

# CRIMEAN WAR 1853- 1856



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## Description

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basics behind the Crimean War of 1853-56, how Russian expansionism helped precipitate the war, why the French and British empires decided to back the Ottoman Empire, and how the results of the war ultimately led to even more trouble for the “sick man of Europe” in Constantinople.

## Subjects

European History

## Grade Level

11-12

## Duration

90 minutes

## Tour Links

- Crimean War Memorial, London
- Crimean War Monument, Halifax, NS
- Crimean War Monument, Sevastopol
- Mon. to the Scuttled Ships, Sevastopol

## Essential Questions

- What was the Crimean War of 1853-1856? Which countries fought on each side? Where is the Crimea?
- What was Russia's role in the Crimean war? Why did the Russians seek to occupy the Crimea?
- Why did other European nations oppose Russian involvement in the Crimea? Why did war break out? What were the results of the war?
- What were the basic terms of the Treaty of Paris (1856)?

# Academic Summary

## Sevastopol Stormed

### Sergeant Timothy Gowing, Royal Fusiliers

We fell in at 9 a.m. A dram of rum was issued to each man as he stood in the ranks; all hands had previously been served out with two days' rations. There were in our ranks a great number of very young men, who had not much idea of the terrible work that lay before them; but there were others who knew only too well, having had near twelve months' hard wrestling with the foe - and no mean foe either. We were about to face the enemy in deadly conflict once more. The defense of Sevastopol had raised the Russians in the estimation of the bravest of the brave, and their Sovereign and country had no reason to regret entrusting that defense to their hands. Sevastopol had, for the first time in military history since powder had been invented, defied the united fire of some 900 guns of the largest caliber, exclusive of mortars, which had been directed on the devoted city from early morning of the 5th September. When the final bombardment opened the very earth trembled beneath the terrible crash. It was grand, but awful. But after it the enemy's batteries looked as strong as ever; we might, apparently, have gone on bombarding until now. The Redan and Malakoff appeared to be much stronger than when we first looked at them, although no fewer than 1,600,000 shot and shell had been hurled at them. I say again, the Russian nation might well be proud of the manner their army had defended that fortress.

At last cold steel had to do what artillery had been baffled at. Large breaches have invariably been made by artillery fire in the enemy's fortifications before ever the 'dogs of war' were let loose at them; but no breach was made in the fortifications of Sevastopol.

The bombardment was still raging on that terrible 8th September; every gun and mortar that our people and our noble allies the French could bring to bear upon the enemy's works was raining death and destruction upon them. The stormers had all got into their places; they consisted of about 1,000 men of the old Light and Second Division. The supports were formed up as closely as possible to them, and all appeared in readiness. History may well say the storming of a fortress is an awful task! There we stood, not a word being spoken. Everyone seemed to be full of thought. Many a courageous heart destined to be still in death in one short hour was now beating high.

It was about 11.15 a.m., and our heavy guns were firing in such a way as I had never before heard. The batteries fired in volleys or salvoes as hard as they could load and fire, the balls passing a few feet above our heads, while the air seemed full of shell. The enemy were not idle, for round shot, shell, grape, and musket balls, were bounding and whizzing all about us, and earth and stones were rattling about our heads like hail.

Our poor fellows fell fast, but still our sailors and artillerymen stuck to it manfully. We knew well that this could not last long; but many a poor fellow's career was cut short long before we advanced to the attack. A number of the older hands - both officers and men - were smoking and taking not the slightest notice of the 'dance of death'. Some men were being carried past dead, and others limping to the rear with mangled limbs while their life's blood was streaming fast away.

We looked at each other with amazement, for we were now (about 11.30 a.m.) under such a fire as was without parallel; even Leipzig (where the allies alone had 1,400 field guns, and the French 1,000) was eclipsed: upwards of 100,000 dead and wounded lay upon that field, but then the contest had lasted three days and nights.

*From Timothy Gowing's Voice from the Ranks: a personal narrative of the Crimean Campaign (Nottingham: 1895).*

Valiant Comrades, it is painful, it is hard to leave Sebastopol in the enemy's hands. But remember the sacrifice we made upon the altar of our country in 1812, Moscow was surely as valuable as Sebastopol - we abandoned it after the immortal battle of Borodino. The defense of Sebastopol during 349 days is superior to Borodino, and when the enemy entered Moscow in that great year of 1812, they only found heaps of stones and ashes. Likewise it is not Sebastopol which we have left them, but the burning ruins of the town which we ourselves set fire to, having maintained the honor of the defense in such a manner that our great-grandchildren may recall the remembrance thereof with pride to all posterity.

Sebastopol kept us chained to its walls; with its fall we acquire freedom of movement, and a new war commences, a war in the open field, that most congenial to the Russian soldier. Let us prove to the Emperor, let us prove to Russia, that we are still imbued with the spirit which animated our ancestors in our memorable and patriotic struggle. Wherever the enemy may show himself we will present our breasts to him, and defend our native land as we defended it in 1812.

Valiant warriors of the land and sea forces! - In the name of the emperor, I thank you, for the unexampled courage, firmness and constancy you have displayed during the siege of Sebastopol.

*Prince Gortschakoff, from his headquarters at the Heights of Inkermann, Aug 1855, as reprinted in the New York Times*

On 30 March 1856, after almost three years of brutal and bloody war, representatives from the Russian Empire signed a peace treaty with representatives from Great Britain, France, the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Sardinia (in modern Italy), ending the Crimean War (known in Russia as the Eastern War of 1853-56).

The war was in response to the slow collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a large Muslim empire based in Constantinople (today's Istanbul, Turkey). Since the 14th century, the Ottomans had controlled much of the area around the Black Sea, but over the centuries, its hegemony in the region had slipped as Slavic and German nations in Eastern Europe gained in strength. Russian interests in particular clashed with those of the Ottomans. Russian tsars had long desired a warm water port on the Black Sea through which they could increase trade and prestige. By the middle of the 19th century, the Sultan's grip on his European territories was tenuous at best, held up only through the desire of other European powers. Britain and France, especially, believed that only by supporting the "Sick Man of Europe" could peace in the region be maintained against Russian expansionism.

The impetus for war in 1853 had been a crisis over the protection of religious Christians in the Ottoman lands. Under 18th century treaties signed between the Ottomans and Russia, the tsar was designated protector of all Orthodox Christians in the Muslim Empire. In the wake of the revolutions that struck across Europe in 1848-49, Tsar Nicholas I and his advisors incorrectly believed that the western European powers were in no position to oppose Russian expansionist tendencies. It was a serious mistake. While issues between the bourgeois governments and proletariat

masses seriously threatened internal stability in France and England, the vast majority of people regardless of class in both countries remained committed to following those same governments in foreign matters. French Emperor Napoleon III, in particular, was seen as a champion of all Catholics across Europe, including those living in the Muslim dominated Ottoman lands.

In July 1853, when Russian troops began to mobilize along the frontier and subsequently occupied the Ottoman territories of Moldavia and Wallachia (in modern Romania) in order to “protect” Orthodox Christians, Britain and France sent warships into the Dardanelles Strait (Istanbul). When negotiations between the Ottomans and Russians failed to convince the tsar to withdraw his troops, the Sultan declared war on Russia on 23 October 1853. On 28 March 1854, after the tsar formally ignored a joint Anglo-French ultimatum for withdrawing his troops from Moldavia and Wallachia, the two western empires declared war.

The war itself was short lived, lasting only 14 months, but the fighting was intense, and included such new ideas as trench warfare and early repeating guns. Although focused on the Crimea region in the Black Sea and the Caucasus region on the border between southern Russia and what is now northeastern Turkey (including an area known as Chechnya), fighting raged around the globe to such places as the Baltic Sea and the Pacific Ocean. The city of Sevastopol in the Crimea suffered through a terrible and bloody yearlong siege before falling to French troops in September 1855, by which time public opinion on both sides had tired of war. Peace negotiations resulted in the Treaty of Paris on 30 March 1856.

The Crimean War had long lasting effects on the stability and history of Europe. Russian “Panslavism” increased as many in the mighty empire sought to reestablish the tsar’s influence in the Black Sea region. France and Britain were now committed to propping up the Ottoman regime, a decision that would ultimately help lead to the Great War in 1914.

The Crimean War was also important for its technological advances, including the use of railroads and telegraph lines, both of which improved communications. Florence Nightingale, a British nurse in Crimea, established herself as a champion for modern sanitary, medical and nursing practices during the war. The Times of London carried reports from the front daily. It was also the first European war to be photographed. What horrified many on all sides was the carnage and loss of life, estimated at over 1 million dead and wounded.

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the basics behind the Crimean War of 1853-56, how Russian expansionism helped precipitate the war, why the French and British empires decided to back the Ottoman Empire, and how the results of the war ultimately led to even more trouble for the “sick man of Europe” in Constantinople.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the basics of the Crimean War of 1853-56.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how Russian expansionist tendencies helped precipitate the Crimean War of 1853-56.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain why the French and British empires decided to back the Ottoman Empire in the Crimean War of 1853-56.
4. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how the Crimean War and the Treaty of Paris (1856) that followed ultimately led to even more trouble for the “Sick Man of Europe” in Constantinople.

# Procedures

## I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Why did the Russians see themselves as masters over the Black Sea region? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

## II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Crimean War and Russian Expansionism in the Black Sea region (20 min)
- Video – The Crimean War – excerpts (15 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the sources and articles on the Crimean War. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles for homework to prepare for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Suggestion: AP/Advanced students should concentrate on primary sources.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: What was the Crimean War? How did Russian expansionism in the Black Sea region play in the outbreak of war? Why did the French and British empires get involved? How did the war ultimately help contribute to the Ottoman Empire's ultimate disintegration? (20 min)

## III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail the Crimean War of 1853-56, how Russian expansionism helped precipitate the war, why the French and British empires decided to back the Ottoman Empire, and how the results of the war ultimately led to even more trouble for the “sick man of Europe” in Constantinople.

## Extension

### **On tour: Crimean War Monument, Sevastopol, Ukraine**

While on tour, students traveling the Black Sea can visit Sevastopol, where they can see for themselves the Crimean War Monument. It memorializes the defenders of Sevastopol, mostly Russian soldiers, who lost their lives during the siege of the city in 1854-55.

### **On tour: Crimean War Memorial, London**

While on tour in London, students can visit the Crimean War Memorial, located on Waterloo Place at the junction of Regent Street and Pall Mall. The statue was moved in 1914 to its present location, 30 feet north of its original placement, to make room for statues of Florence Nightingale and Sidney Herbert (Secretary of War during the Crimean War). The memorial was cast in bronze using cannon taken from Sevastopol after the siege ended.

### **On tour: Crimean War Monument, Halifax, Nova Scotia**

While on tour in Halifax, students can visit the Old Burial Ground historic cemetery in the old downtown part of the city, where they can see for themselves the Welsford-Parker Monument (also known as the Crimean War Monument). It was built in 1860 to commemorate the British victory in the war and the Nova Scotians who, as citizens of the empire, had fought in the British army (until the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867, Canadian citizens were simply colonists in the empire). Welsford and Parker were war heroes from Nova Scotia. Both died during the Crimean War. The monument in Nova Scotia is the only memorial to the Crimean War in North America.

# Web Links

## Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ftncnw/](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ftncnw/)  
Fenton Crimean War Photographs (primary sources) – 263 photographs at the Library of Congress website.
- [www.silverwhistle.co.uk/crimea/](http://www.silverwhistle.co.uk/crimea/)  
The Crimean War (website) – contains primary and secondary sources on the war
- [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/crimea/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/battles/crimea/)  
British Battles: The Crimea 1854 (website) – from the British National Archives. This is a great website with descriptions of different aspects of the war, mostly from a British perspective. Highly recommended for all students and teachers.
- [www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crimea\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/crimea_01.shtml)  
The Crimean War (academic essay) – from Andrew Lambert, British naval historian and Laughton Professor of Naval History at the Department of War Studies at King's College (UK)
- [www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/WARcrimean.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/WARcrimean.htm)  
The Crimean War (website) – from Spartacus Educational (UK)
- [www.amitm.com/thecon/lesson5.html](http://www.amitm.com/thecon/lesson5.html)  
The Crimean Crisis (website) – great website with maps and sources that are good for all students. This site also has the Treaty of Paris (1856) in full text.
- <http://mrbelloblog.com/2014/02/28/homework-2/20-14-crimean-war/>  
Crimean War (AP World History DBQ Assignment)
- [www.historyhome.co.uk/forpol/crimea/crimeaov.htm](http://www.historyhome.co.uk/forpol/crimea/crimeaov.htm)  
British Foreign Policy – The Crimean War (website) – Outstanding collection of websites with both primary and secondary sources. Highly recommended for students and teachers, especially those in AP/Advanced classes.
- [www.heritage-history.com/www/heritage.php?Dir=wars&FileName=wars\\_crimean.php](http://www.heritage-history.com/www/heritage.php?Dir=wars&FileName=wars_crimean.php)  
Crimean War (website) – from Heritage History (UK). Good website with the basic details of the war and its aftermath.
- [http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/Hist304/Hist304CrimeanWar\\_files/frame.htm](http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/Hist304/Hist304CrimeanWar_files/frame.htm)  
Crimean War (PowerPoint) – from Mark Baker, Assistant Professor of European History at Koc University (Turkey).
- [www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=AELyJnz23E0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AELyJnz23E0)  
The Crimean War (Full Video Documentary). This outstanding documentary, produced by UKTV, at over 2 hours, is probably too long for most in-class showings, but is highly recommended for out-of-class viewings. Perhaps the best video on the Crimean War ever produced, it is especially valuable for AP and Advanced students.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=F\\_SMMpUFZT0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_SMMpUFZT0)  
History: Crimean War (video) – much shorter 4 minute student produced presentation.



## Background Information

- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea>  
Crimea – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimean_War)  
Crimean War – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Sevastopol\\_\(1854%E2%80%931855\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Sevastopol_(1854%E2%80%931855))  
Siege of Sevastopol (1854-55) – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty\\_of\\_Paris\\_\(1856\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1856))  
Treaty of Paris 1856 – Wikipedia article

## Key Terms

- Crimea
- Crimean War
- Expansionism
- Florence Nightingale
- Ottoman Empire
- Pan Slavism
- Russian Empire
- Slavs
- Tsar/Czar

