

Winston Churchill Essay Questions

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Winston Churchill Versus Neville Chamberlain

In this essay I will compare and contrast the positions of Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill and explain which one ultimately prevailed and why. Chamberlain and Churchill felt very differently about how to deal with the situation of Hitler and Germany. At first people wanted to side with Chamberlain but eventually people started to realize that Churchill had been correct the whole time.

Around the time that Hitler was stirring up trouble in Germany, Britain was having some major problems with its economy. Neville Chamberlain believed that Britain should focus almost entirely on fixing its economy, reducing unemployment, and balancing its budget, rather than worry about national security. Chamberlain believed that Britain was not in danger from Germany and that cutting military funding to save money was a very good idea.

“Defense had, historically, been the heaviest drain on the public purse. Under his chancellorship the services were starved of funds. He denied the Royal Navy new capital ships and the Royal Air Force modern aircraft. The army was left in an almost archaic state, with equipment suitable only for conducting colonial operations.”¹

Even after Chamberlain was forced to allow the rearmament of the military he continued to oppose any confrontation with Germany. “Chamberlain continued to resist bringing confrontation with Germany to a head.”²

Churchill on the other hand believed that national defense was by far the most important thing and should be on the top of the list for government spending. Not only did Churchill believe that having a strong military was very important for the defense of Britain, but he also believed very firmly that Britain should be involved in the war against Hitler. Churchill believed that Britain should be a strong military country and didn't like that it was being forced to sit back idly.

“They should know that there has been gross neglect and deficiency in our defenses: they should know that we have sustained a defeat without war. They should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged.”³

¹ John Keegan, Winston Churchill. [Kindle version]. Viking Penguin. 2002. Ch. 7, location: 1404.

² Keegan. Ch. 7, location: 1538.

³ Keegan. Ch. 7, location: 1528.

“unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigor, we rise again and take out stand for freedom as in the olden time.”⁴

For a good while Chamberlain had a lot more support than Churchill did. Churchill was actually a bit of a political outcast because everybody else wanted to focus on imperial and economic issues instead of strategic ones. Chamberlain's original plan to help the economy and put national security seemed fine for a while, but the entire time Hitler was getting more and more powerful. Soon people realized that Britain had fallen behind and needed to get involved in the war. Churchill was correct from the beginning about the need for Britain to boost its defenses and get involved in the war, but Chamberlain never changed his mind.

Hitler wanted to invade and take some of the borders of Czechoslovakia. In response Chamberlain signed the Munich Agreement, which simply gave Hitler some of the land he wanted so long as Hitler didn't invade. Hitler signed the agreement, took the land, and then proceeded to invade Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain, surprised by this fact, made a diplomatic guarantee to Poland to help if the Nazis invaded. When Hitler invaded Poland soon after, Chamberlain once again attempted to make a deal to avoid actually doing something. At this point the House of Commons finally lost its patience with Chamberlain and declared war on Germany. Chamberlain continued to do nothing while Germany destroyed Poland and the Commons finally decided that new leadership was needed.

“Chamberlain nevertheless hesitated to invoke the guarantee to Poland... He proposed convening a conference if Germany would agree to withdraw its troops. At that the House of Commons lost patience.”⁵

Good. Would have been better if you included Churchill's denunciations of Hitler and his views that giving him what he wanted the first time was wrong.

⁴ Keegan. Ch. 7, location: 1528.

⁵ Keegan. Ch. 7, location: 1556.

Winston Churchill

Motivating With Words

raise morale

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In this essay I will show examples of how Winston Churchill as prime minister used words and speeches to raising morals during the early days of WWII. Churchill made a lot of quotes and speeches to the nation, House of Commons, and his war cabinet that motivated people in the war effort. Churchill's words had such an impact that it was once said that his greatest achievement was to mobilize the English language and send it into battle.

Just after Churchill became Prime Minister he had to gain more supporters as well as the support of his newly formed War Cabinet. It was very important that Churchill made a strong statement and set the tone for his effort to win the war. He told his cabinet that he had nothing to offer but "Blood, toil, tears, and sweat."⁶ He then addressed the commons and said,

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"You ask: What is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war by sea, land, and air with all our might. . . . You ask: What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory! Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be."⁷

These words may have been a little melodramatic, but they are very important because they set the tone of how Churchill planned to win the war. They let everybody know that he would never back down for anything and helped him gain the support that he needed.

At one point the Germans were in the process of encircling the French army. The French had attempted a counter attack and failed, and the British tried one too, and also failed. An evacuation fleet was assembled and the British government even considered seeking terms from Hitler. However, just when the plan for evacuation was coming together, Churchill rejected it and said to his Cabinet,

"Nations which went down fighting rose again, but those who surrender tamely were finished. . . . If this long island story of ours is to end at last, let it end only when each one of us lies choking in his own blood upon the ground."⁸

if use a long phrase word for word from book need to quote it

The effect of these words was so profound that the Cabinet members leapt from their chairs to shake his hand and pummel him on the back! The group was almost certainly going to attempt evacuation and surrender, but with just a few sentences Churchill completely changed the decisions of every person in the War Cabinet.

⁶ Keegan. Ch. 8, location: 1610.

⁷ Keegan. Ch. 8, location: 1620.

⁸ Keegan. Ch. 8, location: 1629.

While it was very important to gain support from and motivate the Cabinet and the House of Commons, it is also very important to motivate the general public. If the public is against the war or convinced that all is lost then it is very unlikely that the war will be won. In one of Churchill's speeches to the Commons he promised that the Germans would be fought,

“on the beaches . . . on the landing grounds . . . in the fields and in the streets . . . in the hills,” concluding “We shall never surrender.”⁹

These words created such patriotic enthusiasm in the British people that they were in every newspaper and broadcast. They reminded the public that Britain was a warrior nation and ensured the continued support of the British people in the war effort.

Churchill's motivating words played a much larger part in WWII than you might expect. They gain him support from members of the War Cabinet that gave him the power to get things done. They had a diplomatic effect gaining support from the United States. And probably most importantly, they motivated the British people to continue supporting the war effort even at times when all seemed lost.

⁹ Keegan. Ch. 8, location: 1639.

Poland Rescued and Captured By the Same Guys

In this essay I will describe some of the things that happened to Poland during WWII. Poland was very significant in WWII because it was actually Poland that brought Britain into the war. It is also interesting because during the war it switched control several times and ended up being taken over by the same country that saved it from the invaders.

Hitler stated the whole problem when he formed this nasty habit of invading countries and taking them over. It was very likely the Poland would soon be invaded so Britain, France, and Russia all agreed to help Poland if Hitler did invade. Russia however didn't like Poland much and made a secret deal with Hitler to split Poland if war broke out. Hitler of course invaded Poland, Russia joined in, and they were both happy for a while. However, Hitler chose to break the little deal by invading Russia and to make a very long story short, Russia eventually drove Hitler out of Poland.

Once Hitler had been driven from Poland and the war was finally starting to slowly die down, the question was, what would happen to Poland. There were three very important people, called the Big Three, in this debate. They were Theodor Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin. Stalin, who after removing Hitler had effectively taken over all of Poland of course wanted to keep it, but Churchill and Roosevelt had both already worked very hard to defend Poland. The final decision would be made at the Yalta conference. The truth is that the conference didn't really do anything. Churchill was just recovering from a bout of illness and Roosevelt was in very poor health. And either way, they couldn't really make any serious demands because Stalin's Red Army was already spread all over Poland. Poland ended up being saved from the Germans only to end up under the control of the Russians.

"Stalin was determined to supplant it with puppets of his own and could not be budged. He was eventually to get his way, which could not realistically be refused with the Red Army then deep inside Polish territory."¹⁰

¹⁰ Keegan. Ch. 9, location: 2025.

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before this
Franklin
Roosevelt!

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