Learning Targets
• To consider the nature of imperial systems in the era of Second Wave civilizations
• To explore why empires developed in some regions but not in others
• To show the important similarities and differences between imperial systems and the reasons behind them
• To reflect on the significance that Second Wave empires have for us today

Big Picture Questions
1. What common features can you identify in the empires described in this chapter? In what ways did they differ from one another? What accounts for those differences?
2. Are you more impressed with the “greatness” of empires or with their destructive and oppressive features? Why?
3. Do you think that these second-wave empires hold “lessons” for the present, or are contemporary circumstances sufficiently unique as to render the distant past irrelevant?
4. How might you assess—both positively and negatively—the role of empires in the history of the second-wave era?

Margin Review Questions
1. How did Persian and Greek civilizations differ in their political organization and values?
2. How did semidemocratic governments emerge in some of the Greek city-states?
3. What were the consequences for both sides of the encounter between the Persians and the Greeks?
4. What changes did Alexander’s conquests bring in their wake?
5. How did Rome grow from a single city to the center of a huge empire?
6. Why was the Chinese empire able to take shape so quickly, while that of the Romans took centuries?
7. Why were the Roman and Chinese empires able to enjoy long periods of relative stability and prosperity?
8. What internal and external factors contributed to the collapse of the Roman and Chinese empires?
9. Why were centralized empires so much less prominent in India than in China?

Key Terms
Alexander the Great: Alexander III of Macedon (356–323 B.C.E.), conqueror of the Persian Empire and part of northwest India.
Ashoka: The most famous ruler of the Mauryan empire (r. 268–232 B.C.E.), who converted to Buddhism and tried to rule peacefully and with tolerance. (pron. ah-SHOKE-uh)
Athenian democracy: A radical form of direct democracy in which much of the free male population of Athens had the franchise and officeholders were chosen by lot.
Caesar Augustus: The great-nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar who emerged as sole ruler of the Roman state at the end of an extended period of civil war (r. 31 B.C.E.–14 C.E.).
Greco-Persian Wars: Two major Persian invasions of Greece, in 490 B.C.E. and 480 B.C.E., in which the Persians were defeated on both land and sea.
Han dynasty: Dynasty that ruled China from 206 B.C.E. to 220 C.E., creating a durable state based on Shihuangdi’s state-building achievement. (pron. hahn)
Hellenistic era: The period from 323 to 30 B.C.E. in which Greek culture spread widely in Eurasia and North Africa in the kingdoms ruled by Alexander’s political successors.
Mauryan Empire: A major empire (322–185 B.C.E.) that encompassed most of India.
pax Romana: The “Roman peace,” a term typically used to denote the stability and prosperity of the early Roman Empire, especially in the first and second centuries C.E. (pron. pox roh-MAHIN-uh)
Persian Empire: A major empire that expanded from the Iranian plateau to incorporate the Middle East from Egypt to India; flourished from around 550 to 330 B.C.E.
Qin Shihuangdi: Literally “first emperor from the Qin”; Shihuangdi (r. 221–210 B.C.E.) forcibly reunited China and established a strong and repressive state. (pron. chihn shee-HWANGdee)
Trung Trac: Vietnamese woman from an aristocratic military family who led an ultimately unsuccessful revolt against China around 40 C.E. following the execution of her husband.