# GRAPHIC NOVEL

# **Summaries and Activities**

for

DISCOVERING OUR PAST: MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN TIMES



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# MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN TIMES

The following pages contain additional information about each graphic novel. You will find background information, brief summaries of each graphic novel, and two activities to help you guide your students' understanding of each graphic novel. The first activity is designed to help the student utilize the story presented to complete the assigned task. The second activity is more broadly focused, allowing students to make connections between the graphic novel and the larger historical context of the period.

CHAPTER 1. PAGES 132-169

THEODORA: RAGS TO REGENT

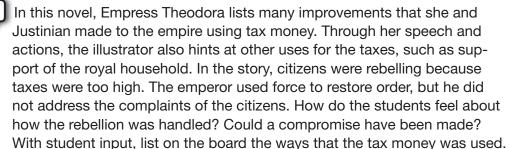
SUMMARY

Empress Theodora's life began as a lower-class citizen. She was an actress, which at the time was considered a lowly occupation. She married Justinian in A.D. 525 after his uncle, the emperor, changed the law that forbade nobles from marrying actresses. The couple became rulers of the Byzantine Empire in A.D. 527.

As empress, Theodora had considerable influence. Justinian sought her counsel as a ruler of the empire. She played a key role in choosing government officials and writing new laws. She met and corresponded with foreign ambassadors and rulers. Together, she and Justinian built Constantinople into a beautiful thriving city complete with aqueducts, bridges, and churches. She also developed many laws that benefited and protected women.

The revolt discussed in this novel is called the Nika revolt. The rebels were from two rival groups in the city. They started a riot and proclaimed a new emperor. Justinian's officials felt the best response was to abandon the city and the throne. Theodora persuaded Justinian and the officials to stay and fight. With renewed determination, Justinian ordered his general to quell the revolt.

## ACTIVITIES



Have a class discussion about the list. Are there things that could be cut to lessen taxes? Will cutting some items affect others? Can this story teach us anything today about taxation?



2 The Byzantine Empire lasted for approximately 1,000 years and influenced much of the world. Many developments during that time are still influential today. Have students choose one of the following topics: law, art, architecture, human rights, and education. Next have students gather information related to their topic from the textbook and independent sources and write an essay on the developments made during the Byzantine Empire. Students also should consider these questions in their research: How did the developments affect other countries? How did knowledge of the developments spread? How have they influenced the world today?

# CHAPTER 2. PAGES 170 - 201

# THE FIVE PILLARS

#### SUMMARY

In Arabic, the word Islam means "surrender" or "submission." In the religion of Islam, Muslims must surrender to the will of God, or Allah. There are five acts of worship that they are supposed to perform. One of them is to make a pilgrimage, or haji, to Makkah in Saudi Arabia. This pilgrimage takes place on days seven through twelve during the last month of the Islamic year.

When pilgrims approach Makkah, they change into special clothing. They wrap two white seamless sheets around their bodies. This clothing symbolizes that they are now in a holy state. While on the pilgrimage, people perform special rites. For instance, they first go to the Great Mosque in Makkah and walk seven times around the Kaaba, which is a sacred place. They also touch or kiss the Black Stone, a holy object located in the Kaaba. On the seventh day of the month, pilgrims are reminded of their duties. On days eight through twelve, they visit holy places outside Makkah and perform more sacred rites. On day twelve, pilgrims return to Makkah and once again circle the Kaaba before ending their pilgrimage.

In this graphic novel, Nazar and Matt meet on the playground at their school. They start talking because Nazar is playing with a video game and Matt is curious about it. In the course of their conversation, it becomes obvious that Nazar is Muslim and Matt is Catholic. Nazar's replies to Matt's questions about Islam lead Matt to make comparisons between the two religions. Towards the end of recess, Nazar invites Matt to have dinner at his house so they can look at his video games.

## ACTIVITIES

Have students read the graphic novel "The Five Pillars." While they are reading, tell them to imagine that they are on the playground listening to Matt and Nazar's conversation. As students read, they should ask themselves the following questions: What are the traditions of Islam? Of Catholicism? When students have finished the story, ask them to share what they learned from the boys' conversation. Then point out to students that the illustrator

never says that the setting, or location, of the story is New York City. Ask the class to describe how he shows this information. Next ask the following questions: How are the beginning and the ending of the story similar? In your opinion, why did the illustrator use this technique? Is it effective? Why or why not?



Ask students to read in their textbooks about the teachings of Islam. Then organize the class into small groups. Each group should use the information in the graphic novel and the textbook to prepare a summary of the teachings of Islam. Groups may use a variety of formats for their summaries—a slide-show presentation, a graphic organizer, a written paragraph, or a conversation between two or more group members. Ask volunteers to share their summaries.

# CHAPTER 3. PAGES 202-241 THE SOUNDS OF SILENCE ... AND SALT SUMMARY

Arab traders from North Africa wanted gold because they could sell it to Europeans or trade it for European goods. Africa was the main source of gold for Europeans until it was found in the Americas. The Wangara, a people just outside of Ghana, mined gold but wanted salt. The Arabs had salt but wanted gold. Ghana acted as the go-between that allowed the two groups to trade, and it became very wealthy as a result.

The rulers of Ghana also controlled the supply of gold. The king claimed for himself any nuggets that miners found, but he let them keep the gold dust. In this way, gold did not become too plentiful and decrease in value. According to one Arab historian, one of these nuggets was rumored to be heavy enough that the king could tether his horse to it!

In this graphic novel, a father and daughter visit a present-day bazaar in Ghana. The daughter finds the noise of the bazaar loud and confusing. The father then tells her about the "silent trade" that took place between Arab traders and Ghanaians because they did not speak each other's language. The Arabs had salt to trade, and the Ghanaians had gold. In a silent trade, an Arab merchant would leave some salt in a trading location and beat a drum to announce his desire to trade. Then a Ghanaian would leave what he believed was a fair price in gold and beat the drum for the same reason. This back-and-forth continued until they agreed on a price. Intrigued by this idea, the girl in the story then tries to trade a box of salt for gold.

## ACTIVITIES



Point out that in "The Sounds of Silence . . . and Salt," the girl finds the bazaar very loud and confusing. Ask students the following questions: How does the illustrator show the many activities that the girl finds so confusing? In your opinion, why is the girl unsuccessful when she tries to trade salt for gold? After discussing these questions with students, share this story from long ago: Some merchants wanted to learn where Ghanaian gold came

from. As a result, they captured a Wangara miner when he came to trade with them. The miner refused to tell the merchants the gold's source, and he eventually died when he was not allowed to return home. The miners were so angry at the merchants that they did not trade with them for three years. Only a desperate need for salt forced the miners to begin trading again. Next ask small groups of students to add these events to the graphic novel. Groups may draw frames and include the necessary dialogue or just write the dialogue. Have volunteers share their adaptations with the class.

- Organize the class into groups and ask them to read in their textbooks about the empires of Ghana and Mali. Then tell the groups to use the reference map in their textbooks to draw a map of Africa on a separate sheet of paper. Groups should also draw the following on their maps:
  - The ancient kingdoms of Ghana and Mali
  - The present-day countries of Ghana and Mali

As a class, discuss what students discovered about the location of the ancient kingdoms versus the present-day countries with the same names.

# CHAPTER 4, PAGES 248-291 I'LL DO IT TOMORROW...

#### SUMMARY

The use of a civil service exam to identify talented people to work in the government was first set up under the Han dynasty. Over the hundreds of years in which the exams were given, their subject matter varied, but the teachings of Confucius were always included. Different dynasties added more levels to the exam system. In its final form there were three levels. Only individuals who passed the third level of exams, the most difficult level, qualified for appointment to high office. Passing any level of the exams, however, gave an individual particular privileges. He did not have to perform labor for the government and could not be punished physically. In addition such a person received money from the government and became part of the scholar-official class.

In this graphic novel, Chiu and Chang are supposed to take a civil service exam to qualify for a government job. They arrive at the testing center two weeks before the test. Even at this point, however, Chiu is always busy doing something enjoyable instead of studying. Chang, on the other hand, studies constantly and is always quoting Confucius. Finally on the night before the exam, Chiu begins studying. After being up all night, he falls asleep and dreams about Confucius. When he wakes up, he discovers that he has slept through the exam.

## ACTIVITIES

Point out that one-dimensional characters are people and animals in a story who only show one kind of behavior. Authors often use the actions of such characters to make a particular point. Then ask the following questions: What kind of person is Chiu? How do you know that? What kind of person

is Chang? How do you know that? What point is the illustrator making in this story? Then explain that anyone who failed the civil service test could never become a government official. Ask pairs of students to draw a couple of frames for each character. They should show what Chiu and Chang are doing a few years after the test. Have volunteers share and explain their work.



Have students read in their textbooks about China in the Middle Ages. Then ask the following questions: Which dynasties used the results of civil service exams to hire government officials? If someone passed the civil service exams, how could it affect his life? In your opinion, was a government official an important person in Chinese society? Why or why not? Then point out that the use of civil service exams spread from China to other Asian and European countries. Have students research why civil service exams developed in the United States and what the Pendleton Civil Service Act is. Discuss the results of student research, and then ask the following questions: In your opinion, does having a government job in the U.S. give the holder a high position in society? Why or why not?

#### CHAPTER 5. PAGES 292-319

# HONOR: WAY OF THE SAMURAL

#### SUMMARY

The samurai were brave and powerful warriors. Armies of samurai were used by Japanese nobles for protection. They also used them to defend and increase their property. In the early 1100s, the Japanese nobles fought each other using the samurai to try to seize land and gain control of the government. Though the nobles wanted more land and power, the samurai were not interested in wealth and were loyal only to their noble.

The samural code of conduct was called the Bushido. It was taught to boys in samurai families while they were still very young. The code required the samurai to be loyal, courageous, brave, and honorable. Failure to live up to this code was considered disgraceful. The samurai would rather commit suicide than face such disgrace, especially on the battlefield.

Amidst the glory and honor of battle, soldiers can feel uncertain. This graphic novel illustrates a young samurai who has not yet experienced battle. When he is faced with his first conflict, he is initially unsure if he can be an effective and honorable soldier. On the final page of the novel, we see him push aside his fears and march resolutely toward the battlefield. This novel demonstrates that some samurai had to overcome uncertainty and fear.

## ACTIVITIES



As this novel ends, the young samural is about to face his first battle. Though unsure of himself, he sets his mind to the job he has been training for. Have students reread the novel and think about what might have happened next in the story. Then have students create a letter written by the young samurai to his parents after the battle. The letter should give details about what happened during and after the battle. Ask students: Did the young samurai live up to the code? Who won the battle? What reactions would a defeated samural have to the loss?



In many ways, the samural are similar to today's soldiers. Though soldiers today might not start training as young children, they have a code of conduct and a specific training program. Using the textbook and other resources, have the students gather information on the samurai, including their way of life and organization, qualifications, the code of conduct, weapons, and uniform. Then have students choose one of the armed forces in the United States military and conduct the same research. Students will then create a graphic organizer comparing and contrasting the two soldiers. Have interested students present their findings to the class.

## CHAPTER 6, PAGES 320-373

# RATS!

#### SUMMARY

The symptoms of the Black Death include very high fever, vomiting, chills, and bleeding under the skin. The blood forms boils, or lumps, under the skin, which are black. This symptom is probably the origin of the name "Black Death." The disease is transmitted by fleas that have bitten infected rats. If the disease spreads to a sick person's lungs, it can then spread through the air.

Today there are antibiotics to treat the Black Death, but in the Middle Ages there were none. Without these drugs, the Black Death had a very high death rate. Victims often died within one to four days after contracting the disease. Doctors in the Middle Ages had no idea how the Black Death spread or how to treat it. As a matter of fact, its cause was not discovered until 1894. Quarantine, or isolation, was one of the few relatively effective measures used to fight the disease. If one person in a household got it, all its inhabitants were guarantined for 40 days. This may have prevented the disease from spreading, but often everyone in the house died.

It is thought that the song "Ring Around the Rosie" concerns the Black Death. "Rosie" refers to the round pink rash that occurs at the beginning of the disease. People often wore "posies," or bouquets of flowers, to cover up the smell of the sickness. "Ashes" connects to the burning of the dead. "All fall down" refers to the fact that people died from the Black Death.

This graphic novel shows the spread of the Black Death. The story begins with a man bringing boxes of goods home from a seaport. Along with the boxes, he is carrying rats. Fleas from these rats bite him, and he gets sick with the Black Death. By the time he dies, other people in the town are also infected with the disease. Although the town clergyman cares for the sick in an improvised hospital, many of them die. Afterward, a grave digger carts the bodies away and burns them as a means of keeping the disease from spreading. Ironically, infected rats are already wandering throughout the countryside. The novel ends with the rats close to another town.

## ACTIVITIES

After the class looks through "RATS!," tell each student to write dialogue and narration boxes for the story. Students should include the feelings of the characters as well as accurate reporting about what is happening. Next have volunteers share their stories. Finally, ask students the following questions:

- What is the grave digger wearing on his face?
- In your opinion, why is he wearing such a mask?
- What do you think will happen next in the story? Why?
- What could people and/or governments have done in the Middle Ages to stop or slow down the spread of the Black Death if they had known what caused it?



2 Tell students to read in their textbooks about the Crusades and the Black Death. Then ask them to create a cause-and-effect chart showing how these events weakened feudal society. Have students share their charts with the class.

# CHAPTER 7. PAGES 380-417 WELCOME TO VENICE! SUMMARY

According to the brochure in the graphic novel, celebrating Carnival is one reason to visit Venice. While Carnival is not a religious celebration, it is connected to the beliefs and practices of Christianity. During the Renaissance, Lent was a time period in which people fasted and did not eat meat on specific days. Then as now, Lent is a 40-day period of atonement leading up to the celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter. Carnival is a celebration that takes place just before the beginning of Lent. Depending on when and where Carnival is celebrated, the specific activities and the length of Carnival vary. One of the characteristics of Carnival in Renaissance Venice was the wearing of costumes and masks. The wealthy also attended elaborate masked balls.

In this graphic novel, a couple receives a brochure about Venice. The brochure describes Venetian government and trade. It also mentions how travelers to the Holy Land can get assistance there. In addition the brochure highlights information about Venetian crafts, artists, and Carnival. At the end of the brochure, there is an invitation to the reader to visit Venice whether it is for business or pleasure.

## ACTIVITIES



**1** After students read "Welcome to Venice!," ask the following questions: If you were a traveler and you were deciding whether or not to go to Venice, what else would you want to know about it? In your opinion, why did the illustrator include information about business opportunities in the brochure? Then ask students to write a short note that the couple in the graphic novel might have sent home while on their visit to Venice. The note should relate to something specific that they saw or did. It should also include a sketch

of the place, item, or event. For example, the sketch could be of a place like Piazza San Marco, the Doge's Palace, or the Rialto Bridge; an item such as a painting or the winged lion of St. Mark; the costumes and the masked ball; or the gondola ride on the Grand Canal.

2 Have students read in their textbooks about the rise of the Italian city-states, their governments, and artists in Renaissance Italy. As students read, they should list any additional information about Venice that might encourage people to visit there. Next have each student make a brochure inviting people to visit Florence during the Renaissance. Explain that it is not necessary to produce the brochure in graphic novel format. After students have completed their brochures, have them share what they learned about Florence. Then take a vote to determine which city-state students would have preferred to visit—Venice or Florence.

#### CHAPTER 8, PAGES 418 - 445

# MARTIN LUTHER: THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE MONK

In the 1500s, the Roman Catholic Church was very rich and powerful. Peasants, having barely enough to eat, paid high taxes to the Church, while the clergy lived lavishly in beautiful buildings. Many Catholics were unhappy with the leaders and their focus on money. Martin Luther, a theologian and monk, saw much of the corruption that occurred in the medieval Church. In 1517 he publicly argued that the Roman Catholic Church should reform and return to what he viewed to be the correct, biblical doctrines and teachings. The doctrine of indulgences was particularly upsetting to Luther. The Church began selling them to raise money for the renovation of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Luther wrote a list of arguments against indulgences, later called the Ninety-Five Theses, and sent it to his bishop. It was also copied and distributed to many German kingdoms.

Luther's early attempts toward reform were dismissed. The Church saw him as an obscure monk not worth their attention. As Luther gathered more support and exposure, Church leaders began to see him as a heretic and a threat. In 1520 the pope warned Luther to recant (or take back) his writings or risk excommunication. Excommunication means to exclude a person from church membership. Though Luther did not want to leave the Church, he was unwilling to change his views.

Martin Luther's work sparked a movement throughout Europe that led to the Protestant Reformation. Small kingdoms within the Holy Roman Empire began supporting Protestantism. This movement took money and power away from the Catholic Church and many political leaders.

## SUMMARY AND ACTIVITIES

In this graphic novel, Luther is being interviewed using a video camera. In reality, Martin Luther took advantage of the latest technology of his day to share his thoughts with many people. The newly invented printing press helped spread his writings throughout Europe within months. Have students imagine they have been hired as a marketing director for Luther. Their task is to create an advertising campaign to attract interest to Luther. They may create such items

as posters, commercials, or newspaper ads or articles. Students should touch on Luther's background, his views of God, and why he wants reform within the Church.

As Luther's ideas spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire, conflict arose between the Emperor, the pope, and the many kingdoms within the empire. Power was shifting, affecting the resources of many people. Have students review the textbook section related to these conflicts. With paper and a marker, ask a few students to write down names of some of the main characters or groups from this period, such as the pope, Charles V, German kings, nobles, and peasants. Explain to the students that the spread of Protestantism changed who had power and resources. Using volunteers, give a sheet to each student and have them stand in front of the class. Through class discussion, have students place the volunteers in order of power as it was prior to the new denomination and then after. What are their impressions about the change, such as who moved into power and who did not? How do they feel about this information? Can we find similar examples of this today?

# CHAPTER 9, PAGES 446-481 BROKEN SPEARS

#### SUMMARY

Although Cortés had taken Montezuma prisoner, the struggle for control over the Aztec Empire was far from over. First, one of the lakeside people revolted against Spanish rule. Then Cortés had to rush most of his army back to the coast to fight a Spanish force that had come to arrest him for his disloyalty to the Spanish governor of Cuba. Luckily for Cortés, he was successful, and he returned to Tenochtitlán with significantly more men in June 1520. Cortés soon learned that Pedro de Alvarado, whom he had left in charge, had imprisoned and massacred Aztecs during his absence, totally alienating the Aztec. Even Montezuma could not pacify his people. When the Aztec learned that their king and many nobles were dead, they were outraged. The Spanish and their allies tried to secretly escape the city during the night. The Aztec, however, attacked, turning the escape into a rout, and hundreds died fleeing the Aztec's revenge. This event is still called *la noche triste* (the night of tears).

Thinking that they had defeated the Spanish, the Aztec resumed their normal lives. Then at the end of September, people began dying of a mysterious disease. They had caught smallpox from the Spanish. Thousands died before the epidemic ended in late November. In the meantime, Cortés had rebuilt his forces. By the end of December, he and his allies were on the move. First, they conquered the towns around Tenochtitlán. Then they landed on Tenochtitlán. The fighting lasted for months as the two sides battled street by street through the city. After the Aztec finally surrendered, the Spanish looted Tenochtitlán and their allies took their revenge on the Aztec.

The graphic novel begins at this point. An unknown Aztec who was in Tenochtilán wrote the text in the story, which describes the despair that he feels. The

quote used in the graphic novel was taken from The Broken Spears edited by Miguel Leon-Portilla.

## ACTIVITIES

Have students focus on the excerpt from *The Broken Spears* in the graphic novel. According to the poem, what does Tenochtitlán look like at the end of the siege? How do the Aztec feel about the defeat of their city? Why do you think that? What does the phrase "broken spears" in the poem represent? How do you think the poet felt? For the Aztec, what did Tenochtitlán represent?

2 Ask students to read the section in the textbook about the Spanish conquest of the Aztec. Then give students a few minutes to think about how the city might have looked at the end of the siege and how the Aztec might have felt after their two-year war with the Spanish. Next, tell students to scan only the images in the graphic novel "Broken Spears." Ask volunteers to compare what they visualized with the illustrator's portrayal. Which did they find more vivid? Why?

#### CHAPTER 10, PAGES 482-509

# AROUND THE WORLD IN 1000 DAYS

#### SUMMARY

In the 1490s Pope Alexander VI drew the Line of Demarcation, which divided newly discovered lands between Portugal and Spain. Lands east of the line went to Portugal. Lands west of the line belonged to Spain. In 1513, a Spanish explorer named Vasco Núñez de Balboa crossed the Isthmus of Panama and discovered an unknown body of water, the Pacific Ocean. Ferdinand Magellan believed that the Spice Islands were located in this body of water. If he could find a water route through or around South America, he could prove his theory. Since those lands were west of the Line of Demarcation, they belonged to Spain.

Magellan and his partner convinced the Spanish king, Charles I, to support their voyage. Magellan left Spain in September 1519, with 5 ships and more than 250 men. On board was Antonio Pigafetta, who kept a written record of the journey.

As the fleet searched along the coast of South America for the strait that would lead the ships to the Pacific Ocean, one ship sank, and Magellan had to fight off a mutiny. While crossing the strait, another ship deserted. Europeans believed that the Spice Islands were only a few days' sailing from South America. Instead, Magellan sailed for 99 days before landing at Guam. When Magellan was killed in the Philippines in April 1521, Juan de Elcano became commander of the expedition. Only two ships reached the Spice Islands. Only one ship, captained by de Elcano, survived and returned to Spain in September 1522.

This graphic novel begins during the expedition's search along the South American coast for the long-sought strait. In these unknown waters, Magellan has to

fight off a mutiny. Pigafetta then describes the difficult journey across the Pacific Ocean, Magellan's death, and finally the one ship's return to Spain.

#### ACTIVITIES

Discuss with students the dangers and difficulties that captains and sailors encountered during voyages of exploration. Next ask the following guestions: What characteristics were important for an explorer? What risks did Charles I face when he agreed to pay for Magellan's expedition? In your opinion, why did Charles I agree to pay for the voyage? Have students draw a few frames illustrating the meeting among Magellan, his partner, and the king. In their dialogue, students should explain how Magellan convinced the king to support their voyage and why the king agreed to do so.

2 Ask students to read in their textbooks about Portuguese explorations, Columbus's voyages, and Magellan's expedition. Tell students to read the first and last frames of the story. Who is telling the story, "Around the World in 1000 Days"? Who is the man in the last frame? Next organize students into small groups in which members role-play de Elcano, Pigafetta, and King Charles I of Spain. (You may wish to add sailors to the groups to better fit the size of your class.) Explain that King Charles I is curious about the Magellan voyage and wonders how it compares to those of Columbus. Group members should work together to prepare an interview based on information in the text and the graphic novel. A good interview answers the questions Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How about an event. It also includes interesting details. Have the members of each group prepare a written record of their interview. Then ask volunteers to present their interviews to the class.

# CHAPTER 11, PAGES 510 - 545 A GENTLEMEN'S 'DISCUSSION'

#### SUMMARY

Thomas Hobbes and John Locke lived in a time when there were sharp disagreements about government in England. Hobbes believed that democracy is the first form of government that people organize. This democracy fails, however, when a monarch arises and takes power. These ideas alienated both King Charles I and Parliament. Afraid for his life, Hobbes fled the country. Locke also found himself in danger because he supported a Protestant constitutional monarchy, but the king was Catholic. In 1683 Locke went to Holland and stayed there until it was safe to return.

In this graphic novel, the philosophers Thomas Hobbes and John Locke make fun of each other's beliefs while defending their own. When it looks as though the debate may turn into a fight, the tavern owner forces them to continue their disagreement outside.

- Have students look up *tabula rasa* and *leviathan* in the dictionary. Discuss their definitions with the class and then explain how the terms relate specifically to Hobbes's and Locke's philosophies. Next, as students read the graphic novel, have them make graphic organizers that compare the beliefs of Hobbes and Locke. Then point out that the humor and insults in the graphic novel depend on words and phrases that have double meanings. Ask students to explain the following:
  - Locke to Hobbes: "Your theories are . . . nasty, brutish, and short!"
  - Hobbes to Locke: "When I'm done with you, you're going to feel like Leviathan just walked all over you, whelp."
  - Locke to Hobbes: "There ain't gonna be nothing left but a blank slate!
     Tabula rasa, baby!"
  - Hobbes to Locke: "Time for my all-powerful monarch to regulate you!"
- Tell students to read in their textbooks about the Enlightenment. If students already have a graphic organizer comparing the philosophies of Hobbes and Locke, ask them to add additional information that they find in their textbooks. Tell students to make such an organizer if they do not already have one. Next ask students whether the following rulers could use Hobbes's or Locke's ideas to prove that they had the right to rule:
  - James II of England
  - Catherine II of Russia
  - William and Mary of England

Students should explain their choices.