GCSE History

Paper One

League of Nations
Key Question: To what extent was the League of Nations a success?

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<td>What were the aims of the League?</td>
<td>The aims of the League, its strengths and weaknesses in structure and organisation; successes and failures in peacekeeping during the 1920s; disarmament; the work of the Court of International Justice, the ILO and the Special Commissions; the impact of the World Depression on the work of the League after 1929; the failures of the League in Manchuria and Abyssinia</td>
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<td>How successful was the League in the 1920s?</td>
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<td>How far did weaknesses in the League’s organisation make failure inevitable?</td>
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<td>How far did the Depression make the work of the League more difficult?</td>
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<td>Why did the League fail over Manchuria and Abyssinia?</td>
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What was the League of Nations?

The League of Nations was set up by the Treaty of Versailles. The League had been the idea of the US President, Woodrow Wilson and it was meant to make the world a better place. It was active until the Second World War and at its peak fifty eight nations were members.

The Secretariat: The Secretariat were the Leagues civil servants. They kept records and prepared reports. It was divided up into different sections, each one dealing with an aspect of the League’s work.

The Aims of the League of Nations: (Also known as the Covenant)

a) Keep the peace and encourage cooperation
b) Safeguard the independence of other nations
c) Reduce armaments
d) Improve living conditions

The Assembly: The Assembly was the Leagues Parliament. Every country in the League sent a representative to the Assembly. The Assembly could vote on:

a) Admitting new members to the League.
b) Appointing members to the council.
c) The budget of the League.
d) Other ideas put forward by the council.

The Assembly met only once per year. Any decisions made by the League had to be unanimous - they had to be agreed by all members of the Assembly.

The Council: The Council was a smaller group than the Assembly and met more often, usually about five times per year or when there was an emergency. It included:

a) The Permanent members - in 1920 this included Japan, Britain, France and Italy.
b) Temporary members - These were elected by the Assembly for 3 year periods

The Council was meant to decide on all important and urgent matters. The Council was meant to discuss emergencies and decide on a course of action. It could order member states how to act or to stop acting in a certain way. All members had to agree before action could be taken.

The Council could use a range of powers if member states refused to do as they were ordered.

The League of Nations Commissions:

The League had a number of Commissions which were meant to try and solve a number of problems.

The Permanent Court of International Justice: This was a major part of the League. It was meant to settle disputes between member nations in a peaceful way. It was based in the Hague in Holland and was made up of judges from the other member nations. However, it had no way of enforcing its decisions and member states could ignore it.

International Labour Organisation: Worked at getting better working conditions for people around the world.
The Powers of the League of Nations:

The League was meant to solve disputes and problems by negotiation. However, if this failed they had powers they could use to make member nations change their behaviour:

Moral Condemnation:
Here the League starts off by telling the country that it is doing something wrong and that it must stop. It was hoped that this would shame a country into behaving properly. *The problem with this power was that some countries would simply ignore being told off.*

Economic Sanctions:
If moral condemnation failed the League could tell other countries to stop trading with the country that was breaking the rules. This was meant to put extra pressure on the country. *The problem with this power is that some countries would not stop trading with other countries as this would cost them money.*

Military Sanctions:
If all else failed the League could use military action to make a country fall into line. They would ask other member nations to use their armed forces to enforce the League decision. *The problem with this power was that the members would not give the League soldiers.*

Membership of the League of Nations:

The USA Refuses to Join the League:
Although President Wilson had thought-up the idea of the League, there were many people in the USA who did not want America to become a member. Many Americans did not want to get involved in foreign problems that would damage trade and lead to American soldiers being killed. They were ISOLATIONISTS - they wanted to keep themselves to themselves. The American Congress (Parliament) would not allow the USA to join. The League had lost its potential leader - the USA would have provided guidance to the League. Also the USA was the world's most powerful nation - how could the League work without it?

Germany is not allowed to join:
The Germans were not allowed to join the League until 1926. They had been blamed for starting the war and so were not allowed to join. Many Germans saw this as a great insult. They saw the League as a kind of club for the winning nations. Germany was still an important nation but it was not a member of the League.

The USSR is not invited to Join:
The USSR with its communist government was not trusted by the other great powers. The USSR was keen to spread the ideas of communism around the world, the key members of the League disliked this idea and so froze the USSR out. However, the USSR was a great power.

Tensions between Britain and France:
When America refused to join the League, the leadership role fell to Britain and France. However, Britain and France were badly divided. France wanted the League to have greater powers to intervene in other nation's affairs. It also wanted the League to be a stronger military organisation. However, Britain wanted to keep out of other countries' wars and arguments. Britain wanted to concentrate on defending her empire.
The League and Peace Keeping in the 1920s.

Vilna - 1920: Vilna was the capital city of the newly-created country of Lithuania. Most of the people in Vilna were Polish. In 1920 a private Polish army took control of Vilna. Both Poland and Lithuania were members of the League. Lithuania asked the League to take some action. Poland was clearly in the wrong, but when the League asked it to leave, Poland refused.

Under its rules, the League could have asked France or Britain to take military action. However, France did not want to get involved as it wanted to remain friendly with Poland who was an enemy of Germany. Britain was not prepared to act alone.

Aaland Islands - 1920: Both Finland and Sweden claimed the Aaland Islands which were half way between the two countries. They came close to war, but appealed to the League to rule on ownership. The League awarded the Islands to Finland. Sweden accepted the decision.

Yugoslavia/Albania - 1920: The League prevented Albania being invaded by Yugoslavia.

Upper Silesia - 1921: This was an area between Poland and Germany which was of mixed Polish and German population. Poland and Germany asked the League to decide where the border should be in this area.

The League organised a vote in which the people of Upper Silesia were asked to decide between Poland and Germany. The vote was too close to help the League to decide. The rural areas wanted to be Polish, the towns wanted to be German. The League divided the area in two and gave half to each country. They made sure the wealth and water supplies were equally shared.

The Corfu Incident - 1923: After the Great War The League appointed as Italian General to map out the border between Greece and Albania. While they were working on the Greek side of the border in April 1923, the team were attacked and killed.

The Italian leader Mussolini was furious and blamed Greece. He wanted the killers executed and compensation to be paid to Italy. In August 1923, Italian ships bombarded and invaded the Greek Island of Corfu. Greece asked the League for action.

The League’s Council was divided and did not take action against Italy, but they did make Greece pay compensation and apologise. Some countries complained that Italy had got its way because it was such a powerful country.

Mosul - 1924-25: Both Turkey and Iraq claimed they owned the town of Mosul. The League asked the people of Mosul who they wanted to belong to. They chose Iraq. Turkey accepted the deal.

Greece and Bulgaria - 1925: In 1925 some Greek soldiers were killed on the border with Bulgaria. Greece invaded Bulgaria. Greece felt this was justified following the example of Italy in Corfu. The League ordered Greece to pull out. Greece decided it could not hold out against the disapproval of so many nations and it left Bulgaria. It did complain that the League had one rule for strong nations like Italy and another one for weak ones like Greece.

Give each event a score out of 10: 1 is a complete failure and 10 is a complete success.
How did the League help create a better world?

**Refugee Commission:**
The League set up agencies to help refugees and former prisoners of war to get home. 400,000 prisoners were helped home by the League after the Great War. Many refugees were helped and housed throughout the 1920s: in Greece (1924-29) and Bulgaria (1926).

**Financial Help:**
A number of countries went bankrupt in the 1920s and needed loans. The League negotiated loans for Estonia (1927), Austria (1922) and Hungary (1923).

**Health Committee:**
The work of the Health Committee of the League was central to the fight against a number of diseases. Leprosy, malaria, the plague and yellow fever were all cut by the work of the league.

The League worked hard at regulating the trade in drugs – both legal and illegal ones.

**Working Conditions:**
The League’s International Labour Organisation tried hard to get member countries to pass laws to cut working hours and improve working conditions. Few countries agreed to this. However, the League’s campaigns did raise awareness about the problems.

**Slavery Commission:**
In Burma, Sierra Leone and Tanganyika slaves were freed because of the League’s work.

The slavery commission campaigned hard to get fair and equal treatment for women around the world.

However, slavery still went on.
### International Agreements of the 1920s

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<tr>
<td>Japan, USA and Britain.</td>
<td>Germany and the Soviet Union.</td>
<td>Germany and Russia had both been left out of the League. They were unhappy about this. The two countries wanted to show the other countries in Europe that they could hold their own conferences and make deals.</td>
<td>France, Britain, Belgium, Italy and Germany.</td>
<td>Most of the World including Italy, Japan, USA, France etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Aims:</strong></td>
<td>To limit the expansion on naval forces in the Pacific Ocean. It was set up by the USA because they had no confidence in the League. They wanted to limit tension in the Pacific.</td>
<td>Germany and Russia both had been left out of the League. They were unhappy about this. The two countries wanted to show the other countries in Europe that they could hold their own conferences and make deals.</td>
<td>After the invasion of the Ruhr France wanted to search for a compromise with Germany. They called a conference in Switzerland at Locarno.</td>
<td>The aim was to get many of the World's great powers to agree not to fight wars in the future. Named after the American Foreign Minister, Kellogg, and the French politician, Briand.</td>
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<td><strong>Terms:</strong></td>
<td>Limited the size of the Japanese Navy. For every five ships the USA had, Japan could have three and Britain five. The three countries each lost around 15 ships each.</td>
<td>Germany and Russia both agreed to stay friends. They also secretly agreed that they would trade weapons and military information. This was against the Treaty of Versailles.</td>
<td>Germany, France and Belgium agreed not to change their borders with each set up by the Treaty of Versailles. France promised to protect other countries from German invasion. Germany agreed to join the League.</td>
<td>Most of the key nations agreed not to use war to solve disputes.</td>
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<td><strong>Impact on the League of Nations:</strong></td>
<td>Made the League look weak and un-necessary. The League was meant to sort out this type of deal, but the three big powers in the Pacific had ignored the League. Britain was a member supposed to be a leading member of the League.</td>
<td>Very damaging. It made the League look weak and ineffective. The Treaty of Versailles had banned Germany making such deals - but the League could do little to stop them.</td>
<td>Peace seemed to be much closer and the League was stronger now that Germany was a member. Germany was now part of the system. However, Germany made no promises about her borders with Poland in the east!!!</td>
<td>Looked good at first, but the League looked weak as they were not involved - the deal was set up by the Americans and the French. The whole deal was rather pointless. Many of the countries involved used war as a means of getting their own way.</td>
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The League and Disarmament

One of the aims of the League was to reduce armaments (weapons) and so help stop war.

The League had some success: By 1926 Germany had disarmed and many other countries, including Britain, Japan and the USA had cut back on the size of their armed forces.

However, the League failed to achieve disarmament. There were many reasons for this.

Why Did It Fail?

- **Weakness of the League**
  The League was just too slow and too disorganised to deal with the job.

- **Self-Interest**
  Some countries would not reduce their armed forces because they believed it was not in their interests to do so.

- **Militarism**
  Some countries would not disarm because they wanted to attack and invade other nations.

Examples

- **France 1926**
  When Germany had disarmed in 1926 France refused to do the same – they said they did not trust the Germans and were afraid they would be invaded again at some time in the future.

- **Britain 1920s**
  Britain refused to disarm because it wanted to keep its armed forces to protect its empire.

- **The World Disarmament Conference 1932**
  In the late 1920s the League tried to organise a Disarmament conference. It took five years to organise. Discussions were slow and often confused.

- **Hitler and Disarmament 1933**
  When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 he worked with the Disarmament Conference and then left the League and started to re-arm because he wanted to use weapons to expand his territory in Europe.
# How did Major Powers React to the Depression

## How Countries Reacted to the Depression

<table>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<td><strong>Germany</strong></td>
<td>Mass unemployment made people disillusioned with the Weimar Republic. The Nazis came to power and promised to overturn the Treaty of Versailles. German rearmament speeded up.</td>
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<td><strong>Japan</strong></td>
<td>50% of Japan’s heavy industry closed, the vital silk export trade was destroyed. These economic problems strengthened the hand of the army which wanted to find new markets and raw materials by invading Japan’s neighbors.</td>
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<td><strong>Italy</strong></td>
<td>Mussolini wanted to distract attention from economic problems by enlarging the Italian Empire in Africa.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>USA</strong></td>
<td>Retreated further into isolation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Britain</strong></td>
<td>Concentrated on economic problems at home and delayed rearming as it feared this would further harm its economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>France</strong></td>
<td>Internal political problems made France delay rearmament.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>USSR</strong></td>
<td>The Depression had little effect on Russia which had few trade links with the rest of the world.</td>
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## Problems which threatened Peace

1. Invading China would upset the League of Nations, but what could the League do? Europe was a long way away.

2. The most powerful country in the world turned its back on international problems and concentrated on rebuilding its economy.

3. The collapse of world trade suggested that capitalism was wrong and communism was right, so this country was even more suspicious of capitalist countries.

4. With other countries worried about their problems at home, here was the chance to tear up the Treaty of Versailles and retake lost territory.

5. Unemployment caused this country to delay rearmament, but when the threat from its neighbors increased it built a massive line of forts along its border.

6. Relations with other democracies suffered and this country wanted to work with its great Empire and avoid conflict which might threaten its Empire.

7. Invading Abyssinia, an independent African country would upset the League and could mean the loss of Britain and France as allies. There was always Germany to ally with.
How did the Depression make the League’s job harder?

October 1929: Wall Street Crash

USA very short of money

USA cannot buy goods from other nations

Massive hardship and unemployment around the world

USA cannot lend out money

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Lack of Trust/selfishness:

The Depression made countries care only about their own problems. They did not care about what was going on in the world and only wanted to solve their own problems. They became selfish. Britain and France in particular started to become less interested in the League. America became more Isolationist.

Unemployment:

The unemployed people in the various countries wanted their governments to get them jobs not go around the world solving everyone else's problems – this was true in Britain and France. They also started to vote for more violent and extreme parties – this was true in Germany and Italy.

Extremism:

In Germany the people voted for Hitler because he promised them jobs. Hitler also made other promises, such as scrapping the Treaty of Versailles. In Italy, Mussolini had to try and distract the people of Italy from the economic problems – one way to do this was to invade part of North Africa.

Desire for resources:

Some countries, like Japan and Italy needed resources to make up for lost trade. One way to do this was to invade other countries.
The Japanese Invasion of Manchuria - 1931

In September 1931 the Japanese invaded an area of South China known as Manchuria. Why did this happen?

**The Mukden Incident**

Japan owned a railway in Manchuria. Japan was worried that the Chinese government would try and take back the land around the railway. The Japanese Army stages an incident at Mukden that made it look as if the Chinese had attacked the railway. The Japanese used the fake attack as an excuse to invade Manchuria.

**Japanese Militarism**

The armed forces in Japan had become very powerful. They wanted a strong Japan and wanted to become strong via war. They put pressure on the government to take action. When one Prime Minister refused to act, they had him killed. Invading Manchuria was the sort of action the Army wanted.

**Japanese Nationalism**

Japan had become much stronger after defeating Russia in a war in 1905. This made them very proud and want to become even stronger. They started to want an Empire in Asia to turn them into a great power. Manchuria would be part of the new Empire.

**The Depression**

Japan lacked key raw materials. Oil and rubber were in short supply. Japan could not afford to import them so she had to capture them in other countries. The Depression hit Japan hard. Her trade and wealth were hit hard and the USA stopped trading with the Japanese. The Japanese needed raw materials and wealth—the only option was to invade other countries.

**What did the League do?**

- It set up the Lytton Committee to investigate. It took two years to write a report and then blamed Japan and China. No punishments were given. Japan left the League.

**Why Did The League Take No Real Action?**

<table>
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<th>Self Interest of France and Britain:</th>
<th>The Depression:</th>
<th>Weakness of the League:</th>
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<tr>
<td>France was obsessed with defending herself against Germany and would not act. Britain did not want to fight Japan in case it led to her losing her Empire.</td>
<td>Most members of the League, including Britain and France were worried about their economic problems. If they had gone to war with Japan or imposed sanctions it would have cost them money and trade.</td>
<td>The League was slow to make decisions and it did not have an army. It simply did not have the powers to stop Japan. It also needed the consent of all members to take action and some nations, such as Italy would not agree to stop Japan as they wanted to do the same thing elsewhere.</td>
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The Italian Invasion of Abyssinia – 1935

In December 1934 the Italians and the Abyssinians fought a small battle at Wal Wal. In September 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia. Both countries were members of the League. The League introduced some economic sanctions, but they did not include petrol and oil - this meant Italy was not hurt by the sanctions and they failed. The League looked weak and Mussolini looked like a real winner.

Why did Italy Invade?

**Revenge for the Battle of Adowa:** In 1896, the Italian Army had tried to take control of Abyssinia. They were defeated and humiliated. Many Italians saw the invasion as an act of revenge.

**Italy wanted an Empire:** Mussolini has a dream of making Italy as great as it was in the time of the Roman Empire. Italy wanted to become a great power like Britain and France. He felt Italy needed an empire to achieve this. Taking Abyssinia would be a way of expanding Italy’s empire and help make Italy great again.

**The Depression:** Italy was suffering because of the depression. Italian industry was not doing well and there was high unemployment. Mussolini needed to distract the Italian people from these problems and make himself look strong. Invading Abyssinia would do this.

**The Stressa Front:** Italy had signed an agreement with Britain and France called the Stressa Front. This was an agreement that the three nations would stand up to Hitler. Britain and France were keen to keep Italy happy and did not try and stop Mussolini when he mentioned invading Abyssinia.

What Did The League Do?

They condemned Italy and imposed economic sanctions. Members of the League were banned from trading with Italy. However, they did not ban the member nations from selling oil, coal and steel to Italy - this meant Mussolini could go on making weapons!

Why Did The League Not Take More Action?

**Hoare Laval Pact:** Britain and France did not want to fight Mussolini. They did not want to lose him as an ally against Hitler. They drew up a secret agreement with Mussolini, called the Hoare-Laval Pact, to allow him to keep the richer half of Abyssinia. They did this in secret without asking the League. The plan was leaked to the newspapers and the public in France and Britain were angry. The plan was dropped, but the British and French looked as if they were going behind the League's back - the League looked weak and Britain and France looked as if they were giving in to Mussolini. By the time the confusion had died down, Mussolini had won the war and was in control of the whole of Abyssinia.

**Weakness of the League:** The League was slow to make decisions and it did not have an army. It simply did not have the powers to stop Japan. It also needed the consent of all members to take action and some nations, such as Italy would not agree to stop Japan as they wanted to do the same thing elsewhere.
Why did the League of Nations Fail?

1) **Weakness of its organisation/Slow Decision Making**
The League of Nations organisation was very weak and unable to cope with major problems. All decisions had to be unanimous and the League was slow to meet and make decisions. This meant that when the League faced major problems such as Manchuria and Abyssinia, it simply could not act effectively or with speed and so it failed. In both Abyssinia and Manchuria, Italy and Japan had occupied the countries before the League could act.

2) **Lack of any Army**
The League of Nations did not have an army and this made it weak. The League was meant to be able to ask member nations for soldiers, but they would not always help. This meant that the League could not use its power of military sanctions and attack counties such as Japan and Italy when they broke the rules. This made the League weak and meant that it failed.

3) **Economic Depression of the 1930s (after the Wall Street Crash of 1929)**
When the depression set in after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 the League of Nations was much weaker. Leading members such as Britain and France were so tied up with their own problems that they were not always interested in working with the League. Also countries were unwilling to take action such as imposing economic sanctions because this would have cost them money and jobs. This meant that Italy and Japan were both allowed to get away with invading other countries which weakened the League and made it fail.

4) **USA’s refusal to join**
The USA’s refusal to join the League was a major blow because the League had been the idea of the American President. The fact that the USA would not join made the League look weak. Also the fact that the USA was not a member meant that economic sanctions would not work because the USA would go on trading with countries such as Italy and Japan if the League imposed sanctions. The USA would also have been a good leader of the League and made decision making and sanctions more effective.

5) **Aggressive nationalism of Germany, Italy and Japan**
The aggressive nationalism of Italy, Germany and Japan helped destroy the League because it was just too much for the League to cope with. These countries all invaded other countries and then ignored the League when it tried to stop them. Eventually, when the League failed to stop Mussolini’s Italy from invading Abyssinia it lost all credibility and was destroyed as a peacekeeping body.

6) **The self-interest of member nations**
The member nations of the League were not always willing to act beyond their own self-interest. The British and French for example would not stop Italy invading Abyssinia because they wanted to trade with Italy and keep it as a friend in any war with Germany. Britain also refused to act against Japan in Manchuria in case it caused problems with the British Empire in Asia. All this made the League weak.