

## Condolence letter from General MacArthur, 1950

### Introduction

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In 1950, with Soviet support, North Korea invaded South Korea. The ensuing war lasted until 1953, with the United Nations and the United States entering the conflict soon after it began. For the United States, participation in the Korean War was integral to the containment of Communism, though it came at a cost of more than 30,000 American combat deaths. One of those casualties was Donald Cushman, who was killed early in the war. In October 1950, General Douglas MacArthur wrote this letter of condolence to Donald Cushman's mother, Mary, in Bangor, Maine. MacArthur offered his sympathies, writing, "It is my earnest prayer that Almighty God will sustain and strengthen you in this hour of trial." He also told Mrs. Cushman that "Some measure of comfort may be derived from the knowledge that he died in the service of his country and in defense of a peace-loving people."

### Questions for Discussion

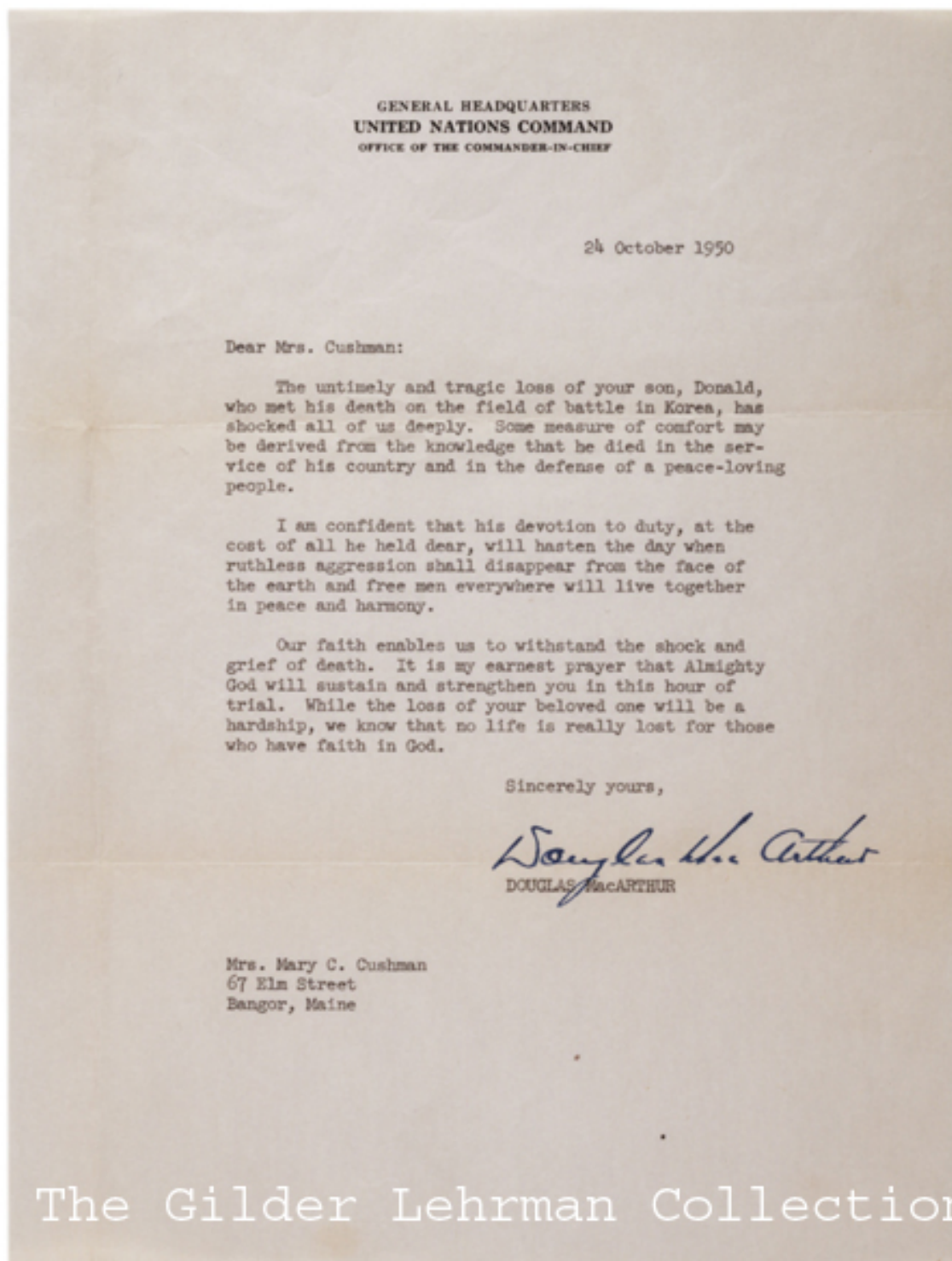
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Read the document introduction and the transcript. Then apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. How can we explain General MacArthur's decision to send this personal condolence letter to Mrs. Cushman?
2. Explain why MacArthur's letterhead indicated he was the Commander-in-Chief of the United Nations Command.
3. How does the letter support the US foreign policy at the time of "containment"?

## Condolence letter from General MacArthur, 1950

Image



Douglas MacArthur to Mary Cushman, October 24, 1950. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC05508.173)

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### Transcript

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Douglas MacArthur to Mary Cushman, October 24, 1950. (Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC05508.173)

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS  
UNITED NATIONS COMMAND  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

24 October 1950

Dear Mrs. Cushman:

The untimely and tragic loss of your son, Donald, who met his death on the field of battle in Korea, has shocked all of us deeply. Some measure of comfort may be derived from the knowledge that he died in the service of his country and in the defense of a peace-loving people.

I am confident that his devotion to duty, at the cost of all he held dear, will hasten the day when ruthless aggression shall disappear from the face of the earth and free men everywhere will live together in peace and harmony.

Our faith enables us to withstand the shock and grief of death. It is my earnest prayer that Almighty God will sustain and strengthen you in this hour of trial. While the loss of your beloved one will be a hardship, we know that no life is really lost for those who have faith in God.

Sincerely yours,

Douglas Mac Arthur

DOUGLAS MacARTHUR