Conflict in Europe
1935-1945
Option B: Conflict in Europe 1935–1945

Principal focus: Students investigate key features and issues in the history of the conflict in Europe 1935–1945.

Key features and issues:
- causes of the conflict
- aims and strategies of the Allied and Axis powers
- turning points of the war
- impact of war on civilians
- origins, nature and impact of the Holocaust
- reasons for the Allied victory

Students learn about:

1  Growth of European tensions
   - dictatorships in Germany and Italy
   - the League of Nations and collapse of collective security: Abyssinia, the
     Spanish Civil War
   - Britain, France and the policy of appeasement: an assessment
   - significance of the Nazi–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact

2  Course of the European war
   - German advances: the fall of Poland, the Low Countries and France
   - the air war and its effects: The Battle of Britain and the Blitz, the bombing of
     Germany
   - Operation Barbarossa, the Battle of Stalingrad and the significance of the
     Russian campaign*
   - Battle of El Alamein and the significance of the conflict in North Africa to the
     European War

3  Civilians at war
   - social and economic effects of the war on civilians in Britain and EITHER
     Germany OR the Soviet Union
   - Nazi racial policies: the Holocaust and the persecution of minorities

4  End of the conflict
   - ‘D’ Day and the liberation of France
   - Russian counter offensives 1944
   - final defeat 1944–1945
   - Nuremberg War Crimes trials
Introduction

During this unit you will use this booklet to make notes on the topics covered in class each week. You may sometimes get the opportunity to work on this in class, but you will also need to do some as homework.

To make studying for examinations easier, you should keep your notes organised under headings and sub headings.

Readings

Principal text


The College Library has numerous texts on the Second World War in Europe. Titles you might find useful to extend your knowledge on specific aspects of the course include:

General histories and reference volumes on the war


Marvin Perry, World War II in Europe, Cengage Learning, Boston, 2013.

Causes of the Second World War


Specific campaigns and battles

See the Osprey series for titles on campaigns such as Stalingrad, Kursk and D-Day, and for overviews of particular theatres such as the Mediterranean and North Africa.
**Nazi Racial Policy and the Holocaust**


**Home fronts- Britain and Nazi Germany OR the USSR**


**Films**

The British documentary series ‘The World at War’ is an older production (1970s) but provides a sound overview of the conflict that will help you to comprehend the course of the war: it’s major campaigns, themes and personalities. All 24 episodes are on the College’s library server V-Library to download and view. Particularly relevant episodes include:

3. France falls (May-June 1940)
4. Alone (May 1940- May 1941)
5. Barbarossa (June-December 1941)
8. The Desert: North Africa (1940-43)
9. Stalingrad (June 1942-February 1943)
12. Whirlwind: Bombing Germany (September 1939-April 1944)
16. Inside the Reich: Germany (1940-44)
17. Morning (June-August 1944)
19. Pincers (August 1944-March 1945)
20. Genocide (1941-45)

Additional readings will be put in the course folder on the server for those students interested in extending their knowledge beyond the text book.
Course Structure

1. GROWTH OF EUROPEAN TENSIONS

Dictatorships in Germany and Italy

Germany

1. How did Hitler come to take power in Germany in 1933? (p. 5)
2. Explain the meaning of Lebensarum.
3. How did Nazi ideology view race?
4. What were the goals of foreign policy? How were these related to Nazi ideology? (Create a table, diagram or write a paragraph)
5. Complete Exercise 1.2. With each event write a 1-2 sentence summary.

Italy

6. Summarise how Mussolini came to power. Note any similarities with Hitler’s rise to power.
7. Summarise Italian foreign policy goals. Note similarities and differences with Nazi foreign policy.
8. Complete Exercise 1.3.
9. Summarise the views of THREE historians who have written about the German and Italian dictatorships (pp. 16-17)

The League of Nations and the collapse of collective security

1. Complete the table (Exercise 2.1 p. 22)
2. Write a mini-essay explaining weaknesses in the League (p. 21)
3. How did the idea of ‘Collective Security’ collapse? Create notes on the following events. Include a summary of what happened, why the League failed to intervene and the interpretation of at least one scholar.

   i. Japanese invasion of Manchuria 1931-1933
   ii. Italian invasion of Abyssinia 1935-1936
   iii. The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939
Britain, France and the policy of appeasement: an assessment

Read Webb pp. 29-38 and make notes under the following subheadings:

1. Background and origins to appeasement
2. Appeasement in action
3. Factors behind the policy of appeasement (summarise the diagram)
4. The Czechoslovak Conference
5. The End of Appeasement
6. The Historians’ views (summarise different opinions on appeasement)
   i. Cato
   ii. Churchill
   iii. Taylor
   iv. Charmley

Nazi-Soviet non aggression pact 1939: significance

Read Webb p. 40-43 and make notes under the following subheadings:

1. Background to Soviet Foreign Policy
2. Foreign Policy in the 1930s
3. Why Hitler and Stalin signed a non aggression pact (summarise the diagram into two paragraphs, eg- Hitler signed because… and Stalin signed because…)
4. The historians’ views on the Nazi-Soviet non aggression pact
   i. Bell
   ii. Evans
   iii. McCauley

Historical interpretations on the origins of World War II

Read Webb pp. 45-49. Summarise the seven different interpretations about the beginning of the Second World War.

You could use a diagram to present your information (Prezi) or a table if you like.

Extension:

1. If you would like more detail on this section of the syllabus read the document ‘Causes of WW2’ in the ‘Additional Readings’ file of the class folder.
Revision: Syllabus Section 1

2. Vocabulary exercise- define the following terms as they applied to the growth of European tensions before the Second World War.

- Lebensraum
- Autarky
- Grossdeutschland
- Guernica
- Anschluss
- Appeasement

3. Select an essay question from the list of past-HSC questions and write a 1,000 word response to submit to your teacher.
2. COURSE OF THE EUROPEAN WAR

German advances: the fall of Poland, the Low Countries and France

1. Define the term blitzkrieg and outline its distinguishing features.
2. Create notes on the following campaigns. Identify key personalities, the strengths and weaknesses of the opposing sides, the major events of the campaign and the results.
   a. Poland (September 1940)
   b. Denmark and Norway (April 1940)
   c. The Low Countries- Holland and Belgium (May 1940)
   d. France (June 1940)
3. Identify and summarise the views of TWO historians whose interpretations might be useful to you in an essay that deals with the 1940 campaigns.
4. Write a mini-essay responding to the following question: ‘Why were the Germans so successful on the continent in 1940?’ Try to identify at least 2-3 key points and expand on these.

Allied and German Strategy

1. What advantages did Britain have in 1940-41? In what ways was its strategic situation not as bleak as it might have appeared at that time?
2. What shortcomings did the German Wehrmacht have that its victories in Poland and Western Europe obscured at the time?
3. Explain Hitler’s strategy at the beginning of the war and how this changed in 1940.

The air war and its effects: The Battle of Britain and the Blitz
Read Webb pp.69-72 and make notes on the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.

1. Create an annotated timeline of the major events in the Battle of Britain.
2. Summarise the reasons behind the RAF’s success.
3. Why might historians consider British success in June-September 1940 as a ‘turning point’ in the war? What significance did the British victory have?
4. Identify and record four key facts about the Blitz.

The bombing of Germany
Read Webb pp. 73-76 and
1. Make a annotated timeline on the bombing of Germany between May 1940 and April 1945.
2. Summarise the views that the following historians have on the effectiveness of the air war
   i. Richards
   ii. Taylor
   iii. Overy (*The battle* - his book on the Battle of Britain)
   iv. Liddell Hart
   v. Overy (*Why the allies won* - his work on the bombing of Germany)
The North African Campaign: the Battle of El Alamein

Read Webb, p. 89-95 and
1. Complete the questions from p. 95 (Exercise 9.1: make these into notes)
2. Summarise the views of the following historians on the significance of the North African Campaign:
   i. Thompson
   ii. Shirer
   iii. Knowles

Operation Barbarossa, Stalingrad and the Russian Campaign

Read Webb, pp. 77-80 and make notes on
1. Background to Barbarossa
2. The attack (create an annotated timeline of the campaign)
3. Why did Operation Barbarossa fail?
4. The views of the following historians on the significance of Operation Barbarossa
   i. Christian
   ii. Bullock
   iii. Kershaw

5. Read Webb pp. 82-84 and make notes on the Battle of Stalingrad and its significance.

6. Read Webb pp. 85-87 and make notes on the historical significance of the Russian campaign and the views of the following historians:
   i. Overy
   ii. Liddell Hart

7. Complete Exercise 8.2 (p. 86)

8. Even though the syllabus does not specifically mention the battle of Kursk (July-August 1943) it is a very important battle on the Eastern Front and should be included. There is a reading in your Additional Readings folder that you should read and create some summary notes from.
   a. When did the battle occur? What were its principal stages?
   b. Key commanders on both sides
   c. Size and composition of forces – who had the advantage?
   d. Its outcome
   e. Its significance
   f. If you can find any: a historiographical perspective or two

Review: Syllabus section 2

1. Definitions:
   - Area bombing
   - Blitzkrieg
- Chain Home
- logistics
- Luftwaffe
- Strategic bombing
- Scorched earth

2. Create a table of key battles during the first half of the war.
3. Select an essay question from a past paper on the course of the war and compose a 1000 word response.

3. CIVILIANS AT WAR

Social and economic effects of the war in Britain
Read Webb pp. 101-110 and make notes under the relevant subheadings in the text. Also, summarise the views of Cole & Postgate, Marwick and Jenkins.

AND

Social and economic effects of the war in Germany
Read Webb pp. 111-117 and make notes under the relevant subheadings in the text. Also, summarise the views of Overy, Broszat and Burleigh.

OR

Social and economic effects of the war in the USSR
Read Webb pp. 119-124 and make notes under the relevant subheadings in the text. Also summarise the views of Deutscher, Carrere D’Encausse and Overy.

Extension: View episodes 11 or 16 of the World at War: ‘Red Star’ (USSR home front) and ‘Inside the Reich’ (German home front) and add to your notes.

Nazi racial policies: the holocaust and the persecution of minorities

1. Explain Nazi thinking on the issue of race (pp. 125-26)
2. Create an annotated timeline of the Nazi anti-Semitic policy (pp. 127-130)
3. Read ‘The persecution of the minorities’ and complete Exercise 13.2
4. Create a table comparing and contrasting the views of ‘internationalists’ and ‘structuralists’.

Review: Syllabus Section 3
1. Definitions
   • Anti-Semitism
   • Total war
   • The Final Solution

2. Select an essay question on civilians at war from the past-HSC questions and compose a 1000 word response to it.

4. END OF THE CONFLICT

‘D’ Day and the liberation of France

1.

**Russian counter offensives 1944 and final defeat 1944-1945**

1. Complete the table in Exercise 15.1. Write a paragraph description of each of the events listed.

2. Summarise
   a. Operation Market Garden
   b. The Battle of the Bulge (Ardennes campaign)

3. On a map of Germany follow and label key events in:
   a. The war in the west January-May 1945
   b. The war in the east January-May 1945

Read Webb pp. 159-163 and make notes on the five historical interpretations about the reasons for Allied victory.

**Nuremberg War Crimes trials**

1. Examine the table on p. 156 of Nazis accused of war crimes. Write a paragraph describing their positions and their sentence/fate, as a group.

2. Summarise the interpretations of John Toland and John Mann.

**Review: Syllabus Section 4**

1. Select a past HSC examination question from the End of the Conflict and compose a 1000 word question on it.
Past HSC Examination Questions

The ‘International studies in peace and conflict’ section of the HSC examination is structured similarly to the ‘National studies’ section.

You will be presented with a choice of two extended response questions. You must attempt ONE. It is worth 25 marks.

Questions are based on the four syllabus areas and draw on the key features (see syllabus outline at the beginning of this study guide):

1. Growth of European tensions
2. Course of the European war
3. Civilians at war
4. End of the conflict

2016
(a) To what extent were the dictatorships in Germany and Italy responsible for the growth of European tensions?
OR
(b) Assess the significance of the Battle of El Alamein as a turning point in the European conflict.

2015
(a) Appeasement was a tactic used to delay war rather than a policy to achieve a lasting peace. How accurate is this statement?
OR
(b) To what extent was the impact of the war on civilians in Great Britain equal to its impact on civilians in EITHER Germany OR the Soviet Union?

2014
(a) How significant was the war in the air in shaping the course of the European war?
OR
(b) Assess the role of the 1944 Russian counter-offensives in bringing about the end of the conflict in Europe.

2013
(a) Without the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact there would have been no war in Europe. To what extent is this statement accurate?
OR
(b) To what extent did the aims and strategies of the Axis powers shape the course of the European war?

2012
(a) Why was Germany so successful in the European war up to the start of Operation Barbarossa?
OR
(b) Assess the social and economic effects of the war on civilians in Britain and EITHER Germany OR the Soviet Union.

2011 HSC
(a) Assess the effectiveness of the League of Nations to the maintenance of peace in Europe to 1939.
OR
(b) Evaluate the significance of D-Day and the liberation of France in the bringing about an end of the conflict in Europe by 1945.

2010 HSC
(a) How significant were the Battle of Stalingrad and the Russian campaign in leading to the Allied victory in the European war?
OR
(b) Assess the impact of Nazi racial policies on civilians during the European war.

2009 HSC
(a) To what extent was the policy of appeasement responsible for the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939?
OR
(b) Assess the significance of the conflict in North Africa to Allied Victory in the European War.

2008 HSC
(a) Evaluate the view that the air war determined the outcome of the European War.
OR
(b) Assess the significance of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact to the outbreak of war in 1939.

2007 HSC
(a) Evaluate the view that Operation Barbarossa was the major turning point of the European war.
OR
(b) To what extent did Allied and Axis strategies during World War II affect civilians?

2006 HSC
(a) Evaluate the view that the dictators Hitler and Mussolini were primarily responsible for the tensions that led to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939.
OR
(b) To what extent was the Soviet Union (Russia) responsible for the Allied victory in the conflict in Europe?

Note: The option “Conflict in Europe 1935-1945” was not part of the HSC course before 2006.