Weekly Discussion Questions 2/17/2025

Classroom Discussion Questions College Level

Strategic Adaptation and Military Innovation: The U.S. Army's experiment with camels was an attempt to adapt to the environmental challenges of the American Southwest. Considering the advantages and disadvantages outlined in the article, what factors ultimately led to the failure of this initiative? How do these considerations compare to modern military or governmental adaptations to environmental challenges?

Ecological and Environmental Impact of Introduced Species: The release of camels into the wild after the experiment ended raises questions about human intervention in ecosystems. What potential ecological impacts could introducing a non-native species have on an environment? How does this historical example compare to other instances of introduced species, such as invasive plants or animals that have altered ecosystems?

Innovation, Resistance, and Cultural Factors: Despite the potential benefits, the U.S. military abandoned the use of camels, while other nations continued to use them. What role do cultural perceptions, logistical challenges, and institutional resistance play in whether new technologies or practices are adopted? Can you think of modern technological or environmental innovations that have faced similar resistance despite their potential benefits?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 9-12

Evaluating Military Innovation: The U.S. Army's experiment with camels was an attempt to improve military operations in arid regions. What were the advantages and disadvantages of using camels compared to traditional pack animals like horses and mules? Do you think the experiment would have been more successful if not for the Civil War? Why or why not?

Unintended Consequences and Adaptation: The article mentions that some camels were released into the wild after the experiment ended, leading to legends about them in the Southwest. How do you think introducing a non-native species like camels could impact the local environment and ecosystem? Can you think of other historical examples where animals were introduced to new environments with unintended consequences?

Lessons from History: The U.S. Army ultimately abandoned the use of camels, but other nations continued to use them for military purposes. What factors influence whether an innovation is adopted or discarded? Can you think of any modern examples where a potentially beneficial technology or idea was rejected due to cultural, political, or logistical reasons?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 6-8

Camels vs. Horses and Mules: The U.S. Army tried using camels instead of horses and mules for travel in dry areas. What were some good things about using camels? What were some problems? Do you think the army should have kept using camels? Why or why not?

Camels in the Wild: After the army stopped using camels, some were set free in the Southwest. How do you think this affected the land and other animals? Can you think of other times when people brought new animals to a place, and it caused problems?

Why Some Ideas Fail: The U.S. Army stopped using camels, but other countries kept using them for military work. What are some reasons why a new idea might not work out? Can you think of a new invention or idea today that people are unsure about or don't want to use?

Classroom Discussion Questions Grades 1-5

Camels vs. Horses: The U.S. Army tried using camels instead of horses and mules. What were some good things about camels? What were some problems? Would you rather ride a horse or a camel? Why?

Camels in the Wild: Some camels were set free after the army stopped using them. How do you think this changed the land and affected other animals? Have you ever seen an animal in a place where it doesn't usually live?

Why Some Ideas Don't Work: The army stopped using camels, but other places still did. Why do you think some ideas don't work out? Can you think of something new people have tried that didn't work as expected?