Document-Based Assessment

Richard the Lion-heart, King and Crusader

Richard I, king of England from 1189 to 1199, spent only six months in England during his reign. The rest of the time he was at war abroad, most famously as one of the leaders of the Third Crusade. His daring as a warrior gained him the nickname “Lion-heart,” by which he is still referred to today. On his way home from the Holy Land, Richard was held for ransom by Emperor Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire. It took his mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, a year to raise the money to free him.

Document A

“Some... advised the king against engaging such a large army, as he then only had around fifty knights with him. Yet their trepidation [fear] only made him more courageous. Putting spur to horse, he charged into the enemy, broke through and scattered their battleline, destroying them. . . . When this was over the king put out an edict by public crier. All the locals who wanted peace could freely come and go, unhindered by his people, and enjoy guaranteed liberty.”

—From Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi, eyewitness account of the Third Crusade

Document B

“Yet to the sad ’tis comfort to complain
Friends I have many, and promises abound;
Shame will be theirs; if, for winters twain,
Unransom’d, I still bear a tyrant’s chain.
Full well they know, my lords and nobles all . . .
Ne’er did I slight my poorest vassal’s call . . .
They know this well who now are rich and strong . . .
That far from them, in hostile bonds I strain.”

—poem by King Richard I, written while imprisoned by Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV

Document C

“[King Richard I of England] is one of the most romantic figures of all English history. . . . Richard has become the very epitome [symbol] of chivalry, the knight fighting bravely for his kingdom, his church, and his lady with ax, shield, and horse. . . . That in actual history, [he] does not quite measure up to the standards of his own legend does not dull his allure [appeal]. He was a brilliant military mind and a fearsome general . . . in single combat he was unrivaled in bravery and recklessness. . . . Richard is remembered for his bravado [daring] and cunning—and his extravagance. He is not remembered for his compassion, his tact, or his restraint.”

—from Warriors of God, by James Reston, Jr., 2001

Document D

Analyzing Documents

Use your knowledge of medieval Europe and the Crusades and Documents A, B, C, and D to answer questions 1–4.

1. According to Document A, Richard I
   A bravely but foolishly rushed at the enemy when he was outnumbered.
   B was a good commander who stayed in the background.
   C was a brave conqueror and town crier.
   D was an impressive warrior and compassionate conqueror.

2. Which of the following statements BEST summarizes Reston’s view of Richard the Lion-heart?
   A Although he was a brave warrior, he does not measure up to his own legend.
   B He was compassionate and tactful.
   C He is a truly heroic figure worthy of his reputation.
   D His legend leaves out his good qualities.

3. What do the creators of Documents A and D want to convey about Richard I?
   A his bravery and compassion
   B his bravery and skill as a poet
   C his bravery and skill as a warrior
   D his greatness as a Christian ruler

4. Writing Task Which of the documents above are most reliable, and why? How does each one help you understand Richard’s character? Write your own description of Richard’s character, using at least three of the documents to support your thesis.