

Leaders of World War II Essay Questions—Volume 4

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.

Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King

Born on December 17, 1874, in Berlin (now called Kitchener), Ontario, Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie King served as prime minister of Canada longer than any other prime minister has. Many of King's young years were spent at the home his family lived in referred to as "Woodside," where William and his siblings developed a love of the outdoors. His family openly discussed current events along with their family's history.

King attended the University of Toronto and was a very good debater. He was not certain if he wanted to go into law or the ministry and developed an interest in social work. He worked for a newspaper after he graduated and studied law at night, receiving a law degree in 1896. He studied economics and, upon returning to Toronto, investigated labour conditions there and made suggestions to protect clothing workers in Canada. This led to the Fair Wages Resolution, which Parliament passed. In 1897, King received a scholarship from Harvard University. He studied there for two years. The scholarship was renewed in 1899, with the added advantage of being able to study abroad. While he was visiting Rome in 1900, he received a job offer to edit the *Labour Gazette*. It was a difficult decision because he had also been offered a teaching position at Harvard. He chose the editing job. When the *Labour Gazette* was founded, it was the first step in establishing of a Department of Labour in Canada.

In September 1900, King was appointed deputy minister of labour at the age of 25. He became known for his fairness as he traveled through Canada helping settle labour disputes. Canada's industrial relations laws today are still partially based on the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act of 1907 that King prepared. He was appointed the first full-time minister of labour in 1909. Due to family health problems, King decided to accept a job as the director of the Department of Industrial Relations at the Rockefeller Foundation, although he insisted he be allowed to continue to live in Canada. Within the next eight years, King's father, mother, and brother all died. King was chosen leader of the Liberal Party in 1919. In 1921, William Lyon Mackenzie King became prime minister of Canada.

When King became prime minister, the economy was not doing well. However, with changes he made, in 1924, the government balanced its budget for the first time in eleven years. King also worked to make Canada more independent in its international relations. He did not feel it was necessary to always support British decisions if they were not in the best interests of Canada. Canada established old-age pensions in 1927, and King also tried to get unemployment insurance passed into law, but could not get support. When the depression began in 1929, unemployment became a huge problem for Canada as well as the rest of the world. During King's third term as prime minister, he knew a war was inevitable in Europe. He was fortunate to be surrounded by an effective Cabinet. He allowed those in charge of the military to do their jobs without trying to tell them what to do. He wanted the decision to send troops to be one that was made in Canada, by the Canadian parliament, to be certain that both English-speaking and

French-speaking Canadians were represented in the decision. Parliament voted overwhelmingly to participate. In 1942, Canadians voted to allow conscription, but King said he would not draft troops unless absolutely necessary. Canadian units overseas consisted entirely of volunteers, but by late 1944, replacements were badly needed. At that time, King decided to send draftees overseas, and he was supported by Parliament. King worked to become a link between Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom and President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States during the war. He was in a position to understand the views of both countries and helped Churchill and Roosevelt reach agreements on certain issues. He continued to lead Canada until he retired due to poor health in 1948. William Lyon Mackenzie King died on July 22, 1950.

One of the detractors people have raised about William Lyon Mackenzie King was that he did not insist on Canada having a greater influence in deciding policy for the Allies during World War II. Before the United States entered the war in 1941, Canada was the major ally of Britain. It is said King did not want to plan strategy because he did not want to be forced to commit more troops than Canada could supply without resorting to the draft. It was also said the idea of sending drafted troops overseas in World War I had caused major problems for Canada, and King knew this. However, Canada did send a tremendous number of troops overseas, including some draftees before the end of the war, and had very little influence over strategy in the war. How difficult do you think it would be to decide which way to turn on this issue? Would it be better to have little say over the strategy of the war and try to keep your own citizens satisfied, or to take a chance on causing a major crisis in your own country in order to have more say over the way the war was going? What do you think of King's decision?

Charles de Gaulle

Born on November 22, 1890, in Lille, France, Charles de Gaulle had an interest in the military from the time he was a boy. He attended the Military Academy of Saint-Cyr and graduated with honors. He joined an infantry regiment in 1913. Intelligent and hardworking as a soldier, he was very sure of himself in matters and also very courageous. He fought in World War I, was wounded at least three times, and was captured while fighting at Verdun. He spent more than two and one-half years as a prisoner of war. He made five attempts to escape, but each failed.

He served on the staff of the Supreme War Council beginning in 1925. From 1927 to 1929, he spent time with the army that occupied the Rhineland and saw for himself the danger that could come from German aggression. As a major, he was also very much aware that, at the time, the French defenses were not able to handle German aggression if it came. He began writing about military matters, and in 1934, he wrote a study on military theory that defended the idea of a small professional army, correctly trained and outfitted, being more beneficial than the Maginot Line which had been built along the French-German border. This army could easily move around, fighting with tanks and other forms of machinery. He became very unpopular because his views opposed those of his military superiors. Some German officers studied his views and used tactics similar to those he proposed against the Allies in World War II. He was also proven at least partially correct since Germany attacked Belgium first and then came into France at the end of the Maginot Line, making it basically useless against them.

He held the rank of temporary brigadier general in May 1940, after the outbreak of the war. A courageous leader, he made many trips to England on behalf of the government of Paul Reynaud to discuss the war. Shortly after, the government of Paul Reynaud was replaced with

the government of Marshal Petain, who headed the French government while it cooperated with Germany. De Gaulle escaped to England and broadcasted from London his attempt to convince the French to continue the war with him as their leader. In August 1940, a French military court tried and sentenced him to loss of military rank, confiscation of property, and death. Since he was in England, his execution could not be carried out. De Gaulle became a political leader with a few supporters who became the Free French Forces. He organized them in the United Kingdom and in the French colonies. He was unknown to many of the political leaders at the time, but he was very certain in his beliefs and had the qualities of a good leader. He was completely devoted to France and fought for France with all the resources he could gather. The French began to recognize him as a leader because of his broadcasts from England, the work of the Free French Forces, and the work of the French underground, but the Allies did not completely recognize him as a leader until after Paris was liberated in 1944. He returned to Paris with the Allies in 1944, heading two provisional governments until January 1946, when he resigned. Charles de Gaulle became president of the Republic of France on December 21, 1958. He served as president until 1969. He died on November 9, 1970.

At 49 years of age when he was condemned by a military court, lost his rank and property, and was sentenced to death at a trial where he was not present, Charles de Gaulle took the initiative to fight for what he believed in. Some say his continued fighting was out of stubbornness, others that he was so dedicated to France that he would not give up. Regardless, his confidence in what he believed to be the correct road for France to take during World War II helped bring about the French resistance that was so important for the Allies during the fight. What would be the difficulty in organizing and commanding a resistance movement from other countries or through the underground of France? How would you convince others to follow you if you could not be there all of the time to coordinate and command them? Do you think all of the credit goes to de Gaulle's dynamic qualities, or do you think the circumstances of the times had something to do with his ability to draw followers to fight to free France?

Major General Richard N. Gale

Born on July 25, 1896, in London, England, Richard Nelson Gale traveled with his family for many of the early years of his life in Australia and New Zealand. His family returned to England in 1906. After graduating, he wanted to be an officer in the Royal Artillery, but he did not have the grades or physical qualifications to enter the Royal Military Academy. He was determined to enter the British Army, so he attended physical training classes and studied to improve his academic grades. After World War I started, he finally was admitted to the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. At the end of 1915, after being commissioned into the Worcestershire Regiment as a Second Lieutenant, he applied for a course on training with machine guns. When he was transferred to the Machine Gun Training Centre, he found he had actually applied to join the Machine Gun Corps, and not just to take a course as he thought. He was soon sent to the Western Front. During his service in France, he won the Military Cross for his devotion to duty and his bravery.

After World War I, he volunteered to serve with the British Army in India, staying with the Machine Gun Corps until it was disbanded. Leaving India in 1936, he returned to England. By 1941, he had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and commanded a battalion. When the 1st Parachute Brigade was formed with the expansion of the British airborne forces, Gale was given command of the Brigade. He was promoted to the rank of Major General in May 1943, with just

less than one year to organize and train the newly-formed 6th Airborne Division before it was to take part in the British airborne landings in Normandy in June 1944. No British airborne division had ever been sent into battle solely through aerial means. To make it work, there was much planning and tactical work to be done. Gale was very thorough in his work, and the division landed successfully in Normandy before dawn on June 6, 1944, with Major General Gale landing by glider with them. He commanded operations to block the German approach to Sword Beach. When the division returned to England for rest, Gale did not go with them. Instead, he worked with the First Allied Airborne Army and was given command of British I Airborne Corps near the end of the war.

Gale was knighted in 1950. He remained in the British Army until 1957, when he retired, but he was called back to active duty in early 1958. He permanently retired in 1960. Richard Nelson Gale died on July 29, 1982.

Richard Nelson Gale wanted to be in the British Army for much of his life. However, when he first attempted to enter the Royal Military Academy, he did not have the qualifications needed. He had to work extremely hard to meet the qualifications necessary to serve in the British Army. Even with his work, it was his bravery in saving other lives and devotion to duty that made him stand out in World War I. How do you think devotion to duty and care for the lives of others influenced him as he assembled and trained men for their part in the Normandy invasion? How do you think determination to work hard when he was preparing to enter the military academy helped him in the tremendous amount of work he had to do to plan the tactical maneuvers needed to safely land and carry out his mission on D-Day? What does this tell you about looking at your opportunities in a serious manner, as you do not know what they may prepare you for in the future?

Prime Minister Winston Churchill

Born on November 30, 1874, at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England, Winston Churchill was the son of Lord Randolph and Lady Churchill. He spoke with a stutter and a lisp, and his parents did not have much time for him due to the responsibilities of their positions. Although he was the lowest in class ranking in secondary school, it was there his love for the English language began. When his father found Winston was interested in becoming a soldier, he decided it would be good for him to enter the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. It took him three tries to pass the entrance examinations, but once there, he soon led his class in tactics and fortifications. In 1895, he was appointed a second lieutenant in the 4th Hussars, a cavalry regiment. As a soldier, Winston Churchill wanted to be involved in fighting, but his country was not at war at the time. However, the people of Cuba were revolting against the Spanish who ruled them. Churchill arranged to go there as an observer and write articles about the revolt for a newspaper in London. Churchill's regiment was sent to southern India in 1896. In 1897, he learned that fighting had broken out in northwestern India and was hired to report on the fighting. He joined the advance guard and took part in the fighting. After returning to his regiment, he used this experience to write his first book. With his love of adventure, Churchill transferred to Egypt. He took part in the Battle of Omdurman, then, when he returned to England, wrote another book.

He decided to retire from the army and run for office, but he lost. He was hired by a London newspaper to report on the Anglo-Boer War in South Africa. Soon after arriving, the Boers ambushed his train, and Churchill was captured and imprisoned. One night, he scaled the wall of

the prison, made it past the sentries, and traveled on freight trains across about 300 miles of enemy territory to safety, suddenly becoming a hero.

Back in England, he again ran for Parliament, and this time, he won. He served in Parliament and in other government positions. In 1911, Churchill was appointed first lord of the Admiralty. The prime minister felt Churchill was one of the few people who thought war with Germany would likely happen and felt Churchill would be the strong leader the Admiralty needed. When the United Kingdom entered World War I, the Admiralty was ready. Churchill resigned from the Admiralty in 1915 after he was blamed for an attack going very badly. He joined the British Army in France until 1917, when he was appointed minister of munitions and began large-scale production of tanks. In 1919, Churchill became secretary of state for war and for air.

He returned to Parliament in 1924, where he remained until 1939. Again, Churchill saw war with Germany coming, but instead of following his suggestions to build up the British air force, people called him a warmonger. The need for a powerful British air force was seen quickly after the war began. After the United Kingdom entered the war in 1939, Churchill was again appointed first lord of the Admiralty. When Prime Minister Chamberlain's government fell in 1940, King George VI asked Churchill to form a new government. Churchill became prime minister at age 65. The Battle of Britain began with bombing raids on London by the Luftwaffe. The Royal Air Force finally defeated the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain and the bombing in London stopped, but not without a high price on both sides. Churchill argued to try to get certain of the Allies to fight deeper into Europe to stop the Soviet Union from being able to so easily take over certain areas after the war, but he could not get cooperation from the other Allies. After the surrender of Germany, Churchill's party was defeated in the elections, and he was no longer prime minister.

Churchill still had his seat in parliament and warned people against the threat of communism, but was again accused of being a warmonger. The term "Iron Curtain" actually came into common use after a speech Churchill gave in 1946, when he spoke of the iron curtain that had descended across the Continent. When Churchill's party returned to power in 1951, Churchill again became prime minister. He was almost 77 years old at the time. He suffered a stroke in 1953 that paralyzed him on his left side, but amazingly recovered. Later that year, he won the Nobel Prize in literature. In April 1955, Churchill retired. He was made an honorary U.S. citizen in 1963. On January 24, 1965, Winston Churchill died.

As a boy, Winston Churchill's grades in school were not good, and he did not seem to have the drive to improve them until he decided to work harder at the Royal Military College. From this beginning, one of the world's most brilliant leaders came about. How often do you think a student's apparent lack of ability is really a lack of interest in the work being presented? Do you think presenting things in a way that interests the student would lead to an increase in drive and therefore what would seem to be an increase in ability? How often do you think talents lay hidden in people because the right circumstances have not been presented to bring them out? What do you think can be done to find ways to help people work to their fullest potential? How can attitudes be changed to help bring out the best in people?

General Dwight D. Eisenhower

Born on October 14, 1890, in Denison, Texas, United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower was raised in Kansas, where his family moved when he was still a baby. Dwight worked, with his brothers,

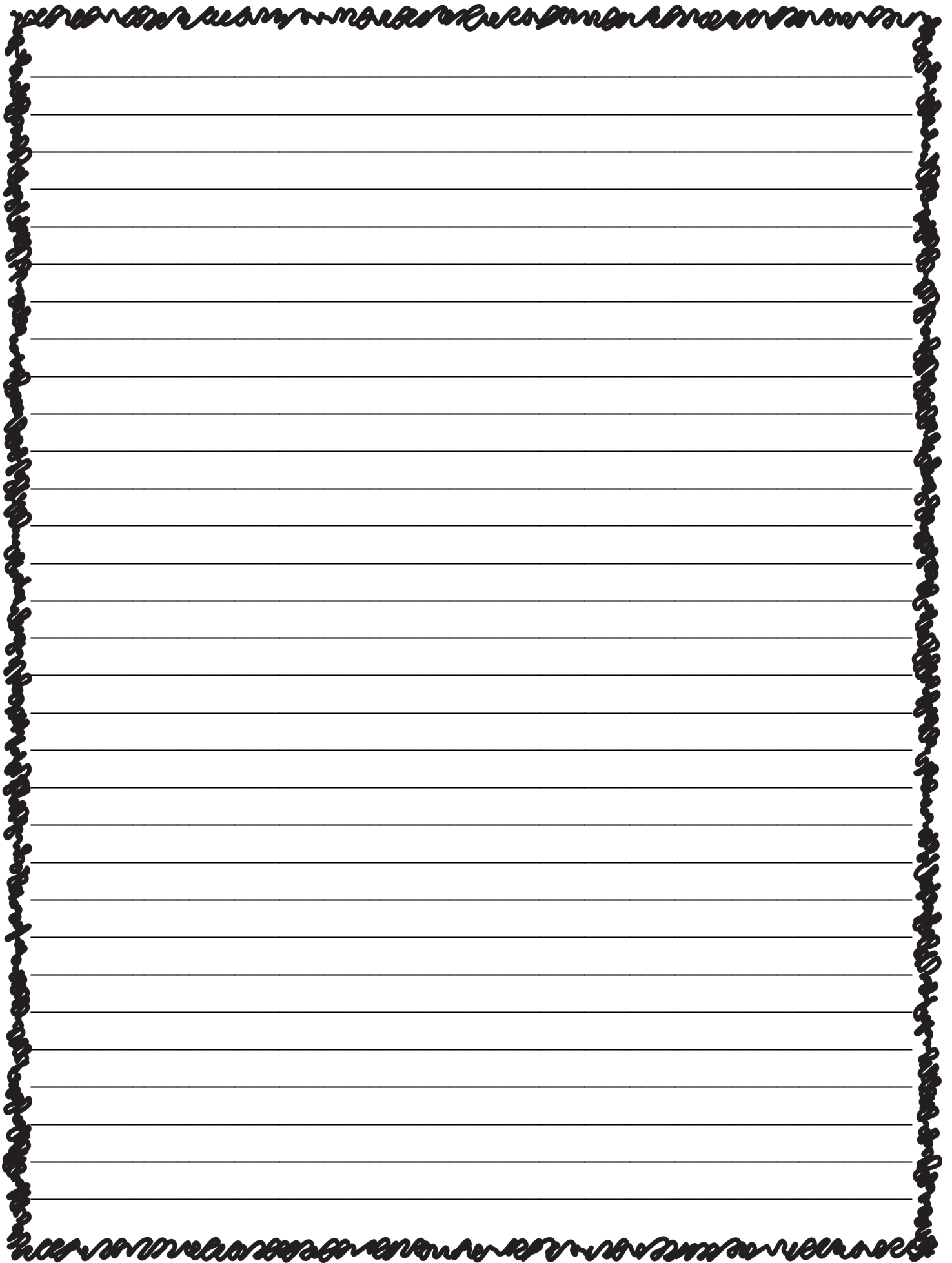
from the time he was young to contribute to the family's income. After graduating from high school, Dwight helped pay his older brother's first-year college expenses and did not have specific plans for a higher education himself. He was encouraged to apply to the national military academies because the tuition was free. A Kansas senator got Eisenhower an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York. When Eisenhower graduated from West Point in 1915 as a second lieutenant, he was assigned to Fort Sam Houston, near San Antonio, Texas. He was promoted to first lieutenant in 1916.

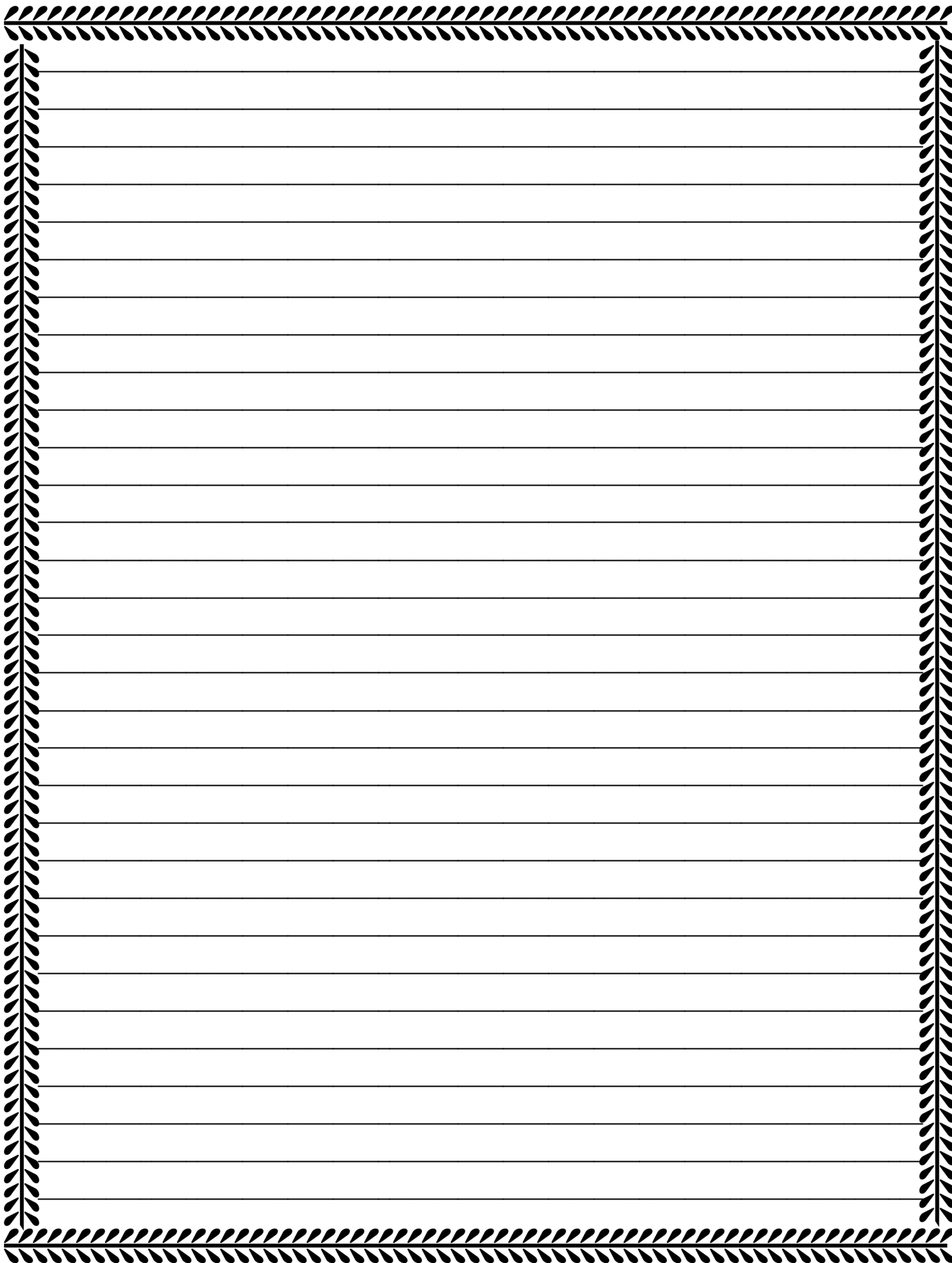
During World War I, Eisenhower worked with tank training programs for troops in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. After World War I, Eisenhower served in the Panama Canal Zone and then applied for admission to the Army's Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He graduated first in a class of 275 top officers. As an aide to General Douglas MacArthur, Eisenhower spent time in the Philippines.

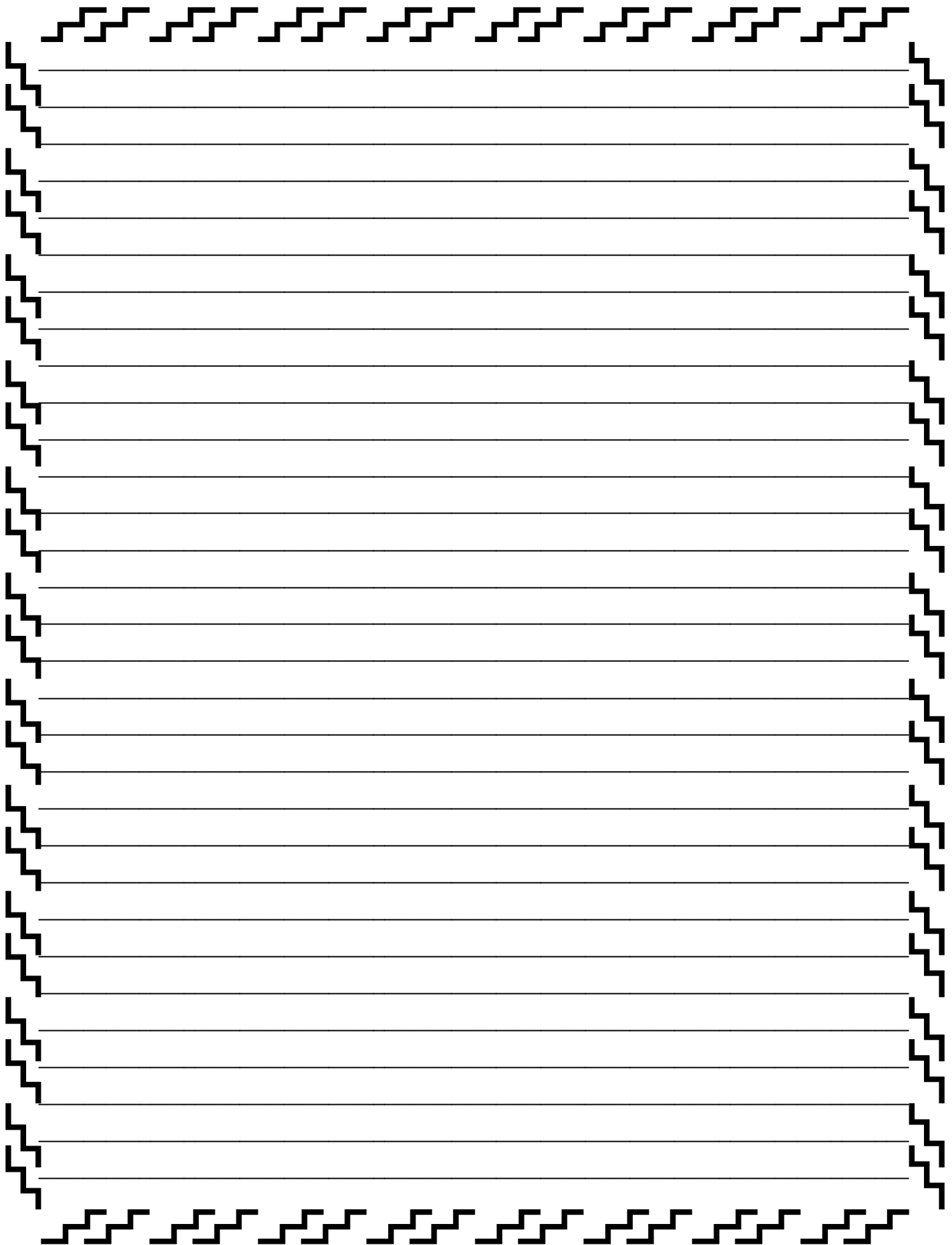
In 1940, after the start of World War II, the United States began to prepare its military forces in case they were needed. In 1941, Eisenhower was appointed to plan strategy for the Third Army in war games. His efforts in this earned him a promotion to brigadier general. After the United States entered the war in December 1941, Eisenhower served in the Army's war plans division. He was promoted to major general, then, in June 1942, named commanding general of the U.S. forces in the European Theater of Operations. By July 1942, Eisenhower had been promoted to lieutenant general and named commander of the Allied forces invading North Africa. By February 1943, he was made a four-star general, the highest rank in the Army at that time. When it was time to organize Operation Overlord to plan the Allied invasion of Europe across the English Channel, Eisenhower was named supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe. The decision of when to carry out Operation Overlord was difficult because it was very much dependent upon the weather and the need for calm seas. The date to invade was not decided upon until the day before the invasion. D-Day occurred on June 6, 1944. Eleven months later, after much fighting and many deaths, Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945. By the time he returned from the war, Eisenhower had been made a five-star general, a newly created rank in the Army, and wanted to retire. He finally retired from active military service in 1948, but was called back in 1950 to be supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe.

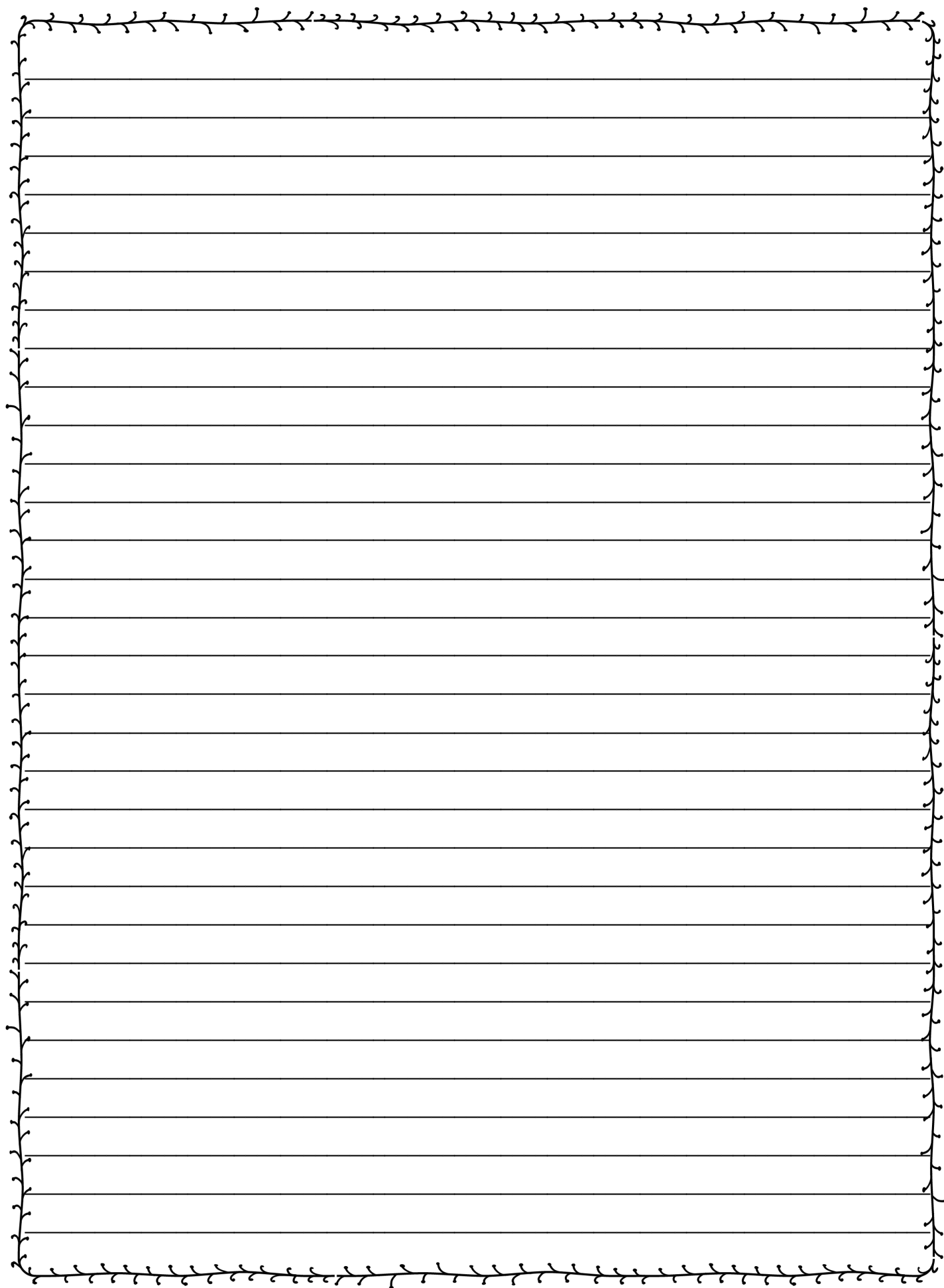
Eisenhower was encouraged to run for president. Upon learning that President Truman was not going to seek another term, he decided to retire from the army without pay or military benefits and become a candidate for president. Eisenhower won two terms as president of the United States. In 1961, he retired to his farm in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He died on March 28, 1969.

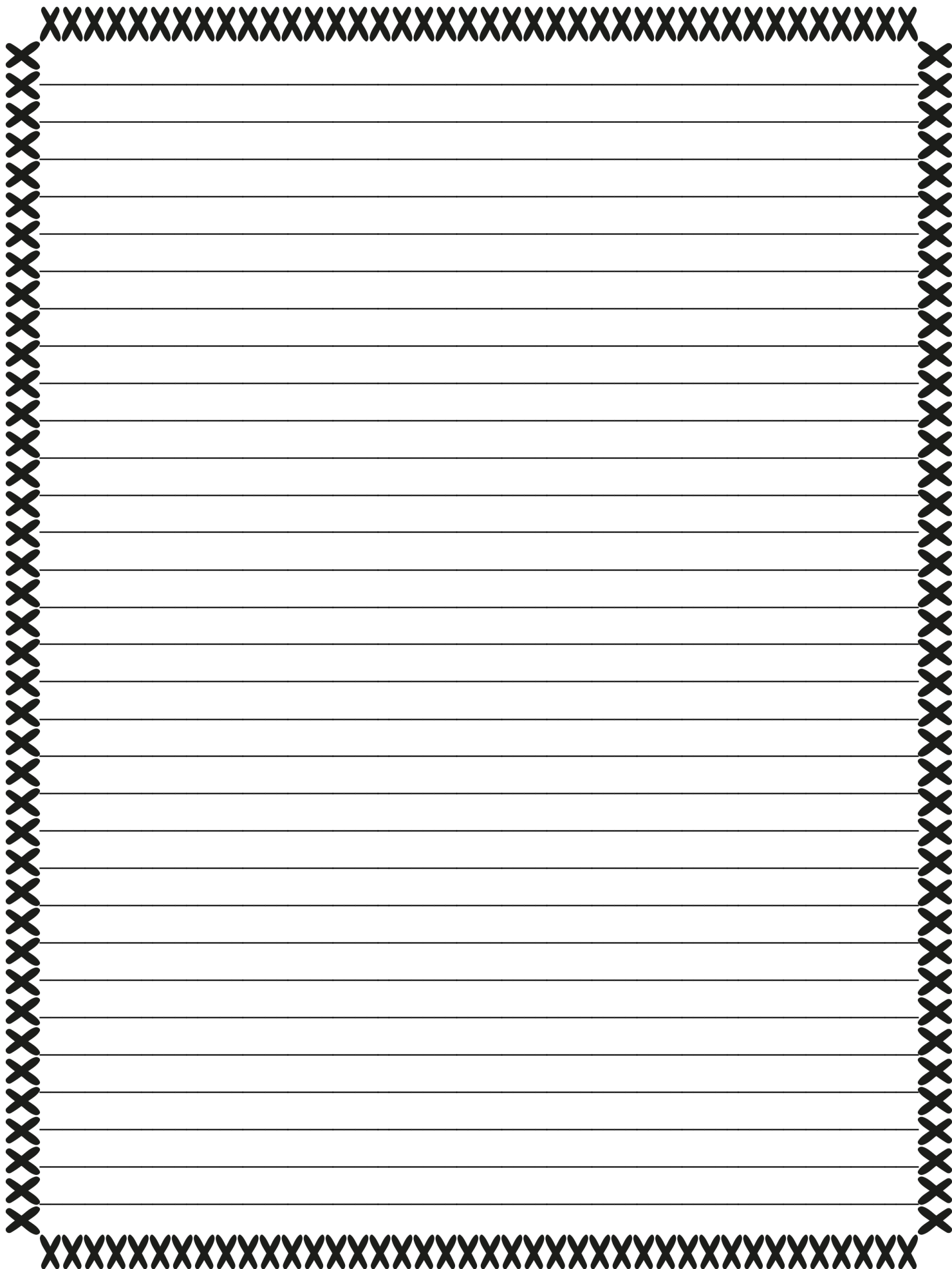
Dwight D. Eisenhower grew up in America at a time when technology was not prevalent. He learned from a friend how to compute percentages and figure odds. He was very observant and an extremely good judge of character. He was not judgmental, but observant enough to be able to "read" people. He had a good idea how they would react to different situations. Do you think this trait is common in people today? Do you think the reliance upon technology has lessened the ability of people to use their powers of observation, since much communication is done via phone and internet? Do you think the reliance upon technology for computing outcomes has reduced the need for people to rely on their own skills for thinking things through and weighing all possible outcomes? In other words, is it easier to rely on computer simulations than to have to think through all of the variables that could influence an outcome? Explain your thoughts on these matters.











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