**King Leopold’s Public Letter** (Document A**)***The following is an excerpt from a public letter written by King Leopold to all Belgian agents working in the Congo.*

“The task which the Belgian agents have to accomplish in the Congo is noble. It is incumbent upon them [necessary] to carry on the work of civilization in Africa.The aim [goal] is to regenerate [re-make] races whose degradation and misfortune is hard to realize. The fearful scourges in the eyes of our humanity, these races are the victim. This is already lessening, little by little, through our intervention. Each step forward by our people should mark an improvement in the condition of the natives. In those vast (*huge)* regions of land, mostly uncultivated (*unused)* and mainly unproductive, where the natives hardly knew how to get their own daily food, European experience, knowledge, resources, and enterprise (*skills)* have brought to light unimaginable wealth. Exploration of virgin (*new)* lands goes on, communications are established, highways are opened, and legitimate trade and industry are established.

*Source: Letter from King Leopold II of Belgium to all government agents in the Congo, June 16, 1897*

**King Leopold to the Missionaries** (Document B)*The following is an excerpt from a private letter written by King Leopold to a group of Belgian missionaries about to leave for the Congo in 1883.*

“Reverends, Fathers and Dear Compatriots: The task that is given to you is very difficult. You will go certainly to evangelize, but your priority must be Belgium interests. Your principal mission in the Congo is never to teach the savages to know God, this they know already. They speak and submit to a Mungu, one Nzambi, one Nzakomba, and what else I don’t know (*all of these are native African gods)*.Your essential role is to facilitate the task of administrators and industrialists, which means you will go to interpret the gospel in the way it will be the best to protect our interests in that part of the world. Your knowledge of the gospel will allow you to find texts encouraging your followers to love poverty, like “Happier are the poor because they will inherit the heavens" and, "It’s very difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of God." You have to make them abandon everything which gives them the courage to affront [resist] us. Evangelize the savages so that they stay forever in submission to the white colonialists, so they never revolt against the restraints they are undergoing. Recite every day-"Happy are those who are weeping because the kingdom of God is for them." Convert the blacks always by using the whip.

*Source: Letter from King Leopold II of Belgium to Colonial Missionaries, 188*

**Excerpt from** *King Leopold’s Ghost*(Document C)

“As king of a small country with no interest in colonies, King Leopold realized that a colonial push of his own would require a strong humanitarian veneer (*appearance*). Curbing the slave trade, moral uplift, and the advancement of science were the aims he would talk about, not profits. In 1876, he began planning a step to establish his image as a philanthropist and advance his African ambitions. He organized a conference of explorers and geographers. Underlying most of King Leopold’s excitement was the hope that Africa would be a source of raw materials to feed Belgium’s Industrial Revolution, just as the search for slaves had driven many countries to become interested in Africa.

*Source:* King Leopold’s Ghost. By Adam Hochschild. 1998

**Testimony of a Congolese native who experienced colonization** (Document D)

It used to take ten days to get the twenty baskets of rubber – we were always in the forest to find the rubber vines, to go without food, and our women had to give up cultivating the fields and gardens. Then we starved. Leopards killed some of us while we were working away in the forest and others got lost or died from exposure and starvation. We begged the white man to leave us alone, saying we could get no more rubber, but the white men and their soldiers said: ‘Go. You are only beasts yourselves, you are only nyama (meat).’ We tried, always going further into the forest, and when we failed and our rubber was short, the soldiers came to our towns and killed us. Many were shot, some had their ears cut off; others were tied up with ropes round their necks and taken away.

Questions:

Compare and contrast the way King Leopold II speaks in public and private letters.

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Why do you think wealth is mentioned last by King Leopold in Document 1?

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Compare and contrast the goals King Leopold has for the missionaries and the goals you think they would have had themselves.

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What does Hochschild say Leopold wanted from the Congo?

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What is the difference between what Leopold wanted for the Congolese and what actually happened?

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