

## The Republic of Venice Factors to Consider

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Venice was an Italian city-state that became a republic of “merchants, financiers, and middlemen” relying predominantly on trade for its well-being. It encouraged settlement by foreign merchants and was the home to diasporic communities of Greeks, Turks, and Jews.
- 2) Until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Venice was the chief European center for trade in Indian spices, Chinese and Persian silks, jewels, and luxury goods, most of which were transported along the Eastern Mediterranean and up the Adriatic by well-armed Venetian ships from ports in Egypt (Cairo and Alexandria). Their trade supremacy was eclipsed by the Dutch in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.
- 3) The Venetians were major shipbuilders and also produced glass, which was in high demand and required alum, which was found in the Ottoman Empire. Venice was also major center of printing.
- 4) Due to the spice trade, relations with the Ottoman Empire were vital to Venice. The predominantly Catholic Venetians, traded with the Muslim Ottoman Turks against the explicit order of the Pope and frequently disregarded religious loyalties.
- 5) However, the Venetians sided against the Ottomans, as in 1571 when they joined Spain and the Papal States to defeat the Ottoman navy in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Battle of Lepanto.
- 6) The government of Venice, run by a hereditary elite and headed by an elected figurehead known as the doge, was very stable throughout the Early Modern era.
- 7) The Republic of Venice sought to dominate the trade routes and secure ports along the Eastern Mediterranean rather than acquire territory.
- 8) While Portugal tried to dominate the Indian Ocean spice trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Venetian spices were seen as superior to the sea-transported Portuguese spices.