

Leaders of World War II Essay Questions—Volume 3

Following are brief biographies of five influential leaders of World War II. With each biography are questions to answer in essay form. The first pages give you the biography and the questions. Notebooking pages you can use for your answers follow.

Air Commodore Alan Christopher Deere

Born on December 12, 1917, in Auckland, New Zealand, Alan Christopher Deere is considered one of New Zealand's most famous fighter pilots of World War II. Alan Deere was educated at St. Carries School in Whanganui and then worked as a shepherd before becoming a law clerk in Whanganui. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1937. His first combat came in May 1940, when the squadron he was serving with assisted in covering the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk. In one week, he destroyed six German planes and was shot down himself. He made it back to his base nineteen hours later after he was able to get a ride on a boat across the English Channel. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in the Battle of France. He went on to serve in the Battle of Britain. The squadron he was part of was one of the squadrons involved in a great deal of the fighting between July and September 1940. He was involved in a battle where his plane was damaged, but he managed to crash land and break out of the plane before it burst into flames. He was back on duty the next day. Just weeks later, he was shot down again. After being attacked by five German fighters, he was able to make it back to the English coast but had to bail out of his plane. As it was coming down, he became caught in the plane and could not get loose until he was blown free and was able to complete a parachute landing. He later was forced to bail out of a plane and landed in a plum tree. Only days later, the airfield where he was preparing to take off was bombed, and his plane flipped and slid across the airfield upside down with Deere in it. He was helped out of the damaged, overturned plane by another injured pilot who he then helped back to the station. He made a short tour of the United States to teach fighter tactics to pilots in America. He later commanded the Free French fighter wing during D-Day and the liberation of France. At the end of the war, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire in addition to the many awards he had earned during the war. After the war, he served as Aide-de-camp to Queen Elizabeth in 1962. Alan Deere died on September 21, 1995. His name is listed on the Battle of Britain London Monument unveiled in 2005, in London, England.

Reading the biography of Alan Christopher Deere sounds like something you would see in a movie. It is hard to imagine anyone really living through so much. How do you think a person could have the courage to continually return to active duty and fight so valiantly after going through as much as Alan Deere did? Where do you feel that kind of courage comes from?

Admiral Andrew Browne Cunningham

Born on January 7, 1883, in Dublin, Ireland, Andrew Browne Cunningham joined the Royal Navy when he was only fifteen years old. He worked his way up through the ranks of the Royal Navy and commanded the British destroyer HMS *Scorpion* in World War I. He became a vice admiral in 1936 and was serving in the Mediterranean area when World War II started in September 1939. Although greatly outnumbered, he went on the offensive against the Italian navy. In November

1940, he commanded air attacks against the Italian naval ships anchored at Taranto and reduced the size of the Italian navy by three battleships. Later, in the Battle of Cape Matapan in March 1941, he sank three of Italy's largest cruisers. These victories were achieved while the war was going badly in other areas. He became naval commander of the Allied expeditionary force in the Mediterranean in 1942 and served as General Eisenhower's naval deputy. He commanded the fleet that covered the Allied landings in North Africa during Operation Torch. He later commanded the Allied naval forces during the amphibious invasions of Sicily and Italy in 1943. He was promoted to chief of naval staff, a position in which he reported directly to Prime Minister Winston Churchill through the Chiefs of Staff Committee. He retired in 1946. In 1951, he wrote his biography, *A Sailor's Odyssey*. He died on June 12, 1963.

Admiral Andrew Browne Cunningham was 56 years old when World War II began. In spite of the fact that he was born twenty years before the Wright brothers made their historic flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, United States, he was able to hold different positions of command throughout a war that involved a war in the air as much as on the ground and on the sea. How hard do you think it would be to remain current on the many changes and advancements in warfare that were taking place even as the war was being fought? What characteristics would a commander need to be able to fight in a war that was so different than any war before it?

Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque

Born on November 22, 1902, in Belloy-Saint-Léonard, France, Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque attended the military schools at Saint-Cyr and Saumur. He was wounded and captured by the Germans in 1939 but escaped to England. When he heard that Charles de Gaulle was gathering the Free French Forces who were in London, he changed his name to Leclerc in order to prevent any retaliation against his wife and children still in France and joined de Gaulle. Charles de Gaulle promoted him to the rank of colonel, and he went on to serve in French Equatorial Africa and achieved many victories. His next promotion was to brigadier general, after which he marched his troops approximately 1,000 miles (1,600 km) from Chad to Tripoli, Libya. He captured garrisons of Italian troops during the march and joined his troops with the British Eighth Army when he arrived. He was commander of the Free French 2nd Armored Division from Morocco. As leader of this division, he commanded people of twenty-two nationalities who worked together as part of the Normandy operations. The 2nd Armored Division participated with Patton's army in the closing of the Falaise pocket. On August 20, 1944, Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered the liberation of Paris, and on August 25, the German commander in Paris surrendered to Leclerc. Leclerc continued on in World War II, liberating Strasbourg and later taking his men into Germany. He then fought in the Pacific theater as the head of the French Expeditionary Force in the Far East and signed the Japanese surrender agreement on behalf of France. After the war, he was given the post of inspector general of French forces in North Africa. He died on November 28, 1947, as a result of an airplane crash.

In addition to his bravery and daring, Philippe Leclerc de Hauteclocque is set apart from many others by his ability to command people and bring them together to fight for a goal. He was able to bring a group that included twenty-two nationalities together into a division that fought with tremendous unity. Today, many seem to have trouble allowing room for people who do not agree with their beliefs. Do you think Leclerc was only successful because of the circumstances of war? Do you feel the times have changed to such a degree that such unity is no longer possible? What traits would it take for someone to be able to unite people in this way? How

could someone keep this kind of unity among people of such diversity? Do you think working together for a united goal is still possible?

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz

Born on February 24, 1885, in Fredericksburg, Texas, United States, Chester W. Nimitz grew up listening to his grandfather tell stories of his life before he retired as a sea captain. However, Chester Nimitz wanted to be a soldier, not a sailor. Chester wrote to his Congressman to apply for an appointment to West Point. Since all openings to West Point had been filled, he was talked into taking an examination for the U.S. Naval Academy. He took the examination and was accepted and appointed to the Academy in 1901. He left high school to attend the Naval Academy and didn't actually receive a high school diploma until after he had become a Fleet Admiral. In 1905, he graduated seventh in a class of 114 from the Naval Academy, at the age of twenty. He admitted to getting seasick on his first assignment and later in his career, was court martialed for running a destroyer aground on a mud bank. He overcame this setback and was eventually ordered to report for submarine training. By 1912, he was appointed Commander, Atlantic Submarine Flotilla. Serving in different positions throughout his career, Nimitz was sent to Pearl Harbor in 1920 to build a submarine base there. He was then assigned to the Naval War College where he studied the logistics of a potential war in the Pacific Ocean. This would be invaluable to him later. Chester Nimitz filled many positions in the Navy until December 1941, when he was ordered to take command of the Pacific Fleet. He served brilliantly as Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, directing many offenses that helped the Allies in their fight against the Japanese forces. He was honored to be chosen to sign the Japanese surrender documents on behalf of the United States aboard the USS *Missouri*. After his service in World War II, Admiral Nimitz served as Chief of Naval Operations, and then in other positions, both with the Navy and in civilian life. He also did much to help restore good relations with Japan by raising money to restore the Japanese battleship *Mikasa*. He died on February 20, 1966.

Chester W. Nimitz never intended to be in the Navy. Yet, when he decided to attend the Naval Academy, it seems he never looked back. In spite of terrible seasickness at first and running a destroyer aground early in his career, he became one of the greatest admirals in navy history. According to an article on the Naval History and Heritage Command website, the yearbook of the Naval Academy described him as a man "of cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows."¹ How do you think this outlook helped Nimitz in his career and in his life in general? How would this outlook help someone overcome obstacles and grow in confidence throughout his life? How can the attitude of "confident tomorrows" help nations when they are going through hard times? Do you think most people today think of tomorrow with any type of confidence?

1. <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/biographies-list/bios-n/nimitz-chester-w.html>, accessed 3/12/2018

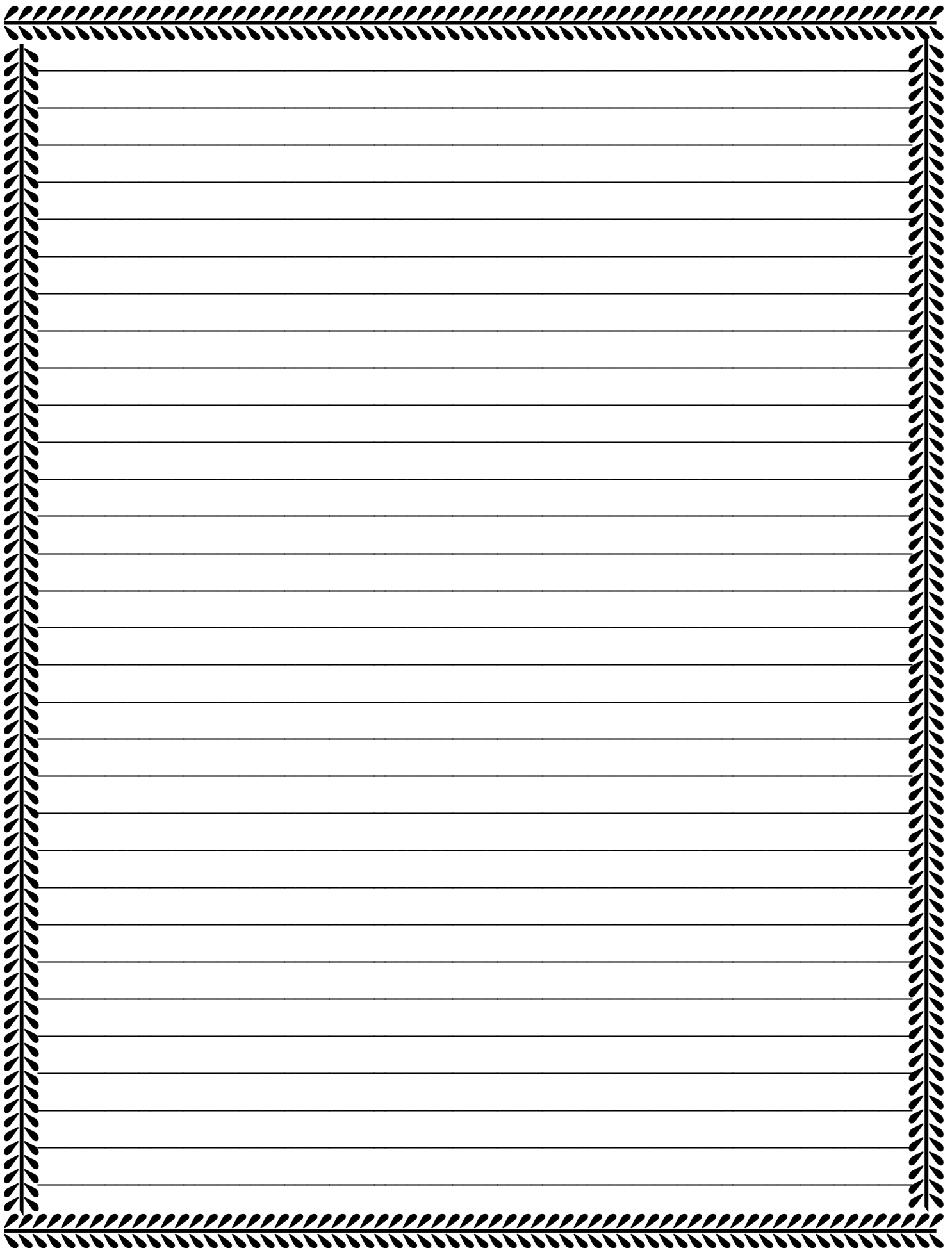
General Douglas MacArthur

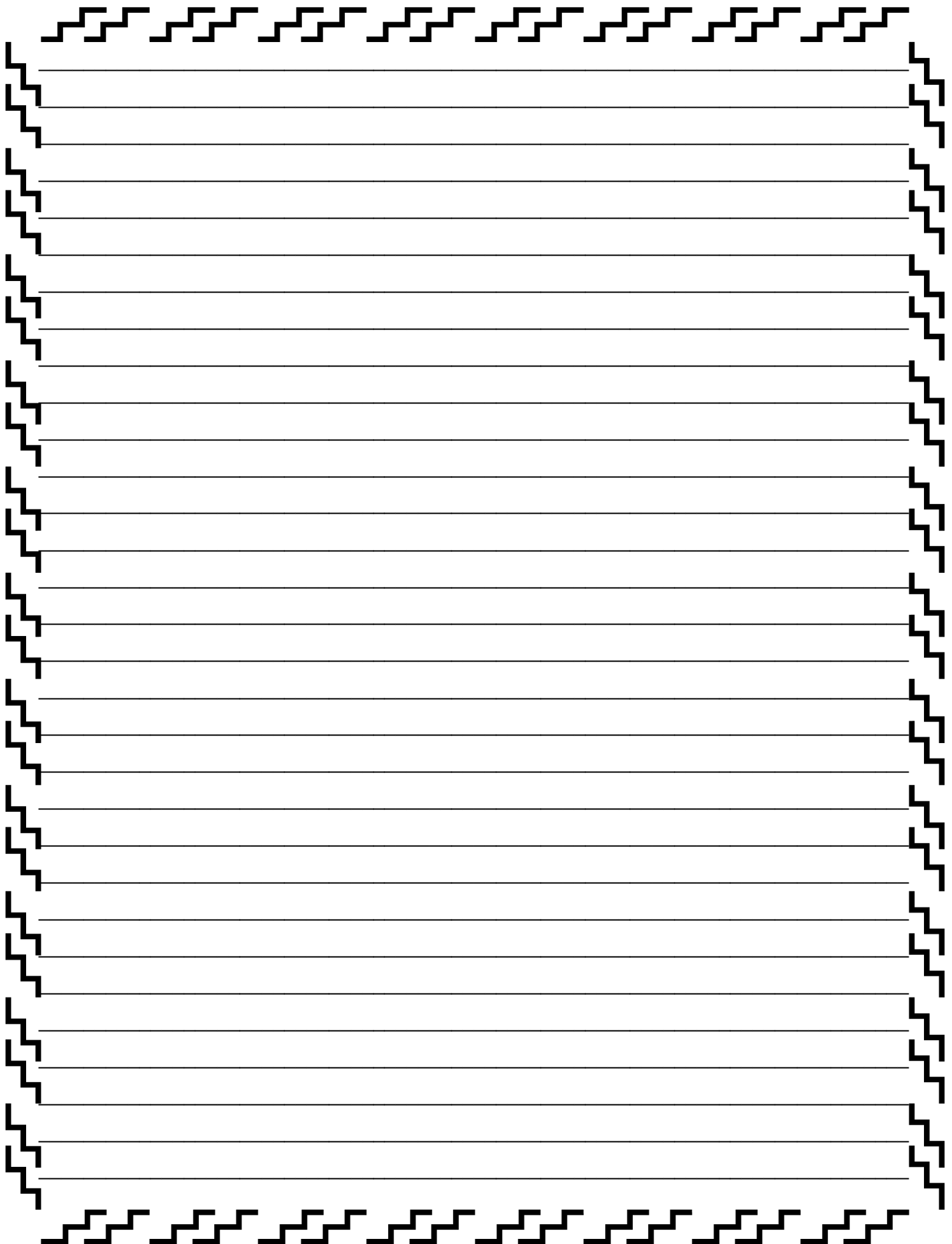
Born on January 26, 1880, in Little Rock, Arkansas, United States, Douglas MacArthur was the son of an American Civil War hero. In 1903, he graduated with one of the highest academic records in the history of West Point. He served as chief of staff of the 42nd Division in France in World War I. During this time, he received many medals for bravery and was wounded twice, receiving two Purple Hearts. He advanced in rank in the army until he became a general when

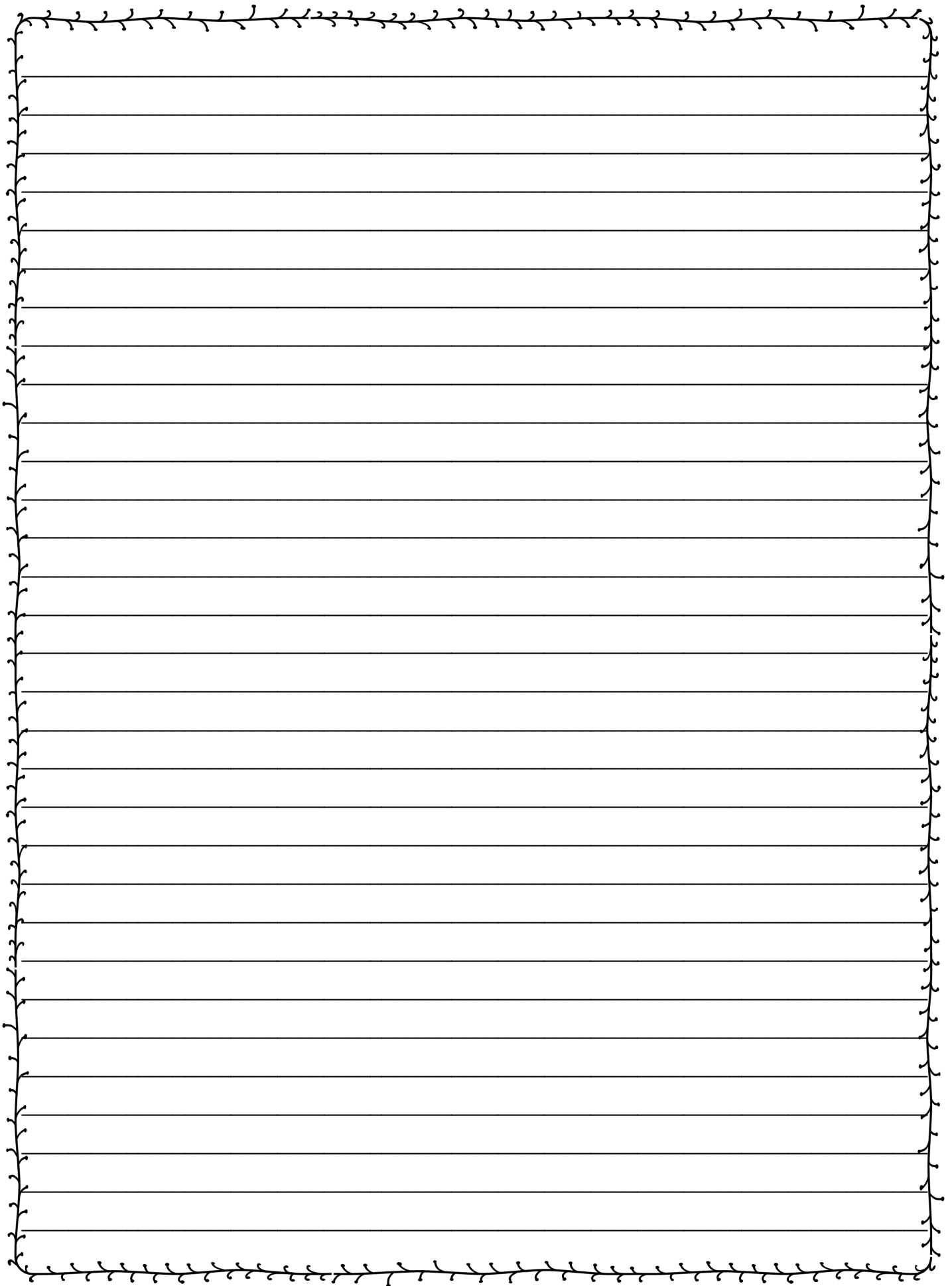
he was made army chief of staff in 1930. MacArthur served as military adviser in the Commonwealth of the Philippines, which was preparing for independence. He fought in the defense of the Philippines until he was ordered to Australia in 1942 to command Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific Theater. His troops won many battles in the South Pacific, and he was finally given the support needed to invade the Philippines in 1944. Shortly after returning to the Philippines, MacArthur was made a five-star general, one of only five men to receive that high rank. MacArthur was appointed commander of all U.S. Army forces in the Pacific in early 1945. He took charge of the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. He was Allied commander of the Japanese occupation from 1945 to 1951. MacArthur then served as commander of the United Nations forces during the Korean War. North Korea was losing the war until Communist Chinese forces joined the war on the side of North Korea. MacArthur wanted to continue the war into China, but President Truman was afraid of starting World War III. MacArthur refused to obey orders not to discuss his disagreement with policy on the war and sent a letter demanding the surrender of the Chinese. He was recalled to the United States and relieved of command. He returned to private life and died on April 5, 1964.

Douglas MacArthur was a brilliant leader of troops during World War II and the Korean War. His troops aided in the liberation of many islands in the South Pacific. As Allied commander of the Japanese occupation from 1945 to 1951, MacArthur worked to help the Japanese people rebuild their country and their lives. He refused pressure to remove Emperor Hirohito from the throne, although in helping to form the new Japanese constitution, MacArthur included sections that outlawed war and gave Japanese women the right to vote. He was very popular with the Japanese people. How hard do you think it would have been to balance the feelings that MacArthur had during World War II when he saw his troops being killed fighting Japanese troops, with the feelings of wanting to help the Japanese people put their lives back together after the war was over? How do you think you would react if you had to change from seeing someone as a mortal enemy one day to helping them rebuild their lives and learn to be successful the next day? Do you think you could do it?









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