

Essay and Discussion Questions

Contemporary History Post-1945 High School Questions

Help students understand how events since 1945 have shaped today's world through these essay and discussion questions.

Introduction

1. What was the fundamental conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War?
2. What are the major factors that explain why the Cold War stayed cold?
3. How did deterrence work during the Cold War?
4. How did the Cold War complicate decolonization? In what ways is decolonization still an issue?
5. How important do you think decisions by American and Soviet leaders were in explaining why the Cold War stayed cold? Were they more or less important than structural factors such as balance of power and nuclear weapons?
6. Do you see decolonization as an ongoing process? What additional legacies of colonialism do you think need to be reckoned with?

Economy

1. Which post-World War II historical events led to the rise of mass production and mass consumption?
2. Who has benefited most from the rise of mass production and mass consumption? Who has been hurt by this trend?
3. How have mass production and mass consumption changed everyday life for Americans?
4. Has the rise in mass production and mass consumption been a generally beneficial development?

China

1. What was so humiliating about China's century of humiliation? How has this era inspired the Chinese Communist Party's policies and worldview?
2. How did Mao Zedong's rule transform China?
3. How have U.S.-China relations impacted U.S. trade policy in recent years?
4. What aspects of the Belt & Road Initiative seem most profitable for countries involved?