

KING LEOPOLD II - QUESTIONS

Directions: Complete the following questions, based on the included reading.

1. What European nation was King Leopold II from?

Belgium

2. What area of Africa did King Leopold II control?

Congo River basin

3. What did the actions of Leopold II come to symbolize?

The brutality and worst aspects of European imperialism in Africa.

4. What resource(s) did the Congo River basin contain that was of importance to Leopold II?

Rubber, Copper, etc.

5. Why was rubber so valuable during the time period?

Rubber tires were in demand for the bicycle and automobile.

6. Describe how the Congolese people were treated during the time of Leopold II.

The companies would brutalize the people by forcing them to harvest rubber and if they did not meet their quota than the people suffered abuses, such as: beatings, cutting of their hands, starvation, imprisoning women and children to force men to work harder and destroying entire villages.

7. What eventually led to Leopold II giving up his control of the Congo?

After news of the atrocities gained international attention, he was pressured to give up control over the Congo.

8. Explain how Leopold II benefited from his control over the Congo.

He amassed a substantial fortune and was considered to be one of the wealthiest people in the world.

9. Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture or ethnic heritage is superior to all others. Explain how the events of Leopold II and his rule over the Congo is an example of ethnocentrism?

Based on how Leopold treated the people in the Congo, he obviously did not value their lives. Instead, he was concerned with amassing his own personal fortune. Therefore, he likely believed himself and Europeans to be superior to that of Africans.

10. How do you think the legacy of Leopold II and his control over the Congo Free State has impacted present day Congo?

*** Students could be required to complete online research on the current and recent state of life for people in the Congo.

In general, student could infer that the Congo is left with a legacy of destroyed social networks and the deaths/mutilations that Leopold II led to. The Congo would also have suffered from having its wealth of resources taken for the benefit of Belgium and not for its own benefit. Just as other African nations, the Congo is also dealing with overcoming years of imperial control and the ramifications of colonial rule.

Answer the following questions based on the included political cartoon.

11. The cartoon shows a rubber vine wrapped around the African man. What does this vine represent? Explain.

The head of the vine resembles Leopold II. Therefore, the vine represents the idea that the policies of Leopold II enslaved and brutalized the people of the Congo.

12. What is the significance of the caption at the bottom of the cartoon? Explain.

The caption revisits the idea that rubber as a resource led to the enslavement and brutalization of the Congo people by Leopold II. As well, the caption uses quotations around the word "Free" to highlight the irony of the name and the idea that the people of the Congo were anything but free.

13. What is the overall message of the cartoon? Explain your reasoning.

Student answers may vary, but it centers on the impact that European imperialism had on Europe. In particular, the cartoon's message is focused on the notion that the reign of Leopold II had devastating effects for many people in the Congo.