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CLEP Western Civilization I Exam*

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Question: 1

Which of the following explanations accounts for the spread of Hellenism, i.e. Greek culture, in the decades following the overthrow of Greek power?

- A. Many countries voluntarily adopted Greek government and culture because it was superior to their own.
- B. Greek soldiers took control of the Persian Empire, imposing Greek culture on all of Persia's former conquests.
- C. The spread of Hellenism was stopped after the overthrow of Greek power.
- D. Rome was influenced by Greek culture and spread its version of Hellenism as it amassed power and territory.
- E. Alexander, ruler of Macedon, adopted Greek culture as his own and spread it throughout the ancient world.

Answer: E

Explanation:

A, B, and C are implausible or historically inaccurate. D is incorrect because Rome did not begin to expand its empire during these decades.

Question: 2

Which of the following statements are not true of Alexander the Great?

- A. Alexander conquered Persia in 336 B.C.
- B. Alexander took control of Egypt and founded Alexandria in 331 B.C.
- C. Alexander conquered all of India.
- D. Alexander's conquests ended after his troops mutinied.
- E. Alexander died in 323 B.C. at the age of 33.

Answer: C

Explanation:

Each of these statements is historically true except C. Alexander did not successfully conquer all of India because his troops, weary from years of military campaigns, mutinied. Alexander agreed to return home and conquered many tribes along the western border of the country, but he did not enter the mainland as he intended.

Question: 3

Which of the statements below is not true of the century following the death of Alexander?

- A. Alexander's generals began fighting for control over the empire.
- B. Alexander's brother took power only to be executed.
- C. Alexander's heir took power and was executed.
- D. Alexander's son brought peace to the empire and ushered in the Golden Age of Hellenistic Culture.
- E. The generals divided the conquered lands into separate kingdoms and waged war with each other.

Answer: D

Explanation:

Alexander's son did not bring peace to the region: he was executed after taking power over the empire. Each of the remaining choices is true statements about the period after Alexanders death.

Question: 4

Which statement is closest to the core beliefs of the Greeks?

- A. "Seize the day."
- B. "Everything in moderation."
- C. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
- D. "Live and let live."
- E. "An eye for an eye."

Answer: B

Explanation:

The Greeks believed excess brought about negative consequences, while moderation did not. The remaining choices reflect other cultures' values, some of which are present in Greek culture; however, the theme of moderation dominates Greek writing and art.

Question: 5

Which of these statements does not reflect an influence on Greek art?

- A. The symmetry of Greek sculpture and architecture shows the influence of geometry and mathematics.
- B. Sculptures of bodies in motion show the Greek admiration of athletic skill.
- C. The expressions of humility on the faces of statues reflect the belief that all humanity is fallen from grace.
- D. The popularity of vases and pottery shows Greeks valued functionality as well as beauty.
- E. The simple designs of Greek art reflect their distaste for excess and their praise of moderation.

Answer: C

Explanation:

The belief that humanity has fallen from grace is more in keeping with Christian beliefs. Furthermore, the faces of Greek statues rarely express humility. The expressionless faces of Greek statuary capture the belief that strong emotion should not be expressed in public. Each of the remaining statements is a valid interpretation. The symmetry and precision of Greek architecture was achieved through the application of geometrical and mathematical principles. The Greeks placed a high value on athletic skill as evidenced in the popularity of the Olympic Games. Much Greek art was functional. Simplicity was valued above excess and this value is reflected in the art.

Question: 6

Our primary source of knowledge about the philosophy of Socrates was preserved in what way?

- A. On stone tablets he composed.
- B. In the writings of his students.
- C. On scrolls of papyrus he composed.
- D. In comedic plays that depict his life.
- E. In works written hundreds of years after his death.

Answer: B

Explanation:

The majority of our knowledge of Socrates' philosophy comes from the writing of Plato, and to a lesser extent, the writing of his contemporary, Xenophon. Socrates never wrote anything down. In one of Plato's dialogs, he speaks out against the written word, arguing that it makes the memory weaker if people become too reliant on it. The comedian Aristophanes did depict Socrates in his play *The Clouds*, however, the comedic work only parodies and doesn't explore in any depth. Many works about Socrates were written during his lifetime and shortly thereafter.

Question: 7

"This school of thought held that certainty is an illusion because no knowledge can be absolutely true. The universe constantly changes, and what is true for one time is not true for all. Thinkers who followed this school's founder, Pyrrho, questioned all scientific and religious beliefs."

The above passage reflects which of the following school of thought?

- A. Skepticism.
- B. Epicureanism.
- C. Cynicism.
- D. Stoicism.
- E. Dualism.

Answer: A

Explanation:

The most significant clue is the name Pyrrho, who founded the school of skepticism. Epicureanism held that people should seek pleasure and minimize pain to get the most out of life. The cynics promoted a life without concern for social status, physical pleasure, or wealth. The stoics placed the pursuit of wisdom above all other goals. Dualism is a generic term for a philosophy that divides the world into parts: mind / body, spiritual / material, etc.

Question: 8

"They are indestructible, constantly in motion, indivisible, and infinite. All material substances are composed of them. This theory of atoms is remarkable in that it anticipates scientific theories that would be confirmed two and a half millennia later."

Which of the following Greek philosophers is primarily responsible for the ideas described in the above passage?

- A. Socrates.
- B. Aristotle.
- C. Plato.
- D. Thales.
- E. Democritus.

Answer: E

Explanation:

Democritus was a Greek philosopher whose argument that the world is composed of tiny, indivisible atoms has been confirmed by science. The atomic theory is primarily attributed to Democritus and his mentor Leucippus.

Question: 9

Which of the following statements about Greek contribution to modern science is not true?

- A. Aristotle was one of the first to explore the fields we now know as comparative anatomy, taxonomy, and embryology'.
- B. Socrates was the first to argue that the material world is composed of indivisible units called atoms.
- C. Hippocrates separated the study of medicine from religion and was one of the first to establish effective medical theories.
- D. Herophilus dissected cadavers to advance the field of human anatomy.
- E. Euclid established many of the foundations of the study of geometry.

Answer: B

Explanation:

Socrates is not considered the first to argue in favor of the atomic theory. The remaining choices are true statements about the contributions of Greek thinkers to science.

Question: 10

The three works by Aeschylus, Agamemnon, Libation Bearers, and Eumenides make up the only surviving trilogy of Greek drama known as

- A. The Oresteia.
- B. The Oedipus Triology.
- C. The Iliad.
- D. The Odyssey.
- E. The Antigone Trilogy.

Answer: A

Explanation:

The three works are the only extant trilogy, though most works of Greek drama were composed as trilogies. The three plays written about Oedipus were written by Sophocles and were not technically a trilogy. Sophocles' plays were composed and performed at different times while Aeschylus' works were composed to be performed together. The remaining choices are not trilogies.



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