

Alfred, Lord Tennyson wrote this poem about the Battle of Balaclava, fought on October 25, 1854, during the Crimean War. In the battle, a group of 600 British men on horseback (the Light Brigade) made a charge against a larger and more heavily armed Russian army. Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Half a league,¹ half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
5 'Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

'Forward, the Light Brigade!'
10 Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
15 Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
20 Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
25 Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres² bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,

¹ *league* — the equivalent of three miles

² *sabre* — a type of sword

30 Charging an army, while
 All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack³ and Russian
35 Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
 Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
 Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
40 Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
 Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
45 They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

50 When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
 All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
55 Noble six hundred!

—*Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

³ *Cossack* — people from southern Ukraine and parts of Asia famous as cavalry soldiers