

Position 6 (Set 3)

Analysis: History - WWII

Position: Thesis

The thesis of this paper scores a 6 because it is clear, defensible, comprehensive, and focused. That being said, it lacks the nuance of a 7. The thesis states: “Therefore, the failure of the League of Nations was the primary cause of World War II because it led to a series of events that triggered German aggression, ultimately causing World War II.” A thesis that scored a 7 would introduce an idea that had not been presented in class.

Essay: History - WWII

Prompt: What was the primary cause of WWII?

In the years following the Great War, international relations were tense and the world began to feel increasingly different. To ensure that nothing as terrible as World War I ever happened again, the Allied Powers created the Treaty of Versailles and then the League of Nations in order to maintain peace. However, these did not work well, and this in conjunction with the Great Depression caused Germany to become an aggressor. Appeasement in Europe allowed it to continue until finally, Germany’s behavior could no longer be tolerated. Therefore, the failure of the League of Nations was the primary cause of World War II because it led to a series of events that triggered German aggression, ultimately causing World War II.

In 1919, the victors of World War I came together to form the Treaty of Versailles, a precursor to the League of Nations. This treaty outlined the details of how war damage was to be addressed, and what should happen in order to prevent future warring. The treaty stated that Germany, the primary scapegoat and aggressor of the war, was to, “Accept complete responsibility for initiating World War I” (Doc 2). This implied a limit on the German military, occupation of German land, and most embarrassingly, reparations. Although Germany had much reason to disobey the Treaty, it agreed to the treaty’s rules. Out of the Treaty came the League of Nations, which was intended to be an international policer and peacekeeper. Its power in conjunction with the

Treaty's seemed promising, and the future looked bright. However, the League took a drastic turn of events and spiraled into a trail of mistakes that ultimately caused World War II.

The League of Nations first failed because of a weak coalition of support. Multiple major world powers were not a part of the League of Nations: "Germany wasn't allowed to join the League, ...Russia was also excluded, ...[and] the US had adopted a policy of isolation from European affairs" (Doc 2). In essence, the League of Nations never actually was a league of nations. It was missing three of the most powerful countries in the world! Regardless, with the few nations it had, it was too weak to do anything. Because, "The constitution of The League didn't ask for nations to provide an army for a military force" (2), it had no capability to defend peace. Seeing this, Germany started aggressing in 1935. It disobeyed the Treaty of Versailles, which was now invalid because of the failure of its keeper, the League of Nations. Simultaneously, the Great Depression also occurred, which angered Germany and encouraged them even more to rebel. Throughout Germany's aggression, European countries continued to allow Germany to aggress, until in 1939, Great Britain and France ended their appeasement and declared war on Germany. In the end, this all contributed to the reason why Germany aggressed – because they could. Without the enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles by the League of Nations, Germany aggressed until it could not be taken anymore. World War II had begun.

Although the failure of the League of Nations was the firestarter of the German aggression that caused WWII, some have claimed that the Great Depression was the primary cause of World War II. This faulty line of thinking followed that, "Depression caused political unrest in Germany, leading the German people to become desperate and willing to listen to anyone" (Doc 3). The loose argument was that this political unrest allowed for Adolf Hitler to become Chancellor and then wreck havoc on the planet. However, it is less likely that the link could be made between the Depression and Hitler's rise to power than the League and the war because Hitler's followers consisted of "upper middle class socialites" (Doc 3), who were far from feeling the Great Depression's effects.

Ultimately, the League of Nations fell short of succeeding its goal of world peace. This caused the domino effect of the Treaty of Versailles failure, German aggression, appeasement, and intolerance that caused World War II. Because the League of Nations failed, a slew of problems were instigated, and World War II came about.