

Formative Assessment: Evaluating Evidence



Thinking historically means identifying the evidence related to a claim, assessing its validity, and corroborating it by comparing multiple sources' interpretations of events, developments, or processes.

Directions: Read the following secondary source and then answer the questions on evaluating evidence that follow. The multiple choice questions for this formative assessment are Weighted Multiple Choice (WMC) questions. This means that there is only one *incorrect* answer, but the other 3 choices are weighted. The *best* answer is 3 points, the *second-best* answer is 2 points, and the *third-best* answer is 1 point. The *incorrect* answer is 0 points.

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Source: Hernán Cortés, "Second Letter to Spanish Emperor Charles V," October 30, 1520.
Translated by Francis Augustus MacNutt, 1908.

It is believed that [the Aztecs] must have some system of justice for punishing the wicked, because one of the natives of this province stole some gold from a Spaniard, and I told this to that Magiscatzin, the greatest lord among them. After making their investigation, they pursued him to a city which is near there, called Churultecal, whence they brought him prisoner, and delivered him to me with the gold, telling me that I might chastise him. I thanked them for the diligence they took in this, but told them that, inasmuch as I was in their country, they might chastise him according to their custom, and that I did not wish to meddle with the punishment of their people while I was in their country.

They thanked me for this, and took him with a public crier, who proclaimed his offence, leading him through the great market place, where they put him at the foot of a sort of theatre, and with a loud voice again published his offence. And all having seen him, they beat him on the head with sticks until they killed him. We have seen many others in the prisons, who, it is said, were confined there for thefts, and other offences they had committed.



muy mucha mas gente que Granada tenia al tiempo q se gano: y muy mejor abastecida de las cosas de la tierra que es de pan y de aues y caça y pechado de los rios y de otras legumbres y cosas q ellos comen muy buenas. Y en esta ciudad vn mercado en que corria diariamente todos los dias ay en el de rrr. mill animas arriba vendiendo y comprando sin otros muchos mercadillos que ay por la ciudad en partes. En este mercado ay todas quantas cosas alli de mantenimiento como de vestido y calçado q ellos tratan y puede aver. Y ferias de oro y plata y piedras y de otras cosas de plumajes tan bien cõcertado como puede ser en todas las plagas y mercados del mundo. Y mucha loça de todas maneras y muy buena y tal como la mejor de España. Tienen mucha lena y carbon y yeruas de comer y medicinales. Y casas donde lanan las cabeças como barueros y las rapa. Y baños. Finalmente que entre ellos ay toda manera de buena orden y policia. Y es gente de toda razon y concierto: y tal que lo mejor de Africa no se le yguala. Es esta prouincia de muchos valles llanos y hermosos y todos labrados y sembrados sin auer en ella cosa vacua. Tiene entorzo la prouincia. r. leguas y mas. La orden q ha hasta agora se a alcanzado q la gente della tiene en gouernar se es casi como las señorias de Venecia y Benoua o España. Pero q no ay señor general de todos. Y muchos señores y todos residen en esta ciudad: los pueblos de la tierra sō labradores y son vasallos de estos señores: y cada vno tiene su tierra por si. Tienen vnos mas que otros. E para las guerras que hã de ordenar juntan se todos: y todos juntos las ordenan y cõcertan. Leche q deuen de tener alguna manera de justicia pa castigar los malos: por que vno de los naturales desta prouincia jurto cierto oro a vn español: y yo lo oire a qd. Adagisacin q es el mayor señor de todos: y hizieron su pesquisa: y siguieron lo fasta vna ciudad q esta cerca de alli q se dice Churultecal: de alli lo traerõ preso y me lo entregard con el oro: y me dijeron q yo lo hiziese castigar. Yo les agradeçi la diligencia q en ello pusieron: y les dije q pues estava en su tierra q ellos lo castigassen como lo acostumbrauan: y q yo no me queria entremeter en castigarlos supos estando en su tierra: delo qual me dieron gracias y lo tomaron: y cõ plego publico q manifestaua su delito le hizieron llevar por aquel gran mercado: y alli le pusieron al pie de vno como theatro q esta en medio del dicho mercado: y en cima del theatro subio el pregonero: y a altas voces tomo a dezir el delito de aquel. E viendolo todos le dieron con vnas porras en la cabeza hasta q lo mataron. E muchos otros auemos visto en prisiones q dizen que los tienen por furtos y cosas que han hecho. Y en esta prouincia por vna visitaçion q yo en ella mande hazer. d. mill vezinos con otra prouincia pequena que esta junto con ella que se dice Binacingo que bien ala manera de estos sin señor natural. Los quales no menos estan por vasallos de vna alteza q estos de Tascalteca.

Estando muy catolico señor: en aquel real que tenia en el campo quando en la guerra desta prouincia estava: venieron a mi seys señores muy principales vasallos de Ahuacema con fasta dosientos hombres para su feruicio y me dijeron que venian de parte del dicho Ahuacema a me dezir como el queria ser vasallo de vna alteza y mi amigo: y q viesse yo que era lo q queria que el otelle por vna alteza en cada vn año de tributo alli de oro como de plata y piezdras y cildanos y ropa de algodõn y otras cosas de las q el tenia: y que todo lo daria con tanto q yo no fuesse a su tierra: y q lo havia por que era muy estéril y falta de todos mantenimientos: y que le peñaria de que yo padeciese necesidad y los q conmigo venian. E con ellos me embio fasta mill pesos de oro: y otras raras piezas de ropa de algodõn de la q ellos viste. Y estuuió conmigo en mucha parte de la guerra hasta en fin della q vieron bien lo que los españoles pobian: y las pazes que con los desta prouincia se hizieron: y el ofrecimiento que al feruicio de vna. S. majestad los señores y toda la tierra hizierõ: d q segun parçio y ellos mostraua no ouerõ mucho pleyer: por q trabajarõ por muchas vias y forz

The above printed copy of the text on the right is written in Castilian Spanish and was published by Jacobo Cromberger in 1522 in Seville, Spain. A digital version is available from at the [Library of Congress](#).



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1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **The Aztecs had a sophisticated government with a clear system of justice.**
 - A. "but told them that, inasmuch as I was in their country, they might chastise him according to their custom..."
 - B. "And all having seen him, they beat him on the head with sticks until they killed him."
 - C. "one of the natives of this province stole some gold from a Spaniard..."
 - D. "We have seen many others in the prisons, who, it is said, were confined there for thefts, and other offences they had committed."

2. Justify your choice in the space below.



1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **The Aztecs had a sophisticated government with a clear system of justice.**
 - A. "but told them that, inasmuch as I was in their country, they might chastise him according to their custom..." **(2 points)**
 - B. "And all having seen him, they beat him on the head with sticks until they killed him." **(1 points)**
 - C. "one of the natives of this province stole some gold from a Spaniard..." **(0 points)**
 - D. "We have seen many others in the prisons, who, it is said, were confined there for thefts, and other offences they had committed." **(3 points)**

2. Justify your choice in the space below.

Choice D, worth 3 points, is the best piece of evidence to support the claim that the Aztecs had a sophisticated government and system of justice. It reveals that the Aztecs had prisons and imprisoned people for theft, which would ensure order and peace between neighbors within the society. Choice A also supports the claim, since Cortes notes that they have a "custom" for punishment, but it isn't quite as detailed as Choice D. Choice B is only worth 1 point, because it implies that there was a system of justice, but not a sophisticated government. Lastly, Choice C is worth 0 points because it provides no clues to prove that the claim is true.



1. Weighted Multiple Choice

3 points (Choice D)	2 points (Choice A)	1 point (Choice B)	0 points (Choice C)
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

2. Short Answer: Justify Your Answer

3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Student thoroughly justifies their choice of the <i>best</i> piece of evidence—which is worth three points as shown on the teacher key—that supports the claim.	Student thoroughly justifies their choice of either the 1 or 2 point option from the WMC question. OR Student's justification of the 3 point option needs deeper analysis.	Student's justification of their choice (either the 1 or 2 point option) lacks deep analysis.	Student either makes no attempt to justify their choice OR try to justify the 0 point option.
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

Total: _____ / 6

