

# Gustave eiffel essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

An engineer by training, Gustave Eiffel designed some of the finest and most recognized structures in the world today. Specializing in metal structural work, Eiffels accomplishments range from the Nice observatory to the Statue of Liberty. His brilliant career was marred only by the fraudulent charges brought on during the construction of the Panama Canal.

Gustave Eiffel was born in Dijon, France in 1832. He graduated from the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures in 1855, the same year that Paris hosted the first Worlds Fair. He spent several years in the southwest of France, where he supervised work on the great railway bridge in Bordeaux. In 1864 he set up his own business, specializing in metal structural work.

Eiffel built hundreds of metal structures around the world. Bridges, and in particular railway bridges, were his favorite fields of work. He also won renown for his industrial installations. His career was marked by a large number of fine buildings. Two of the most outstanding are the twin edifices of the Porto Viaduct, and the Garabit Viaduct in the Cantal region of France. Equally outstanding are certain other structures in which the pure inventiveness of Eiffels company was allowed free rein. Some examples are the portable bridges that were sold around the world, and the ingenious structure of the Statue of Liberty. The best example is the Eiffel Tower itself, which he built for the 1889 Worlds Fair.

In 1878 Gustave Eiffel agreed to build the locks of the Panama Canal, an immense undertaking poorly managed by Ferdinand De Lesseps. It was the biggest contract in his entire career, and also the one with the greatest risk. Given the risk he faced, he was granted major financial advantages and solid

guarantees. Despite the care that Eiffel took in the project, the liquidation of the canal construction company, Compagnie du Canal, on February 4, 1889, led to his own indictment for fraud. Eiffel was sentenced to two years in prison and a fine of 2000 francs, even though nothing could be blamed on him personally. The ruling was later annulled by the highest court of appeals, the Cour de Cassation, liberating him of all obligations concerning the accusations. Still, with his honor and dignity severely compromised, he withdrew from business.

In retirement, following the Panama Canal scandal, Eiffel devoted the final thirty years of his life to a fruitful career in science. First, he set himself to finding a practical application for the Eiffel Tower, which had only been built to stand for twenty years. He employed it in wind resistance experiments, and as a meteorological observation post. Eiffel collected meteorological data at posts installed in various spots on the Tower. He also pursued his research into aerodynamics, building a wind tunnel at the foot of the Tower. Above all, Eiffel employed the Tower as a giant aerial mast for the new science of radio broadcasting. He approached the military with a proposal to make the Tower into a long-distance radio antenna. In 1903 a radio connection was made with military bases around France, and in 1906 a permanent radio station was installed. Eiffel heard the first European public radio broadcast in 1921.

Gustave Eiffel has graced the world with his fine metal work. Even today his structures stand as a reminder of one of the greatest structural minds of the late 19th century.

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