

Essay and Discussion Questions

Contemporary History Pre-1900 Higher Education Questions

Help students understand how events before 1900 continue to shape today's world through these essay and discussion questions.

Question 1

To what extent has the principle of sovereignty been a positive influence on the international system we know today? What are some of the negative aspects associated with sovereignty? What happens when countries disagree about sovereignty?

- What is the definition of a country?
- What are the characteristics of a country or sovereign nation?
- What is the principle of sovereignty and what are its three dimensions? How is it embedded in the United Nations charter?
- How did the Peace of Westphalia change international relations and existing social structures in Europe?

Question 2

In 1800, more than one-third of children died before their fifth birthday. How have improvements in public health changed society? Consider economic, social, and political aspects of health. Address the role of the introduction of germ theory, and growing global cooperation.

- What impact do high child mortality rates have on society?
- To what extent should the international community support sanitation and vaccination efforts in developing nations? To what extent should the international community focus on fighting infectious disease in developing nations?

Question 3

To what extent are Enlightenment values still relevant today? To what extent does modern society live up to these Enlightenment ideals? What new ideas have emerged that elaborate on, modify, or replace Enlightenment ideals?

- What key events influenced the Enlightenment?
- In what ways did the Enlightenment change the lives of everyday people?
- Where do we see Enlightenment values reflected today?
- How did the Enlightenment lead to revolutions in the United States, France, Haiti, and Latin America?

Question 4

Assess the positive and negative effects of the industrial revolution. How did the Industrial Revolution contribute to other historical events including the labor movement, colonialism, and climate change?

- The Industrial Revolution occurred following the emergence of revolutionary technology. Describe what a future economic revolution would look like.
- What are the biggest challenges and threats of a potential new Industrial Revolution?
- Describe the factors that contributed to the Industrial Revolution. To what extent did the Industrial

Revolution inspire change in society?

- How did the Industrial Revolution reshape society? How did the Industrial Revolution contribute to social inequality?
- Why did European countries engage in colonialism? What were the differences between settler colonies and extractive colonies?