

NAME:

BLOCK:

- CENTRAL HISTORICAL QUESTION(S) -

BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN INDIA:

WHAT ACTUALLY CAUSED THE FIRST INDIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE / “SEPOY REBELLION”?

FEATURED BELOW: *An illustration of the Battle of Cawnpore in 1857. unknown - Ball, Charles (c.1860) *The History of the Indian Mutiny: Giving A Detailed Account of the Sepoy Insurrection in India; and a Concise History of the Great Military Events Which Have Tended to Consolidate British Empire in Hindostan.* London: The London Printing and Publishing Company.



LESSON OBJECTIVE(S)

- 1.) **ANALYZE** *varying perspectives on the cause of the Sepoy Rebellion*
- 2.) **HYPOTHESIZE** *what caused the Sepoy Rebellion based on historical evidence*

PART I: WARM UP

DIRECTIONS: Respond to the Warm Up question. Make note of any meaningful comment in the following mini-discussion.

BRITISH IMPERIALISM IN INDIA: THE SEPOY REBELLION TIMELINE

Early 1600's – English explorers and traders, arrive in East India, and begin the initial stages of starting what would later come to be known as the **British East India Company**

1707 – Mughal Empire of India begins its slow decline in Indian influence

1750 - The English / British **Industrial Revolution** begins to take shape and transforms the economic status of England into a more prosperous, expanding imperial **British** Empire

1757 – Army official of the British East India Company, Robert Clive, wins a strategic battle against Indian forces at the Battle of Plessy, beginning the period of **indirect rule**, or economic, social and political dominance of the British East India Company in India.

1757 – 1850's The British government has an **indirect control/rule** over India through its British East India Company, largely achieved through gaining trust and political power from local Indian rulers. The British East India Company essentially becomes a political authority in the region and is seen as more influential than the declining, powerless government of the Mughal Empire.

The British East India company largely relies on its **Sepoys**, (*i.e. Indian soldiers, loyal to the rule of the British East India Company*) to enforce and establish their political authority.

1840's - The Muslim minority gains political prominence in the Indian province of **Oudh (Awadh)**, after years of relative little influence throughout India.

1848 - The **Doctrine of Lapse** is created by the British officer, James Andrew Broun-Ramsay, the Lord of Dalhousie, which allowed for the British to become the next ruler upon the death of a local Indian ruler.

1850's – By the 1850's, the Sepoys are in the numbers of 300,000 total, enormously outnumbering British official. However, British culture spreads throughout India through intermarries and in some cases, conversions to Christianity. In turn, Great Britain becomes enormously wealthy as a result of the East India company's foothold and tax revenue coming from India.

1856 – Local Indian rulers in the province of *Oudh (Awadh)* refuse to pay taxes to the British East India Company. In response, the British East India Company annexes (*takes over*) Oudh.

January 1857 – Rumors spread that the guns that the Sepoys have to use are greased with cow and pig fat, upsetting the religious beliefs of both Hindu & Muslim Sepoys. The Sepoys refuse to serve, causing hostility and insecurity amongst the outnumbered officials of the British East India company. Some Sepoys are put on trial and imprisoned.

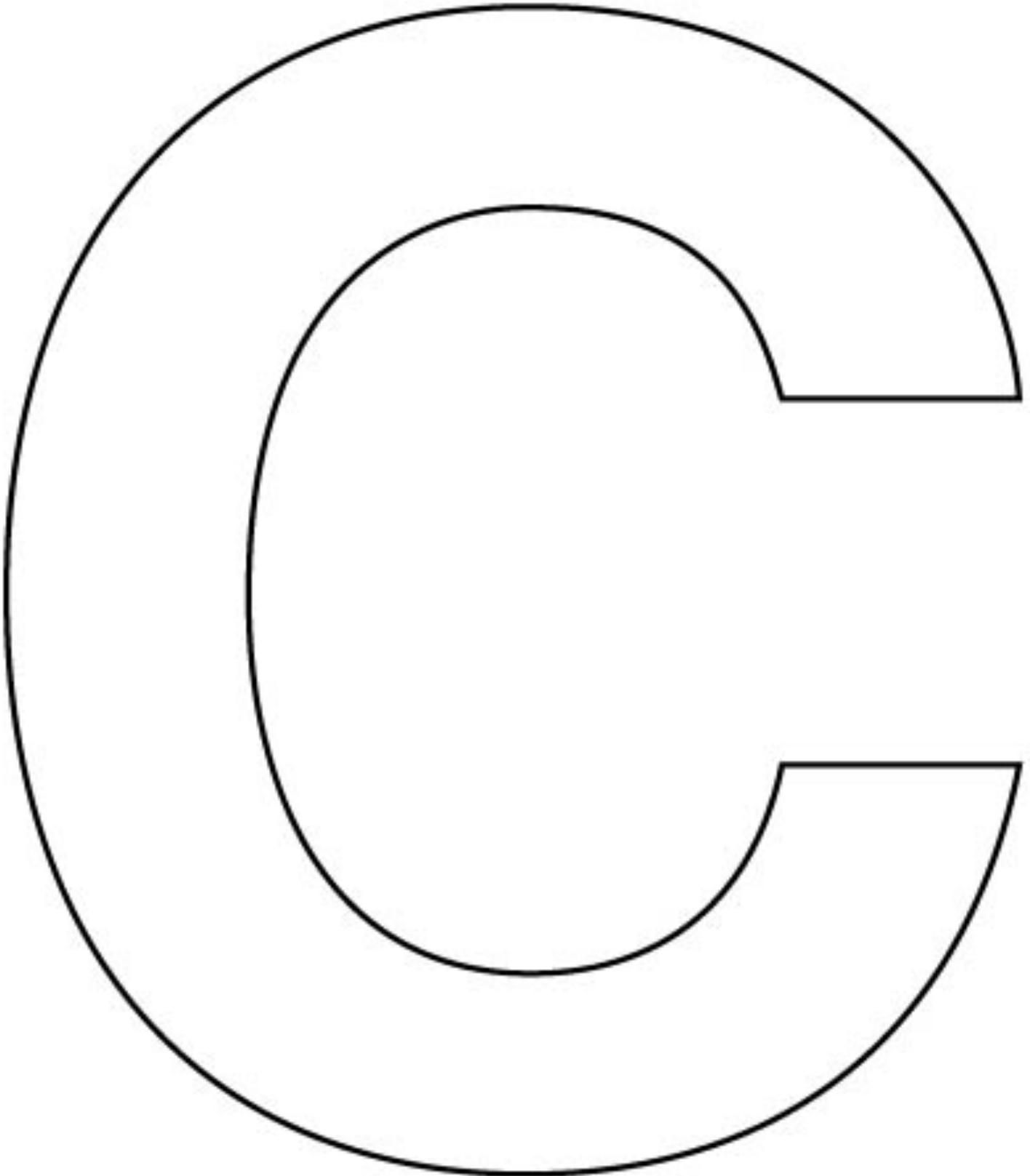
May 10th, 1857 - The Sepoys rebelled in an alleged shooting of a British official. Sepoys march in droves to Delhi and declare the last remaining emperor of the Mughal Empire to be in full control of India, ousting the political authority of the British East India Company. The British government sends troops.

Over the course of the year, isolated atrocities brought on by both Indian rebellions and British response occur throughout India. Crimes on both sides are heinous. Without any code of warfare, innocent Indian & British women/children are brutalized. The British troops eventually stop the rebellion as a result of the lacking unity amongst Hindu & Muslim members of India, as well as conflict between various sections of caste system of Hindus.

1858 – The British government takes **direct control** of India, beginning the period known as the **Raj**.

PART II: BUILDING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

DIRECTIONS: Record what you believe to be the significant historical events that help explain what actually caused the First Indian War of Independence.



DOCUMENT 1: Samuel Rawson Gardiner

The Indian Mutiny of 1857

The religion of the Hindus, who form a great part of the natives in India, teaches many things which seem very strange to Englishmen. Among other things they are taught that they will be **defiled** if they eat any part of a cow. By this defilement they will meet with much **contempt** from their fellows, and will suffer much after death in another world. The bulk of the army in India was composed of Hindus.

It happened that an improved rifle had lately been invented for the use of the soldiers, and that the **cartridges** used in this rifle needed to be greased so they could be rammed down easily into the barrel. The men believed that the grease was made of the fat of cows, though this was not really the case. There was, therefore, much suspicion and angry feeling among the native soldiers, and when ignorant men are suspicious and angry they are likely to break out into deeds of unreasoning **fury**.

VOCABULARY:

defiled: made dirty, spoiled, ruined
cartridge: ammunition for a gun or rifle

contempt: disrespect
fury: extreme anger

SOURCE: Gardiner's English History for Schools, an English textbook edited for American students, 1881. Samuel Rawson Gardiner (1829-1902) was an English historian and a professor of history at King's College in London. He wrote several books on English history. The excerpt below comes from a book he wrote for young students.

Document 2: Sir Colin Campbell

(Modified)

Any considerable offence offered to [the Brahmins] . . . might seriously endanger the **fidelity** of the native troops; and there seems to be little doubt that offence has been given. **Injudicious** attempts to convert sepoys to Christianity have been made, and [the sepoys believed] that they were to be converted by **compulsion**. . . .

At the same time it is impossible to dissociate the revolt and the [removal] of the Muslim king of **Oudh**.

The province of Oudh had always maintained its independence. . . . But at length the system of government became too bad to be tolerated; the court was a mere hot bed of oppression, intrigue, and sensuality; and the British took control of Oudh.

It has never been disputed that this was a merciful change for the people of Oudh; but the people are not always governed by reason. Prejudices – religious, national and social – have paramount influence even in a civilized country; this is even more true in a region sunk into barbarism.

VOCABULARY:

fidelity: loyalty, faithfulness | injudicious: unwise, lacking in judgment | compulsion: act of compelling or forcing

Oudh: Region in northern India | fanaticism: wild or extreme devotion or enthusiasm, as with regard to religion or politics

SOURCE: Sir Colin Campbell, Narrative of the Indian Revolt from Its Outbreak to the Capture of Lucknow, 1858. Sir Colin Campbell took charge of British forces during the uprising. In this passage from his book on the uprising, he first discusses the Hindu sepoys. These soldiers included members of various castes, and a sizable number of them were Brahmins, the highest caste.

Document 3: Sita Ram

It chanced that about this time the English Government sent parties of men from each regiment to different garrisons for instruction in the use of the new rifle. These men performed the new drill for some time until a report got about, by some means or other, that the cartridges used for these new rifles were greased with the fat of cows and pigs. The men from our regiment wrote to others in the regiment telling them of this, and there was soon excitement in every regiment.

Some men pointed out that in forty years of service nothing had ever been done by the English Government to insult their religion, but as I have already mentioned the sepoys' minds had been inflamed by the seizure of Oudh. Interested parties were quick to point out that the great aim of the English was to turn us all into Christians and they had therefore introduced the cartridge in order to bring this about, since both Muslims and Hindus would be defiled by using it. . . .

[The Proclamation of the King of Delhi] stated that the English Government intended to make all Brahmins into Christians, which had in fact been proved correct, and in proof of it one hundred ministers were about to be stationed in Oudh. Caste was going to be broken by forcing everyone to eat beef or pork. . . .

I had never known the English to interfere with our religion or our caste in all the years since I had been a soldier, but I was nevertheless filled with doubt. . . I had also remarked the increase in Missionaries during recent years, who stood up in the streets of our cities and told the people that their cherished religion was all false, and who exhorted them to become Christians.

SOURCE: Sita Ram, From Sepoy to Subedar: Being the Life Adventures of Subedar Sita Ram, A Native Officer in the Bengal Army, Written and Related by Himself. Sita Ram was a sepoy who remained loyal to the British. Yet even he had his "doubts" about them. The following is an excerpt from memoirs he wrote sometime in the 1860s about the rebellion.

Document 4: Sayyid Ahmed Khan

The evils which resulted to India from the non-admission of natives into the Legislative Council of India were various. . . . The people had no means of protesting against what they might feel to be a foolish measure. . . . Whatever law was passed was **misconstrued** (*i.e. misunderstood*) by men who had no share in the framing of it. At length the **Hindustanis** (*i.e. people of Hind area of Northern India, along the plain of the Ganges River.*) fell into the habit of thinking that all the laws were passed with a view to degrade and ruin them. . . . Although the intentions of Government were excellent, there was no man who could convince the people of it; no one was at hand to correct the errors which [the government] had adopted. And why? Because there was not one of their own number among the members of the Legislative Council. Had there been, these evils that had happened to us, would have been averted.

There is not the smallest doubt that all men whether ignorant or well-informed, whether high or low, felt a firm conviction that the English Government was bent on interfering with their religion and with their old established customs. They believed that Government intended to force the Christian Religion and foreign customs upon Hindu and Muslim alike.

SOURCE: Sayyid Ahmed Khan, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*. Medical Hall Press, 1873. Sayyid Ahmed Khan was a Muslim noble and scholar who worked as a jurist for the British East India Company. At the time of the uprising, he was loyal to the British. Later, he came to blame several British policies and mistakes for the uprising. He thought that the British decision not to include Indians in the Legislative Council, a British government organization in charge of India, was particularly harmful. He explained his views in a book he first published in 1858 in Urdu. The book was translated into English in an edition published in 1873. This passage is from the English translation.

DOCUMENT 5: Joseph Coohill

Sepoys in the British East India Company army had seen their pay (and therefore their status) decline in recent years, and many felt that the new officers serving in the Company army . . . did not have the same respect and sympathy for sepoys as the previous generation of Company officers. Lord Dalhousie, Governor General of India, introduced the so-called **Doctrine of Lapse**, a policy which allowed the British East India Company to extend its control into Indian territory when a native ruler died. . . .

The Company applied the Doctrine to take over the town of Oudh. Indians considered this to be a final outrage of British conquest. Oudh was such a rich and historic part of India that this seizure was seen as a cultural insult. The outbreak of hostilities in the army would not have spread so quickly or gained much-needed local support if the sepoys' **grievances** had not been echoed by **discontent** in many parts of India, both rural and urban.

VOCABULARY: grievances: complaints discontent: unhappiness

SOURCE: Joseph Coohill, "Indian Voices from the 1857 Rebellion," History Today, 2007. Joseph Coohill is a historian and university professor at Duquesne University. The passage below is from an article he wrote in 2007 for the magazine History Today.

HOMEWORK

DUE FRIDAY – MARCH 4th @ 2:30 PM, please submit a NON-GRADED take-home Historical Argument DBQ Essay to turnitin.com in the assignment portal entitled: *SEPOY DBQ ESSAY (NON-GRADED HW ASSIGNMENT)*

The essay is based on the background material (*textbook reading, timeline, mini-lecture*) and Documents 1 – 5 in this handout (same as yesterday's handout).

This will be counted only as a HW assignment and the assignment here is designed to keep your argument / analysis writing in rhythm so that when you go to write your QUARTER 4 Historical Argument DBQ Essay for a grade, it won't be such a foreign experience.

QUIZ DATE CHANGE - ANNOUNCEMENT

MONDAY, MARCH 7TH, 2016 we will have a quiz on the following terms.

The following terms will be covered in our mini-lectures and HW textbook readings:

Imperialism - New Imperialism - Ethnocentrism - Nationalism - Social Darwinism

Scientific Racism - White Man's Burden - British East India Company

The Sepoy Revolt / Rebellion or First Indian War of Independence

The British Raj