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# **World War II**

## *Analyzing Visual Primary Sources* *World History Series*

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# Introduction

Primary sources are the building blocks of history. Using these sources to introduce students to historical periods offers students the opportunity to become historians themselves—to analyze the evidence, form hypotheses, and learn how to support arguments based on evidence. They learn what it means to interpret the past in ways that provide meaning for the present. Textual primary sources can often be difficult for students to engage with because they are often couched in unfamiliar language from a different historical era. Visual primary sources can prove more appealing and accessible to students, and they also involve different types of “reading” skills.

## How to Use This Product

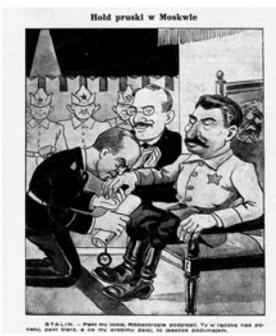
This PowerPoint® presentation is designed to walk students through the process of primary source interpretation. Slides help to focus students’ attention and train them how to “read” visual primary sources. Targeted questions and enlarged insets from images help to train students to see deeper into the historical record, to uncover evidence that, though plainly before their eyes, is not always obvious at first glance.

## Let Us Know What You Think

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis  
Chief Education Officer  
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# World War II



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- Appeasement
- The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact
- The Battle of Britain
- The Invasion of Normandy
- The Bombing of Dresden

# Appeasement

- Giving in to the demands of an aggressor in order to avoid war
- Foreign policy of the British government between World War I and World War II
- The Munich Agreement

The policy of appeasement is one of the background causes of World War II. Following the Great War, the nations of the world—and in particular Europe—looked to avoid war at all costs. Despite the weaknesses of both the Treaty of Versailles and the newly created League of Nations, it was hoped that the world would never again face a war as destructive and as costly as World War I. Beginning in the 1930s, significant change became evident in Germany, Italy, and Japan as each of these nations began to take aggressive action against other nations.

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain hoped his policy of appeasement would avoid war. He had many supporters who agreed that preserving peace should be the government's priority, but there were those that believed that ultimately Britain (and others) would pay a price for giving in to the aggressors.

The agreement followed a conference held in Munich, Germany, attended by Hitler and the leaders of Great Britain, Italy, and France. In March 1938, Hitler had annexed Austria. Many believed that his next target would be the Sudetenland, territory that was part of Czechoslovakia but that had a large German-speaking population. In anticipation of this move, the conference was convened. It was agreed that Czechoslovakia would turn over the Sudetenland to Hitler with the understanding that Hitler would then agree to take no more land. The Munich Agreement is an example of appeasement, with the major nations of Europe agreeing to give into Hitler's aggressive demands.

# Appeasement

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Evening Standard, Wednesday, October 5, 1938



OUR NEW DEFENCE

(Copyright in All Countries.)

Give students a minute to view this cartoon, then proceed to the next slide.



- What type of image is this?
- Where does it come from?
- How do you know?

This is a political cartoon created for the *Evening Standard*, a British newspaper, in October 1938. The cartoonist, David Low, was well known for satirizing both Hitler and Mussolini. Low's name appears in the bottom right corner.

- What is the date of the cartoon?
- Why might the date be significant?



The cartoon appeared in the paper on October 5, 1938. The date is significant because it is less than a week after the Munich Agreement was signed.

Students should be reminded that aggression and appeasement were key causes of World War II. Although this cartoon offers no direct reference to the Munich Agreement, students should have an understanding that the cartoonist is responding to a significant event involving Hitler. The date is important: World War II officially began in September 1939, with Hitler's invasion of Poland.

This cartoon should allow for a discussion of the background causes leading to war. Additionally, given that it is October 1938, and that the war does not begin until September 1939, students may conclude that Hitler clearly did not make good on the promise mentioned in the cartoon.