## Decline of the Caliphate Name:

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| **The End of the Golden Age:** in 1200, the Middle East was one of the most impressive civilizations on earth. It had the most advanced sciences and a powerful economy exceeded only by the Song Dynasty in China. By 1600, the Middle East had fallen behind Europe and Asia in science, and its economy was in a state of almost permanent recession. For the years up until the 1940s, the Middle East would continue to decline compared to its neighboring regions. The question is: ***Why***. Why did the center of medieval world science and trade enter such a long period of decline? |

You will look at three factors for why this occurred. Your job is to read each and briefly summarize what it says. Then, at the end, explain the decline of the Golden Age and choose which factor was the most important in your opinion.

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| **The Mongols:** in the 1200s, Asia was struck by the Mongols. Khwarazm fell in 1220, Northern China in 1235, and Rus in 1240. By the 1250s, the Mongols had conquered all of Central Asia and arrived at the borders of the Middle East. The Abbasids tried to summon an army to repulse the Mongols but they found it difficult for the Caliphate was politically fractured in this time. The greatest of the states in the Caliphate, the Mamluk Sultanate, declined to fight with the Abbasids.  In 1258, the Mongols destroyed the armies of the Caliphate and took Baghdad. The last Caliph, Al-Mutasim, had offended the Mongol Khan and the Mongols’ wrath on Baghdad was terrible. The Caliph was wrapped in a rug and trampled by horses. His family were beheaded. The people of Baghdad were taken as slaves or killed. The House of Wisdom was burned down. The books were thrown in the river. The city was destroyed so completely that no two stones stood on each other anywhere between the walls. The farmland that fed the city was looted. The irrigation canals were destroyed. Such was the destruction that Baghdad did not recover for 700 years.  Some of the books survived the destruction and most were sold to Venetian merchants, who brought them back to Europe, sparking the Renaissance. However, for the Caliphates, the next 200 years would be spent fighting back the Mongols and their successor kingdoms. This new age of the Caliphate was not about learning, but about war. |
| **Summarize: How did the Mongols contribute to the decline of Caliphal Science and Trade?** |

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| **Intellectual Conservativism:** in the years from 632-1100, the Caliphate embraced learning, questioning, and science. Science and philosophy were seen as paths to a greater understanding of the world—and therefore God as well. However, starting in the 1000s, culture began to shift. Much of this can be tied to a very influential philosopher named Al-Ghazali. In his two greatest works, “The Revival of the Religious Sciences” and “The Incoherence of the Philosophers,” he put forth the argument that science and philosophy contained no guidance towards a pious and holy life. His work was massively popular and while it was condemned by many, it slowly was embraced by most.  While there are still significant scientific discoveries after Al-Ghazali, science generally declines as a primary pursuit of the Caliphate. Many lords cease to patronize scholars. Many philosophers are charged with blasphemy and discouraged from pursuing their thoughts. In general, the Islamic world becomes much more conservative and mystical. The idea of *taqlid* becomes a major component of faith. *Taqlid* is the idea that, unless you are an expert, you should accept the teachings of those experts without question. This stifled any sort of scientific inquiry.  After Al-Ghazali, the progressive, inquiring, scientific culture of the Middle East dies. It is instead replaced by a conservative culture that would have been very familiar to Europe in the middle ages. |
| **Summarize: How did Intellectual Conservatism contribute to the decline of Caliphal Science and Trade?** |

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| **New Trade Routes:** much of the wealth of the Middle East was based upon the domination of the Silk Road. However, in the 1250s, the Mongols became the masters of that trade route and the Caliphate’s economic strength wanes. In the 1400s, China begins to close its doors. With it, the flow of silk slows to almost a halt. However, the real death blow is the beginning of global sea trade. In the 1480s, Europeans find a way around Africa. Now Europeans don’t have to pay the Caliphate’s exorbitant prices for spices and Chinese goods like silk and porcelain.  By 1600, Europe controls world trade. Not only does this erase the Caliphate’s main advantage, but Europeans also punish the Caliphate. Europe was primarily a Christian region and European countries were eager to cut the Muslim Middle East out of trade. Without their position in trade, the Caliphate has only its own resources to rely on, which are not very considerable. In fact, until the discovery of gasoline in the late 1800s, there was almost no material wealth to most Middle Eastern countries. |
| **Summarize: How did new trade routes contribute to the decline of Caliphal Science and Trade?** |

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| Explain in your own words why the Caliphate declined: |
| Which factor do you think is most significant? Why? |

Well Hola! And Bonjour!