

Document E

Source: List compiled from various sources, including legends and folk songs as well as historical documents.

The Human Cost of the Great Wall

Soldiers	
<p style="text-align: center;">Qin Dynasty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 300,000 men from Qin's army ordered to build and guard the wall until complete • Soldiers forced to leave families and villages for several years • Convict labor sent to do much of work. • According to poetry and legend, tens of thousands of soldiers died from hunger, sickness, and extreme heat or cold. No exact numbers of deaths are available. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Han Dynasty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soldiers ordered to work on wall for two to five years • Manned the wall and outposts in desolate western frontier • Heavy fighting against the Xiongnu during much of 2nd century BCE. One campaign in 104 BCE reported 80 percent Han casualties.
<p>Note: For all soldiers, loneliness and boredom was a problem.</p>	

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Peasants (Qin and Han)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the short ten-year period of Qin wall-building, there was heavy use of peasant laborers, who worked seven-day work weeks with little food. During the eight months of winter, temperatures reached 20- to 30-below zero, Fahrenheit. • In the Han period, peasant farm families were forced to move north and west both to colonize the Chinese frontier and to build some 4,000 miles of earthen wall. Not as brutal as Qin conditions, but life was still very hard. Many peasants and soldiers attempted to move across the border to live with the Xiongnu.

Document Analysis

1. Name the two categories of people who worked on the Great Wall.
2. According to the document, what evidence is there that conditions were harsh for Qin soldiers sent to the wall?
3. According to the document, what difficulties were faced by Han soldiers sent to the wall?
4. How could you use this document to argue that building the Great Wall was worth the cost?
5. How could you use this document to argue that building the Great Wall was not worth the cost?

Document F

Source: A Chinese poem describing the life of the Han cavalry (horseback) soldier. The author and date are unknown.

*We fight south of the wall, we die north of the wall;
If we die, unburied, in the wilds, our corpses will feed the crows.
The waters run deep and turbulent, the reeds grow dark and murky;
The cavalry fight to the death, their exhausted steeds pace up and down,
Whinnying.
If the rice isn't harvested, how will you eat?
Although we are willing to serve loyally, how can we live this way?
You will be remembered, worthy, honest soldiers.
We sally forth at dawn, but do not return at dusk.*

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Document Analysis

1. What would cause Han cavalry soldiers to die north of the wall?
2. What might explain why the rice in China is not being harvested?
3. If the rice is not harvested, who is likely to go hungry?
4. Explain the line, "We sally forth at dawn, but do not return at dusk."
5. How can you use this poem to argue that the Great Wall was not worth the cost?