

## Workshop 3: Against appeasement

### Teachers' notes: Background knowledge for pupils

The First World War ended with a peace treaty, the Treaty of Versailles. It limited Germany's territories, and prohibited Germany from having an army.

But Hitler ignored the Treaty of Versailles. From 1935 Germany built tanks and planes, creating a strong army. He wanted to expand Germany beyond the boundaries agreed by the Treaty of Versailles.

In 1938, Germany annexed Austria. Many Austrians welcomed the Nazi troops. Next, Hitler wanted to annex Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia.

### Learning content

Since 1933 Wedgwood had been warning that Hitler was a dictator. He warned too that Germany was re-arming.

From 1933 onwards, Wedgwood argued that Britain should go to war against Nazi Germany straight away. He gave three main reasons:

- a) For moral reasons, because Hitler was a dictator, persecuting Jews and other groups. He felt this was Christians' duty
- b) Because Nazi Germany behaved like a bully. If other countries did not stand up to Germany, it would take more and more land.
- c) War was inevitable. It was better to go to war sooner, before Germany built up its army.

After the horror of the First World War only 20 years earlier, many people wanted to avoid war again. Some people (especially upper classes) supported Hitler and Mussolini against Communism.

In September 1938, Britain's Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain went to meet Hitler in Germany. Hitler promised to limit his plans to expand Germany. Chamberlain and Hitler signed an agreement. Chamberlain returned claiming their agreement meant 'Peace for our time'.

But Wedgwood argued that appeasement, making concessions to an aggressive power to avoid conflict, was a cowardly response.

In reality, Chamberlain had given in to Hitler's demands, in return for a promise to stop any further expansion. But Hitler broke his promise, taking more land in Czechoslovakia. No one stopped him.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Britain could stand by no longer.  
On 3 September 1939, Britain declared war with Germany.

## Workshop 3: Against appeasement

### Aims:

To consolidate background knowledge about appeasement

To explore Josiah Wedgwood's arguments against appeasement

### Key questions:

How should we respond to dictators?

Why did Josiah Wedgwood argue Britain should fight Hitler's Germany?

How might local people have responded to the issues?

### Resources

Learning from Workshop 2

Standard family details

Sources 3A-3E

Additional information from Teachers' notes

## Workshop 3: Against appeasement: Activity

### Stage 1: Sources 3A-3C

Introduce the theme of appeasement, giving background information as necessary.

Working in small groups, ask students to each take on a character as a member of the Standard family (see Workshop 2).

In character, ask them to read Josiah Wedgwood's speeches in Parliament and memoir excerpt (**Sources 3A-3C**). Then ask students to answer these questions, thinking about what might influence their character. There will be differing opinions in the family.

- Does your character agree or disagree with Wedgwood?
- Should Britain go to war against Nazi Germany at this time?

- How is your character affected by Father's memories of his time fighting in the First World War?
- Charlie and Alfie would soon be coming up to fighting age. How does this affect your character's views?

Invite 'family groups' to act out their discussion in character. Share some of the discussions.

Are themes emerging in characters' responses? Eg do the different students playing 'Charlie' reach similar or different conclusions?

### **Stage 2: Sources 3D and 3E**

Using **Sources 3D and 3E**, ask students in character to discuss the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's visits to Germany in 1938 to meet Hitler. Does your character agree with his actions and his speech, 'Peace for our time'?

### **Stage 3: Creative writing**

In character as a member of the Standard family, ask students to write a series of at least two diary entries dated after the sources they have considered. What are their hopes and fears? Do their responses change as events unfold?

And/or

In character, write a letter to Josiah Wedgwood as a local MP, agreeing or disagreeing with his speeches, and explaining your views on Neville Chamberlain's meeting and agreement with Hitler.

### **Extension: Contemporary resonances**

Class discussion: There are echoes in today's world where dictators are oppressing their people.

- Ask students if they can think of contemporary parallels, today or in recent history, where dictators are oppressing their people?
- Should our country get involved?
- How should we respond to people fleeing oppression?



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### Skills required

- Analysing sources in context
- Estimating historical significance and linking to larger trends
- Considering the ethical dimension
- Analysing cause and consequence
- Using evidence rigorously
- Creating a structured account



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## Workshop 3 Sources

### Source 3A

Colonel Wedgwood's speech in Parliament: 26 May 1933, recorded in Hansard

I have said that there are very few things for which we would fight. One of the things for which I would fight, and I think most people would agree with me, would be to prevent injustice. When you see the sort of injustice that is going on in Germany to-day, the veriest pacifist is converted into an ardent militarist. You have not only to disarm; you have to get a change of mind in the Governments of European countries, at any rate. So long as you have people acting in a mediaeval manner, you cannot trust what they may do in their international relationships.

The only chance of preventing these things happening is to take a firm line at first and never to give way to force what you are not prepared to give way to weakness. If you do that, you encourage force.

### Source 3B

Colonel Wedgwood's speech in Parliament: 13 Nov 1933, recorded in Hansard

The Government must make up its mind when and at what point it is going to put down its foot. They are absorbing Danzig now. We shall not fight about that. They are absorbing the Polish Corridor to-morrow; they are absorbing Austria later on. Where do we stand now? Where does the League of Nations, where does the collective civilisation of the world step in and say, "No further"?

Goodness knows, I am not a war-monger; I have seen too much of it; but there are certain things for which it is legitimate to fight. I do not mean King or country, but when it is a question of fighting for justice and the right, [I remember] Patrick Henry once said: Is life so sweet, or peace so dear, as to be purchased at the price of chains of slavery? I know not what course this may take, but, as for me, give me liberty or give me death

### Source 3C

Josiah Wedgwood's Memoirs of a Fighting Life p225

Till 1933 almost the whole of the British upper class ... felt they ought to sympathise with Hitler, who had broken the threat of the working class. They made excuses – for the Reichstag fire, for the murders, for the persecution of Jews, for the annexation of Austria, of the Sudetenland, of Czechoslovakia.



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**Source 3D**



Photograph of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain shaking hands with Adolf Hitler, 15 September 1938 Germany. [Creative Commons]

**Source 3E**

'Peace for our time'?



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Watch Chamberlain's speech on arrival back in the UK after meeting Adolf Hitler.  
The newsreel is titled: ONE MAN SAVED US FROM THE GREATEST WAR OF ALL

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQ95ffnU4Sw>