Winston Churchill: Right or Wrong Man for the Job 1933-1940?
From His ‘Wilderness Years’ to Prime Minister
A Lesson from a WWII Elective by Arnie Mansdorf

Class time: Two or three class periods

Objective 1: Students will identify the major reasons why Churchill’s anti-appeasement arguments were rejected from 1933-39

Objective 2: Students will compare/contrast Churchill’s heroic, post 1940 image with his unpopularity during the previous decade. Did he change or did the circumstances?

Objective 3: Through a PowerPoint presentation of Churchill’s life that emphasizes his family background, his military service, and his political résumé, students will examine the events and experiences which prepared him to become the “right” man to lead Britain against Nazi Germany.

Objective 4: To present a document pack of excerpts from Churchill’s speeches and writings, including questions for students, as evidence of Churchill's positions and those of his critics.

Materials
- Computer with projection capability for a PowerPoint
- A script for the PowerPoint Presentation, interspersed with Socratic-style questions and answers begins on page 2. The script may also be found in Notes on the PowerPoint.
- A document pack of excerpts from Churchill speeches and related secondary sources, with questions, for homework or classroom, is on page 14
- A Churchill Timeline, a handout, is on pages 12-13
- A note from Arnie Mansdorf, the teacher who wrote this lesson plan, is on page 28.
- PowerPoint Presentation

The Organization of the Lesson Plan:
An introductory PowerPoint on Churchill includes a script with questions for class discussion (including notes for the teacher). Students should have the additional references, a timeline and a selection of primary and secondary documents, available throughout.

The document pack may also be used as a homework assignment.
I. CHURCHILL’S FAMILY BACKGROUND

Slide 1: Introduction

Winston Spencer Churchill was prime minister of Great Britain from May 1940-July 1945 – virtually the entire Second World War. As we shall see, he is famous for his courage and his inspiring words that kept England fighting ALONE from June 1940 after the defeat of France until 1941 when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June and Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December. CBS reporter Edward R. Murrow stated “Winston Churchill mobilized the English language and sent it into battle.” He is considered by many British historians and the public to be the greatest Englishman in history.

BUT when we look at Churchill’s life more closely we will see that he was a political outcast from 1929-1939 and was thus in the "wilderness" when Hitler came to power in 1933. He was a Conservative member of parliament but he was out of the cabinet /government and sat isolated except for a small band of followers as a backbencher. His own party, the opposition Labour party, the press and the general public, both rich and poor alike, vilified him.

Modern day supporters like to think they would be different if they had lived in the 1930’s but as stated by the late British journalist Alistair Cook: “The British people would do anything to stop Hitler, except fight him. And if you had been there, ladies and gentleman – if you had been alive and sentient and British in the mid-Thirties – not one in ten of you would have supported Mr. Winston Churchill.” (Finest Hour, Spring 2011)

Question(s) Slide 1

Why should Churchill have been listened to?

Churchill gave clear and eloquent warnings regarding the true nature of the Nazi regime and the specific danger posed by Hitler’s arms buildup and territorial conquests through the 1930’s.

What did Churchill actually have to say about Hitler in the 1930’s?


Take a look at the timeline (handout) of Winston Churchill. Why at first glance was this rejection of WSC surprising? Why did he seem so qualified to lead? Why should he have been considered the right man for the job in the 1930’s?

Slide 2: Family Background

Here is a picture of Winston Churchill’s birthplace: Blenheim Palace. Winston’s parents were
visiting the Palace, the home of Winston’s grandfather, the Seventh Duke of Marlborough. Plans had been made for the birth to take place in London, but during the visit his mother Jennie slipped and fell, leading to the early onset of labor.

**Question(s) Slide 2**
What does this tell you about WSC’s family background?

WSC had aristocratic bloodlines. He was the grandson of the Duke of Marlborough.

What is the definition of “aristocratic”?

He was a “friendly familiar”

to the Royal family, including the Prince of Wales (to be the Duke of Windsor and King Edward VIII, who abdicated in 1936). “[H]e had in the early post-war [I]ears been a frequent guest at small supper and dancing parties assembled to amuse the then Prince of Wales.”

**Slide 3: Family Background - First Duke of Marlborough**
The first Duke, John Churchill, was an early 18th century military hero who was given the estate as a gift by Queen Anne after crushing France in major battles on the continent, one at Blenheim, Germany in 1704. John Churchill led the allied forces to victory over Louis XIV in the War of the Spanish Succession.

**Question(s) Slide 3**
Why was WSC’s background important for an aspiring politician in early 20th century England?

Great Britain was still very class conscious at this time. WSC was tied to an illustrious family and this gave him instant credibility with the established elite and the public.

**Slide 4: Family Background - Churchill’s Parents**
His father Lord Randolph Churchill (was the second son of the latest Duke so he was not in line for the title. He thus had to go to work. From your knowledge of early 20th century American literature where could he go to get a ready made fortune?

Randolph married a young beautiful American heiress – Jennie Jerome, who was born in Brooklyn. Jennie was the daughter of the Wall Street tycoon Leonard Jerome. Jerome Avenue and the Jerome Racetrack (which is now the Jerome Park Reservoir) were named after him. Yes WSC was half American!

(Only for Bronx school or NYC teachers) Why should YOU be especially proud of this marriage? (Hint: When you cut class and go to lunch where do you sneak off to?)

Lord Randolph was a brilliant but mercurial conservative leader. He soared at a young age to become the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister/Sec of the Treasury in the U.S.) but after an ego battle with Prime Minister (P.M.) Salisbury over the military budget he resigned in

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2 Ibid. p. 498
1886. Randolph expected to be called back to power. Instead he was left isolated and his political career was over. Randolph had many enemies and many considered him to be too combative, proud, reckless and overly ambitious.

Jennie and Randolph’s marriage was not a good one. He was gravely ill and died at only 45 in 1895. He was thought at the time to be suffering from syphilis but today, doctors think he most likely had a brain tumor. Jennie however kept her place in British high society.

Question(s) Slide 4
Why, however, was Lord Randolph, a failed politician, still a major asset to WSC even after he was dead? And how could his mother also help his career?

Randolph left his son with many valuable contacts in the political, business, military and academic world that opened doors for him later. Even Lord Salisbury helped him along.

Jennie also gave WSC access to England’s elite. The King was a close friend. Former high placed friends were called on when WSC needed military transfers, newspaper reporting jobs or political contacts when he decided to run for office.

II. CHURCHILL’S MILITARY BACKGROUND
Slide 5: Military Background – His Education and First Assignment
Churchill was a graduate of Sandhurst – (England’s equivalent of West Point). He was a lieutenant in the 4th Hussars cavalry regiment. In 1895 during leave from his regiment and while working as a reporter in Cuba faced live fire from anti-Spanish rebels. In 1897 while stationed in India he volunteered for the Malakand Field Force, which saw fighting against local tribesman in the North West Frontier, which makes up modern day Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Question(s) Slide 5
Why would a solid military background help WSC’s career advancement?

Political leaders have to deal with military technology, strategy formulation and war itself. Experience in battle demonstrates courage, leadership skills and the ability to perform under pressure.

Unlike most of his fellow MPs, WSC had significant military experience. Cite examples from the timeline.

Slide 6: Military Background - Churchill in the Sudan
In 1898, using his mother’s connections, WSC was transferred to the 21st Lancers and he fought in the last great cavalry charge of the British Army in the Sudan at the Battle of Omdurman.

Slide 7: Military Background - Churchill in the Boer War
In 1899 WSC became a national hero. Taking leave once again to work as a newspaper reporter during the Boer War he was taken prisoner while courageously trying to stop the capture of a British military train. Churchill was humiliated by his capture and imprisonment in Pretoria.

See Wanted photo. WSC made a daring escape that involved jumping a prison camp fence,
hiding in the woods during the day, being hidden in a coal mine by a pro British South African deep in enemy territory and a dangerous train ride hidden between bails of cotton from South Africa to freedom in Portuguese East Africa. All the while as you can see from this Wanted Poster Churchill was the most hunted man in Boer controlled South Africa.

**Question(s) Slide 7**
How then did this seemingly unfortunate event make him a national hero in 1900?
Why was his capture widely publicized by the Boers?

_Churchill was royalty. He was the grandson of the Duke of Marlborough and the son of Lord Randolph Churchill the former #2 in the Conservative Party. He was a war correspondent with access to the media – the paper he worked for._

Go back to your knowledge of Boer War from Global history class. Why was this escape such a big deal in England?

_At this time the war was going very badly for England. Churchill’s escape was an enormous morale booster. It made him a national media star and he was elected to Parliament in 1900 for the first time at only 26._

**Slide 8: Military Background in WWI**
Churchill fought in the trenches (albeit in a relatively peaceful portion) in France.

**Question(s) Slide 8**
As an aside, how might this influence his strategic choices during WWII?

_Churchill saw the bloodshed of WWI firsthand. This made him wary of frontal assaults and he pushed for more diversionary attacks – i.e. the Mediterranean campaign over an early cross channel invasion. More on this later._

**III. CHURCHILL’S POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

Take a look once again at the Timeline. Why is WSC considered to be a political prodigy?

_He was elected to Parliament in 1900 at 26 and from then held just about every important position in government except prime minister._

Give me some examples from the timeline and explain why it was a significant position:

1. In 1905 at 31 WSC was Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. WSC played a major role in running the vast British Empire.

**Slide 9: Political Background - President, Board of Trade**
2. In 1908 at 34 WSC was President of the Board of Trade, the department mainly responsible for Labour policy. This was a cabinet position in Asquith’s Liberal Party government. In this position WSC worked with Chancellor of the Exchequer Lloyd George to build the foundations
for many social welfare programs – pensions, unemployment insurance, minimum wage and labour exchanges and dispute mediation

3. From timeline: In 1910 at 36, WSC was Home Secretary, the minister responsible for the preservation of law and order. This put WSC in charge of England’s police force, prisons and working conditions.

**Slide 10: Political Background – First Lord of the Admiralty, the civilian head of the Navy**

4. In 1911 WSC was First Lord of the Admiralty. He played a major role in the modernization of the navy – especially its shift from coal to oil and was credited for making sure the Navy was prepared for war on August 4, 1918

5. Timeline: In 1917 WSC was Minister of Munitions, responsible for armaments procurement during a critical phase of WWI. He helped develop the tank and was an early proponent of airpower.

6. Timeline: In 1919 WSC was Secretary of State for War and Air and in 1921 was Colonial Secretary. He played a major in the creating the modern Middle East out of the defeated Ottoman Empire.

7. Timeline: In 1924 WSC was Chancellor of the Exchequer. In this position Churchill was the chief government overseer of the budget and exchange rate and foreign trade policy. It is traditionally considered the #2 position in the government and the stepping-stone to becoming the prime minister.

**Question(s) Slides 9 and 10, Timeline**

This is an enormous number of powerful positions. So why was WSC so hated in the 1930’s? Why was he considered “unfit” for office by so many people? Why was he in the “wilderness” - elected to parliament but without a position in the government from 1929-1939?

**Re-examine Churchill from his critics’ point of view.**

Why is WSC’s track record more controversial than it first appears? Why, according to his critics was he NOT the right man for the job in the 1930’s?

(Go back to the time line) WSC was elected to parliament as a Conservative in 1900. This was a logical choice. As mentioned he came from an aristocratic background and his father was a Conservative MP. But what happened in 1904?

WSC literally “crossed the aisle” in 1904 to join the Liberal Party. He was NOT an opportunist. He was motivated by ideology and had become a strong supporter of Asquith/Lloyd George’s commitment to social welfare programs.

WSC party switch did have political benefits. The Liberals had become the dominant party. WSC as mentioned was given important positions in the government.
But why did this switch cost him dearly in the 1930’s? (Hint: Who was in charge in the 1930’s?)

Slide 11: Political Opponents in the 1930s
The Conservatives were the dominant party in the 1930’s. Churchill had switched back in 1924 and had been made Chancellor of the Exchequer. He stated, “Anyone can rat, but it takes a certain amount of ingenuity to re-rat.” BUT even he didn’t have quite enough ingenuity. Many Conservative leaders and backbenchers had never forgiven him for his earlier switch and his vicious criticism in Parliament. He was considered to be untrustworthy, an opportunist and a traitor by many Conservatives. Among his critics were Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, both future prime ministers.

Slide 12: Political Problems as Home Secretary
Let’s look at his handling of his positions in government. As Home Secretary in 1910 WSC was involved in a street fight with anarchists in London.

Slide 13: Political Mishandling of Sydney Street?
Let’s read an account from Roy Jenkins:

Question(s) Slides 12 and 13
Do you find Jenkins compelling?
How did WSC’s handling of this incident hurt him in the 1930’s?

As Home Secretary he was accused of being unprofessional and reckless for his handling of the Sydney Street standoff.

Slide 14: World War I – Relief of the Western Front
Let’s quickly review the geography and the countries in 1914, the beginning of the First World War.
Who were the Neutral Powers?
Who were the Central Powers?
The Allied Powers?

Question(s) Slide 14
What does Churchill mean by “chewing barbed wire in Flanders”?
Why did the British feel this was a sound strategy in 1915? (Hint: What was going on the western front and in Russia at this time?)

Flanders, an area of Belgium, saw great loss of life in the stalemate of trench warfare on the Western Front, particularly at Ypres. Barbed wire was used to help defend the trenches. Churchill looked for alternatives, particularly asking, “Cannot the power of the Navy be brought more directly to bear upon the enemy?” Churchill’s first idea, “the northern strategy,” was to capture the island of Borkum off the German coast to invade Germany, threaten the Kiel Canal and enable both Denmark and Russia to join a new attack on Germany. When Russia pleads for relief from Turkey, Kitchener, the secretary for War urged Churchill to force the Dardanelles and Churchill enthusiastically embraced the idea.
Slide 15: The Dardanelles Disaster
As First Lord of the Admiralty (the civilian head) during WWI, WSC was held responsible for the Dardanelles campaign. This was an attempt by the British Navy to conquer Constantinople by forcing the Dardanelles, the narrow waterway connecting the Mediterranean to the Black Sea (The Bosporus).

Question(s) Slide 15
Again, what did the British hope to accomplish?
From the map, what do you think the difficulties might be in forcing the Dardanelles Strait? 

Fighting on the western front had stalemated into a bloody war of attrition. Russia was doing very badly in the East and needed supplies. The purpose of the Dardanelles campaign was to knock Turkey out of the war and thus open up a “soft underbelly” to attack Germany and Austria through the Balkans – opening up a second front. The Black Sea would be opened up for increased shipments of supplies to their ally, Russia.

The Strait is very narrow; ships would be an easy target from shore-based guns.

Slide 16: Why did this turn into a disaster?
“What about the Dardanelles?” was a taunt Churchill endured for generations.
Review the timeline of Churchill’s decision-making on the slide
Although this campaign had the approval of the full cabinet (including PM Asquith) and the military chiefs (including Lord Kitchener), WSC became the scapegoat. He resigned and went to the front. Although a later parliamentary investigation - the Dardanelles Committee - gave him some vindication, the campaign severely hurt him in the 1930’s. Why?

Optional: After many delays, a combined British, Australian, and New Zealand military force under Sir Ian Hamilton landed on the tip of the Gallipoli Peninsula on April 25th. Casualties mounted throughout the summer and fall. Addison writes: “Churchill continued to champion the operation with unquenchable enthusiasm.” The campaign ended with the evacuation of remaining troops in January 1916 after 46,000 allied troops had been killed.

Slide 17: On the Dardanelles by Robert Rhodes James, Churchill a Study in Failure, I
Whether it could have ever succeeded against the dual threat of minefield defences and gunfire from the Turkish forts remains a subject for debate. Historians argue whether the Dardanelles was good strategy, poorly executed or just bad strategy and whether a combined operation would have lead to success. The final question is whether if it had been successful, would Turkey have quit the war, allowing re-supply of Russian allies.

The historian Paul Addison writes:
"Churchill was to a great extent, the scapegoat. It was Kitchener who first pressed for a naval operation and Asquith, as prime minister, who authorized it. Fisher concealed his early doubts and subsequently expressed great enthusiasm. Nor did Churchill’s responsibility extend much beyond the naval attack on 18 March. The land [Gallipoli] campaign, which began on 25 April, was primarily the responsibility of the War Office. Nevertheless Churchill’s own egotism and impetuosity were factors in his downfall. He was
over-confident of success, trumpeting victory in advance and passionately supporting the operation long after most people had written it off.”

From the comments on slide 17, how was Churchill hurt in the 1930s by the 1915 Dardanelles disaster?

WSC was viewed as a reckless adventurist, a loose cannon who was not trusted by much of the public, press and by Members of Parliament for the next 20 years. Families who lost loved ones in the sinking ships never forgave him.

Slide 18: The British Gazette
As Chancellor the Exchequer, WSC was criticized for putting the British Pound (£) back on the gold standard. This made the Pound very strong versus other currencies and it severely damaged British exports – especially coal. A coal miner’s strike linked to falling competitiveness and attempts by the mine owners to lower wages led to a 9 day General Strike in May 1926. Responding to a shutdown of newspapers, Churchill was appointed to run a government paper - the British Gazette. It claimed to accurately depict the news but as stated by Rhodes-James:
See slide 19

Question(s): Slide 18
How did both Churchill’s economic policies and his actions during the 1926 strike damage his position in the 1930’s?

Critics claimed that the violent suppression of strikers was stirred by Churchill’s rhetoric. He was still hated by the unions, the working class and their representatives in the Labour Party.

Slide 19: The India Question
In the 1930’s a debate raged in England on whether India should be given dominion (DEFINE) status and eventually independence. Supporters of this popular policy in the Conservative and Labour parties felt that the British Empire was becoming unaffordable and a liability. Here is what WSC had to say:

“It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. Such a spectacle can only increase the unrest in India and the danger to which white people there are exposed.”

“Conservative Differences on India”
Winchester House, February 23, 1931

Question(s) Slide 19
How did this view damage WSC’s position in 1933?

Churchill was viewed as an out of date Victorian at best and a racist reactionary at worst by much of the public.

**Slide 20: the Abdication Crisis**
The movie the “King’s Speech” (2011) was a widely popular uplifting story. In the film WSC is seen as a loyal supporter of King George VI in 1936. In reality, WSC took his brother Edward’s side during the struggle by the Baldwin government to remove him from the throne if he chose to marry an American divorcée Wallace Simpson. (Why could this not be allowed?) Churchill asked for more time for King Edward to make his decision. He accused the Baldwin government of pressuring for a quick solution that would damage the monarchy and the country.

“There was . . . a basis and history of friendship which made it not only plausible but natural that when, at the height of the crisis, the King [Edward] sought and secured Baldwin’s permission to consult with some independent political figure, it should have been to Churchill that he turned.”

The historian John Ramsden wrote: “The abdication crisis was, along with the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, one of the two great threats to the stability of the throne during the 20th century.”

In urging support, even under the guise of ‘time and patience’ for the King to decide, Churchill “edged towards a number of dangerous constitutional doctrines,” according to Churchill biographer Roy Jenkins (501).

**Question(s): Slide 20**
How did this stand damage Churchill’s reputation in the 1930’s?

*Read Rhodes James p 305. (Slide 20)*

*WSC was accused of being an opportunist – of trying to split the Conservative Party by backing Edward. If Baldwin were removed, Churchill could step into the vacuum.*

**Slide 21: The question of the lesson:**
Why was Churchill’s unpopularity and isolation significant?

*His warnings about Hitler and the Nazi’s began when Hitler came into power in 1933. Through every step – rearmament in 1935, remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, Anschluss in 1938 and the Czechoslovakian crisis in 1938 - Churchill warned of the true*
nature of the Nazi regime, the need to rearm and to form an alliance with the USSR. But Churchill was ignored and even worse, called a reckless warmonger. From 1933-1939, his past discredited him as a serious, responsible statesman.

Slide 22: Churchill, the Right Man for the Job
In September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, whose independence Britain had guaranteed. Britain declared war on Germany and Chamberlain was forced to bring Churchill back into government. Churchill was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, for the second time.

Question(s): Slide 22
Why were Churchill’s warnings, speeches and writings so important in 1939?

Churchill turned out to be right! After Hitler broke the Munich Agreement in March 1939 by invading Czechoslovakia, even his fiercest critics could see that he was seeking to conquer central and Eastern Europe. Churchill was vindicated and he had established his legitimacy.

Slide 23: Churchill as the Last Lion
Go back to the timeline. In the 1930’s Churchill had been called a reactionary warmonger. Why did his background suddenly make him the “right man for the job” after all?

“I was a child of the Victorian era, when the structure of our country seemed firmly set, when its position in trade and on the seas was unrivalled, and when the realization of the greatness of our Empire and of our duty to preserve it was ever growing stronger. In those days the dominant forces of Great Britain were very sure of themselves and of their doctrines. They thought they could teach the world the art of government, and the science of economics. They were sure they were supreme at sea and consequently safe at home. They rested therefore sedately under the convictions of power and security.”

“My Early Life”
Winston S. Churchill

As stated by one of his biographers William Manchester, WSC was the “Last Lion.” His direct link to Victorian England - when Great Britain ruled the waves, controlled 25% of the globe and dominated world trade and finance - made him the living symbol of Great Britain’s past greatness. This stirred the people’s emotions and gave them the energy to fight when all seemed lost.
Churchill Timeline

• 1874 30th November  Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill is born at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire

• 1888  Churchill enters Harrow School

• 1893  Winston is enrolled into the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst

• 1895  Churchill is commissioned into the 4th Hussars. While on leave he visits Cuba and comes under fire for the first time

• 1896  the young cavalry officer Churchill is posted to India

• 1897  Winston becomes involved with the Malakand Field force fighting local tribesmen on the Northwest frontier

• 1898  Churchill participates in a regimental cavalry charge with the 21st Lancers in the Sudan

• 1899  break from the army, Winston fails to be elected to parliament. Travels as a journalist to the Boer War. Is captured and escapes. Commissioned into the South African Light Horse.

• 1900  after his return to England, Winston is elected to parliament as a Conservative MP

• 1904  leaves the Conservatives to join the Liberals

• 1905  Winston is made Under Secretary of State for the Colonies

• 1908  Churchill is made President of the Board of Trade. He marries the love of his life Clementine Hozier

• 1910  Winston becomes Home Secretary

• 1911  Churchill is made the First Lord of the Admiralty for the first time

• 1914  The First World War begins

• 1915  after the disaster of the Dardanelles, Winston resigns from the Cabinet and rejoins the army

• 1916  Churchill leads the men of the 6th Battalion Royal Scots fusiliers in the trenches of France. Later resumes his political career

• 1917  Churchill works as Minister for Munitions
• 1918  First World War ends

• 1919  Churchill is named Secretary of State for War and Air

• 1921  Churchill becomes Colonial Secretary

• 1922  Churchill loses his seat as MP for Dundee in the general election

1924  Churchill leaves the Liberals to rejoin the Conservative party. He is re-elected to parliament and is made the Chancellor of the Exchequer

• 1930s  Out of office and largely out of favor, these are described as Churchill's "Wilderness Years". He warns persistently of the threat of war with Germany.

• 1939  Britain declares war on Germany - Winston is back as First Lord of the Admiralty

• 1940  Churchill becomes Prime Minister. He leads the country during the dark days of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz
Churchill’s Anti-Appeasement Speeches with Questions

Doc #1 Warning on German Rearmament

BACKGROUND: The Treaty of Versailles (TOV) sharply limited Germany’s ability to rearm and wage war. The military was only to be large enough to maintain law and order at home. Troops were capped at 100,000 men and conscription was forbidden. Tanks could not be built and airplanes for military use were also prohibited. Restrictions on the navy limited Germany to six battleships, six cruisers and twelve destroyers. In March 1935, Goring formally stated that Germany’s air force had been reestablished while Hitler openly renounced the TOV’s disarmament provisions. Conscription was reinstituted and an arms buildup began.

Hitler however, had openly called for overturning the TOV since the 1920’s in Mein Kampf and in his speeches through the early 1930’s. WSC warned against allowing Germany to rearm in November 1932 –two months before Hitler officially became Chancellor:

“Now the demand is that Germany should be allowed to rearm. Do not delude yourselves. Do not let His Majesty’s Government believe, I am sure they do not believe, that all that Germany is asking for is equal status…That is not what Germany is seeking. All these bands of sturdy Teutonic youths, marching through the streets and roads of Germany, with the light of desire in their eyes to suffer for their Fatherland, are not looking for status. They are looking for weapons, and when they have the weapons, believe me they will then ask for the return of lost territories and lost colonies…Britain is weaker; and Britain’s hour of weakness is Europe’s hour of danger.”

Winston S. Churchill, House of Commons– November 23, 1932

1. Go back to your lessons from Global history class. Why did the Germans feel the TOV’s disarmament provisions were unfair?

2. This was not just a legal issue for Churchill. Why did he feel that German rearmament would directly threaten England’s national security? (Hint: What does he think the Germans will do once they are rearmed?)

3. Look closely at the actual speech. What specific words, phrases and images are used by Churchill to make his point more dramatic?
Document #2  Need To Buildup The Royal Air Force

BACKGROUND: Using a network of informers in the Foreign Office, intelligence services and the military, WSC presented evidence to the House of Commons and to the public through newspaper articles that the British armed forces had fallen dangerously behind Germany.

“Disarmament and the running down of the armed services had been one of the few consistent threads in the discordant tapestry of British policies since 1918. In 1926-27, total defense expenditure had been L116 million, despite the swinging economies of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer; by 1932-33 it had fallen to just over L100 million. The Royal Air Force was numerically sixth in the world; the Royal Navy had a smaller complement of men than at any time for forty years; the condition of the British Army was the most hapless of all...The equipment of the R.A.F. was obsolescent; although the Navy was in far better condition than the other services, much of its vaunted strength was illusory; in the Army, after the severe and arbitrary reductions of the 1920’s and early 1930’s, mechanization had almost stopped and virtually all equipment was out of date and in poor supply.

Robert Rhodes James, Churchill: A Study In Failure, p257.

“On July 30 (1934) he repeated ... that Germany was now ‘arming fast,’ would within a year or eighteen months be strong enough in the air to threaten ‘the heart of the British Empire.’ Now he returned to this theme, despite Baldwin’s reiterated assurance that the British Government would not permit such an eventuality: ‘If Germany continues this expansion and if we continue to carry out our scheme, then some time in 1936 Germany will be definitely and substantially stronger in the air than Great Britain.’

Robert Rhodes James, Churchill: A Study In Failure, p256.

On November 28, 1934 Churchill stated in the House of Commons: “What is the great new fact which has broken in upon us during the last eighteen months? Germany is rearming. That is the great new fact, which rivets the attention of every country in Europe — indeed, in the world — and which throws almost all other issues into the background...One could hardly expect that less than 30,000 or 40,000 people would be killed or maimed” in a week or ten days’ intensive bombing of London, which would lead to the exodus from the city of at least 3,000,000 or 4,000,000 people.”... He described German munition factories ‘working practically under war conditions.’ He urged a scientific approach to air defense, and then put the case for building a bomber force capable of deterring a possible aggressor. He stated that the illegal German air force ‘is rapidly approaching equality with our own’ and would probably be at least equal and possibly stronger in a year; furthermore he estimated that the German air force would be double the size of the R.A.F. by 1937.’

Robert Rhodes James, Churchill: A Study In Failure, p256.

1. The Baldwin government denied that England was in imminent danger. What images does Churchill use in his July speech to wake up the Commons and the public to the growing threat?

2. Why was a loss of air superiority so dangerous for Great Britain? (Hint: Think Napoleon and the Battle of Trafalgar.)

3. Why was the German military buildup so dangerous to England on the political/diplomatic level? (Hint: What is the link between political and military power?)

The Churchill Centre

www.winstonchurchill.org
Document #3 The Real Germany

BACKGROUND: Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor in January 1933. Despite his promise to respect the Weimar constitution, he established a dictatorship by the end of 1934. Claiming that the Reichstag fire of February 27th was the result of a communist plot to overthrow the government, Hitler pushed the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Enabling Act through the Nazi controlled Reichstag in March 1933. The Communist and Social Democrat parties were abolished. Civil liberties were sharply curtailed and Hitler was given the power to rule by decree. The Dachau concentration camp opened in March to hold political prisoners. In May non-Nazi trade unions were abolished. In June the judiciary lost its independence when judges were forced to sign oaths pledging loyalty to Hitler and the Nazi regime. In July all the remaining major political parties except for the Nazi’s were abolished. On June 30, 1934 over 200 (some historians estimate 400) SA rivals – including former ally and SA chief Ernest Rohm – were assassinated by Himmler’s SS. The murdered SA were accused of treason but no trials were held. Hitler didn’t try to hide his role: “In this hour I was responsible for the fate of the German people and thereby I became the supreme judge of the German people. I gave the order to shoot the ringleaders in this treason.” Completing his takeover, Hitler became president and commander of Germany’s armed forces following Hindenburg’s death in August 1934. He was then head of state and commander of the armed forces as well as head of the government (Chancellor).

Despite these clear signals, the Baldwin government failed to see the looming threat. Churchill however, warned the public in a BBC radio address of the real nature of the Nazi regime in November 1934.

“As we go to and fro in this peaceful country, with its decent ordinary people going about their business under free institutions, and with so much tolerance and fair play in their laws and customs, it is startling and fearful to realize that we are no longer safe in our island home…After all, only a few hours away by air there dwells a nation of nearly seventy millions of the most educated, industrious, scientific, disciplined people in the world, who are being taught from childhood to think of war and conquest as a glorious exercise, and death in battle as the noblest fate for man. There is a nation which has abandoned all its liberties in order to augment its collective might. There is a nation which, with all its strength and virtues, is in the grip of a group of ruthless men preaching a gospel of intolerance and racial pride, unrestrained by law, by Parliament or by public opinion…From their new table of commandments they have omitted ‘Thou shalt not kill.’ I am afraid that if you look intently at what is moving towards Great Britain, you will see that the only choice open is the old grim choice our forbears had to face, namely, whether we shall submit or whether we shall prepare…We must, without another hour’s delay, begin to make ourselves at least the strongest air power in the European world…Anything like a balance of power in Europe will lead to war. Great wars usually come only when both sides think they have good hopes of victory. Peace must be founded upon preponderance. There is safety in numbers…May God protect us all.”

Winston Churchill, BBC Radio Address – November 16, 1934
Questions for Document #3 The Real Germany

1. How does Churchill portray the British in this speech? Why is this image a weakness as well as a virtue in terms of dealing with the Nazi threat in 1934?

2. In contrast how does Churchill portray the Germans? Why does he say the British are no longer safe in their island home?

3. What is his solution to the German threat? What does he mean when he says, “Peace must be founded upon preponderance. There is safety in numbers…”
Document #4 Germany Occupies the Rhineland - 1936

BACKGROUND: On March 7, 1936 Germany sent troops into the Rhineland. Under the Treaty of Versailles the Rhineland was demilitarized in order to provide a buffer zone between France and Germany. The occupation also violated the Treaty of Locarno of 1925 in which Germany officially recognized the western borders established by the Treaty of Versailles. Germany had invaded France in 1870 and 1914. The buffer zone created by the Treaty was designed to protect France from a future invasion by a revived and militaristic Germany. This was especially important to France after the United States refused to join the League of Nations in 1919. England would not support strong action by the League of Nations to pressure Hitler to remove German troops from the territory. Lord Lothian, the aristocratic statesmen (and later ambassador to the U.S.) and a supporter of appeasement stated, “After all, the Germans are only going into their own backyard.”

Churchill gave his opinion in an article in the Evening Standard on March 13th.

As stated by Martin Gilbert: “With the remilitarization of the Rhineland he wrote, Europe was presented simultaneously with ‘Hope and Peril’. Were the League of Nations to seize the opportunity to re-establish ‘a reign of law’ in Europe, then it might still be possible to stop ‘the horrible, dull, remorseless drift to war in 1937 or 1938’, and bring to an end the ‘preparatory piling up’ of armaments in every European country. France had appealed to the League of Nations. It was essential for the League to give her justice and ‘satisfaction’. If the League proved powerless to act, if no means ‘of patient, lawful redress’ could be found to put at rest the fears not only of France but also Belgium, ‘the whole doctrine of international law and co-operation, upon which the hopes of the future are based, would lapse ignominiously’. There was only one way to preserve peace: ‘the assembly of overwhelming force, moral and physical, in support of international law’…” The fateful moment has arrived for choice between the New Age and the Old.’

Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill, Volume V, 1922-1939 p.71

In his memoirs written in 1948, Churchill stated:

“There was also great division in France… We now know of conflicts of opinion which arose at this time between Hitler and the German High Command. If the French Government had mobilized the French Army, with nearly a hundred divisions, and its air force (then still falsely believed to be the strongest in Europe), there is no doubt that Hitler would have been compelled by his own General Staff to withdraw, and a check would have been given to his pretensions which might well have proved fatal to his rule. It must be remembered that France alone was at this time quite strong enough to drive the Germans out of the Rhineland…”

Questions for Document #4 Germany Occupies the Rhineland - 1936

1. Why was Germany’s invasion of the Rhineland more than a legal issue to Churchill? (Hint: What was at stake in terms of the League of Nations? Look at the map. Why were Belgium and the Netherlands threatened along with France?)

2. What did Churchill call on the British and French governments to do in response to Hitler’s move?

3. Why did Churchill feel a major opportunity to stop Hitler without the need to fight a major war was lost? (Hint: What did Churchill state would have happened if England and France had reacted with force?)
Document #5 Building up British Defenses

BACKGROUND: Baldwin and Chamberlain did respond to Hitler’s arms buildup.

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**British Defence Expenditure (£000s)**

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<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Admiralty</th>
<th>Air Ministry</th>
<th>War Office</th>
<th>Civil Defence</th>
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<td>248,561</td>
<td>243,638</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>700,538</td>
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</table>

Churchill responded in the House of Commons on November 12, 1936:

“The Government simply cannot make up their minds, or they cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind. So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent. So we go on preparing more months and years – precious, perhaps vital, to the greatness of Britain, for the locusts to eat.”

Prime Minister Baldwin defended himself:

“Supposing I had gone to the country, and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacifist democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain.”
Questions for Document #5 Building up British Defenses

1. Per the above chart, the Baldwin government did increase funding for the military. So why was Churchill so critical of the Baldwin government? (Hint: Why did Churchill feel the Baldwin buildup was still insufficient? Pay attention to the dates! Cite statistics to support your point!)

2. Churchill was sharply critical of Baldwin’s defense. Why? (Hint: When should the prime minister separate his role as leader of the country from his role as party leader?)
Document #6 Anschluss

BACKGROUND: In 1937 and 1938 Germany pressured Austria to formally unite with Germany. Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg, in a desperate attempt to avoid turning power over to the Austrian National Socialist party led by Seys-Inquart and to maintain Austria’s independence called for a referendum. He (perhaps romantically and unrealistically) expected the Austrians to reject the Nazi offer. On March 11th, Hitler gave Schuschnigg an ultimatum to turn his government over to Seys-Inquart – leader of Austria’s Nazi Party. Schuschnigg, without any offers of help from England, France or the League of Nations resigned. As stated by Martin Gilbert, “That afternoon, Halifax telegraphed to Vienna that he could not ‘take the responsibility’ of advising Schuschnigg to take any action ‘which might expose his country to dangers against which His Majesty’s Government are unable to guarantee protection.” (Gilbert Volume V, P497) Seys-Inquart then “invited” Germany to “enter” Austria. Large-scale arrests and executions began immediately. In April the Nazi dominated government held its own plebiscite and 99.73% of the voters approved Germany’s annexation of Austria.

Churchill responded in the House of Commons on March 24, 1938:

“Are they not getting all they want without it? Are they not achieving a long succession of most important objectives without firing a single shot? Is there any limit to the economic and political pressure which, without actually using military force, Germany will be able to bring to bear upon this unhappy State? She can be convulsed politically, she can be strangled economically, she is practically surrounded by superior forces, and, unless something is done to mitigate the pressure of circumstances, she will be forced to make continuous surrenders, far beyond the bounds of what any impartial tribunal would consider just or right, until finally her sovereignty, her independence, her integrity, have been destroyed. Why, then, should the rulers of Germany strike a military blow? Why should they incur the risk of a major war?

For five years I have talked to the House on these matters- not with very great success. I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet. Look back over the last five years. It is true that great mistakes were made in the years immediately after the War. But at Locarno we laid the foundation from which a great forward movement could have been made. Look back upon the last five years—since, that is to say, Germany began to rearm in earnest and openly to seek revenge. If we study the history of Rome and Carthage, we can understand what happened and why. It is not difficult to form an intelligent view about the three Punic Wars; but if mortal catastrophe should overtake the British Nation and the British Empire, historians a thousand years hence will still be baffled by the mystery of our affairs. They will never understand how it was that a victorious nation, with everything in hand, suffered themselves to be brought low, and to cast away all that they had gained by measureless sacrifice and absolute victory—gone with the wind!
Now the victors are the vanquished, and those who threw down their arms in the field and sued for an armistice are striding on to world mastery. That is the position—that is the terrible transformation that has taken place bit by bit. I rejoice to hear from the Prime Minister that a further supreme effort is to be made to place us in a position of security. Now is the time at last to rouse the nation. Perhaps it is the last time it can be roused with a chance of preventing war, or with a chance of coming through to victory should our efforts to prevent war fail. We should lay aside every hindrance and Endeavour by uniting the whole force and spirit of our people to raise again a great British nation standing up before all the world; for such a nation, rising in its ancient vigour, can even at this hour save civilization.”

“The Danube Basin” March 24, 1938 before the House of Commons

1. How did England’s (and France’s) response to Anschluss weaken the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations?

2. Look at a map of Europe in March 1938? How did Anschluss threaten the balance of power in central Europe? (Hint: Look closely at Czechoslovakia.)

3. What did Churchill mean when he stated “…but if mortal catastrophe should overtake the British Nation and the British Empire, historians a thousand years hence will still be baffled by the mystery of our affairs?”

4. A clear warning has been given. Why can Churchill not be accused of defeatism? What is he calling on the British people to do?
BACKGROUND: the Treaty of Versailles had dismembered Austria-Hungary. Under the treaty, the newly created Czechoslovakia included three million ethnic Germans in its western border region – the Sudetenland. Following up on his takeover of Austria in March 1938, Hitler put intense pressure on Czechoslovakia to turn over this territory to Germany. In September, Hitler falsely claimed that Germans were being murdered and he threatened to invade if the Sudetenland was not turned over to Germany. Although Czechoslovakia was a functioning democracy with a strong industrialized economy, had a modern arms industry and strong fortifications, was a member of the League of Nations and had defense treaties with France and the USSR, England and France would not stand behind President Benes even after he mobilized Czechoslovakia’s forces. Prime Minister Chamberlain flew two times to Germany but was unsuccessful in his attempts to solve the crisis. With war imminent, he flew a third time to Munich on September 30. In a final conference attended by Chamberlain, Hitler, Prime Minister Daladier of France and Mussolini, the Munich Agreement was signed. Benes was not present. Czechoslovakia was given an ultimatum to turn over all of the Sudetenland by October 10th – which included valuable fortifications and modern munitions factories – or face Germany alone. Benes capitulated.

Roaring crowds met Chamberlain at Heston Aerodrome on September 30th. He stated:

“The settlement of the Czechoslovakian problem, which has now been achieved is, in my view, only the prelude to a larger settlement in which all Europe may find peace. This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler, and here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine…We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.”

Outside of 10 Downing Street he later stated before an equaling adoring audience, “My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.”

Churchill responded in the House of Commons on October 5, 1938:

“Having thus fortified myself by the example of others, I will proceed to emulate them. I will, therefore, begin by saying the most unpopular and most unwelcome thing. I will begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat, and that France has suffered even more than we have.

The utmost my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been able to secure by all his immense exertions, by all the great efforts and mobilisation which took place in this country, and by all the anguish and strain through which we have passed in this country, the utmost he has been able to gain for Czechoslovakia in the matters which were in dispute has been that the German dictator,
instead of snatching the victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him course by course.

…I do not grudge our loyal, brave people, who were ready to do their duty no matter what the cost, who never flinched under the strain of last week - I do not grudge them the natural, spontaneous outburst of joy and relief when they learned that the hard ordeal would no longer be required of them at the moment; but they should know the truth. They should know that there has been gross neglect and deficiency in our defences; they should know that we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road; they should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged, and that the terrible words have for the time being been pronounced against the Western democracies:  "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting."

And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.”

“Munich”, October 5, 1938 before the House of Commons

1. What does Churchill mean when he says that “we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat, and that France has suffered even more than we have”?

2. What does he mean when he says “they should know that we (Great Britain) have sustained a defeat without a war?”

3. “The tone of this speech is moralistic and filled with condemnation.” Explain. Cite specific statements that support this statement.

4. What does Churchill mean when he states, “This is only the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year.” Be specific. (Hint: What does he think Hitler will do next?)

5. Read the last sentence of the speech. What is the ending tone and message of this speech?
Document #8 Loss of Civil Liberties In Germany

BACKGROUND: The Strand Magazine was a popular British magazine in the 1930’s. It was filled with fiction; articles about celebrities, movie and radio show reviews and advertisements for household appliances and automobiles. Churchill wrote many entertaining and humorous articles for this publication. In November 1935, Churchill wrote a more serious piece, “The Truth About Hitler”. In the article, Churchill questions the argument that Hitler over time will behave in a more responsible leader on both the domestic and international fronts once he feels more secure in office.

The following section pertained to Hitler’s crushing of civil liberties in Germany.

“The Jews, supposed to have contributed, by a disloyal and pacifist influence, to the collapse of Germany at the end of the Great War, were also deemed to be the main prop of communism and the authors of defeatist doctrines in every form. Therefore the Jews of Germany, a community numbered by many hundreds of thousands, were to be stripped of all power, driven from every position in public and social life, expelled from the professions, silenced in the Press, and declared a foul and odious race…. No past service, no proved patriotism, even wounds sustained in war, could procure immunity for persons whose only crime was that their parents had brought them in the world. Every kind of persecution, grave or petty, upon the world-famous scientists, writers, and composers at the top to the wretched little Jewish children in the national schools, was practiced, was glorified, and is still being practiced and glorified…. A similar proscription fell upon socialists and communists of every hue. The Trade Unionists and liberal intelligentsia are equally smitten.”


1. Why did Hitler target Germany’s Jewish population?

2. Why did Churchill feel his attacks on the Jews were particularly unfair?

3. What is the tone of this article? Does Churchill sound optimistic or pessimistic regarding Hitler’s future behavior?

4. Why did Churchill write this article for a popular mass circulation magazine instead of an academic journal?

5. Why is Churchill’s article consistent with the prior speeches we have reviewed in this packet?
Hello fellow Churchillians and High School teachers:

The following is a three-section lesson for my WWII elective. The goal is to blend a biography of WSC and related primary and secondary documents to the appeasement debate of the 1930’s and to deal with the question of why Britain’s political leaders and public rejected WSC. The absence of biography in our textbooks is sadly noted. Students find Churchill’s background –his foibles and successes- captivating. Churchill’s brave stand during the Wilderness Years is also great stuff for young people.

This lesson would logically follow a lesson(s) on the reasons why appeasement was followed by England, France and the U.S. in the 30’s (war weariness, Great Depression, fear of communism etc.) in a Global/World history or American History class. I think it’s suitable for both a “regular” and A.P. level class.

The lesson has three components. The basic lesson is found in the document “Churchill –Wrong Man For The Job 1933-1940”. Teachers and students are ‘directed” in the early part of this lesson to a separate “Churchill’s Speeches Document Packet” and to a PowerPoint that is directly linked to the basic lesson through specific references. e.g. “See PowerPoint Document (PPD) #3” etc. Questions are included in the speeches document package that can be used for homework and/or in class.

I am an “old fashioned” teacher who uses the Socratic Method in the classroom so as you can see the lesson is written in a question/answer format much like a script. My goal is to have a great deal of student interaction but I admit this plan is a bit more teacher focused than my usual. That’s because I don’t plan to assign a great deal of reading ahead of time on WSC’s background. Perhaps it could be modified/adapted to a cooperative learning format with some tinkering and some additional reading. Teachers are encouraged to modify and to carve up the three sections as they see fit.

I would be happy to speak or correspond with any teachers who would like to further explore this or any topic on Churchill in the classroom.

Regards,

Arnie Mansdorf
Social Studies – Lead Teacher
High School of American Studies
2925 Goulden Avenue
Bronx, New York 10468
(718) 329-2144
arnie.mansdorf@gmail.com

The Churchill Centre
www.winstonchurchill.org