World history topics

IB DP History Paper 2: the essay, authoritarian states, 20th-century wars, the Cold War

World history topics

- plan and write a Paper 2 essay with a **thesis**, argued paragraphs, a **counter-argument** and a **judgement**;
- explain how authoritarian states emerged, consolidated power and ruled, using Germany and Cuba;
- explain the long-term, short-term and trigger causes of the First World War and its effects;
- explain the origins, crises and end of the Cold War and how historians disagree about it.

The Paper 2 essay

- An essay is an **argument** : it answers the question and proves the answer.
- Use this plan:
- 1. **Introduction**: answer the question directly in one or two sentences.
- This is your **thesis** . 2. **Three body paragraphs**: each makes one point that supports the **thesis**.

Authoritarian states (20th century)

- An **authoritarian state** is ruled by one leader or party that does not allow free elections or opposition.
- Questions ask about three stages: its **emergence** (how it came to power), its **consolidation** (how it kept power) and its **policies** (what it did with power).
- You must know at least two states from different regions.
- Germany and Cuba are a common pair.

Causes and effects of 20th-century wars

- Historians separate three kinds of cause:
- War came quickly: Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July, Germany on Russia on 1 August and on France on 3 August, and Britain on Germany on 4 August, after German troops entered Belgium.
- Effects are political, economic and social.
- About 10 million soldiers died.

The Cold War (1945–1991)

- **Origins** : different ideas (capitalism and communism), Soviet control of Eastern Europe after 1945, and US policies such as the Truman Doctrine (1947) and the Marshall Plan, which gave about US$13 billion to rebuild Western Europe.
- **Crises**: the Berlin Blockade (1948–49), the Korean War (1950–53), the Berlin Wall (1961) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (October 1962), when the world came close to nuclear war for 13 days.

The Cold War (1945–1991) (2)

- **Détente** : in the 1970s both sides reduced tension and signed arms agreements such as SALT I (1972).
- **The end**: the Soviet economy weakened; Mikhail Gorbachev (in power from 1985) introduced reforms; the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989; the Soviet Union ended on 26 December 1991.

Sources for this lesson

- International Baccalaureate, *History guide* (first assessment 2017), Paper 2 markbands.
- R. J. Evans, *The Coming of the Third Reich* (2003) and *The Third Reich in Power* (2005).
- I. Kershaw, *Hitler* (2008 single-volume edition).

Sources for this lesson (2)

- L. A. Pérez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (5th edition, 2015).
- J. L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (2005); C. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers* (2012).

Common errors

- Telling the story in order instead of arguing an answer to the question.
- Writing a **thesis** that only repeats the question.
- Giving general **evidence** ("many people supported Hitler") instead of precise names, dates and figures.

Common errors (2)

- Writing about one state or one war when the question asks you to compare two.
- Ignoring the **counter-argument**, or giving it with no **judgement**.
- Treating historians' views as facts instead of interpretations you can weigh.

Key terms

- **Authoritarian state**: a state in which power is held by one leader or party that does not accept political opposition.
- **Consolidation**: the steps a regime takes to make its power secure.
- **Propaganda**: information, often one-sided, used to promote a political cause.

Key terms (2)

- **Détente**: a period of reduced tension between the USA and the USSR in the 1970s.
- **Orthodox view**: in Cold War history, the view that Soviet expansion caused the Cold War.
- **Revisionist view**: the view that US economic interests caused the Cold War.
- **Post-revisionist view**: the view that fear and misunderstanding on both sides caused the Cold War.

Check yourself

- 1.
- What are the parts of a strong Paper 2 essay, and how long should each essay take? 2.
- How did the Nazi share of the vote change from 1928 to July 1932?
- Give one reason. 3.