In her brief life, she was known variously as Malinal, Doña Marina, and La Malinche. By whatever name, she was a woman of the Old World and the New in particularly intimate ways, even as she became a bridge between them. Born around 1505, Malinal was the daughter of an elite and cultured family in the borderlands between the Mayan and Aztec cultures in what is now southern Mexico. Two dramatic events decisively shaped her life.

The first occurred when her father died and her mother remarried, bearing a son to her new husband. To protect this boy’s inheritance, Malinal’s family sold her into slavery. Eventually, she came into the possession of a Maya chieftain in Tabasco on the Gulf of Mexico.

Here her second life-changing event took place in March 1519, when the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés landed his troops and inflicted a sharp military defeat on Tabasco. In the negotiations that followed, Tabasco authorities rendered lavish gifts to the Spanish, and Nahualt, the language of the Aztecs, Doña Marina soon picked up Spanish and quickly became indispensable to Cortés as an interpreter, cross-cultural broker, and strategist. She accompanied him on his march inland to the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan, and on several occasions her language skills and cultural awareness allowed her to uncover spies and plots that might well have seriously impeded Cortés’s defeat of the Aztec empire. Diaz reported that “Doña Marina, who understood full well what was happening, told [Cortés] what was going on.” In the Aztec capital, where Cortés took the Emperor Moctezuma captive, it fell to Doña Marina to persuade him to accept this humiliating position and surrender his wealth to the Spanish. Even Cortés, who was never very gracious with his praise for her, acknowledged that “after God, we owe this conquest of New Spain to Doña Marina.” Aztecs soon came to see this young woman as the voice of Cortés, referring to her as La Malinche, a Spanish approximation of her original name. So paired did Cortés and La Malinche become in Aztec thinking that Cortés himself was often called “Malinche.” (See Visual Source 13.2, p. 663, for an Aztec image of La Malinche.)

More than an interpreter for Cortés, Doña Marina also became his mistress and bore him a son. But after the initial conquest of Mexico was complete and he no longer needed her skills, Cortés married Doña Marina off to another Spanish conquistador, Juan Jaramillo, with whom she lived until her death, probably around 1570. Cortés did provide her with several pieces of land, one of which, ironically, had belonged to Moctezuma. Her son, however, was taken from her and raised in Spain.

In 1533, Doña Marina performed one final service for Cortés, accompanying him on a mission to Honduras to suppress a rebellion. There her personal life seemed to come full circle, for near her hometown, she encountered her mother, who had told her into slavery, and her half-brother.

The Great Dying

Whatever combination of factors explains the European acquisition of their empires in the Americas, there is no doubting their global significance. Chief among those consequences was the demographic collapse of Native American societies. Although precise figures remain the subject of much debate, scholars generally agree that the pre-Columbian population of the Western Hemisphere was substantial, perhaps 60 to 80 million. The greatest concentrations of people lived in the Mesoamerican and Andean zones, which were dominated by the Aztec and Inca empires. Long isolation from the Afro-Eurasian world and the lack of most domesticated animals meant the absence of acquired immunities to Old World diseases such as smallpox, measles, typhus, influenza, malaria, and yellow fever.

Therefore, when they came into contact with these European and African diseases, Native American peoples died in appalling numbers, in many cases up to 90 percent of the population. The densely settled peoples of Caribbean islands virtually vanished within fifty years of Columbus’s arrival. Central Mexico, with a population estimated at some 10 to 20 million, declined to about 1 million by 1650. A native Nahuaid (nahuatl) account depicted the social breakdown that accompanied the smallpox pandemic: “A great many died from this plague, and many others died of hunger. They could not get up to search for food, and everyone else was too sick to care for them, so they starved to death in their beds.”

The situation was similar in North America. A Dutch observer in New Netherland (later New York) reported in 1626 that “the Indians . . . affirmed that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the small pox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they are now, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died.” To Governor Bradford of Plymouth colony (in present-day Massachusetts), such conditions represented the “good hand of God” at work, “sweping away great multitudes of the
February 1730 found Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, less than thirty years of age, living between the Gambia and Senegal rivers in West Africa among the Fulbe-speaking people. Like his father, a prominent Islamic scholar and teacher, Ayuba was a Muslim, literate in Arabic, a prayer leader in the local mosque, and a hafiz, someone who had memorized the entire Quran. He was also husband to two wives and father to four children. Now his father sent the young man on an errand. He was to take several of their many slaves to a location some 200 miles away, where an English trading ship had anchored, and exchange them for paper and other goods. The paper was especially important, for his father’s income depended upon inscribing passages from the Quran on small slips of paper and selling them as protective charms.

Stephen Pike, Ayuba traveled farther south and traded his slaves for a number of cows in the land of the Mandinke people. Well beyond the safety of his own country, he was in dangerous territory. As he and his companions stopped to rest on the journey home, they were seized, their heads were shaved, and they were sold as slaves to the very same Captain Pike. Although Ayuba was able to send a message to his father asking to be ransomed in exchange for some of their slaves, the ship sailed before a reply was received. And so Ayuba, along with 168 other slaves, both men and women, headed for the British American colony of Maryland, where 150 of them arrived alive. Sold to a local planter, Ayuba was immediately sent to the tobacco fields, but when he became ill from this heavy and unaccustomed work, his owner assigned him the less arduous and more familiar task of tending cattle. Alone with the cattle, Ayuba was able to withdraw into a nearby forest to pray, but he was spotted by a young white boy who mocked him and threw dirt in his face. Sometime later, no doubt in despair, Ayuba ran away, but he was soon captured and housed in the county jail, located in the back room of a tavern. There he became something of a local curiosity and attracted the attention of a lawyer named Thomas Bluett. When Ayuba refused wine, wrote a few lines in Arabic, and mentioned “Allah” and “Muhammad,” Bluett realized that he was “no common slave.” Locating an old slave who could translate for him, Bluett was fascinated by Ayuba’s story, and he initiated a process that took both of them to England in 1733, where philanthropists purchased Ayuba’s freedom.

Ayuba’s reception in England was amazing. Now fluent in English, Ayuba was received by the English royal family and various members of the nobility, hosted by leading scholars, and entertained by wealthy merchants, eager to tap his knowledge of economic conditions in West Africa. The prominent artist William Hoare painted his portrait, complete with a small Quran hanging from his neck.

In 1734, he finally set off for home, loaded with gifts from his English friends. There he encountered, quite by chance, the same Mandinke men who had sold him only a few years before. Francis Moore, a European trader accompanying Ayuba, wrote that he “fell into a most terrible passion and was for killing them” and was restrained from doing so only with difficulty. He arrived in his hometown to find that his father had recently died. His wives and children, however, were all alive and welcomed him warmly. One of them had remarried, believing him gone forever, but her new husband readily gave way, and Ayuba resumed his place of prominence in his own community until his death in 1773. He also resumed his life as a slave owner. Selling some of the gifts he had acquired in England, he purchased a woman slave and two horses, soon after his arrival back in West Africa. According to Moore, he “spoke always very handsomely of the English,” and he continued his association with the Royal African Company, the primary English trading firm in West Africa, in their rivalry with French traders. The last mention of Ayuba in the records of that company noted that he was seeking compensation for the loss of two slaves and a watch, probably the one given him by the English Queen Caroline.

Questions: What might you infer about Ayuba’s own view of slavery and the slave trade? What insights or questions about the slave trade does his remarkable story suggest?

Reflections: Economic Globalization—Then and Now

The study of history reminds us of two quite contradictory truths. One is that our lives in the present bear remarkable similarities to those of people long ago. We are perhaps not so unique as we might think. The other is that our lives are very different from theirs and that things have changed substantially. This chapter about global commerce—long-distance trade in spices and textiles, silver and gold, beaver pelts and deerskins, slaves and sugar—provides both perspectives. If we are accustomed to thinking about globalization as a product of the late twentieth century, early modern world history provides a corrective. Those three centuries reveal much that is familiar to people of the twenty-first century—the global circulation of goods; an international currency; production for a world market; the growing economic role of the West on the global stage; private enterprise, such as the British and Dutch East India companies, operating on a world scale; national governments eager to support their merchants in a highly competitive environment. By the eighteenth century, many Europeans dined from Chinese porcelain dishes called “china,” wore Indian-made cotton textiles, and drank chocolate from Mexico, tea from China, and coffee from Yemen while sweetening these beverages with sugar from the Caribbean or Brazil. The millions who worked to produce these goods, whether slave or free, were operating in a world economy. Some industries were thoroughly international. New England rum producers, for example, depended on molasses imported from the Caribbean, while the West Indian sugar industry used African labor and European equipment to produce for a global market. Nonetheless, early modern economic globalization was a far cry from that of the twentieth century. Most obvious perhaps were scale and speed. By 2000, immensely
Ursula de Jesús, An Afro-Peruvian Slave and Christian Visionary

Ursula de Jesús was born in the prosperous Spanish colonial city of Lima, Peru, in 1606, the daughter of slave mother. Thus she entered life at the lowest rung of Spanish colonial society. But among enslaved people, Ursula was fortunate. Her mother's owner was a wealthy aristocratic woman, and at age eight, Ursula was sent to live in the home of another elite woman with a reputation for piety and religious visions. Five years later, Ursula accompanied a third woman into the Convent of Santa Clara, where she spent the rest of her life. There Ursula found a place for herself in the world of colonial Peru and Latin American Christianity—but not easily or immediately.

For the next quarter of a century, Ursula was one of more than a hundred slaves in the convent, where she attended to the personal needs of her mistress and participated in communal labor—cooking, cleaning, and attending the sick. In the convent, as in the larger society, Ursula was at the bottom of the social ladder as nuns, novices, and doñas (religious laywomen) all enjoyed a higher status. But the wealth of her mistress or perhaps her own day labor allowed her to dress well and to elevate herself above common slaves. She later noted that she went about "beautifully adorned from head to toe... I used to wear fancy clothes and parade about the choir."

The year 1642 marked a dramatic turning point in Ursula's life, when she almost fell into a deep well. Crediting her deliverance from certain death to the Virgin of Carmen, Ursula turned decisively away from her earlier vain and self-centered ways and embraced an ever-deepening spiritual quest. She sold her lovely clothes, devoted every spare moment to prayer, and sought out the most onerous tasks such as caring for contagious patients and washing soiled garments. She took to whipping herself twice daily, wearing a coarse and painful hair shirt, and placing a crown of thorns beneath her hair. In Catholic religious thinking of the time, such "mortification" of the body served to enhance identification with Jesus's suffering.

Ursula's new religious fervor incurred the displeasure of her mistress, who felt neglected by her slave. By 1645, a deeply unhappy Ursula determined to leave the convent and find a new owner. Then one of the nuns, hoping to retain her pious services, purchased Ursula's freedom. Nonetheless, Ursula chose to stay in the convent as a doña. Doing so represented a modest elevation in her social status, an opportunity to pursue her spiritual life with fewer restrictions, and a measure of social and economic security.

Still, she continued with the same exhausting tasks she had as a slave and complained frequently about them. "I was up to my ears with cooking and other things," she confided to her diary, "desiring only to be in the mountains where there are no people." Even as she struggled with the restrictions of her position in the convent, Ursula enhanced her reputation as a "servant of God;" a woman of extraordinary devotion and humility, and as a visionary and a mystic.

In her diary, Ursula recounted numerous direct encounters with God, Jesus, Mary, and with dead souls seeking her intervention to shorten their time in the purifying fires of purgatory. These visions frequently reflected the tensions of class, race, and position within the convent and in the larger society. Several priests, suffering in purgatory for their sexual sins, luxurious living, and mistreatment of slaves, appealed to Ursula. So too did nuns who had been lax in their spiritual practices or placed their business interests above their religious duties. Ursula had a special concern for the female slaves and servants who asked for her intercession. One feared becoming an "orphan" in purgatory with no one to remember her. Another confessed to a lesbian love affair with a nun. Although Ursula once questioned "whether black women went to heaven," it was later revealed to her as an abode of "great harmony," but not of social equality, for "everyone had their place... in accordance with their standing and the obligations of their class." By the end of her life, however, Ursula was able to affirm the spiritual equality of all. "In memory, understanding, and will," she declared, "they [blacks and whites] are all one."

When Ursula died in 1666, a prominent nun confirmed that she had entered heaven directly, with no intervening time in purgatory. Her funeral was attended by many high officials of both state and church, and she was buried beneath the chapel of the convent she had served.

Question: To what extent did Ursula shape her own life and in what way was it shaped by larger historical forces?
The ideas of the European Enlightenment and the Atlantic revolutions resonated deeply in the life of a remarkable young Javanese woman named Kartini during the late nineteenth century when her country was part of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). Born in 1879 into a large aristocratic Javanese family young Kartini attended a Dutch elementary school where she learned the Dutch language and observed the relative freedom of her European classmates, in sharp contrast to the constraints and ritualized interactions of her own family. At the age of twelve, in keeping with Javanese Muslim customs, Kartini was abruptly removed from her school. For the next four years, she never left her home. Between studies in her family’s home, she read widely on her own and began an extensive correspondence with prominent Europeans both in the Netherlands and in Java. From her letters, we learn something of Kartini’s thinking. In light of her exposure to Europeans and European thought, she found the absolute subordination of Javanese women completely unacceptable. The seclusion of girls, the total separation of the sexes, the absence of educational opportunities—all this drove her almost to despair. “Are fine women of no use to civilization?” she asked. But it was the prospect of a traditional high-class Javanese marriage that she found most appalling. Her husband would be “a stranger, an unknown man, whom my parents would choose for me . . . without my knowledge.” During the wedding ceremony, she would be expected to prostrate herself before the bridegroom and kiss his feet as a sign of her future submission. Even then, she would be only one of several wives. “Do you understand now,” she wrote to a Dutch confidante, “the deep aversion I have for marriage?”

Kartini was equally outraged by particular features of Dutch colonial rule, especially its racism. Conscious of her membership in a “despised brown race,” she deployed the need for “creeping in the dust” before Europeans. Javanese generally were not supposed to speak Dutch with their colonial masters, as if “Dutch is too beautiful to be spoken by a brown mouth.” And yet, for Kartini, it was Dutch education and its universal Enlightenment values—“freedom, equality, fraternity,” as she put it, echoing the slogan of the French Revolution—that would lead to Javanese emancipation from both Dutch and Javanese oppression. “Europe will teach us to be truly free,” she wrote.

Nonetheless, Kartini openly embraced much of her own culture—its art, music, and poetry; its regard for the dead; its hospitality to the poor; its spiritual depth—and she certainly did not seek to transform Javanese into “half-Europeans.” But she did believe that “contact with another civilization” and modern European education in particular would enable Javanese “to develop the fine qualities that are peculiar to their race.” “Emancipation is in the air,” she declared in early 1901.

Kartini’s fondest hope was to contribute to that emancipation by studying in the Netherlands and then opening a school for girls in Java. But these grand dreams were thwarted by opposition from her own family, from Javanese officials, and from much of the Dutch colonial bureaucracy. Java’s leading newspaper denounced her intentions as “outrageous,” and local gossip had it that she simply wanted to marry a European and become a Europeanized woman.

A backup plan to study in the colonial capital of Batavia likewise came to naught with a sudden announcement in mid-1903 that her father had arranged for her to be married to a much older and polygamous man of her social class. Kartini was devastated. “My crown has fallen from my head. My golden illusions of purity and chastity lie shattered in the dust. . . . Now I am nothing more than all the rest.”

Despite Kartini’s feeling that she was “done with all personal happiness,” she determined to make her marriage a model for the future, actually meeting her husband before the wedding and extracting from him a written promise that she could continue with her plans to create a school for girls. But she soon became pregnant, and four days after the birth of her son in 1904, she died at the age of twenty-five. As her writings subsequently became known in Indonesia, Kartini came to be regarded as a pioneer of both feminist and nationalist thinking, and a number of “Kartini schools” were established in her memory.

Question: In what ways was Kartini’s life shaped by living at the intersection of Javanese and European worlds?

Not surprisingly, feminism provoked bitter opposition. Some academic and medical experts argued that the strains of education and life in the world outside the home would cause serious reproductive damage and as a consequence depopulate the nation. Thus feminists were viewed as selfish, willing to sacrifice the family or even the nation while pursuing their individual goals. Some saw suffragettes, like Jews and socialists, as “a foreign body in our national life.” Never before in any society had such a passionate and public debate about the position of women erupted. It was a novel feature of Western historical experience in the aftermath of the Atlantic revolutions.

Like nationalism, a concern with women’s rights spread beyond Western Europe and the United States, though less widely. An overtly feminist newspaper was established in Brazil in 1852, and an independent school for girls was founded in Mexico in 1869. A handful of Japanese women and men, including the empress Haruko, raised issues about marriage, family planning, and especially education as the country began its modernizing process after 1868, but the state soon cracked down firmly, forbidding women from joining political parties or even attending political meetings. In Russia, the most radical feminist activists operated within socialist or anarchist circles, targeting the oppressive tsarist regime. Within the Islamic world and in China, some modernists came to believe that education and a higher status for women strengthened the nation in its struggles for development and independence and therefore deserved support. (See Portrait of Kartini, above, for an example from the Dutch East Indies.) Huda Sharawi, founder of the first feminist organization in Egypt, returned to Cairo in 1923 from an international conference in Italy and threw her veil into the sea. Many upper-class Egyptian women soon followed her example.
Ellen Johnston, Factory Worker and Poet

Born around 1835 to a working-class family in an industrializing Scotland, Ellen Johnston worked in a variety of textile mills throughout her life, lived as a single mother, and most unusually became a published poet with a modest local reputation. Through her brief autobiography and her poetry, we can catch a glimpse of one working-class woman's experience during Britain's Industrial Revolution.

Shortly after her birth, Ellen's father, a stonemason, decided to emigrate to America. Her mother, however, refused to join him and returned to her father's house with her young daughter, where she supported her small family as a dressmaker. Ellen remembered those early years with pleasure, wandering the area with her doll and her dog. When she was eight, her mother remarried an abusive man, who forced young Ellen to work in factories a few years later.

Ellen Johnston's troubled home life made her resistant to the emerging ideology of domesticity, which defined women's roles as tranquil homemakers, wives, and mothers, a view that was holding even within the working classes by the mid-nineteenth century. "Fallen women"—those who gave birth outside of marriage—were generally expected to withdraw from public life in disgrace. Ellen Johnston, however, was unrepentant. "I did not . . . feel inclined to die," she wrote, "when I could no longer conceal what the world falsely calls a woman's shame." Descriptions of home life in her writing are almost always negative. Referring to her aunt's marriage to an alcoholic, she wrote: "Now the dark cup of sorrow embitters thy life / To a hard hearted drunkard, a' thou art a wife."

Johnston supported herself and her daughter by working intermittently in the textile mills of industrial Scotland, occasionally withdrawing for health reasons or to write poetry that she signed as "the factory girl." Through her poetry, Johnston made clear her awareness of the inequalities and exploitation of industrial life, writing in one poem: "It is the pair [poor] man's hard-won toil that fills the rich man's purse . . . / What care the gentry if they're well, though all the poor would die."

Another poem urged unionization for boat builders and boilermakers. In response to industrial misery, however, Johnston did not advocate for socialism or revolutionary upheaval. Rather, she implicitly called on the "master" of the mill to behave in a benevolent fashion toward his employees and to create within the factory a sense of community. At times she recited her poetry at factory-organized gatherings, sometimes toasting the owner: "May he still have wealth; may we still have health / To remain his servants of toil."

On a personal level, this "factory girl" stood up for herself, at one point taking her foreman to court to recover a week's wages when she was fired without notice. But it was within the factory, not the family, that Johnston found emotional and personal satisfaction. In the mills, she discovered camaraderie, an emotional and spiritual home, and a status higher than that of domestic labor, which was the lot of so many young working-class women. Celebrating one of the factories where she worked, Johnston proclaimed: "I would not leave thee, dear beloved place / A crown, a sceptre, or a throne to grace, / To be a queen—the nation's flag unfurl—/ A thousand times I'd be a Factory Girl!"

Johnston had hoped to make her living as a poet and thus escape the poverty to which factory wages condemned her. She did receive occasional financial support from upper-class benefactors, including a small gift from Queen Victoria, and a published collection of her work appeared in 1869. She was, however, aware that both class and gender made it difficult for her to win acceptance among middle- and upper-class members of the literary establishment, a recognition expressed in her writing: "I am so small I cannot shine / Amidst the great that read my rhyme." In 1870, only a year after the publication of the second edition of her book of poetry, she had to apply for "poor relief," and in 1874, Ellen Johnston died in a Scottish poorhouse, not yet forty years of age.

Question: How would you describe Ellen Johnston's outlook on industrial Britain?
Wanjiku of Kenya: An Ordinary Woman in Extraordinary Times

Born in 1910 among the Gikuyu people of East Africa, Wanjiku witnessed almost the entire twentieth century. Her life encompassed the dramatic intrusion of British colonialism, the coming of Christianity, the Mau Mau rebellion against European rule, the achievement of independence for Kenya in 1963, and the challenges of modernization in the decades that followed.

And yet, the first 10 years or more of Wanjiku's life were shaped far more by the customary patterns of rural Gikuyu culture than by the transformations of colonial rule. She grew up in her father's compound where her mother, three other wives, and more than a dozen children also lived. As a child, she began contributing to the household—fetching water, firewood, and vegetables—even as she learned the stories, riddles, and proverbs of Gikuyu folklore. At age fourteen, she had her ears pierced, thus achieving "a grown-up person" eligible for marriage. Described as "buying maturity with pain," the operation, as Wanjiku later recalled, "like being slaughtered." Circumcision also marked Wanjiku's entry into an age-set, a group of girls who had undergone this initiation into womanhood together. As adults they worked together in the fields, provided help and gifts at the birth of children, and protected one another from sexual abuse by men.

Now Wanjiku was also able to attend the evening dances where young men and women mingled. There she met her first husband, Wamai, who initiated the long process of negotiation between families and the payment of numerous goats and cows to the bride's father. Marriage, she found, "was a big change—learning about sex and my husband's habits." Tragedy struck, however, when both her husband and her first child died. A few years later, Wanjiku married Kamau, the younger brother of her first husband, with whom she had three sons. Her second marriage, unlike the first, was accompanied by a circumcision of the clitoris and adjacent genital tissue as a part of initiation rites marking her coming-of-age. To the Gikuyu people, among whom it was widely practiced, it was a prerequisite for adult status and marriage. To missionaries, it was physically damaging to girls and brought "unnecessary attention ... to the non-spiritual aspects of sex." When missionaries in 1929 sought to enforce a ban on the practice among their African converts, outrage ensued. Thousands abandoned mission schools and churches, but they did not abandon Christianity or modern education. Rather they created a series of independent schools and churches in which they could practice their new faith and pursue their educational goals without missionary intrusion. Some recalled that the New Testament itself had declared that "circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing." And so, wrote an angry convert to a local missionary, "Has God spoken to you this time and informed you that those who circumcise will not enter in to God's place? It is better for a European like you to leave off speaking about such things because you can make the Gospel to be evil spoken of." (See the Portrait above for the experience of Wanjiku, a Gikuyu woman.)

As elsewhere, Christianity in Africa soon became Africanized. Within mission-based churches, many converts continued using protective charms and medicines and consulting local medicine men, all of which caused their missionary mentors to speak frequently of "backsliding." Other converts continued to believe in their old gods and spirits but now deemed them evil and sought their destruction. Furthermore, church service and a wedding ring, signs of encroaching Western culture. Both marriages were apparently relatively satisfying, and she reported with pride that neither man mistreated or beat her.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the new realities of colonial life began to touch Wanjiku more personally than before. She and Kamau became Christians around 1940, and in 1948, Wanjiku "became saved." "The saved ones," she declared, "do not take tobacco nor drink. And they don't abuse anybody." She then joined a church-based "Mother's Union," vowing "never again to carry out old Gikuyu customs." For Wanjiku, this group became a major source of social support that operated outside of traditional Gikuyu culture.

In 1952, Wanjiku found herself caught up in the Gikuyu-based Mau Mau rebellion against colonial rule. To separate the general population from the Mau Mau "freedom fighters" in the surrounding forests, the colonial government forced most Gikuyu to relocate into compact villages closely and brutally supervised by the Home Guard, local African police appointed by European authorities. Wanjiku and many others were required to dig a large trench around the village to keep the rebels out. "We were like prisoners," Wanjiku reported. "If we started to drag behind working, we were beaten." Caught between the opposing forces of the Home Guard and the Mau Mau fighters, Wanjiku lived in fear. "If you made a mistake with the Home Guard, you would die. If you made a mistake with the Mau Mau, you would die too."

The British crushed the Mau Mau rebellion by 1956, but, by 1963 Kenya, like dozens of other African countries, had achieved its independence. Wanjiku remembered the day with exhilaration. "We spent the whole night singing and dancing. We were so happy because we would never be ruled by foreigners again. It also meant the end of the beatings." It was perhaps the high point of Wanjiku's consciousness as a public person and a participant in a new nation. In the decades following independence, Wanjiku experienced still further changes. She and her husband began to grow tea as a cash crop, something limited to European farmers for much of the colonial era. Kenya's new government tried to forbid female circumcision, and, as young people were increasingly drawn to the larger cities, older rural social patterns broke down. Boys and girls of different age-sets mingled far more freely than before. Educated young people felt superior and sometimes behaved disrespectfully to illiterate elders such as Wanjiku.

By the 1990s, Wanjiku was an old woman afflicted with arthritis and much diminished vision. She saw herself less as a Kenyan than as a Gikuyu. No longer able to farm, she counseled her children, looked after her grandchildren, and enjoyed recounting her life story to a visiting anthropologist.

Question: How does Wanjiku's life reflect both the continuities and changes of the twentieth century in African history?
When the Chinese emperor decided in 1838 on firm measures to suppress the opium trade, he selected Lin Zexu to enforce that policy. Born in 1785, Lin was the son of a rather poor but scholarly father, who had never achieved an official position. Lin, however, excelled academically, passing the highest level examinations in 1811 after two failed attempts, and then rising rapidly in the ranks of China’s bureaucracy. In the process, he gained a reputation as a strict and honest official, immune to bribery, genuinely concerned with the welfare of the peasants, and unafraid to confront the corruption and decadence of rich and poor alike. And so in December of 1838, after some nineteen personal audiences with the emperor, Lin found himself in Canton, the center of the opium trade and the only Chinese city legally open to foreign merchants. He was facing the greatest challenge of his professional life. Undertaken with the best of intentions as a strict and honest official, Lin undertook his enormous task with a combination of moral appeals, reasoned argument, political pressure, and coercion, while hoping to avoid outright armed conflict. It was an approach that focused on both the demand and supply sides of the problem. In dealing with Chinese opium users, Lin emphasized the health hazards of the drug and demanded that everyone turn in their supplies of opium and the pipes used to smoke it. By mid-1839, he had confiscated some 50,000 pounds of the drug together with over 70,000 pipes and arrested some 1,700 dealers. Hundreds of local students were summoned to an assembly where they were in­ vited to identify opium distributors and to suggest ways of dealing with the problem. Opium-using officials were essential for a strong Chinese nation. Recruiting students into the anti-Qing movement, she often dressed in male clothing: “My aim is to dress like a man,” she declared. “In China, men are strong and women are oppressed because they are supposed to be weak.” (See Document 19.3, pp. 962–65.) Thus was born the immensely powerful force of Chinese nationalism, directed alike against Western imperialists, the foreign Qing dynasty, and aspects of China’s traditional culture.

The Qing dynasty response to these new pressures proved inadequate. A flurry of progressive imperial edicts in 1849, known as the Hundred Days of Reform, was soon squelched by conservative forces. More extensive reform in the early twentieth century, including the end of the old examination system and the promise of a national parliament, was a classic case of too little too late. In 1911, the ancient imperial order that had governed China for two millennia collapsed, with only a modest ruckus from organized revolutionaries. It was the end of a long era in China and the beginning of an immense struggle over the country’s future.

The Ottoman Empire and the West in the Nineteenth Century

Like China, the Islamic world represented a highly successful civilization that felt little need to learn from the “infidels” or “barbarians” of the West until it collided with an expanding and aggressive Europe in the nineteenth century. Unlike China, though, Islamic civilization had been a near neighbor to Europe for 1,000 years. Its most
Not often can historians penetrate the inner worlds of the people they study. But in the letters and diary of Etty Hillesum, a young Dutch Jewish woman caught up in the Nazi occupation of her country during the early 1940s, we can catch a glimpse of her expanding interior life even as her external circumstances contracted sharply amid the unfolding of the Holocaust. Born in 1914, Etty was the daughter of a Dutch academic father and a Russian-born mother. She attended university, tutored students in the Russian language, and hoped to become a writer. The Nazi invasion of the Netherlands in May 1940 found Etty living in Amsterdam with five other people. There she experienced and described Nazi rule and its mounting impact on Jews. “More arrests, more terror, concentration camps; the arbitrary dragging off of fathers, sisters, brothers,” she wrote in June 1941. Soon Amsterdam’s Jews were required to wear identifying yellow stars and were forbidden from walking on certain streets, riding the tram, visiting particular shops, or eating in cafes. Signs reading “no admittance to Jews” sprang up across the city.

Etty initially reacted to these events with hatred and depression. She felt “beside myself with anger, cursing and swearing at the Germans,” and was even upset with a German woman living in her house who had no connections whatever with the Nazis. “They are out to destroy us completely,” she wrote on July 3, 1942. “Today I am filled with despair.” Over time, however, her perspective changed. “I really see no other solution than to turn inward and to root out all the rottenness there.” One day, with the “sound of fire, shooting, bombs” raging outside, Etty listened to a Bach recording and wrote: “I know and share the many sorrows a human being can experience, but I do not cling to them; they pass through me, like life itself, as a broad eternal stream . . . and life continues . . . . If you have given sorrow the space that its gentle origins demand, then you may say that life is beautiful and so rich . . . that it makes you want to believe in God.”

Meanwhile Etty had fallen deeply in love with her fifty-five-year-old German Jewish therapist, Julius Spier. She worried that she was becoming overly dependent on him, particularly since she was already sleeping with another man in whose house she lived. Yet, Spier had become her spiritual companion and mentor as well as her lover. When he died in September 1942, she was devastated but determined to go on. “You were the mediator between God and me,” she wrote of Spier, “and now you have gone and my path leads straight to God.”

Eventually, Etty found herself in Westerbork, a transit camp for Dutch Jews awaiting transport to the east and almost certain death. Friends had offered to hide her, but Etty insisted on voluntarily entering the camp, where she operated as an unofficial social worker and sought to become the “thinking heart of the barracks.” In the camp, panic erupted regularly as new waves of Jews were transported east. Babies screamed as they were awakened to bombs. “I feel as if I were awakening to the fact that I am living in the barracks of a concentration camp,” she wrote in mid-1943. “People live in those big barracks like so many rats in a sewer.”

Even there, however, Etty’s emerging inner life found expression. “Late at night . . . ” she wrote, “I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire. And then time and again, I soars straight from my heart . . . the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent and that one day we shall be building a whole new world. Against every new outrage and every fresh horror, we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves. We may suffer, but we must not succumb.”

Etty’s transport came on September 7, 1943, when she, her parents, and a brother boarded a train for Auschwitz. Her parents were gassed immediately upon arrival, and Etty followed on November 30. Her last known writing was a postcard tossed from the train as it departed Westerbork. “I am sitting on my rucksack in the middle of full freight car. Father, mother, and Mischa [her brother] are a few cars behind . . . We left the camp singing.”

Questions: In what ways did Etty experience the Nazi phenomenon? How might you assess Etty’s interior response to the Nazis? Was it a triumph of the human spirit or an evasion of the responsibility to resist evil more directly?
Born into a large peasant family near Smolensk in western Russia in 1916, Anna Dubova lived through the entire communist experience of her country. Hers was a life that illustrates the complexities that ordinary individuals faced as they sought to navigate the communist system.

Anna was one of fourteen children, of whom seven survived. Her family was dominated by a strict, hard-working, and highly religious father, who was chairman of the local church. Anna's father was suspicious of the communists when they came to power the year after Anna's birth, but her grandmother was more forthright. "We have a new tsar," she declared. "The forces of the tsar and the tsarist church have triumphed." Nonetheless, her father accepted an appointment in 1922 as chairman of the village council of the new communist organ of local government. During the 1920s, the village and Anna's family were among those peasants who flocked to the city to pursue new opportunities that became available as the Soviet Union launched its industrialization drive.

In Moscow, she gained a basic education, a vocation in cake decorating, which she enjoyed, and a brief stint as a mechanic and chauffeur, which she detested. All the while the shadow of her kulak label followed her. Had it been discovered, she could have lost her job and her permission to live in Moscow. And so she married a party activist from a poor peasant family "just so I could cover up my background." Her husband drank heavily, leaving her with a daughter when he went off to war in 1941.

In the Soviet Union, the late 1920s witnessed the terror when millions of alleged "enemies of the people" were arrested and hauled off to execution or labor camps. Anna recalled what it was like: "You'd come home and they'd say, Yesterday they took away Uncle Lesha ... You'd go to see a girlfriend, they'd say, We have an empty room now; they've exiled Andrei." Like most people not directly involved, Anna believed in the guilt of these people. And she feared that she herself might be mistakenly accused, for those with a kulak label were particular targets of the search for enemies. "I was only afraid," she remembered, "that I would be raped in prison."

Beyond her kulak background, Anna also felt compelled to hide a deep religious sensibility derived from her childhood. She remembered the disappearance of the village priest, the looting of the churches, and the destruction of icons. And so she never entered a church or prayed in front of others. But she wore a cross under her clothing. "I never stopped believing," she recalled. "But I concealed it. Deep down I believed." Nor did she ever seek to join the Communist Party, though it may well have advanced her career prospects and standard of living. Perhaps she feared that the investigations accompanying party membership would have disclosed her compromising social and religious background.

In the decades following World War II and especially after Stalin's death in 1953, Anna's life seemed to stabilize. She entered into a thirty-year relationship with a man and found satisfying work in a construction design office, though the lack of higher education and party connections prevented her from moving into higher-paid jobs. Looking back on her life, she regretted the communist intrusion, particularly in its Stalinist phase, into what she remembered as a happy childhood. She had come to value, perhaps nostalgically, the life of a peasant, where "I would have lived on the fruits of my labor," over that of an urban worker, where, she felt, "I've lived someone else's life."

**Question:** In what ways did communism shape Anna's life, and in what respects was she able to construct her own life within that system?
British—all that from a fosterly image of the Pathan leader. The wells that he drank from were thought to cure diseases. He became Badshah Khan (the king of khans) or the Frontier Gandhi.

It was a remarkable achievement. Both Gandhi and his close associate Nehru were astonished that "Abdul Gaffar Khan made his turbulent and quarrelsome people accept peaceful methods of political action, involving enormous suffering." In large measure it had happened because Abdul Khan was able to root nonviolence in both Islam and Pathan culture. In fact, he had come to nonviolence well before meeting Gandhi, seeing it as necessary for overcoming the incessant feuding of his Pathan people. The Prophet Muhammad's mission, he declared, was "to free the oppressed, to feed the poor, and to clothe the naked." Nonviolent struggle was a form of jihad or Islamic holy war, and the suffering it generated was a kind of martyrdom. Furthermore, he linked nonviolent struggle to Pathan male virtues of honor, bravery, and strength.

By the mid-1940s, however, Pathan Muslims increasingly favored a separate state (Pakistan) rather than an alliance with Hindus in a unified India, as Gandhi and Abdul Khan so fervently hoped. Abdul Khan's political critics stigmatized him as "Hindu," while many orthodox Islamic scholars viewed his more inclusive and nonviolent view of Islam as a challenge to their authority and their understanding of the faith. When the Congress finally and reluctantly accepted the partition of India into two states, Abdul Khan felt betrayed. "You have thrown us to the wolves," he said.

Despite his deep disappointment about partition and the immense violence that accompanied it, Abdul Khan declared his allegiance to Pakistan. But neither he nor his Servants of God followers could gain the trust of the new Pakistani authorities, who refused to recognize their role as freedom fighters in the struggle against colonial rule. His long opposition to the creation of Pakistan made his patriotism suspect; his advocacy of Pathan unity raised fears that he was fostering the secession of that region, and his political liberalism and criticism of Pakistani military governments generated suspicions that he was a communist.

Thus he was repeatedly imprisoned in Pakistan and, in conditions far worse than he had experienced in British jails. He viewed Pakistan as a British effort at divide and rule, "so that the Hindus and the Muslims might forever be at war and forget that they were brothers."

Until his death in 1988 at the age of 98, he held firmly to his Islam-based nonviolent beliefs. But like Gandhi, he was far more widely admired than he was imitated.

Questions: Why do you think Abdul Khan is generally unknown? Where does he fit in the larger history of the twentieth century?
Over increasingly large areas of the United States, spring now comes unhurled by the return of the birds, and the early mornings are strangely silent.26 This was the appalling vision that inspired Silent Spring, a book that effectively launched the American environmental movement in 1962 with its devastating critique of unregulated pesticide use. Its author, Rachel Carson, was born in 1907 on a farm near Pittsburgh. Her childhood interest in nature led her to college and graduate studies in biology and then to a career as a marine biologist with the U.S. Department of Fisheries, only the second woman hired for such a position. She was also finding her voice as a writer, penning three well-received books on the ecology of the sea.

Through this work, Carson gained an acute awareness of the intricate and interdependent web of life, but she assumed "much of nature was forever beyond the tampering hand of man." However, the advent of the atomic age, with the dramatic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, shook her confidence that nature was immune to human action, and she began to question the widely held assumption that science always held positive outcomes for human welfare. That skepticism gradually took shape around the issue of pesticides and other toxins deliberately introduced into the environment in the name of progress. In 1953 a letter from a friend describing the death of birds in her yard following aerial spraying for mosquito control prompted Carson to take on a project that became Silent Spring. Initially she called it "inn against the earth."

From government agencies, independent scientists, public health specialists, and her own network of contacts, Carson began to assemble data about the impact of pesticides on natural ecosystems and human health. While she never called for their complete elimination, she argued for much greater care and sensitivity to the environment in employing chemical pesticides. She further urged natural biotic agents as a preferable alternative for pest control. The book also criticized the government regulatory agencies for their negligent oversight and scientific specialists for their "fanatical zeal" to create "a chemically sterile insect-free world." Chemical companies, she wrote, gave out only "little tranquilizing pills of half-truth" when confronted with evidence of their products' harmful results. While she worked hard to ensure the book's scientific credentials, it was a passionate work; fueled by Carson's "anger at the senseless brutal things that were being done." It was also a book written under growing personal difficulties. Her mother, for whom she had long been a caretaker, died in 1958, while Carson's own health too deteriorated as cancer and other ailments took their toll.

When Silent Spring finally published in 1962, the book provided a firestorm of criticism. Velsicol, a major chemical company, threatened a lawsuit to prevent its publication. Critics declared that following her prescriptions would mean "the end of all human progress," even a "return to the Dark Ages [when] insects and diseases and vermin would once again inherit the earth." Some of the attacks were more personal. Rachel Carson had never married, and Ezra Taft Benson, a former secretary of agriculture, wondered "why a spinster with no children was so concerned about genetics," while opining that she was "probably a communist." It was the height of the cold war era, and challenges to government agencies and corporate capitalism were often deemed "un-American" and "sinister."

Carson evoked such a backlash because she had called into question the whole idea of science as progress, so central to Western culture since the Enlightenment. Human kind had acquired the power to "alter the very nature of the [earth's] life," she declared. The book ended with a dire warning: "It is our alarming misfortune that so primitive a science has armed itself with the most modern and terrible weapons, and that in turning them against the insects, it has also turned them against the earth."

But Carson also had a growing number of enthusiastic supporters. Before she died in 1964, she witnessed the vindication of much of her work. Honors and awards poured in; the more than held her own against her critics in a CBS News program devoted to her book; and a presidential Science Advisory Committee cited Carson's work while recommending the "orderly reduction of persistent pesticides." Following her death, a range of policy changes reflected her work including the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency in 1970 and the banning of the insecticide DDT in 1973. Silent Spring also motivated many to join the growing array of environmentalist groups.

Approaching her death, Carson applied her ecological understanding of the world to herself as well. In a letter to her best friend not long before she died, she recalled seeing some monarch butterflies leaving on a journey from which they would not return. And then she added: "When the intangible cycle has run its course, it is a natural and not unhappy thing that a life comes to an end."

Question: In what larger contexts might we understand Rachel Carson and the book that gained her such attention?