

Name _____

Date _____

Ashoka's Reign

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Following the death of Alexander the Great in the third century BCE, a new empire led by Chandragupta Maurya seized power in the region. Throughout the century, the Mauryan Empire began expanding and conquering much of what is now the country of India. Maurya's grandson, Ashoka, eventually took the throne. Ashoka continued the empire's expansion through war. Eight years into his reign, he led a military campaign to conquer Kalinga, a kingdom on the East Central coast of India. The Kalinga War led to the deaths of between 100,000 and 300,000 people. By war's end, even Ashoka himself was troubled by the violence.

Which of the following words best describes Ashoka's early years as leader of the Mauryan Empire?

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| A. Violent | B. Diplomatic |
| C. Accidental | D. Peaceful |

2. After the Kalinga War ended, Ashoka wrote that he was "deeply pained" by the violence and horror of war. He felt deep remorse over the violence he had ordered. As a result, he renounced military conquest for the rest of his life. From that point forward, Ashoka became deeply invested in Buddhism, a religion that promotes peace and nonviolence. He made it his mission to spread Buddhism throughout India, sharing his new beliefs through edicts, or official proclamations, carved into stones and pillars.

Which of these best describes Ashoka's reaction to the Kalinga War?

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| A. Ashoka vowed to continue expanding the Mauryan Empire through war and conquest. | B. Ashoka rejected Buddhism and focused on war and trade. |
| C. Ashoka developed a philosophy that death and destruction is a necessary evil. | D. Ashoka was troubled by the violent consequences of war and decided to rule peacefully. |

3. Ashoka promoted the ideas of religious tolerance and respect for people of all faiths. He also encouraged his subjects to dedicate their lives to generosity and justice. These peaceful messages helped unify the Mauryan Empire and usher in an era of peace. Ashoka's edicts are some of the earliest writing in Indian history, but they were not written in the empire's official language of Sanskrit. Instead, the messages were delivered in various local dialects throughout the empire so people local to those regions could better understand them. After Ashoka died, the Mauryan Empire gradually declined. However, his legacy lived on through his edicts, which were an early vehicle for the spread of Buddhism throughout India.

We can infer from this passage that Ashoka wanted his message of peace and tolerance to reach as many people as possible. What is one detail that supports this inference?

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| A. Ashoka's edicts were written and delivered in local dialects rather than Sanskrit. | B. After the Kalinga War ended, Ashoka was "deeply pained" by the violence he had ordered. |
| C. The Mauryan Empire's power gradually declined in the years following Ashoka's death. | D. Ashoka's edicts were one of the early sources of the spread of Buddhism in India. |