

Activities

In the period leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War, there were a number of arguments put forward in the debate as to whether the policy of appeasement was a good idea or not. The grid below contains a card sorting activity which can be used to explore these arguments.

1. Sort the cards into arguments **for** and **against** appeasement.
2. Within those **for** and **against** groups, rank the cards into the order of **most convincing** to **least convincing** argument.
3. **Discuss:** Which argument do you think is the **most convincing** and why? Which argument do you think is the **least convincing** and why?
4. Select two arguments from the **for** group, and two arguments from the **against** group, and write down who you think would have held that view and why.

e.g. Argument B would be a view held by the Prime Minister because he would be concerned about keeping his party in power, and if he thought that war would be hugely unpopular, he would do all he could to pursue a policy of appeasement.

Possible groups or individuals who would have held certain views: politicians, industrialists, general public, military leaders, or key figures like Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill

5. Produce a written response to the following question:

Why was the policy of appeasement pursued for so long, in spite of the fact that many people feared that it would lead to war?



Argument A

The Treaty of Versailles is unfair. It is perfectly understandable that Hitler would want to challenge it. He will stop when he has overthrown the Treaty. The Rhineland was German territory, and it is reasonable for Hitler to want to defend his border in both Austria and Czechoslovakia. There is evidence to suggest that union with Germany is what the people want.

Argument B

How will I stay in power if I declare war on Germany? The British public is against it. We have problems enough of our own looking after the Empire. Let Europe deal with its own problems.

Argument C

We are not ready for war. Germany's armed forces are technologically more advanced and superior in training. We need at least six months to prepare for war.

Argument D

Now Hitler has Czechoslovakia, he borders Poland on the south. He claims that the Germans living in the Polish corridor should belong to Germany. He has started to publish anti-Polish propaganda claiming that the Poles are mistreating Germans in the Polish corridor. Is he laying the foundations for an invasion of Poland?

Argument E

We will be on our own if we challenge Hitler. France didn't challenge him over the Rhineland, and America is concerned with her own affairs. We can't fight him alone.

Argument F

'An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last.'
Appeasement will threaten our Empire; Hitler has broken every promise he has made. He will never stop until he has swallowed the world. His aims are clear in *Mein Kampf*. We will seem weaker and weaker the more we give in to Hitler.

Argument G

The loss of life will be terrible. We lost a whole generation of young men in the First World War. Do we want to lose yet another generation to war?

Argument H

We don't want any of those communist ideas, about equality and brotherhood spreading to England. I would be bankrupt! Let Hitler deal with the Reds!



Argument I

We can't afford war and would have to borrow the money. There are two problems:

1. Who would we borrow from? The USA is only just recovering from the Wall Street Crash.
2. The debt could result in catastrophe if the loans were recalled suddenly, as happened to Germany.

Argument J

If England and France had stood up to Hitler when the German forces entered the Rhineland, we could have rid the area of German forces, **and** shown the German army that not all of Hitler's military decisions are good ones. We would seem stronger.

Argument K

Communism is a worse evil than fascism. We need to protect ourselves from the spread of communism. A strong Germany in the middle of Europe is the best way to do this.

Argument L

Chamberlain is a fool to think that appeasement will ever satisfy the demands of a man like Hitler. He has made the mistake of trusting that Hitler wants to avoid war.

Argument M

If Hitler is allowed to continue to unite German peoples from other countries such as Austria and Czechoslovakia, he will have a much bigger population from which to create an army.

Argument N

There are people in positions of power in England who are forming dangerous fascist groups. Even Chamberlain knows this and has done nothing about it, showing that he is pro-fascism and pro-Hitler. Fascism is evil and will result in the brutal oppression of millions of people. It must be stopped.