

Cottenham Village College

GCSE History: The Mini Textbook



Contents

| Chapter | Topic | Page |
|---|---|------|
| A. PAPER 2: Britain 1906-1918 | | |
| <i>How did life in Britain change during this time?</i> | | |
| Part 1: Helping the Poor? The Liberal Reforms (1906-1918) | | |
| 1 | What was life like for poor people in around 1900? | |
| 2 | Why did some people start to care about the poor? | |
| 3 | What did some people start to do to help the poor? | |
| 4 | Why did the government start to do something to help the poor? | |
| 5 | What did the government do to help the poor? | |
| 6 | How successfully did the government help the poor? | |
| Part 2: Votes for Women (1906-1918) | | |
| 7 | What was life like for women in around 1900? | |
| 8 | Why did many people think women should <i>not</i> be allowed to vote? | |
| 9 | Why did some people think women <i>should</i> be allowed to vote? | |
| 10 | What were the groups who wanted women to vote? | |
| 11 | What methods did people use to try and get the vote? | |
| 12 | What did women do during the war? | |
| 13 | How successful were the groups who tried to get the vote for women? | |
| 14 | Why did some women get the vote in 1918? | |
| Part 3: Life in Britain during World War One (1914-1918) | | |
| 15 | What was Britain like before 1914? | |
| 16 | How did the war affect ordinary British people in Britain? | |
| 17 | How did the government try to control the country during the war? | |
| 18 | What was propaganda for during the war? | |
| 19 | How effective was propaganda during the war? | |
| 20 | What did people think about the war? How did their opinions change? | |
| 21 | What did British people think at the end of the war? | |
| B. PAPER 1: International Relations 1919-1939 | | |
| <i>How did countries get on? What were the consequences of WWI? What were the causes of WWII?</i> | | |
| Part 1: Were the Peace Treaties at the end of WWI fair? | | |
| 22 | What had WWI been like? | |
| 23 | What did people want to happen at the end of WWI? | |
| 24 | What did countries agree at the end of WWI? | |
| 25 | Why did people disagree about what to do? | |
| 26 | Was Germany treated fairly? | |
| Part 2: Trying to avoid another war: How far was the League of Nations a success? | | |
| 27 | What was the League of Nations supposed to do? | |
| 28 | How was the League of Nations run? | |
| 29 | Were there any problems in how the League was set up? | |
| 30 | Why didn't the USA join? | |
| 31 | Why was it more difficult for the League without the USA in it? | |
| 32 | 1920s: What did the League do well? | |
| 33 | 1920s: What didn't go well for the League? | |
| 34 | What are the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression? | |
| 35 | What problems did the Great Depression cause? | |
| 36 | Why did Japan invade Manchuria? | |
| 37 | Why did the League fail in Manchuria? | |
| 38 | Why did Italy invade Abyssinia? | |
| 39 | Why did the League fail in Abyssinia? | |
| Part 3: What caused World War Two? | | |
| 40 | Why did the Treaty of Versailles make some Germans angry? | |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| 41 | What did Hitler want to do? | |
| 42 | What did Nazi Germany do? | |
| 43 | Why did Nazi Germany do this? | |
| 44 | What did Britain and France do? | |
| 45 | Why didn't Britain and France try to stop Hitler? | |
| 46 | How did war actually break out? | |
| 47 | How far was Hitler to blame for the war? | |
| B. PAPER 1: Germany 1918-1945 | | |
| <i>What were the consequences of the Treaty of Versailles? How far was Germany a success in the 1920s? Why did the Nazis take control? What was life like during World War Two?</i> | | |
| Part 1: Germany after World War One and Weimar Germany (1918-1929) | | |
| 48 | What was Germany like in 1918? | |
| 49 | What happened in Germany 1918-1919? | |
| 50 | What kind of government did Germany have? | |
| 51 | What did people think about the German government? | |
| 52 | Who tried to change the German government 1919-1920? | |
| 53 | Why did the German government survive 1919-1920? | |
| 54 | What problems did the German government have to deal with in 1923? | |
| 55 | How did the German government survive 1923? | |
| 56 | What was going well 1924-1929? | |
| 57 | Why were things going well 1924-1929? | |
| 58 | What wasn't going so well, 1924-1929? | |
| Part 2: Germany after the Great Depression: the rise of the Nazis (1929-1934) | | |
| 59 | How did the Wall Street Crash and Great Depression affect Germany? | |
| 60 | Why did the Nazis become more powerful 1929-1934? | |
| 61 | How did Hitler become more powerful 1933-1934? | |
| Part 3: Life in Nazi Germany (1933-1945) | | |
| 62 | What did the Nazis do 1933-1939? | |
| 63 | Who benefited from Nazi rule? | |
| 64 | Who suffered under the Nazis? | |
| 65 | Why did the Nazis persecute people? | |
| 66 | How did World War Two affect life in Germany? | |
| 67 | How popular were the Nazis 1933-1945? | |
| 68 | Who opposed the Nazis? | |
| 69 | Why did people oppose the Nazis? | |

A. PAPER 2: Britain 1906-1918

How did life in Britain change during this time?

Part 1: Helping the Poor? The Liberal Reforms (1906-1918)

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| 1 | What was life like for poor people in around 1900? | |
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- Britain in 1900 was an important country in the world. It was a rich country. People were proud to be British.
- But, Britain in 1900 was very divided between the rich and poor. People were divided into different 'classes': the working class, who did physical jobs, like factory work; the middle class, who were businessmen, lawyers, accountants, etc.; the upper class, who were extremely rich – they inherited money and land from their families.
- During the 1800s, towns and cities had grown very quickly. By 1900, a lot of poorer people worked in factories. They lived in poor-quality, terraced housing.
- Poor people were paid badly. Children often had to go out to work.
- There was no benefits system. If people were ill, they didn't get paid. If people were unemployed, they didn't get any money.
- Some charities tried to help poor people.
- Most richer people weren't interested in helping the poor – they thought that it was their own fault that they were poor.

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| 2 | Why did some people start to care about the poor? | |
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- Britain used to be the most powerful industrial nation in the world. The USA and Germany were rapidly catching up and even overtaking. Britain needed strong, healthy workers to keep up. Some politicians, like Winston Churchill, were very worried about this. **So**, people like him argued that something should be done to make poorer people healthier.
- Many poor people who tried to join the British Army during the Second Boer War (1899-1902) weren't healthy enough to join. Britain needed a strong army to help control its empire. **So**, some people argued that something should be done to make poorer people healthier.
- There was a new Labour Party around. They were socialists, which means they stood for the workers. Many richer people were worried that the Labour Party would cause a revolution, bringing poor people into power and destroying all that the rich people had worked for. **So**, the Liberal Party decided to offer to help poor people so they would vote for them instead of Labour.
- Most people in Britain in around 1900 were Christian. Some Christians, like Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree were Quakers, a particular type of Christian who believed charity was very important. These people believed that people had a responsibility to help people in need.
- Booth and Rowntree did some research. They argued that it wasn't normally poor people's fault that they were poor: they were trapped in bad jobs with no education. This persuaded some people that the government should help them, rather than just blame them.
- There were new, young, ambitious politicians around, like Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. They wanted to make a name for themselves. Some of them were also quite idealistic – they believed they could make the world a better place. Lloyd George was a friend of Rowntree's.
- Some local councils run by the Liberal Party had set up schemes to help the poor. These had worked quite well. **So**, some people wondered if they could work for the whole country.

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| 3 | What did some people do to start to help the poor? | |
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- Before the reforms, most poor people had to rely on family or charity to support them.
- The Salvation Army gave out free food to poor people.

- Charles Booth and Seebohm Rowntree interviewed poor people and did other research to find out why poor people were poor.
- Local councils run by the Liberals set up schemes to help the poor.

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| 4 | Why did the government start to do something to help the poor? |
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- See section 2.
- The Liberal government had several motives:
 - They wanted to get in power and stay in power. They promised poor people things to win their votes.
 - They wanted to keep more extreme people, like the Labour Party, out of power. So, they promised poor people things so that poor people would vote Liberal not Labour.
 - They were worried about the economy, so they decided to help the poor so they would be healthier and would work harder.
 - They were worried about the strength of the army, so they decided to help the poor so they would be healthier and make better soldiers to defend the British Empire.

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| 5 | What did the government do to help the poor? |
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- The Liberal Government made new laws to help the different groups of poor people.
- **Workers**
 - 1911 - Sick pay: workers paid part of their salary into a scheme, and if they were off ill they would be paid a little money to help them live while they were ill.
- **Unemployed**
 - 1909 - Labour Exchanges – offices were set up where the unemployed could go to look for work (like a Job Centre)
 - 1912 – temporary unemployment pay – workers who had lost their job would be paid a small amount for a few weeks, to help them while they found another job
- **Children**
 - 1908 - New laws were introduced to protect children from physical abuse
 - 1906 - Schools could provide free school meals
 - From 1907 children had free medical checks at school. Later (from 1912), they were also allowed free medical care
- **Elderly**
 - Old Age Pensions were introduced in 1908. Workers paid part of their salary into a scheme. When they retired, at 70, they were paid a small pension to live on once they were too old to work.

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| 6 | How successfully did the government help the poor? |
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Some of the reforms were more successful than others. None of the reforms was a complete success. None was a complete failure.

- **Workers**
 - GOOD: Before, workers had never had sick pay: they just weren't paid if they were ill. Some people would be ill for a very long time. They normally didn't have savings to live off. After the reforms, they did get some pay to live off.
 - GOOD: the government and bosses also paid into the sick pay scheme
 - GOOD: all workers had to join, so they were all covered
 - BAD: The workers had to pay for the sick pay out of their own wages. This made their wages even lower. Workers who weren't sick didn't like the idea that their wages were helping to pay the wages of a sick man – some said they were just skiving.
 - BAD: The sick pay was deliberately very low – the Liberals said they didn't want people to be able to live off it properly, otherwise people might just skive.
- **Unemployed**
 - GOOD: Before, unemployed people would have to wander the streets going from business to business trying to find work. This could take days. With Labour Exchanges, they could go to one place to look at all the jobs available.
 - GOOD: the government and bosses also paid into the unemployment pay scheme
 - BAD: There weren't any guaranteed jobs.
 - BAD: Even if you got a job, the wages were low.

- BAD: You could be sacked very easily.
- BAD: Jobs were often only short-term.
- BAD: the unemployment pay only lasted for up to 15 weeks a year. Not all jobs were covered.
- **Children**
 - GOOD: Many children did get free meals.
 - GOOD: Many children were better fed at school than at home. Statistics show that many children were healthier during term time.
 - BAD: Local councils didn't have to provide free meals in schools.
 - BAD: Children were often still poorly fed at home. Therefore, they were less healthy during the school holidays.
 - BAD: Until 1912, they only had free medical check-ups – they still had to pay for treatment.
- **Elderly**
 - GOOD: Before, elderly people had to rely on family and charity. Poor elderly people probably didn't have any savings. After the old age pensions were introduced, elderly people would get paid even after they retired.
 - BAD: Like sick pay, workers paid part of their salary into a scheme.
 - BAD: You only got the pension when you were 70. Many workers were too weak to work long before then. Many were dead before then.
 - BAD: The pension was small, and smaller than their previous wages.
 - BAD: If you didn't pay in, you didn't get a pension. So, the unemployed didn't get pensions and the poorest workers couldn't afford to pay in.

| Part 2: Votes for Women (1906-1918) | | |
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| 7 | What was life like for women in around 1900? | |

- Women in 1900 could not be lawyers, politicians, bankers, accountants.
- Women could not vote.
- Most people thought women were not up to thinking about business and politics.
- Hardly any women were doctors.
- Women could be nurses, teachers, servants, maids, etc.
- Women couldn't get university degrees.
- Girls were taught different things at school from boys.
- Women had very traditional lives. The wealthiest women had servants. Middle class and lower middle class women would do domestic tasks. Working class women would often have had to work. Their work would be less well paid, less frequent and less reliable than men's work.
- Most women agreed with women having this kind of role.

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| 8 | Why did many people think women should <i>not</i> be allowed to vote? | |
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- Most people thought that men and women had different roles to play: women's minds were not up to thinking about politics and how the world worked.
- Most people thought that women would change their minds too much and not make good decisions.

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| 9 | Why did some people think women <i>should</i> be allowed to vote? | |
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- A small number of people believed that women were being treated unfairly. They believed that women were just as capable of men.
- They said that many women already did responsible jobs, like nurses and teachers. This showed that women were reliable and capable of making difficult decisions.
- Not all women had husbands. Without the vote, women would have no say in how the country was run.
- Only men could vote and be politicians, therefore the country was run to help men. Women needed the vote so they could make the government do things to help women.

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| 10 | What were the groups who wanted women to vote? | |
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- There were two groups who wanted women to have the vote, called the Suffragists and the Suffragettes ("suffrage" means the right to vote).
- The Suffragists came first. They had been around since the middle of the 1800s. They were peaceful. They wanted to *persuade* the government to give women the right to vote.

- The Suffragists came later. They were violent: they were frustrated that the Suffragists hadn't achieved anything. They wanted to *force* the government to give women the right to vote.

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| 11 | What methods did people use to try and get the vote? | |
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- The Suffragists and Suffragettes often used different methods.
- The Suffragists were peaceful. They did things like:
 - Marching
 - Writing letters to politicians
 - Petitions (getting lots of signatures of people who agree with you, and giving them to the government)
- The Suffragettes were noisy and violent. They did things like:
 - Chaining themselves to railings.
 - Interrupting public meetings.
 - Hunger-strikes in prison
 - Disrupting trials
 - Throwing bricks through windows
 - Arson: fire-bombing buildings
 - Propaganda
 - Refusing to pay tax
 - Attacking works of art in galleries
 - Marches and demonstrations (noisy marches!)

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| 12 | What did women do during the war? | |
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- Some Suffragists did not agree with the war. They carried on campaigning for the vote.
- The Suffragettes stopped campaigning for the vote. They thought winning the war was more important at this time. Suffragettes gave white feathers to men who weren't fighting, to say that they were cowards. (Except Sylvia Pankhurst – she was anti-war).
- Some jobs women had already done became even more important: e.g. nursing the wounded soldiers.
- Women took on men's jobs, because men were off fighting, such as:
 - Farming: they joined the Women's Land Army
 - Factory work: they made munitions (bullets and weapons) and uniforms
 - Support work for the military: they joined the Women's Auxiliary Corps and did jobs like being a driver, cook, mechanic, cleaner or secretary for the army.
 - Tram and bus drivers
 - Police officers
 - Running their husband's shop (e.g. butcher's, grocery store, etc.)

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| 13 | How successful were the groups who tried to get the vote for women? | |
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- **Suffragists:**
 - slow to get things to happen. This is why the Suffragettes used violent tactics.
 - peaceful and respectable, and they knew some politicians. They didn't scare people away from the idea of giving women the vote.
 - They had male and female supporters
 - They had over 400 branches all over the country and 100,000 members
 - They had middle class and working class members
 - During the war, people didn't approve of them because they were anti-war
- **Suffragettes:**
 - smaller than the Suffragists
 - got a lot of publicity
 - 40,000 people bought their *Votes for Women* newspaper
 - only women supported them
 - mainly only upper- and middle-class members
 - very few members of the public supported them
 - they showed people that they were serious and wouldn't give up easily (e.g. Emily Davison killed herself in 1913 at the Derby)

- made the government introduce new laws to deal with them (e.g. the Cat and Mouse Act 1913)
- many were sent to prison
- most people disapproved: they were unladylike, irresponsible and criminals: why on earth should people like that be given the vote? They turned people away from the idea of votes for women.
- when they agreed to be peaceful, the government didn't actually do anything then either (e.g. 1910 and 1911)
- as they got more violent, from 1912-1914, public support fell
- leading politicians like Lloyd George said he would support votes for women if the Suffragettes stopped being violent. He said violence was the worst thing they could do.
- politicians couldn't support votes for women because it would look like they were giving in to violence
- most newspapers were totally against violence and called the Suffragettes "lunatics"; they only wrote articles supporting votes for women when the campaigners were peaceful.

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| 14 | Why did some women get the vote in 1918? | |
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- In 1918, the following people were given the vote for the first time:
 - women over 30, if they or their husbands owned a home or shop
 - men over 21 were given the vote for the first time.
- Women over 30 could also now be MPs.
- No women under 30 could vote.
- Even if you were over 30, women couldn't vote unless they or their husbands owned a home.
- **Why?**
 - Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1916. He had always wanted to give peaceful women the vote.
 - The government had to pass a new law to make sure soldiers coming back from WWI could still vote (they had lost their right to vote because they had been abroad so long). This seemed like a good time to change the law for women too.
 - During the war, women had proved they were responsible.
 - Women had worked hard for their country, so should have a say in how it was run.
 - The Suffragettes had stopped their violence, so MPs could say that they weren't giving in to violent criminals.
 - The Conservative Party supported the new law because young women and the poorest women weren't given the vote. This meant that young working class women who had worked in the factories wouldn't vote – the Conservatives liked this because they would probably have voted Labour.

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| Part 3: Life in Britain during World War One (1914-1918) | | |
| 15 | What was Britain like before 1914? | |

- See 1 and 7 above.
- Britain was a proud country
- Britain was a democracy with a king
- There were very poor people and very rich people
- If you were born poor, you normally stayed poor; if you were born rich, you normally stayed rich.
- Britain had a large Empire
- Britain made a lot of money from factories and trade
- Britain was a rival of Germany
- Most people didn't care about the poor
- Women didn't have the vote
- Britain was very traditional
- Britain was proud of its army and navy, but it's army was quite small

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| 16 | How did the war affect ordinary British people in Britain? | |
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- At the start of the war, the army asked for volunteers
- By March 1925, 2.5 million men volunteered
- Many men went off to France and Belgium to fight in the war
- Women had to take on new jobs: see 12 above.
- From 1916, the government forced men to join the army (this is called "conscriptio")
- Some places were bombed by airships, shelled by ships and bombed by large bi-planes called Gothas
- The government took over factories and told people and businesses what to do to win the war

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| 17 | How did the government try to control the country during the war? | |
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- Propaganda: posters, films, radio broadcasts, marches, etc.
- a law called DORA (the Defence of the Realm Act) which meant the government could take over businesses and farm land, to help win the war.
- censorship (controlling what people could say in letters, newspapers, films and on the radio)

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| 18 | What was propaganda for during the war? | |
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- Encourage people to join the army, navy and airforce
- Encourage women to join the Women's Land Army and Women's Auxiliary Corps
- Encourage people to lend money to the government (by buying War Savings Bonds)
- Encourage people to save food
- Encourage people to hate the Germans
- Keep up morale
- Make people feel guilty if they weren't working hard to win the war
- Encourage everyone to get involved to win the war
- Encourage women to persuade male relatives to fight
- Show how heroic and brave the soldiers were

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| 19 | How effective was propaganda during the war? | |
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- **Successes:**
 - 500,000 men volunteered in the first month of the war. 2.5 million men joined between 1914 and March 1916.
 - Women joined the war effort (see 7 above)
 - For the first half of the war, no bad news was published in newspapers and photographers could not photograph the dead or dying.
 - All the media were censored: radio, newspapers and films.
 - Propaganda was everywhere: posters were up everywhere, and when people went to the cinema, they saw propaganda films like "The Battle of the Somme".
 - Soldiers' letters were censored
 - Many British people hated Germany and wanted to defeat them
- **Failures:**
 - In 1916, the government had to force men to join the army (conscripted) because there weren't enough volunteers.
 - From around 1916, bad news was reported, especially when news of the real Battle of the Somme reached home. This had gone really badly.
 - Soldiers felt that people at home did not understand them, because they weren't being told what was really happening.
 - From 1917, artists and photographers were given more freedom: they started to show the terrible things that were happening.

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| 20 | What did people think about the war? How did their opinions change? | |
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At the beginning of the war:

- Most people were very enthusiastic
- People thought Britain would win
- People thought it would be over by Christmas

From 1915:

- People were shocked when places like Scarborough were attacked.
- They were determined to win

From about 1916:

- People started to find out just how bad it was, so people were less keen to join up
- People were tired of the war
- People were disappointed it had gone on so long
- Most people were still determined to win
- Some people were increasingly against the war (e.g. soldiers and poets Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon)

- People celebrated the end of the war
- People were relieved that the war was over
- People were grateful for the efforts of the soldiers
- Soldiers found it hard to adjust to normal life
- People didn't understand what the soldiers had gone through
- People wanted revenge against Germany
- People wanted to avoid another war in future
- They thought it was "the war to end all wars"
- Most people wanted life to go back to normal
- Some women wanted to continue in their new jobs, with their new freedoms
- Some people thought that the war had been caused by the old, traditional way of thinking: they wanted to change how people thought and behaved