**Didius Julianus-Roman Senator and Consul**

Background**:** You are Didius Julianus and have been raised in the influential home of Lucilla Antonines-Marcus Aurelius’ mother. Because of your upbringing, you have a considerable camaraderie with Emperor Aurelius and have been named quaestor a year before your eligibility. Marcus then appointed you as commander of the Primigenia Legion in Germania and you then became governor of Belgica. This command earned you the title of consul and you served Rome with distinction. Accordingly, you have experience both politically and militarily, and serve Marcus as both his confidant and colleague.

*This is not an actual letter, but incorporates much that was actually written and seeks to reasonably represent the viewpoint.*

Dear Marcus, My Mentor and Friend,

Rome is the universe…the center…the emporium of the world, however, fifty percent of the Senate are no longer even Italian. This is an ominous sign that we must change our focus from the exterior to the interior. As your long time friend and trusted advisor, it is with the greatest sense of urgency that I write these words. We now find ourselves at a critical juncture and I implore you to consider the following concerns and adopt the necessary course of action. We must reduce our borders and reconsider our efforts on the Northern front and/or in the Eastern provinces. The constant battles have been so costly that the existence of the empire is now at stake.

Economically, we are out of funding and our treasury is depleted. Due to the plague we have had tragic population losses. Because of our inflationary and recessionary crisis, we must reexamine our priorities. We should decrease our military expenditures and focus our attention on helping the people of Rome.

The frontier provinces have advanced at the expense of the capital. Our soldiers should be serving Rome, not the barbarians of the frontier. We cannot feed the soldiers who are there-how can we afford to send more? We are overextended and need to focus on domestic concerns. We have barbarized our empire and we need to refine what we have and make our empire Roman! Rome for Romans!

Moreover, why are we feeding, defending and supporting barbarians who have nothing to offer Rome…they are sucking the very life force out of the SPQR. We have famine, drought, decaying infrastructure, lack of leadership…Why are we reaching out to foreigners when our own citizens are hungry and homeless and our streets are crumbling? What will be next?…Will you get rid of bread and circuses too?

Rome cannot continue to be the beacon of light for the world-if our own candle is extinguished! It is time to make the right choice and leave the Eastern provinces or the Northern Frontier! If we do not reduce our borders now, the legacy of Rome will be threatened. Marcus Aurelius, I besiege you as your friend and confidant….bring our troops home. Give the barbarians the wasted land that we do not need. Once again, make all roads lead to Rome.

Long live Rome! Hail Caesar!

Sincerely,

Senator Didius Julianis

Guiding Questions:

1. What is Didius asking Marcus Aurelius to do?
2. What reasons does he give to support his position?
3. What are the possible positive consequences of his advice?
4. What are the possible negative consequences of his advice?
5. How should Marcus redraw the boundary between the empire and the Germanic territories?
6. What do you think is Didius’ most powerful argument supporting his proposal? Why?