

Sample SAC response (Outcome 1)

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Outcome 1

Explain the reasons for European voyages of exploration and analyse the motivations of new globally oriented empires.

Guidelines

- Refer to key terms used in the essay question throughout your essay
- There must be a clear argument outlined in the introduction
- Paragraphing is vital
- Construct a clear historical argument; DO NOT just recite the narrative of what occurred
- Provide a range of evidence to support your contention and line of argument
- Use historians views (i.e. Pagden, Aughton, Gunn, Ferguson) to support your evidence and examples
- Include Primary source material

This is approx. 700 words (not counting comments in red):

Essay:

The period of time in history commonly referred to as the 'age of exploration' was characterised by new discoveries, expansion and conquest. The main motivations for these events that took place during early modern Europe (15-late 18 century) can all be almost completely explained and justified by the 'three Gs' - gold, God and glory. Not only was wealth and financial prosperity a large incentive (gold), but so too was the idea of nationalism and increasing one's own power (glory). With these two ideas and motivations as primary goals, the nation states (predominately Portugal and Spain) were able to use the idea of religion (God) to justify their conquests.

'Gold' or the idea of increasing one's own country's wealth, can be seen as the primary incentive for many of the early explorers efforts to voyage off into the unknown. Ferguson claims that the initial cause of what was known as the 'Spice Race' (trading of valuable spices, goods and other such items to other countries) was the lust for money that these countries had. With the opportunity in place to get ahead of rivals economically, no one wanted to be left behind. Spain and Portugal began this rivalry and soon enough everybody followed suit. In terms of exploration however, explorers such as Walter Raleigh were sponsored by 'patrons' (usually rich people or nobles) to go off on expeditions. In the case of Raleigh, his primary goal was to discover the mythical city of El Dorado, also known as the city of gold. Whilst this expedition led to colonisation, its primary goal was to bring back wealth to England. Burbank suggests that the main reason for expeditions such as this was to simply bring back wealth. Wealth meant power and power meant dominance. Money meant more expansion.

A good paragraph with a strong topic sentence. This paragraph draws on different examples (i.e. Raleigh) without retelling different events or stories and uses a range of terms in context (patrons, colonisation). The view of historians Ferguson and Burbank are also incorporated smoothly, adding further authority to the claims made. A discussion of the gold and silver shortage in Europe would have added greater depth to this and further explained why patrons were in such need of gold.

Having an advantage over other rival nation states was another strong incentive for exploration during early modern Europe. The 'sense of competition' as Ferguson described it, motivated these nations to expand and explore. During the 15th century, the Pope issued a bull stating that all land discovered "south of the latitude of the Canary Isles would belong to Portugal" and everything "north of the line" would go to Spain. This line of demarcation could be interpreted as a motivator for these two rival nations to go and take over the land that they had been granted. Colonisation was also a huge part of the motives that drove early explorers. Taking over more land meant more power and a stronger foothold over opponents. Aughton uses example of explorers such as Columbus, da Gama and Dias, whose voyages (or influence at least) led to colonisation of the Americas, as evidence to suggest further reasons for exploration and expansion. Put simply, the more land and territory a country conquered, the more 'glory' their country could receive.

This paragraph again uses terminology well and incorporates historians such as Ferguson and Aughton smoothly to support key points. Further, a primary source extract is used, to explain the line of demarcation clearly - note that this point, which could also be linked to 'God' has been used well to highlight competition and the quest for Glory. The point about colonisation and the gathering of more lands and population is also good, as it thinks a bit beyond the immediate things we looked at in class.

Whilst wealth and expansion were two of the more eye-catching reasons for exploration during the early modern era, religious missions and converting people to Christianity could also be viewed as an important motive. The bull issued by the Pope known as the 'Inter Cetera' stated that the motives for explorers in the Americas was "to lead the peoples...to embrace the Christian religion" and to "bring them to the Catholic faith." These missions however, characterised by the hate of any non-Christian religion, could be seen as simply a justification for the mistreatment of the locals and as an excuse for colonisation and bringing back wealth. In the eyes of explorers, God was trumped by gold. According to Las Casas, the local Indians were "totally deprived of their freedom" and "truly considered to be perpetual slaves" upon the arrival of the Europeans. This was the Christianity that the Indians received. This source helps to illustrate that the local explorers did not come with the purpose of religion in the front of their mind, rather with the thought of imperialism and gaining wealth.

This paragraph builds really well - it first explores how the missional statement from the Pope motivated journeys, but then frames the argument in a way that shows how conquistadors abused it. The quote from Las Casas is a good use of a primary source and shows a perspective on what it was actually like in new Spanish territories. Other quotes, such as the one that claims they are there primarily for gold, would have further supported this point.

The explorers of the early modern era were motivated mainly by the idea of 'gold' and 'glory.' Expansion was characterised by conquest and taking wealth, all the while being justified as a 'religious' expedition. These conquistadors conquered land for the sake of themselves and their country, rather than God. Columbus' reflections are testament to such selfish human motivations in the early modern era: "These people are very unskilled in arms...with 50 men they could all be subjected and made to do all that one wished".