

Worksheet S6.4.1

To understand the need to build a new city as well as understand why Xiberras Hill was chosen.

A: THE NEED TO BUILD A NEW CITY

(notes by Mario Debono and George Calleja)

The Great Siege left great destruction on the fortifications around the Grand Harbour. The walls that defended Vittoriosa and Senglea were in ruins. The Order of St. John had little money to build a new city and to make things worse, there were only a few soldiers to defend this city. A large number of the knights wanted to leave the Maltese Islands forever. However, Jean de Valette contributed as much as he could to persuade the knights to remain in Malta. He requested for help of Pope Pius V, who then sent his expert architect, Francesco Laparelli, to design the plan of the new city.



The Grand Master knew that the Turks could come back at their earliest opportunity for another attack on Malta. So besides requesting financial aid, he also asked the European rulers for soldiers which would be able to defend the builders and new bastions during a sudden attack. After many requests and even threats that the Knights would leave Malta once forever, King Philip II of Spain together with the Pope sent 6,000 soldiers.

Read this passage and then answer the questions.

“Similar to the knights, the Grand Master, a seventy-two year old, was unsure about the decisions he had to make. Without help they could not repair the bastions and much less build a new city. Without soldiers to defend the builders, everything would be lost if the island would be attacked when the bastions would only be half way built.”

1. Who was the Grand Master who was unsure about what to do?

2. In what year do you think this trouble occurred?

3. Why was there need to repair the bastions?

4. Which bastions do you think they had to repair?

5. Who could have attacked Malta?

6. From whom did the Grand Master request help?

7. If no help had arrived, do you think the knights would have stayed in Malta? Why?

B: WHERE IS THE NEW CITY GOING TO BE BUILT?

Read and answer.

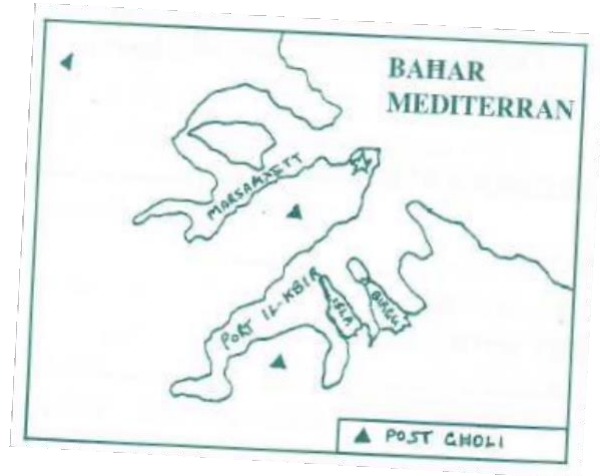
The place chosen for the construction of the new city was Xiberras Hill. This hill was always a problem for Vittoriosa and Senglea during the Great Siege because apart from its being very close to them, it was also higher. This height could be changed into an advantage when the new city was built there. The Xiberras Hill was also a peninsula and thus, it had the advantages of looking over the major ports and was surrounded by the sea except for one side. This was definitely going to assist in the defence of the new city. The only disadvantage it had was that Xiberras Hill had no source of fresh water available, which would surely be very important for the city during a long siege.

1. On the map, mark with the letter A the best place where Valletta was to be built.

2. Give two important reasons why the new city had to be built there.

(a) _____

(b) _____



3. On the same map mark the place where the most powerful bastions had to be built by writing the letter B.

4. Why do you think the most powerful bastions had to be built there?

5. Mention two reasons why the Grand Harbour and the Marsamxett Harbour were very important for the new city?

(a) _____

(b) _____
