

READING FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Using Context Clues—Multiple Choice

Directions: Read this passage about the early history of Christianity. Use it and your knowledge of world history to answer the questions that follow.

The expansion of Christianity was not a gradual, ineluctable process beginning with St. Paul and ending with the conversion of Constantine in 312. Its expansion in the third century was impressive, because it had been totally unexpected. Very suddenly, the Christian Church became a force to be reckoned with in the Mediterranean towns. . . .

The Christian Church differed from [other contemporary religious groups] While the . . . [others] provided special means to salvation in the next world, they took the position of their devotees in this world for granted. The Christian Church offered a way of living in this world. The . . . ecclesiastical hierarchy, the sense of belonging to a distinctive group with carefully prescribed habits and increasing resources heightened the impression that the Christian Church made on the uncertain generations of the third century. . . . [The Christians] remained a small group: but they succeeded in becoming a big problem. . . .

Source: Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity*: A.D. 150–750

1. In line 1, what does the word *ineluctable* probably mean?
 - A. stoppable
 - B. unavoidable
 - C. easy
 - D. continuous
2. In line 8, the word *devotees* most closely means
 - A. fanatics.
 - B. opponents.
 - C. followers.
 - D. None of the above
3. The word *ecclesiastical*, in line 9, probably refers to
 - A. the government of the Roman empire.
 - B. organizations of doctors or healers.
 - C. the Christian Church.
 - D. None of the above

Test Your Knowledge

How might a church that “offered a way of living in this world” appeal to many people? Why would that be a threat to the Roman empire?