Excerpt adapted from bicom.org.uk

“Theodor (1860 - 1904) Herzl, the visionary of Zionism, was born in Budapest in 1860 and was educated … to appreciate secular culture. In 1878, his family moved to Vienna, and in 1884 Herzl was awarded a doctorate of law from the University of Vienna. He became a writer, a playwright and a journalist…

Herzl first encountered the anti-Semitism (prejudice against Jewish people) that would shape his life and the fate of the Jews in the twentieth century while studying at the University of Vienna (1882)…

In 1894, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer in the French army, was unjustly accused of treason, mainly because of the prevailing anti-Semitic atmosphere. Herzl witnessed his trial and resolved that there was only one solution: the mass immigration of Jews to a land that they could call their own. Thus, the Dreyfus Case became one of the determinants in the genesis of Political Zionism.

Herzl…published Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State, 1896). Herzl argued that the essence of the Jewish problem was not individual but national. He declared that the Jews could gain acceptance in the world only if they ceased being a national anomaly…”

“But we wish to give the Jews a Homeland.” ~ Theodor Herzl
During the World War, the Zionist movement clearly defined its objective as a Jewish state in Palestine. After 1945, as the facts and consequences of Hitler's death camps became evident, the Jewish underground intensified the campaign to oust the British, whom they accused of Arab sympathies. Jewish organizations tried to restart unlimited immigration. Britain handed the problem to the United Nations. On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into Jewish and Arab sectors. There was violent and total Arab opposition, but wild Jewish acclaim. Fighting started almost immediately. Arab armies from Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon tried to invade Palestine as soon as the British forces actually left. But the Arab campaign was a generally badly organized. By the middle of 1949 up to 700,000 of about 900,000 Palestinian Arabs had left the affected region. They ended up in the refugee camps of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egyptian-run Gaza and in the Palestinian territory of the West Bank, which was ruled by the Jordanian King Abdullah, as was Arab East Jerusalem. Israel became a state on May 15, 1948, and was recognized by the United States and the Soviet Union that same day.

Questions:
1: What was the Balfour Declaration?

2: What was the objective of the Zionist movement?

3: How did the facts and consequences of Hitler’s death camps affect the Zionist movement?

4: What was the decision of the UN General Assembly after the British handed the organization the problem of Palestine?

5: Why did fighting start immediately?

6: Why were the Arabs defeated?

7: Why do you think many Palestinians left the affected region?
The Palestine problem became an international issue towards the end of the First World War with the disintegration of the Turkish Ottoman Empire. Palestine was among the several former Ottoman Arab territories which were placed under the administration of Great Britain…a primary objective the implementation of the "Balfour Declaration" issued by the British Government in 1917, expressing support for "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people". During the years of the Palestine Mandate, from 1922 to 1947, large-scale Jewish immigration from abroad, mainly from Eastern Europe took place, the numbers swelling in the 1930s with the notorious Nazi persecution of Jewish populations. Palestinian demands for independence and resistance to Jewish immigration led to a rebellion in 1937, followed by continuing terrorism and violence from both sides during and immediately after World War II. Great Britain tried to implement various formulas to bring independence to a land ravaged by violence. In 1947, Great Britain turned the problem over to the United Nations…After looking at various alternatives, the UN proposed the partitioning of Palestine into two independent States, one Palestinian Arab and the other Jewish…One of the two States envisaged in the partition plan proclaimed its independence as Israel and in the 1948 war expanded to occupy 77 per cent of the territory of Palestine…

Questions:
1: How did the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire affect Palestine?
2: What was a primary objective of Great Britain in Palestine?
3: What conflicts arose between Jewish immigrants to Palestine and the Palestinians?
4: How did Israel’s 1948 war and 1967 war affect the Palestinians?
The Balfour Declaration
By Arthur James Balfour
November 2, 1917

The Balfour Declaration was a letter from Arthur Balfour, the British foreign secretary, to Lionel Rothschild, one of the leaders of the Zionist movement. The letter formalized the support of the British government for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine...

Dear Lord Rothschild,
I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.”

Questions:
1: Explain the meaning of the cartoon.

2: Why has peace been so difficult to achieve in the Middle East?

3. Who was Arthur Balfour?

4: What was the Balfour Declaration?

5: According to the Balfour Declaration, how were the Palestinians to be treated?

6: Before it was claimed by Great Britain, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. How did the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I affected Palestine?

7: Israel is surrounded by hostile nations. How do you think the hostility of Israel’s neighbors has increased the difficulty of achieving a resolution to the Israeli and Palestinian conflict?

8: Do you agree or disagree with the UN: In 1974, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty, and to return.