Historical context:

Even though the 1920s began with a favorable outlook for peace, toward the end of the decade and throughout the 1930s the clouds of war were forming. Dictators arose in countries that were dissatisfied with the results of World War I. Germany, Italy, and Japan took aggressive actions, and neither the League of Nations nor the democratic countries were able or willing to stop them. British Prime Minister Chamberlain suggested the best way to deal with Hitler was a policy of appeasement. Actions were taken that moved Europe toward war. The debate over the causes of World War II provides different perspectives.

Directions: Analyze the documents and answer the short answer questions that follow each document in the space provided.

Document 1

In this excerpt from Mein Kampf, Adolf Hitler explains some of his ideas.

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.

1. What is a “Reich”?
2. What does Hitler suggest the Germans need?
3. How does this connect to WWI and the Treaty of Versailles?
4. Do you think, if the German people wanted to unite their nations, they should be able to do that? Why or why not? Use evidence from the Treaty of Versailles and WWI, as well as Hitler’s statements, in your response.
Document 2

After Italy attacked Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia, asked the League of Nations for help in stopping the invasion. He asked for military sanctions but the League of Nations' response was ineffective. Haile Selassie used these words to the League of Nations:

> God and history will remember your judgement. . . . It is us today. It will be you tomorrow.

5. Think about the impact of WWI and its impact on the world. If you were a member of the League of Nations, would you want to step in to help the Ethiopians? Why or why not? Use at least three historical reasons to support your answer.

Document 3

Hitler promised to tear up the Versailles Treaty. Specifically, the treaty forbade German troops from entering the Rhineland, a buffer zone between Germany and France. The texts of two headlines and articles from The New York Times of March 8, 1936, explain this issue from the German and the French points of view.

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.

6. Do some research about the Rhineland. Where is it? Write your answer and draw a picture to represent what it is and where it is. Seriously, draw a basic map out of boxes or something.
7. What did Hitler do that violated the Treaty of Versailles?

8. How did the French feel about it?

9. Should the League of Nations have enforced the Treaty of Versailles at this point? Provide at least two reasons why they should have and at least one reason why they should not have done so.

**Document 4**

As German aggression continued in 1938, Britain, France, and Italy met with Hitler to discuss his demands for the Sudetenland, a section of Czechoslovakia. This radio broadcast by William Shirer describes what happened at this meeting.

*William Shirer:* 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.

10. Do a little more research and draw another picture. Where was the Sudetenland? Why did Hitler believe he should have it? You can find a bit about this in your textbook (p. 772). Draw a picture representing this location.

11. Who were the “Big Four” meeting at the Munich Conference? (Do some research. Who were the people? Where were they from? What were their job titles? One of them was the father of a future U.S. President…)

12. What was decided at this conference?

13. Knowing what you know about WW2 already, was this a wise decision?

14. Look up the definition of “appeasement.” Then, try to imagine the thoughts of these four diplomats. What are some reasons why they felt appeasement was a better option?
Document 5

In this speech to Parliament, British Primer Minister Neville Chamberlain explains why he favored a policy of appeasement in dealing with Hitler at Munich in 1938.

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.

15. Based on this quote, do you think Chamberlain believed his decision for appeasement was a good decision? Why or why not? (Use evidence from his speech.)

Document 6

Winston Churchill disagreed with Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. In this speech to Parliament, Churchill warned England about following a policy of 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. . . . in 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.

16. Do you think Churchill believed Appeasement was a good idea? Why or why not? Use evidence from his speech to support your opinion.

17. Do you think appeasement was a good idea? Why or why not? Use evidence from Chamberlain and Churchill’s speeches to support your opinion.
Document 7

In this excerpt from *Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin*, George F. Kennan offers another critical view of the Munich Agreement (Boston: Atlantic Little Brown, 1961).

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 is 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.

18. What were two reasons Kennan felt the Munich Agreement was unnecessary?

Document 8

In this excerpt adapted from British historian A. J. P. Taylor's *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Atheneum, 1965, p. 291), another point of view on appeasement is presented.

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.

19. Why does this Historian think appeasement was the only real option for British, French, and American leaders?

Document 9

In this excerpt by Keith Eubank from *Origins of World War II*, the author argues that stopping Hitler prior to 1939 was not an issue for several reasons.

. . . neither 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.