

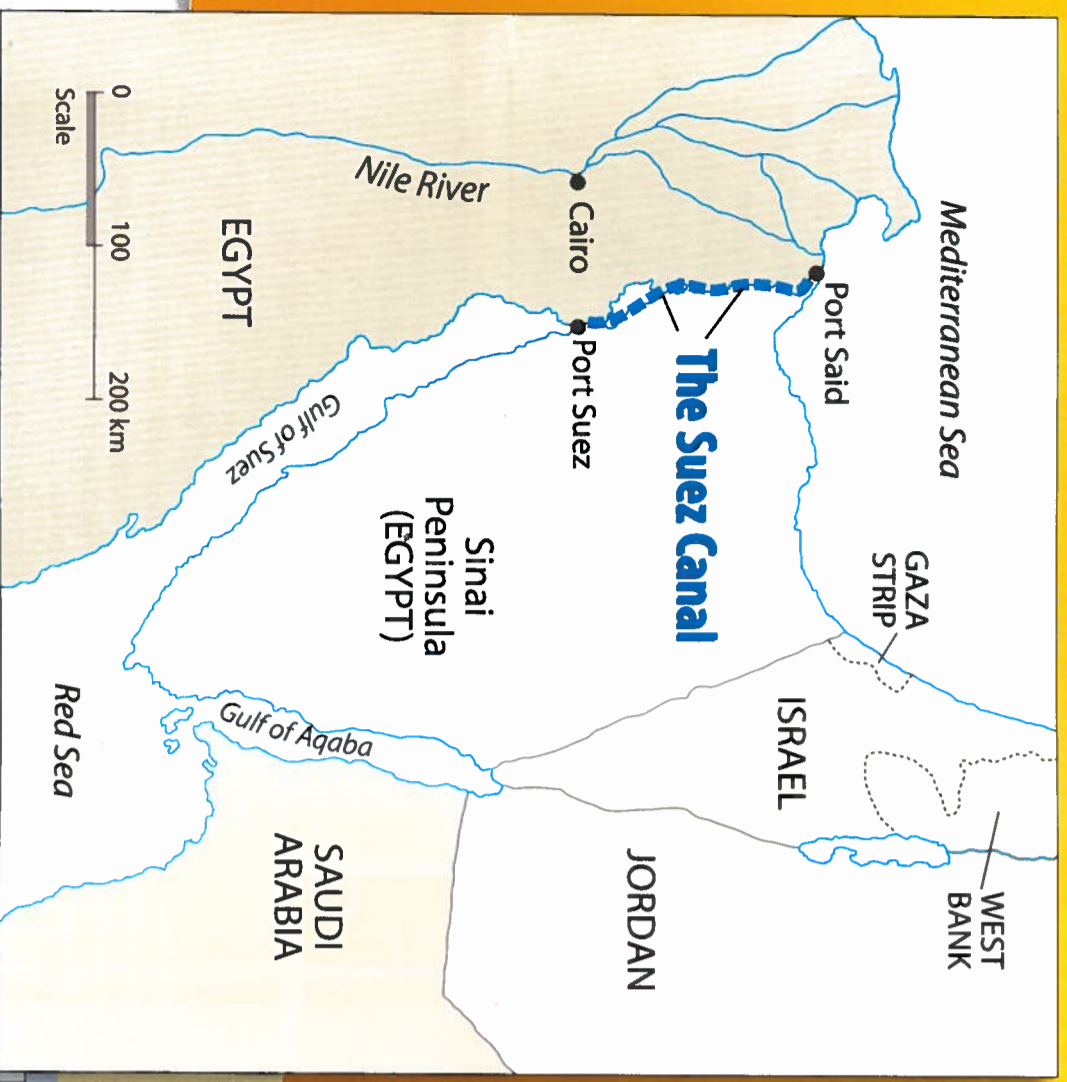
SECTION FOUR HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

WORDS TO KNOW

- volatile
- nationalization
- violate
- ministry
- expropriation
- protocol
- ultimatum
- abstaining

The Suez Canal Crisis: How Significant was Pearson's Role in Preserving World Peace?

Evidence 5.43



From	To	Suez Canal	Cape of Good Hope	Saving
Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia	New York, USA	8281	11 794	30.0%
Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	Liverpool, UK	3902	10 702	63.5%
Mumbai, India	Rotterdam, Netherlands	6337	10 743	41.0%
Mumbai, India	Marseille, France	4558	10 362	56.0%
Shanghai, China	Genoa, Italy	8670	13 619	36.3%

Savings in distance via Suez Canal vs. rounding the Cape of Good Hope, Africa

1. With a partner, list everything you know about Canada and peacekeeping. Why do you believe peacekeeping is significant (consider the criteria for Historical Significance) for Canada?
2. Brainstorm a second list of what you need to find out about peacekeeping to complete your assessment of its significance. When you have finished Section Four, return to your assessment and add to it.

BEFORE READING

In 1956, events in Egypt led to an international incident with all the intrigue of a Hollywood blockbuster—including secret agreements and surprise invasions—set against the backdrop of Cold War politics in the volatile Middle East.

Completed in 1869, the Suez Canal runs 165 kilometres through Egypt to join the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea. **Looking at the table, suggest what made the Suez Canal so important.**

The Setting

What was the intention of the countries who signed the treaty in Evidence 5.44? Why did they consider keeping the canal under international control to be important? Refer to Evidence 5.43 for some ideas.

DURING READING

On October 29, 1888, Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, and Turkey signed a treaty guaranteeing free access to the Suez Maritime Canal. Britain signed the treaty on behalf of Egypt, then Britain's colony. (Egypt gained independence in 1922, but British troops remained in the Suez area until 1955.)

In the beginning, the canal was owned by Britain and France. Later and until 1956, it was administered by a private company owned mainly by Britain and France.

The Crisis: Nationalization of the Suez Canal

Did nationalization of the Suez Canal violate the Convention of Constantinople?

DURING READING

By 1956, the Suez Canal was the busiest ocean-to-ocean waterway in the world. Britain and France considered European control of the canal essential to their worldwide trade. However, when Britain and the United States withdrew their financial support for Egypt's Aswan Dam project in July, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser responded by nationalizing the Suez Canal.

Evidence 5.44

Extracts from the *Convention Respecting the Free Navigation of the Suez Maritime Canal* (Convention of Constantinople), October 29, 1888.

Article I

The Suez Maritime Canal shall always be free and open, in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war without distinction of flag. Consequently, the High Contracting Parties agree not in any way to interfere with the free use of the Canal, in time of war as in time of peace. The Canal shall never be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade. ...

Article IX

The Egyptian Government shall, within the limit of its powers ... and under the conditions provided for in the present Treaty, take the necessary measures of insuring the execution of the said Treaty.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arab Republic of Egypt.

Evidence 5.45

Extracts from the *Decree of the President of the Republic of Egypt on the Nationalization of the Suez Canal Company*, July 26, 1956.

If you were the President of Egypt, given the "international" control of the canal, would you have considered nationalizing it? Why or why not? Why was this decision so important to Nasser? Compare this situation with Canada's claim to the Arctic waters. (The United States contends that the Arctic waters are international, and therefore its ships should have free access to them.)

Article I

The Universal Company of the Suez Maritime Canal (Egyptian joint-stock company) is hereby nationalized. All its assets, rights and obligations are transferred to the Nation [Egypt] and all the organizations and committees that now operate its management are hereby dissolved. Stockholders and holders of founders' shares shall be compensated ... in accordance with the value of shares shown in the closing quotations of the Paris Stock Exchange on the day preceding ...

Article III

The assets and rights of the nationalized company in the Republic of Egypt and abroad, are hereby frozen ...

Source: Paul E. Zinner, "Documents on American Foreign Relations 1957," *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs), Vol. 35, No. 3 (1959), pp. 410-411.