

Name:

Date:

Class/Block:

World War II DBQ

Directions

Read the following sources and answer the accompanying questions. Once completed, use the sources to answer the following two questions:

- What caused the outbreak of WWII in 1939?
- Which response to aggression is more effective: appeasement or collective security?

You must cite at least three of the sources in your final response.

Historical Context

The 1920s began with a favorable outlook for peace. However, toward the end of the decade and throughout the 1930s, the clouds of war were forming. Dictators rose to power in countries that were dissatisfied with the results of World War I and its far reaching consequences. Germany, Italy, and Japan took aggressive actions. Neither the League of Nations nor the democratic nations of Europe and the Americas were able or willing to stop them. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain suggested that a policy of appeasement was the best way to deal with the aggression of Adolf Hitler. The debate over the causes of World War II provides different perspectives.

Document 1

This excerpt from Hitler’s, “Mein Kampf (My Struggle)” explains some of the central tenets of Hitler’s plans for Germany and the world.

“One blood demands one Reich. Never will the German nation have the moral right to enter into colonial politics until, at least, it includes its own sons within a single state.... Oppressed territories are led back to the bosom of a common Reich, not by flaming protests, but by a mighty sword.”

- Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, 1925-1926

1. What did Hitler believe was needed for people of German ancestry? How would they accomplish this? How could this lead to war?

Document 2

In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. The Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, asked the League of Nations for help in stopping the invasion. At the end of his speech he warned:

“God and history will remember your judgment. ... It is us today. It will be you tomorrow. What answer shall I take back to my people?”

- Emperor Haile Selassie, *The Lion’s Roar*, 1935

1. According to Haile Selassie, what will happen to the rest of the world if they do not act to stop the aggression of fascists?

Document 3

Hitler promised to void the Treaty of Versailles. One of the conditions of the treaty, forbid Germany from entering the region known as the Rhineland, the buffer zone that had been created between Germany and France. These excerpts from the New York Times explain the French and German perspectives of this act.

HITLER SENDS GERMAN TROOPS INTO RHINELAND

“Berlin, March 7-Germany today cast off the last shackles fastened upon her by the Treaty of Versailles when Adolf Hitler, as commander-in-chief of the Reich defense forces, sent his new battalions into the Rhineland's demilitarized zone.... ‘After three years of ceaseless battle,’ Hitler concluded, ‘I look upon this day as marking the close of the struggle for German equality status and with that re-won equality the path is now clear for Germany's return to European collective cooperation.’ ”

PARIS APPEALS TO LEAGUE

“Paris, March 7-France has laid Germany's latest treaty violation before the Council of the League of Nations. At the same time the French Government made it quite clear that there could be no negotiation with Germany ... as long as a single German soldier remained in the Rhineland in contravention [violation] of Germany's signed undertakings [agreements].... What is essential, in the French view, is that the German government must be compelled by diplomatic pressure first, and by stronger pressure if need be, to withdraw from the Rhineland.”

- The New York Times, March 8, 1936

1. What did Hitler do in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles? How did he justify these actions?

2. What was France's reaction? How could this lead to war?

Document 4

Germany ramped up their aggressive behavior in 1938. The leaders of Britain, France, and Italy met with Hitler to discuss his demands for the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia.

“It took the Big Four just five hours and twenty-five minutes here in Munich today to dispel the clouds of war and come to an agreement over the partition of Czechoslovakia. There is to be no European war ... the price of that peace is ... the ceding by Czechoslovakia of the Sudeten territory to Herr Hitler's Germany. The German Fuhrer gets what he wanted.... His waiting ten short days has saved Europe from a world war ... most of the peoples of Europe are happy that they won't have to go marching off to war Probably only the Czechs ... are not too happy. But there seems very little that they can do about it in face of all the might and power represented here.”

- William Shirer, CBS Radio Broadcast, 1938

1. What happened at the conference in Munich according to Shirer? What did he think was the reaction of Czechoslovakia vs. the rest of Europe?

Document 5

British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain gave a speech to Parliament in 1938 addressing the need to appease Hitler in order to prevent war.

With a little good will and determination, it is possible to remove grievances and clear away suspicion.... We must try to bring these four nations into friendly discussion. If they can settle their differences, we shall save the peace of Europe for a generation. And, in The Times [London]: I shall not give up the hope of a peaceful solution.... We sympathize with a small nation faced by a big and powerful neighbor. But we cannot involve the whole British Empire in war simply on her account. If we have to fight, it must be on larger issues than that.... I am a man of peace.... Yet if I were sure that any nation had made up its

mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.... But war is a fearful thing.

- Neville Chamberlain, 1938

1. Why did Chamberlain suggest appeasement?

2. What did Chamberlain say would need to happen in order for England to go to war?

Document 6

Winston Churchill disagreed with Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. In a speech he gave to Parliament in 1938, Churchill warns England against appeasement.

"I have always held the view that keeping peace depends on holding back the aggressor. After Hitler's seizure of Austria in March, I appealed to the government. I asked that Britain, together with France and other powers, guarantee the security of Czechoslovakia. If that course had been followed, events would not have fallen into this disastrous state ... (I)n time, Czechoslovakia will be swallowed by the Nazi regime... I think of all the opportunities to stop the growth of Nazi power which have been thrown away. The responsibility must rest with those who have control of our political affairs. They neither prevented Germany from rearming, nor did they rearm us in time. They weakened the League of Nations.... Thus they left us in the hour of trial without a strong national defense or system of international security."

- Winston Churchill, 1938

1. What strategy did Churchill suggest for keeping peace while stopping the growth of Nazi power?

-
-
-
-
2. In his opinion, what opportunities had been lost in the quest for peace? Who was to blame for these missed opportunities?

Document 7

This excerpt discusses the Munich Agreement.

“The Munich Agreement was a ... desperate act of appeasement at the cost of the Czechoslovak state, performed by Chamberlain and French premier, Daladier, in the vain hope that it would satisfy Hitler's stormy ambition, and thus secure for Europe a peaceful future. We know today that it was unnecessary ... because the Czech defenses were very strong ... and because the German generals, conscious of Germany's relative weakness at that moment, were actually prepared to attempt to remove Hitler ... had he continued to move toward war.”

- George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, Atlantic Little Brown, 1961

1. What are the two main reasons Kennan felt the Munich Agreement was unnecessary?

Document 8

In this excerpt, British historian A.J.P. Taylor presents another point of view on appeasement.

“Can any sane man suppose ... that other countries could have intervened by armed force in 1933 to overthrow Hitler when he had come to power by constitutional means and was apparently supported by a large majority of the German people? The Germans put Hitler in power; they were the only ones who could turn him out. Also the " appeasers" feared that the defeat of Germany would be followed by a Russian domination over much of Europe.”

- A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, Atheneum, 1965

1. What were two reasons used to explain why appeasement was logical at that time?

Document 9

In this excerpt, the author argues that the discussion about stopping Hitler prior to 1939 was not an issue, for several reasons.

“[N]either the people nor the government of [Britain and France] were conditioned to the idea of war Before September 1, 1939, Hitler had done nothing that any major power considered dangerous enough to warrant precipitating [starting] a major European war. Nor was there any existing coalition that could have opposed Hitler's massive forces. For Britain sought to appease Hitler [and] the French feared a repetition of the bloody sacrifices of 1914-1918. Stalin wanted an agreement with Hitler on partitioning Europe and the United States rejected all responsibility for Europe.”

- Keith Eubank, *Origins of World War II*, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1969

1. What evidence did this historian give for his belief that Hitler would not have been stopped prior to 1939?

Final Response

- What caused the outbreak of WWII in 1939?

