Name: _____

Date: _____

Partition

In 1947, Gandhi saw his dream of an independent India come true, but not the united India he had fought for. Instead, a bitter struggle over who would govern tore the subcontinent apart before the British departed.

Hindus and Muslims

Hindus formed the majority of the subcontinent, while Muslims were the largest religious minority. Though both groups had lived side by side for centuries, deep mistrust surfaced as independence neared, with many Muslims fearing they would be powerless under a Hindu majority.

In August 1946, Hindu-Muslim violence exploded in Calcutta. For days, mobs burned homes and shops and killed thousands, and the killings quickly spread. Suddenly, families no longer felt safe in villages where they had lived for generations: Hindus feared Muslim neighbors, Muslims feared Hindu neighbors, and both feared what would happen when the British left.

The Best Hope

Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League demanded a separate nation for Muslims, while Gandhi fought to keep India united. Fearing an unstoppable civil war, British and Indian leaders increasingly saw partition as the best hope of preventing even greater bloodshed.

In 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided into the independent nations of India and Pakistan. Pakistan comprised two regions separated by more than 1,100 miles: West Pakistan along the Indus River plain, and East Pakistan.

Millions on the Move

More than 15 million people crossed the new borders in one of history's greatest migrations. Terrified of religious violence, families abandoned houses, farms, and businesses where their ancestors had lived for generations, knowing they could never return.

Hindus and Sikhs headed toward India, while Muslims fled toward Pakistan. Desperate families squeezed inside crowded train cars or clung to the roofs, while millions more walked in endless columns along dirt roads. Along the way, armed mobs ambushed the columns and slaughtered entire trainloads of travelers.

Hundreds of thousands died from violence, hunger, disease, and exhaustion, with some estimates reaching one million. Countless families were torn apart, children lost their parents, and traumatized survivors had to start over among strangers in overcrowded border camps and unfamiliar cities.

Two Pakistans

Pakistan faced another deep fracture. Though united by a shared Muslim majority, its two halves were separated by more than 1,100 miles of Indian territory and sharp cultural divides. While the rugged west held the capital and military command, the flood-prone east was home to most of the population. Most easterners spoke Bengali, but the western-dominated government at first made Urdu the sole national language, leaving Bengalis feeling like second-class citizens.

The Birth of Bangladesh

In November 1970, a catastrophic cyclone killed at least 300,000 people in East Pakistan. When the West Pakistani government downplayed the disaster and was slow to provide relief, many Bengalis felt they were being treated like second-class citizens. The next month, an East Pakistani party won the national election, but western leaders refused to hand over power. The Pakistani army tried to crush Bengali resistance in the east, beginning a brutal war that ended in 1971 with the creation of independent Bangladesh.

The partition of India created a separate nation for many of South Asia's Muslims, but faith alone could not bridge deep divides of language, culture, and geography. Just as Muslims had once demanded freedom from a Hindu majority, Bengalis in the east fought for independence from their own leaders. Religion was supposed to hold Pakistan together; it wasn't enough.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Fill in the Blanks

In 1947 the Indian subcontinent gained __d__p__n__e__ce from B__i__a__n but was divided into the nations of I__d__a and P__k__s__an. Hindus were the m__j__ri__y in India, while Pakistan was created as a nation for M__s__i__s. Fear and v__o__e__ce drove more than 15 m__l__i__n people from their homes as Hindus and Sikhs moved toward I__d__a and Muslims moved toward P__k__s__an.

Pakistan was d__v__d__d into two regions more than 1,100 miles apart, with I__d__a between them. Most people in East Pakistan spoke B__n__a__i, while the g__v__r__m__nt seated in West P__k__s__an favored Urdu and controlled most of the nation's p__w__r. After a deadly c__c__o__e struck East Pakistan in 1970, a__g__r toward the western g__v__r__m__nt grew. An eastern party then won the national e__e__ti__n, but western leaders refused to give up p__w__r. War followed, and in 19____ East Pakistan became the i__d__p__n__e__t nation of B__n__l__d__sh.

Answer in Complete Sentences

★1. Explain why British and local leaders agreed to partition the subcontinent into two nations.?

2. Explain where there were "two Pakistans" from 1947 to 1971.

3. Explain how Pakistan differs from Bangladesh.

★4. Explain why East Pakistan and West Pakistan went to war in 1971?

★ This is a higher order learning question. You must answer the question to the best of your ability, but any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.

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