

## The 1850s Essay Questions

Following are brief overviews of five events from the 1850s. With each event are questions to answer in essay form. The first pages give you the event and the questions. Notebooking pages you can use for your answers follow.

### David Livingstone

David Livingstone was born in Scotland in 1813. His family was very poor, and at the age of ten, he went to work in a cotton mill to help support his family. He was eager to learn and as he grew, he studied Greek, theology, and medicine in Glasgow while he worked part time. He was determined to become a medical missionary to China. Wars in China ended his dreams of going there, but after meeting Robert Moffat, a Scottish missionary to southern Africa, he decided Africa was where he should serve.

While working in Africa, he continued to push deeper and deeper into the middle of Africa. He was fascinated by the discoveries he made about the geography of the continent. He despised the treatment shown to the Africans and fought passionately against slavery. He moved farther north than any European had previously gone, learning the languages and cultures while he traveled into the Kalahari country. In spite of being mauled by a lion, causing an injury to his left arm that was complicated by a second injury shortly after, he showed his determination to spread Christianity to all who were willing to accept it by persevering in his work.

He surveyed many areas and worked to expand scientific understanding of the areas he explored. In 1853, he began a trip northwestward from the area of the Zambezi, intending to find a route to the Atlantic coast to help increase trade, stop the slave trade, and give a more direct route to reach the Makololo people, whom he had been working with. In 1854, he reached Luanda, the present-day capital of Angola. Returning to the Makololo people, he then continued to travel east, exploring the Zambezi and eventually reaching Quelimane, a town in present-day Mozambique on the east coast of the continent, in 1856. During the last part of this trip, he discovered Victoria Falls, which he named in honor of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. He then returned to Britain and wrote a book, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa*, in 1857. For the next six months, he traveled around the British Isles, speaking and calling others to consider working in Africa. He left Britain to return to Africa in 1858. The discoveries made by David Livingstone helped begin a period of colonization of Africa by Britain, France, and other European nations. David Livingstone died in 1873 in what is now Zambia.

David Livingstone had a deep love for the people of Africa, and they had an abiding love for him. Knowing this, do you think Livingstone intended for Britain, France, and other countries to colonize Africa, or would he have only wanted fair trade with the people there? Why do you think so many of the people of Africa loved David Livingstone and worked with him in his study of their land? Explain your answers.

## The Crimean War

The Crimean War was fought mainly on the Crimean Peninsula, a land area that extends from present-day Ukraine into the Black Sea. There were many causes of the war, including religious, economic, and military rivalries. The main objection was to Russia expanding into the area of the Black Sea. In July 1853, the Ottoman Turks, with the support of Britain, stood firm against Russian expansion.

In September 1854, the allied troops, consisting of troops from Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire, began a year-long siege of Sevastopol, an important Russian port and naval base. The first major battle of the Crimean War, the Battle of Alma, occurred during this time. The Russian forces lost the Battle of Alma, but because the allied troops were ordered not to pursue them, the Russians had time to retreat to the south and set up a greater defense of Sevastopol.

The Charge of the Light Brigade in October 1854, occurred during the Battle of Balaklava. It was ordered by Lord Raglan, however it was relayed to Lord Cardigan, leader of the Light Brigade, through many other commanders and was not relayed properly. This resulted in the Light Brigade attacking in a valley surrounded on three sides by Russian forces. Lord Cardigan led a charge directly down the hill and attacked. Lord Raglan saw that the battle was hopeless and wanted to prevent more people from dying, so he stopped any backup for the Light Brigade. The Light Brigade fought bravely as they retreated, but the result was disastrous for the allied troops.

Some of the earliest surviving photographs of mid-1800s battlefield scenes were taken by British photographer Roger Fenton. As the official governmental photographer of the war, Fenton only portrayed the parts of the war that were acceptable to the British government. He did, however, show some of the more ordinary day-to-day aspects of military life.

Late in 1854, Florence Nightingale was put in charge of nursing for the British and allied soldiers during the Crimean War. Florence Nightingale went to the British hospitals in what is now mainly present-day Turkey to care for the wounded after she heard reports that soldiers were being treated by incompetent medical staff and that many basic supplies were not available to treat them. She introduced hygienic standards into the military hospitals, insisting the wards be cleaned and that basic care be provided by nurses. She arranged for supplies to be provided and for the soldiers' wives to help with the laundry. She saw to it that the soldiers were provided with adequate food and even arranged for help with writing letters and providing recreational activities as they healed.

The siege of Sevastopol began in October 1854. It continued for eleven months and finally ended when the Russians evacuated the city and the allies entered the town. After the siege of Sevastopol, the war ended quickly, with Russia accepting peace terms in February 1856, and signing a treaty the following month.

Florence Nightingale remained after the end of the war until the hospitals were ready to close, at which time, she finally returned home.

Looking back at the facts concerning the Crimean War, what do you feel was the most important non-military and non-political outcome of the war? How did the ability to photograph war impact the common person's exposure to war as time went on? How did Florence Nightingale's work at the hospitals impact the treatment of soldiers as time went on? Explain your answers.

## The Great Exhibition of 1851

The modern world's fair began in 1851 in London's Hyde Park with the Great Exhibition. Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, wanted to show Britain to an international audience. It was a time when Britain was at peace, and it was thought that Britain's trade would increase if the other countries saw how much Britain had to offer.

The main structure for the Exhibition was the Crystal Palace, designed by Sir Joseph Paxton. It was an iron and glass structure that held many exhibits and had a floor area that totaled about 23 acres (9 hectares). The same type of building was used for several later expositions. A fund was set up to use profits from the Exhibition to provide fellowships to British students in areas such as engineering and industrial design. A huge profit was made from the more than six million people who attended the Exhibition. Fellowships are still being provided today from the fund. The Exhibition was so successful that it was almost certain more would be held.

There was some opposition to the Great Exhibition. There were those who did not want competition from other countries and those who did not want the building in Hyde Park. A compromise was reached on the subject of building the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park when the agreement was made to tear down the building after the exhibition was finished. The building was moved to Sydenham Hill after the exhibition, where it remained until 1936, when it was destroyed by fire.

The Great Exhibition of 1851 was the first international exhibition of manufactured products. It influenced art and design, international trade, and tourism. About one-half of the exhibits were from Britain. France sent many exhibits, as did the United States, although the French exhibits were more than triple the number of those from the United States. The American exhibits included false teeth, artificial legs, the Colt repeating pistol, chewing tobacco, and the McCormick reaper. The British exhibits included hydraulic presses, steam engines, pumps, and automated spinning machines. A steam hammer was exhibited that was so accurate it could shape the main bearing of a steamship or gently crack an egg. There were also carriages displayed that were used before automobiles were common and a machine that printed and folded envelopes.

Canada sent a fire engine and furs. India sent a throne that had been carved out of ivory. Switzerland sent watches; Russia sent huge vases; and Chile sent one lump of gold that weighed 50 kg.

The Exhibition was opened by Queen Victoria on May 1, 1851. People arrived at the fair by train and other means. Some came as a type of vacation, and others came to see the great fair that resulted from their work and showcased the products they made. One of the first things people saw when approaching the Crystal Palace was the sight of the flags of all participating nations flying on top of it.

Upon entering the Exhibition, people found free water supplied by one company, chocolate drops from another, and many other free samples from others that exposed those at the fair to products of a variety of companies from around the world. There was a fountain 27 feet (8.2 meters) tall located approximately in the middle of the building that was made of several tons of pink glass. In addition, many people saw for the first time how cloth for clothing was made, how lace was made, how a button was made, and many other things they had no way of seeing before unless they worked in that particular field. They finally had the chance to see the

machinery itself in motion.

Fair organizers in Paris held an international exposition in 1855. There were many new features at the Paris exposition, such as reduced admission prices on Sundays and a pavilion that presented fine art. The fine art included works by artists from 29 countries and totaled approximately 5,000 pieces.

World's fairs continued to be held in many countries all over the world and were extremely popular. Other than the financial benefits of a successful world's fair, what other advantages would result from the gathering of products from nations around the world and the interaction of people as they gather to learn what is new and different in science, art, industry, and other areas? Why do you think world's fairs are not as popular in modern times as they were in the 1800s? Are we missing a way to gather together and explore common interests with other cultures by not more actively promoting world's fairs, or is the world already suitably connected that gatherings such as world's fairs are not as necessary? Explain your answers.

### The Suez Canal

The Isthmus of Suez is the only land bridge between Asia and Africa. The first channel there is thought to have been dug as an irrigation channel about a century before the Suez Canal was planned. It was extended over the years, but it was filled in around the year AD 775 for military reasons. The channel made trade in the local region easier, but there was no thought at the time of connecting to the Mediterranean Sea.

During the 1400s and 1500s, making a canal through the isthmus was discussed. It would allow ships to have a more direct route between the Mediterranean and Red Sea, which would help other countries break the monopoly that had been held by the Portuguese, the Dutch, and then the English, who used the route around the Cape of Good Hope. However, nothing was done about these ideas.

In 1798, Napoleon I invaded Egypt under the guise of making them a colony of France so that Egypt could regain the prosperity it had in ancient times. When he invaded, Napoleon not only brought military forces, but also scholars and scientists so they could help the people. However, one of his main reasons for occupying Egypt was connected to the war between France and Britain. By controlling Egypt, France hoped to damage British trade and pose a threat to India. Egypt did not want to be controlled by France and resented the French taking over their country. Eventually the Ottoman sultan declared war on France, which made control of Egypt even more difficult. French control of Egypt ended in 1801.

During the time France occupied Egypt, the first actual survey was made with the thought of creating a canal that would connect to the Mediterranean. However, due to miscalculations, the project was delayed. In 1854, Ferdinand de Lesseps, who was a friend of the Egyptian ruler, received permission to construct a canal. In 1856, an act was passed that gave the Suez Canal Company the right to operate the canal for 99 years after the work on the canal was completed. Construction of the canal began in 1859 and took 10 years to complete. In the beginning, digging was done by a crew of forced labor, peasants who worked using picks and baskets. Later, dredgers and steam shovels were brought in and operated by European workers. The canal was completed and opened in 1869.

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Wars have often brought about advancements as well as destruction and loss. In this case, the building of a canal that has helped many nations throughout history was first seriously considered as a result of a war between France and Britain. Why do you think such advancements are made during wartime? Does it have anything to do with the perceived dangers that need to be protected against? Why do you think people do not consider the advantages to the world as a whole and make these advancements for the good of many during peacetime? Do you think if these advancements were made solely with the hope of helping others that there would be fewer wars, or would the world simply find other things to fight about? Explain your answers.

### Factors Leading to the American Civil War

Many factors led to the American Civil War, but one of the leading factors was the issue of slavery. U.S. President Zachary Taylor was an influential slave owner in the South, but he did not oppose the admission of California as a free state. When the South threatened to secede, President Taylor said he would use the army to stop them. However, on July 9, 1850, President Zachary Taylor died in the White House. Vice President Millard Fillmore became president.

Throughout 1850, the US Congress passed a series of acts known as the Compromise of 1850. These acts were an attempt to settle the issue and resolve the conflict. Zachary Taylor had opposed them because he felt they made concessions to the South, but Millard Fillmore supported them because he thought the compromise was better than possibly going to war.

The Compromise of 1850 called for the return of runaway slaves and was not popular with many Northerners. To try to please the North, another part allowed for California to enter the Union as a free state and abolished the slave trade in the District of Columbia. Fillmore enforced the return of runaway slaves, though, and it lost him support. He was not nominated for president in 1852.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe was published in book form in 1852. It was a best-seller in the U.S. and abroad. Harriet Beecher Stowe hoped this book would quickly bring a peaceful end to the issue of slavery. Instead, it caused many in the North to grow more hostile to those in the South and caused Southerners to say that the book was inaccurate. Many now believe the book helped ignite the Civil War instead of solving the issue peacefully.

In 1852, Henry Clay, who had repeatedly worked in Congress for compromises over the slavery issue with great success, died. Franklin Pierce was elected President of the United States in 1852. He strongly favored the Compromise of 1850 and also supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which allowed slavery in the territories in much of the West. On March 6, 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sanford*. The Dred Scott Decision stated that slaves, even if they had lived in free states and free territories, were not free and further ruled that African Americans were not citizens and could not become citizens. This decision angered many Northerners and brought the country closer to civil war.

Look back over these facts and answer each of the following questions carefully:

- What do you think may have happened if Zachary Taylor had lived longer? Born in Virginia and raised in Kentucky, Zachary Taylor was a slave owner himself. Being from the South, do you think he would have had more influence with Southerners concerning the issue of slavery?
- Do you think the Compromise of 1850 helped or hurt the relationship between the North and the South?
- When Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she hoped it would help solve the slavery problem peacefully, but instead, many think it contributed to the Civil War. Do you think writing a book such as this was a wise thing to do at the time? Do you think, even if it caused more hostility between the North and the South, that it was best to make the situation, as she saw it, known to anyone who read the book?
- Do you think those who supported the Compromise of 1850 and the Kansas-Nebraska Act were doing what they thought was best for the people or what they thought would keep peace, regardless of what it meant for the African American people?
- Do you think the death of someone such as Henry Clay, who was known for his ability to compromise, contributed to the Civil War, or do you think all of the compromises only delayed an inevitable war?
- What do you think of the Dred Scott Decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court? Knowing the statement in the Declaration of Independence of the United States that "all men are created equal," and the Preamble of the Constitution that states, "We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America," did the Supreme Court correctly interpret the Constitution in this case or not?













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