**Philip II and the Twenty Years’ War: Historical Background**

**Directions:** Read the following selection, and summarize the main ideas for each of the following topics: Spanish control of the seas, political ambitions of Philip II of Spain, the weak position of England, and religious conflict.

**Introduction: King Philip of Spain and the Twenty Years’ War**

... The Spanish Armada clash was not an isolated conflict, but merely one battle in a long, bitter war that embroiled not just Spain and England, but all of Western Europe in the ambitions of Spain’s King Philip II. This “Twenty Years’ War” stretched from the mid-1580s to 1604, and it was nothing less than the first world war. Its battles were waged on the European landmass and in the jungles of Panama and the Caribbean, in the warm waters off Europe’s Atlantic Coast, nourished by the Gulf Stream, and in the cold brine of the Pacific’s vastness. ... Perhaps the most crucial encounter of the war was not the Spanish Armada battle itself, but a lesser-known clash between Spain and England at sea and on land in 1589. ... It was in this year that an English Armada under the partial command of that renowned privateer, Sir Francis Drake, mounted a bold amphibious operation, motivated by a triple set of objectives to break the power of the Spanish crown. ...

The outcome of the 1589 battle would have momentous consequences for the history of settlement in the Western Hemisphere, for the balance of power on the European Continent, even for the melancholy and tragic history of Ireland. ... Spain would emerge strengthened in the decade following the Armada, with a fortified navy that was finally capable of fending off buccaneer attacks and reliably transporting precious metals from the Americas. ... England definitely did not rule the seas following the Armada incident; Spain would control the waters for many decades more before passing control to the Dutch, to be followed by a titanic clash between England and France for hegemony over the sea routes in the 1700s. ...

**The Sixteenth Century and the Backdrop to the Anglo-Spanish Clash**

... Spain and Portugal derived enormous wealth from their discoveries in the form of precious metals and slaves, along with new foodstuffs that would rescue Europe from a potential nutritional crisis as its population mushroomed. Throughout the sixteenth century, the sea routes of the Atlantic Ocean were dotted from one horizon to the other with the characteristic sight of Spanish treasure galleons transporting immense hauls of gold and silver from the mines of Mexico and Peru. Inevitably this inspired envy in other West European nations with Atlantic coastlines, who coveted Spain’s newfound affluence and its New World empire. ... [T]he Western Hemisphere remained largely a zone of Spanish influence for most of the 1500s, until the Iberian country’s snowballing wealth prompted more concerted actions by France and England to partake in the riches by the middle of the century. ...

Sixteenth-century Europe featured a human epicenter in the towering personage of the Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who, via a remarkable web of dynastic links, reigned over a vast landmass extending from the Netherlands to the Italian provinces, from the Central European landmass to Spain. It was Charles who presided over and consolidated the vast realms acquired for Spain by conquistadors like Hernando Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, and it was he who first directed his imperial troops against the dispersing wave of the Protestant Reformation in Germany. Charles opined that his empire was far too vast for one individual to

govern alone, so at his abdication he split his realm, giving his son, King Philip II, control over his Western domains, chiefly Spain, the Netherlands, Sardinia, and parts of Italy. . . .

. . . Henry VIII [of England] had waged war with France late in his reign, the latest eruption in hostilities between the two ancient rivals. Mary I and Elizabeth I also invaded northern France during the 1550s and early 1560s over the disputed region of Calais. The French were victorious in both cases, permanently expelling the English from the European Continent and further aggravating the mutual enmity between the two countries. Philip, meanwhile, had designs on the French throne and a keen interest in suppressing the Protestant Huguenot movement headquartered in northern France, and he was suspicious of France’s intentions toward settlement in the Americas. . . . Spain’s imperial status and incredible wealth were undoubtedly desired by its neighbors, but there was little hint of the bloody conflict that would embroil Spain and England later in the century. This changed, however, when the English broke into the slave trade in 1562.

**Hawkins, Drake, and the San Juan de Ulua Incident**

The repugnant yet extremely profitable business of trafficking in black African slaves had been initiated by the Portuguese in the 1400s, and by the mid-1500s Spain had gained a monopoly on the trade’s most lucrative side—selling captured West Africans to eager mine foremen and plantation operators in the Americas. . . . The first English slave trader was a bearded, salty, yet gentlemanly sailor named John Hawkins . . . [who] undertook his first slaving expedition in 1562, making a tidy profit on his human cargo which he promptly reported to Queen Elizabeth I. The queen was initially disapproving of Hawkins’s entrepreneurial undertakings, but dropped her opposition when Hawkins revealed the extent of his profits and, in short order, herself underwrote Hawkins’s next two slaving expeditions, . . . providing ships and other material assistance. . . .

. . . Philip had earned a reputation as the quintessential Holy Warrior for the Church in its Counterreformation efforts, a role that he relished, and not only English citizens but also Catholic Italians, French, even Portuguese regarded his ardor and machinations with trepidation. The Netherlands in particular became a flash point. Several provinces in the northern Dutch Lowlands began to publicly espouse Protestantism and found a clever underground leader in the person of William the Silent of Orange, who waged a crafty war of attrition and harassment in the 1570s against the Netherlands’ Spanish overlords that Philip was not able to suppress. English religious sympathy for Dutch Protestants was coupled with considerable dismay about the adverse effects of Spanish military actions on the valuable commercial markets for English goods that had long existed in the Low Countries. The Protestant Huguenots of France also inspired sympathy across the English Channel, especially in the aftermath of the gratuitously bloody slaughter of twenty thousand of them by French Catholics in the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre of 1572. The Spanish, for their part, took exception to what they viewed as repression and disenfranchisement of English (and eventually Irish) Catholics. . . . [M]any Spaniards began to see themselves as at least the protectors of England’s Catholic population, just as some English cast themselves as the defenders of Dutch, French, and German Protestants on the Continent. The religious strife intensified when Pope Pius V shocked Elizabeth by excommunicating her in 1570 from the Catholic Church and absolving English Catholics from recognizing her authority. . . . [T]he pontiff’s bull of excommunication changed matters, since it led her [Elizabeth I] to identify

more with the Protestant movement. She came to support the Dutch rebels and Huguenots, and she sponsored measures against Catholics within the English realm, as many were suspected of disloyalty or questionable reliability. Catholics complained of persecution, and many departed England in exile. . . .

**Sea Dogs, Deteriorating Relations, and the Spanish Armada**

. . . . [H]ostilities between the English and Spanish erupted openly when, in 1585, the English dispatched seven thousand soldiers under Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester, to support the Dutch Protestant uprising. Leicester's operations in 1585 accomplished little against the professional army of the Spanish, but the gauntlet had now been officially thrown down: England and Spain were at war. . . . English interference in the Low Countries and the unabated depredations of the buccaneers had already irritated the Spanish, but Mary's [Mary, Queen of Scots] execution proved to be the last straw. Philip began to organize an invasion force against the island nation. Led by the Duke of Medina Sidonia, this Spanish Armada would be dispatched in the "Enterprise of England," to rendezvous with a fleet transporting the army of Alessandro Farnese, the Duke of Parma, toward the shores of England. . . .

**The Repulse of the Spanish and the Invasion of the English Armada**

. . . All in all, the Armada and the English fleet largely fought each other to a stalemate before the Spanish forces, led by the Duke of Medina Sidonia, decided to forsake the effort for the time being and sail around the tip of Scotland and Ireland back to Spain. It was here that Spanish sailors were tested in a baptism by fire, with ferocious ocean storms battering their sails and challenging every technical faculty in their stock of experience. Some Spanish ships foundered or were shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland, but most managed to return, battered yet intact. . . .

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The Spanish Armada: Contemporary Sources

Directions: Below are adaptations of contemporary accounts of the encounters between the English navy and the great armada of Spain. In some places, modern punctuation, spelling, and capitalization have been added to make the selections easier to read. Read the selections, and summarize the main ideas in each.

Document 1

The English Mercurie, July 1588

... Such preparations have been long made, by her Majesty's wisdom and foresight for the defense of the Kingdom, that setting aside the common accidents of war, no great danger is to be apprehended, though the Spaniards should land in any part of it; since besides the two camps at Tilbury and Blackheath, large bodies of [English] militia are disposed along the coast under experienced commanders, with proper instructions how to behave, in case a descent cannot be prevented till a greater force may be drawn together, and several of her Majesty's Council and the nobility have raised troops of horse at their own charge, well trained and officered, which are ready to take the field at an hour's warning. ... In so much, that by God's blessing there is no doubt but this unjust and daring enterprise of the King of Spain will turn out to his everlasting shame and dishonor, as all ranks of people, without respect of religion, seem resolute to defend the sacred person of their sovereign and the laws and liberties of this country, against all foreign invaders. ...

The scheme is said to be thus settled, that as soon as their great Armada arrives in sight of the Flemish ports, the Prince of Parma is to get out with his transports and join them. After which, they are in a body to force their way up the River Thames against all impediments, and land as near London as they can. But while these harbours are so closely watched by the united squadron of her Majesty and the states, commanded by the Lord Henry Seymour, it is the general opinion that his highness [the Duke of Parma] will find it impossible to put to sea, and we hope the Lord Admiral Howard will prevent the Spanish navy from being in a condition to raise the blockade.

London July 23rd

The Lord Mayor, Alderman, Common-council, and Lieutenancies of this great city wait upon her majesty at Westminster this afternoon, with assurances of their hearty and unanimous resolution, to stand by and support her Majesty at this critical juncture, with their lives and fortunes, when her invaluable life, the true Protestant religion, and all the privileges of free-born Englishmen are threatened by an open attack from the bigoted and blood-thirsty adversaries, the Spaniards. The Queen received them very graciously, and assured them she did not doubt their zealous endeavors to serve their country on the present very important occasion; that for her part she relied on God's providence and the goodness of her cause, and was resolved to run all risks with her faithful subjects.
Letter from Sir John Hawkins to Sir Francis Walsingham
after the Battle of Gravelines

. . . We met with this fleet, somewhat to the westward of Plymouth upon Sunday in the morning, being the 21 of July where we had some small fight with them in the afternoon. By the coming aboard one of the other Spaniards, a great ship a Biscaner [a ship built for use along the Biscay Bay], spent her foremast, and box sprite [a long pole at the front of a ship to which the rigging for the main mast is attached], which was left by the fleet in the sea, and so taken up by Sir Francis Drake the next morning.

The same Sunday there was a fire caused by a barrel of powder a great biscayne spoiled and abandoned, which my Lord took up and sent away.

The Tuesday following, near Portland, we had a sharp and long fight with them, wherein we spent a great deal of our powder and shot, so as it was not thought good to deal with them any more, until that was relieved.

The Thursday following by the occasion of the shattering of one of the great ships from the fleet, which we hoped to have cut off, there grew a hot fray, wherein some store of powder was spent, and after that little done till we came near to Calais [a seaport in northern France], where the fleet of Spain anchored and our fleet by them, and because they should not be in peace, there to refresh their water, or to have conference with those of the Duke of Parma's party, my Lord Admiral with firing of ships determined to remove them, as he did, and put them to the seas . . . .

The morning being Monday, the 29 of July, we followed the Spaniards and all that day had with them a long and great fight, wherein there was great valor shown generally of our company in this battle, there was spent very much of our powder and shot, and so the wind began to grow westerly, a fresh gale and the Spaniards put themselves somewhat to the northward, whereas we follow and keep company with them, in this fight there was some hurt done among the Spaniards . . . .

Our ships, God be thanked have received little hurt, and are of great force to accompany them, and of such advantage, that with some continuance at the seas, and sufficiently provided of shot and powder, we shall be able with God's favor to weary them out of the sea and confound them.

28,000 men left Lisbon, which included 20,000 soldiers and 8,000 sailors and other men. Their orders were to join up with the Prince of Parma (I have found out) and then carry out their mission. The Duke (Prince of Parma) was supposed to return to Spain leaving behind the ships, sailors, soldiers, etc. . . .

. . . At their departing from Lisbon being the 19 of May by our account, they were victualed [supplied with food] for months, they stayed in the Groyne twenty-eight days and there refreshed their water . . . . And in their coming now a little flaw took them fifty leagues [three nautical miles] from the Coast of Spain, where one great ship was severed from them and four galleys, which hitherto, have not recovered their Company.

And their departing from Lisbon the Soldiers were 20,000 the mariners and others 8,000 so as in all they were 28,000 men. Their commission was to confer with the Prince of Parma and then to proceed to the service.
that should be there concluded. And so the Duke to return into Spain
those ships and mariners and soldiers, etc. and their furniture being left
behind.

... Now this fleet is here and very forcible, and must be waited upon
with all our force, which is little enough, there would be an infinite [con-
stant] quantity of powder and shot provided and continually sent aboard,
without ... which great hazard may grow to our Country, for this is the
greatest and strongest combination to my understanding, that ever was
gathered in Christendom, therefore I wish it of all hands, to be mightily
and diligently looked into, and cared for.

The men have been long unpaid and need relief. I pray to your Lord-
ship that the money, that should have gone to Plymouth may now be
sent to Dover, August now comes in, and this cost will spend ground
tackle, cordage, canvas, and victuals, all which would be sent to Dover in
good plenty. With these things and God's blessing our kingdom may be
preserved which being neglected great hazard may come. I write to your
Lordship briefly and plainly, your wisdom and experience is great, but this
is a matter far passing all that has been seen in our time or long before.
And so praying to God for a happy deliverance, from the malicious and
dangerous practice of our enemies, I humbly take my leave from the sea
aboard the Victory. The Last of July 1588.

The Spaniards take their course for Scotland, my Lord does follow
them. I doubt not with God's favor, but we shall impeach their landing,
there must be order for victual [food] and money, powder and shot to be
sent after us.

Your Lordship's humbly to command,
John Hawkins

Document 3

The Examination of Don Luis de Cordua* in Andalusia

... The fifth day they came before Calais, and there anchored and
chained themselves, at which time there came to the aid of the Queen's
ships twenty-five more: And in the night they perceived six ships falling
upon them fired [a ship carrying explosives, set afire, and sent adrift among
enemy ships to destroy them]: by reason whereof they were driven to cut
their cables and set sail: at which time a great ship was burned among
them, and a galleas cast away on the sands. After which the English ships
entered into a sharp fight with them wherein two of their greatest galleons
were so beaten, that they were driven to come ashore upon Flanders [a
busy trade center, now part of modern Belgium, controlled by the Span-
ish in the fifteenth century], or those parts having unburdened their men
in their other ships. That day if the fire had not broken them they had
determined to have put seven thousand men on shore at Calais to have
gone to the Prince of Parma to have known further his pleasure, for that
they were from thence to be directed by him had some commission unto
him not opened at all but lost in the ship that was there burnt, but be-
ing prevented by the said fire they were broken, and so fought with all
and followed three days after that out of the sight of the coast, and that
the Queen's ships left them, and returned shooting off a great volley of

*A Spanish captain who had survived being shipwrecked on the Irish Coast.
ordinance for joy. After this the Duke of Medina assembled all his forces that were left, and found that he had lost but six ships of all sorts. And then gave order for them to return to Spain: But about Norway, the great tempest took them, and beat those men now prisoners to this coast, of which coast the Duke had before given them great charge to take heed.

Document 4

Elizabeth I: Speech to the Troops at Tilbury

My loving people,

We have been persuaded by some that are careful of our safety, to take heed how we commit our selves to armed multitudes, for fear of treachery; but I assure you I do not desire to live to distrust my faithful and loving people. Let tyrants fear, I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my chiefest strength and safeguard in the loyal hearts and good will of my subjects; and therefore I am come amongst you, as you see, at this time, not for my recreation and disport, but being resolved, in the midst and heat of the battle, to live and die amongst you all; to lay down for my God, and for my kingdom, and my people, my honour and my blood, even in the dust. I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm; to which rather than any dishonour shall grow by me, I myself will take up arms, I myself will be your general, judge, and rewarder of every one of your virtues in the field. I know already, for your forwardness you have deserved rewards and crowns; and we do assure you in the word of a prince, they shall be duly paid you. In the meantime, my lieutenant general [Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester] shall be in my stead, than whom never prince commanded a more noble or worthy subject; not doubting but by your obedience to my general, by your concord in the camp, and your valor in the field, we shall shortly have a famous victory over those enemies of my God, of my kingdom, and of my people.

Document 5

Draft of a Proclamation by the Government of Elizabeth I, June 1588

Although the Queen's majesty does assure herself, that the greatest number of her good and faithful subjects specially such as are endowed with knowledge to discern of her Majesty's intentions and actions in public causes, do truly condone, allow and embrace as most necessary, those her actions, which have been put in execution of late years for the reducing of her people into warlike order, through her whole realm, for defence of the same, as a matter most necessary, to conserve all her good subjects, from the highest to the lowest in surety against all attempts of enemies and rebels.

... whose profession is certainly known in favour of the Pope whom they make their God on earth, to deny their allegiance to her Majesty their sovereign natural Lady and Queen, and to change and subvert the happy state of the realm, and to make the same subject to the Popes will, and the Crown to be translated to such a foreign potentate as he shall thereto
name to usurp the same, for so by therein writing they do directly pro-
nounce the intentions of the Pope to be in procuring of the King of Spain,
and other potentates vasselled to the Pope, to invade this Realm, and to
gain the Crown and the realm with the wealth thereof to therein devours,
which cannot be imagined to be done without a full tyrannical conquest
of the same, by depriving of her Majesty, and by the slaughter of all such
her subjects of all degrees both noble and others, as shall for their con-
science towards Almighty God, persist in the true profession of Christian
Religion, and for their allegiance towards her Majesty (according to their
bond of nature, being naturally born her subjects) shall hazard their lives,
both in defence of her Majesty's person, and to the maintenance of this
Crown, Kingdom, Country, and people, in the Kingly honour, and ancient
liberty wherein it hath remained and been inhabited with kings and people
of mean English blood, more than this five hundred years. . .

(25pts, formative.)
Directions: Do a HIPPO analysis for each of the documents on a separate sheet
of paper.

H - Historical Context (What is going on in the world/europe during this time)
I - Intended Audience (Who is this document written for)
P - (author's Purpose) Why is this document written? What points does it serve.
P - Point of View, what is the authors point of view or biases in writing this?
O - Outside evidence, what outside information can you relate to this document?