

## The 1870s Essay Questions

Following are brief overviews of five events from the 1870s. 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.

### Montreal Bread Riots

In 1875, during a time of depression, there were many hungry people in Montreal, Canada. Those helping people in need were having a hard time finding enough to help all those who came to them. Some of the unemployed went to find the new mayor, William Hales Hingston, but could not find him at his office or at his home. The new mayor, however, was not avoiding the people and met with them later that evening. He promised to be at city hall the next morning. By that time, it was reported that the crowd numbered about 1,000. Still, they were orderly and listened to the mayor as he told them he realized how hard things were for them. He told them that in two days there would be a city council meeting where proposals would be made and discussions held that would lead to some type of help.

Mayor Hingston pushed the city council to make headway on projects that were stalled because of the bureaucracy. He informed the finance committee to find a way to pay for everything. He also sent people to Ottawa to work on speeding up a planned expansion of the Lachine Canal. However, this did not give immediate help to the hungry.

The day after the city council meeting, a crowd once again came to speak to the mayor. This time, some of the crowd turned to vandalism. Bread wagons were overturned and loaves of bread were thrown around. People threw stones at city hall, breaking several windows and striking the police chief. Mayor Hingston would not allow policemen to move on the crowd. He knew the men were desperate to provide for their families.

The mayor spoke to the crowd again, firmly expressing his disappointment at their behavior and warning that if it continued, they would gain nothing. He asked the people to get involved if they saw anyone at all committing acts of violence. He invited the crowd to send a small group of people into city hall to watch the council deliberations. The council formed a plan to help those in need. Men would be hired to work on city projects. Excavation for sewers would be done, land would be graded, stone would be broken up by people instead of by machine, and landfill projects were authorized. By the time the council adjourned for Christmas, work had been laid out for 1,300 needy men. These men had shown they could be calm and responsible under very difficult circumstances. Life was still difficult, but there was hope of better times to come.

What do you think of the way this problem was handled in comparison to the way things are often handled today? Do you think giving people the opportunity to work was better than the government handing them what they wanted without them having to do anything to earn it? Do you think it is better for the character of people who are able to work for what they need and want? Do you think the way the mayor handled the issue of disorderliness by telling the people they would not gain anything is better than the way things are often handled today in giving people what they want if they cause enough trouble? Do you think it was helpful for the people to see that the government took their concerns seriously and did indeed want to help them? Explain your answers.

## The Telephone

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. Because of the number of connections and wires needed to connect phones, switchboards began operating by the following year. In the same year, copper wire was invented that was not as brittle and was able to support itself over the distance between poles. Within another year, the first central office for telephones opened. Three to four years after the invention of the telephone, telephone usage had grown to the point where people were designated by numbers instead of by their names. Within twenty years of the invention of the telephone, dials were used on some phones and desk models were available. By 1915, only approximately 39 years after the invention of the telephone, the first transcontinental telephone call took place in the United States.

In the late eighteenth century, types of railroads used for mining, called plateways, were used in parts of Europe. It was not until 1802 to 1814, with the development and improvements in the steam engine, that the idea of railroads became more popular. In 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway was completed and first opened to carry freight and passengers. This was only an experimental line, but rail service expanded from that point. Railroad travel continued to grow and in 1869, the first transcontinental railroad was finished in the United States.

Looking at these two inventions, it is evident that only about 39 years after the invention of the telephone, the first transcontinental telephone call was made in the United States. This involved installing telephone poles, installing the wire and all the connections necessary, and improving the telephone itself. In contrast, from the time of the development and improvements to the steam engine (using 1814 as the time of this development) to the time of the first transcontinental railroad in the United States, was about 55 years. Why do you think the telephone developed into transcontinental use in a shorter time? If railroads could carry people and freight and the telephone could only carry a voice, why would the telephone develop in the United States so quickly? Did it have anything to do with the components needed to develop each invention? Did it have to do with the state of society at the time each was being developed? Compare the uses and benefits of each invention and state why you think the telephone developed more rapidly.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

For many years, the Bosnia and Herzegovina region was ruled by the Ottoman Empire. However, because of many political and economic problems over the years, taxation grew extensively. In 1875, there was a revolt against the state tax collectors. The unrest soon spread to other areas. Support was given by other countries, including Russia, and resulted in the Serbo-Turkish War. When the war ended in 1878, other powers of Europe stepped in at the Congress of Berlin to try to stop Russia from having too much influence in the Balkan area. It was decided at the congress that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be occupied and governed by Austria-Hungary, although it was still considered a property of Turkey.

Bosnia and Herzegovina was governed by a special joint commission and declared to be a "crown land." Gradually, Ottoman laws were replaced or added to. While there were many improvements made in the country, there were movements of Croatian, Serbian, and Yugoslav nationalism. People began to identify themselves as Croats and Serbs. In 1908, an announcement was made that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be annexed by Austria-Hungary.

This annexation caused a great deal of resentment among Serb and South Slav nationalists and led to the growth of secret societies and revolutionary groups. The First Balkan War of 1912-1913 brought about the closure of Serb cultural associations. In 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand traveled to Bosnia and Herzegovina to review a military exercise. He was assassinated by a member of one of the secret societies who had received assistance from Serbia. Austria-Hungary then declared war on Serbia, which led to World War I.

Explore in more detail the history of the Bosnia and Herzegovina region and trace the relationship between the events in the 1870s and the events that led to World War I. What do you think was the correct way to stop Russian influence in the area after the Serbo-Turkish War? If you agree with the way it was done originally, how do you think the situation should have been handled at the time when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina? Should the area have been given its independence? Do you think giving the region its independence would have resulted in avoiding World War I? Explain your answers.

### Otto von Bismarck and the German Confederation

Otto von Bismarck was a Prussian statesman who helped unite the separate German states into the German Empire by a combination of diplomacy and military skill. The last of three wars during a span of seven years was between Prussia and France in 1870. When France lost the war, the peace treaty was very difficult on France. Two French provinces with large German-speaking populations were annexed into the German Empire. In addition, a five-billion franc payment was demanded from France. This caused a great deal of French hostility against Germany.

Compare this to the peace treaty between the Allies and Germany after World War I. In addition to other concessions, Germany was required to give up much of the territory it had taken from other countries. It was also required to send back all prisoners of war and give up a large amount of war artillery.

Do you think the harsh terms of the peace treaty at the end of World War I were to be a punishment for the war itself, or do you think the prior hostility between Germany and France had anything to do with the terms? Many have said one of the things that led to World War II was the way some in Germany were able to use the harsh terms as a reason to move ahead into World War II. Do you agree that there is a connection between the two wars? Do you see any connection between the treaty ending the war between Prussia and France in 1870 and World War I? How far back in history do you think it is right to go to find reasons to fight and conquer others? Are these reasons real reasons to fight a war or are they simply excuses for those in power to justify their hunger for more power? Explain your answers.

### The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art opened in New York City, New York, in 1870. The first object acquired by the Met was a Roman sarcophagus. In 1871, many European paintings were acquired, and the collection of antiquities grew from there. The idea for the art gallery was proposed by John Jay, a lawyer. By 1902, the Met was compared to the museums of the old world in its dignity and grandeur. The Met acquired works by Édouard Manet and Auguste

Renoir. It was the first public institution in the world to acquire a work by Henri Matisse. Along with the growth of the collection of antiquities, the museum itself has grown over the years with many new “wings” added. There is a wing that houses Old Masters and Impressionist art; one that houses the Temple of Dendur, an Egyptian temple from the reign of Roman Emperor Augustus Ceasar; an American wing that houses many period rooms; a wing that houses arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, and much more. Today, there are thousands of objects to be seen at any time in the now two-million-square-foot building that is the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and there are new galleries being added still.

Looking back through the time the Metropolitan Museum of Art has existed, how do you feel about the expense of building, acquiring, and maintaining such a large undertaking? Do you feel it is important enough to have these works of art and history available for people to see to invest the time and money necessary to have such a museum available? Do you think there are more practical things the time and money could have been spent on? How do you compare the importance of remembering, appreciating, and learning from the past to the needs that were present at different times in the museums history, such as hunger and lack of jobs during times of depression, lack of health care for some during different times, and lack of decent housing causing slums to exist in the city? Does its location in New York City allow the best availability of the museum for the most people to visit it? Does its location there today allow for the best protection of the vast amount of history located there? Give reasons for your answers.











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