ages and people of the Renaissance? Explain.

________________________________________________________________________________________

Document 3

This excerpt is from A History of Europe from 1378 to 1494 written by W. T. Waugh.

It has become evident that there was no suspension of intellectual life in medieval Europe. If there was a Revival of Learning, it occurred about the year A.D. 1000, since when human knowledge has never ceased to advance. It cannot even be said that the Humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries revived the study of the classics. Scholars had been nourished on the classics for centuries. . . . In the first place, the classical writer most studied in the Middle Ages was a Greek, Aristotle. . . . And actually the medieval scholars of western Europe were acquainted with most of the Latin authors familiar to us. . . .

The merits of the artists and the influence of the Humanist scholars must be acknowledged. But one must beware of exaggerating the practical results of their work. It is undeniable that very few people knew or cared anything about the sayings or doings of the Humanists. . . . [and] the plain fact remains that the masterpieces of Renaissance sculpture can be seen by few, those of Renaissance painting by fewer. And in those days, unless you actually saw them, you could not tell what they were like. . . .

Differing Interpretations

According to historian W. T. Waugh, when did modern culture and the work of the humanists begin? Was there a renaissance? What evidence does he cite for his point of view?

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Document 4
The following is an excerpt from *Petrarch's Secret*, translated by W. H. Draper, 1911.

My principle is that, as concerning the glory from which we may hope for here below [on earth], it is right for us to seek it while we are here below. One may expect to enjoy that other more radiant glory in heaven, when we shall have there arrived, and when one will have no more care or wish for the glory of earth. Therefore, as I think, it is in the true order that mortal men should first care for mortal things. . . .

According to Petrarch, a humanist, with what should man be concerned? Is this similar or different from the interests of medieval man? Explain.

Document 5
This excerpt is from *Life and Letters of Erasmus* by A. J. Froude, 1894.

The world is waking out of a long deep sleep. The old ignorance is still defended. Time was when learning was only found in the religious orders. The religious orders nowadays care only for money and sensuality [indulgence of the appetites], while learning has passed to secular princes and peers and courtiers. Where in school or monastery will you find so many distinguished and accomplished men as form your English Court? Shame on us all! The tables of priests and divines run with wine and echo with drunken noise and scurrilous jest, while in princes' halls is heard only grave and modest conversation on points of morals or knowledge. . . . That king of yours [Henry VIII of England] may bring back the golden age, though I shall not live to enjoy it, as my tale draws to an end.

According to Erasmus, what change is coming? How does he feel about priests, the church, and the religious order? Why do you think he feels this way?

Document 7
Johannes Kepler, a German astronomer, made this observation in 1596.

Now we shall proceed to the astronomical determination of the orbits and to geometrical considerations. If these do not confirm the thesis, then all our previous effects have doubtless been in vain.

According to Kepler, how are theories proven? Is this consistent with the attitude of a “medieval” scientist? Explain.
After reviewing the documents formulate a thesis statement that you could use when writing a DBQ. Be sure to answer all parts of the question and take a position.

Thesis statement:


Bonus Question: Is there another historical time period that you can relate this topic to?

Skill 4: Comparison –

- Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, compare, and evaluate multiple historical developments within one society, one or more developments across or between different societies, and in various chronological and geographical contexts. It also involves the ability to identify, compare, and evaluate multiple perspectives on a given historical experience.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Compare related historical developments and processes across place, time, and/or different societies, or within one society.
  - Explain and evaluate multiple and differing perspectives on a given historical phenomenon.
- Activity:
  - Complete the activity: did women and men benefit equally from the Renaissance? The Tale of Two Classes.

Did Women and Men Benefit Equally from the Renaissance? The Tale of Two Classes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From the Time Period: Primary Source Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source #1: Christine de Pizan, <em>The Book of Ladies</em>, early 15th Century</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If it were customary to send little girls to school and to teach them the same subjects as are taught to boys, they would learn just as fully and would understand for subtleties of all arts and science. Indeed it may be they would understand them better... [since] their
understanding is so sharp…If they understand less it is because they do not go out and see so many different places and things but stay at home and mind their own work.

**Did Women Have a Renaissance, Joan Kelly, 1977**

*An American Historian who earned her Ph.D. from Columbia University*

Men and women did not benefit equally in society because women were denied independence in education, domestic life, and society. For historians, it becomes apparent that there was a sharp distinction between the inferior domestic sphere of women and the superior public realm of men. By looking at Castiglione, the author of the *Courtier*, writings on Renaissance high life it becomes even more obvious that the plight of women did not change. On one hand, the Renaissance lady appears equal to the courtier since she learns “knowledge of letters, of music, of painting, and how to dance and how to be festive”. But for woman, charm had become the primary occupation and aim. While men learned about arms (war), women’s purpose was to “entertain graciously every kind of man”. The Renaissance lady was not desired, not loved for herself, but her ability to entertain. Hence, greater independence was given to men and it became unladylike for women to be in positions of power.

**The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy by Jacob Burckhardt, 1860**

*A German Historian who became a Professor at major university; considered the founder of cultural history*

If one focuses on the great women, the noble women of the Renaissance, they can see that man and woman both benefited. While fewer women than man had the opportunity to study, both men and women could study the classics and literary works since education became open to women. Therefore, education allowed for more equality. Women were also known to study medicine and philosophy in the Renaissance. Evidence that further supports women’s growth can be seen in books written in honor of women and books written about women. Based on this description, women were as much humanists as men…The highest praise which could then be given to the great Italian women was that they had the mind and the courage of men.

(A) Provide one piece of evidence that supports Joan Kelly’s argument.

(B) Provide one piece of evidence that supports Jacob Burckhardt’s argument.

(C) Considering the Renaissance, which historian makes the stronger argument?

**Skill 5: Contextualization –**

- Historical thinking involves the ability to connect historical events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national, or global processes.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Explain and evaluate ways in which specific historical phenomena, events, or processes connect to broader regional, national or global processes occurring at the same time.
  - Explain and evaluate ways in which a phenomenon, event, or process connects to other similar historical phenomena across time and place.
  - Historical events must not be evaluated in isolation from the total cultural and intellectual environment of the time in which they took place.
Activity (complete on a separate piece of paper):
- Watch “Moments in Time: The Curse of the Rat The Black Death”
  [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYjaN939gHo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYjaN939gHo)
- Create a Mind Map with the Black Death as your central event; then identify the (1) economic context (2) the cultural context (3) the environmental context (4) the social context (5) the political context of Europe (6) the political context beyond Europe.

Skill 6: Historical Argumentation

- Historical thinking involves the ability to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question about the past and to address that question through the construction of an argument. A plausible and persuasive argument requires a clear, comprehensive and analytical thesis, supported by relevant historical evidence – not simply evidence that supports a preferred or preconceived position. Additionally, argumentation involves the capacity to describe, analyze, and evaluate the arguments of others in light of available evidence.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Analyze commonly accepted historical arguments and explain how an argument has been constructed from historical evidence.
  - Construct convincing interpretations through analysis of disparate, relevant historical evidence.
  - Evaluate and synthesize conflicting historical evidence to construct persuasive historical arguments.

Activity: Deconstruction Template

The Deconstruction Template below will help you organize your analysis in a meaningful way. Try it based on your reading of “The Black Death: A Socioeconomic Perspective.”
[http://www.trinityhistory.org/Crisis/Black%20Death%20historiography.PDF](http://www.trinityhistory.org/Crisis/Black%20Death%20historiography.PDF) (rotate document)

Author: Who wrote the essay or gave the speech?
Title: What is the title of the essay? If a speech, what is the setting in which it was given?
Topic: What is the topic of the essay or speech?
Question: What question does the essay answer?
Thesis: What is the author’s answer to the question?
Reasons: What specific details or evidence does the author use to prove his or her thesis?

Author: ____________________________
Title/Setting: ____________________________

Topic: ____________________________
Question:

Thesis:

Reasons:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Skill 7: Appropriate use of Relevant Historical Evidence

- Historical thinking involves the ability to describe and evaluate evidence about the past using diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, archaeological artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary sources), and requires paying attention to the content, authorship, purpose, format, and audience of such sources. It involves the capacity to extract useful information, make supportable inferences, and draw appropriate conclusions from historical evidence, while also noting the context in which the evidence was produced and used, recognizing its limitations and assessing the points of view it reflects.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Analyze features of historical evidence such as audience, purpose, point of view, format, argument, limitations and context germane to the evidence considered.
  - Based on analysis and evaluation of historical evidence, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions.

Activity:

- Let’s look at Pope Boniface VIII’s famous Bull, *Unam sanctam*:
  - [https://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/B8-unam.asp](https://legacy.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/B8-unam.asp)

- **Part I**: Complete the following organizer to help you better understand the insights gained from looking at this primary source document.

Evidence type/Underlying Questions

| Content – What point (s) is the document trying to make? What does the document not say? What of its content is usable by a historian? |  |
| **Authorship** – Who wrote the document? What do I know about this person that would affect the reliability of the document? What was their position in society? |
| **Purpose** – Why did the author create the source? Why was the document created at this time? Why has it survived to the present? How does its purpose affect its reliability or usefulness? |
| **Format** – What is the format of the source (e.g., text, image, art, newspaper article, letter, cartoon, lyrics, op-ed)? What is the intent of the medium? Does the sources’ format or genre add meaning to what the source explicitly states? |
| **Audience** – Who was the source created for? How might the audience have affected the content of the source? How might the audience have affected the reliability of the source? |
| **Context** – When and where was the source produced? What contemporaneous events might have affected the author’s viewpoint and/or message? How does the context affect the reliability of a source? |
| **Author’s point of view** – What was the author’s point of view? Does the author’s point of view undermine the explicit purpose of the source? How can you tell, if you can tell, what other beliefs the author might hold? |
| **Limitations** – What does the document not tell me? What might have limited the knowledge of the author? What other kinds of sources might fill in the content gaps? What other documents might offer alternatives to the author’s point of view? What other documents might help to better understand the author’s own point of view? |

- **Part II**: What conclusions can you reliably make about the Church’s view of its own power and importance in the 14th century? Where do they gain such authority and who might disagree with them?
Skill 8: Interpretation

- Historical thinking involves the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct diverse, interpretations of the past, and to be aware of how particular circumstances and contexts in which individual historians work and write also shape their interpretation of past events. Historical interpretation requires analyzing evidence, reasoning, contexts, and points of view found in both primary and secondary sources.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Analyze diverse historical interpretations.
  - Evaluate how historians’ perspectives influence their interpretations and how models of historical interpretation change over time.

Let’s return to the Historical Argumentation deconstruction template from Skill 6 above. Let’s add a section that prompts us to interpret a primary or secondary sources.


Deconstruction Template

**Author:** Who wrote the essay or gave the speech?

**Title:** What is the title of the essay? If a speech, what is the setting in which it was given?

**Topic:** What is the topic of the essay or speech?

**Question:** What question does the essay answer?

**Thesis:** What is the author’s answer to the question?

**Reasons:** What specific details or evidence does the author use to prove his or her thesis?

**Evaluation:** Do you think the author proved his or her thesis? What was strong? What was weak?

Author:

Title/Setting:

________________________________________

**Topic:**

________________________________________

**Question:**

________________________________________
Skill 9: Synthesis

- Historical thinking involves the ability to develop meaningful and persuasive new understandings of the past by applying all of the other historical thinking skills, by drawing appropriately on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry or disciplines, and by creatively fusing disparate, relevant, and sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works. Additionally, synthesis may involve applying insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present.
- Proficient students should be able to:
  - Combine disparate, sometimes contradictory evidence from primary sources and secondary works in order to create a persuasive understanding of the past.
  - Apply insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstance, including the present.

Consider Barbara Tuchman’s comments excerpted in the Calamitous 14th Century. She presents a rather dismal picture of a series of earth changing events during that time. Please write a paragraph responding to the following prompt. Be sure to support your answer with facts from the current time:

**Are we living in the calamitous 21st Century?**
**Map Activity:**

On the blank map you will need to fill in all of the following countries (43 countries).

**Countries:**

| 1. Iceland | 14. Finland | 24. Greece |
| 2. Ireland | 15. Latvia  | 25. Macedonia |
| 4. France  | 17. Belarus  | 27. Bosnia |
| 7. Germany | 20. Romania  | 30. Slovenia |
| 10. Denmark | 23. Estonia  | 33. Austria |
| 11. Poland |  | 34. Italy |
| 12. Norway |  | 35. Switzerland |
|            |  | 37. Russia |
|            |  | 38. Montenegro |

(Very small countries: Draw an arrow to these!)

| 39. Andorra | 40. Luxembourg | 41. Monaco |
| 42. Liechtenstein | 43. San Marino |