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### Academic ESL World History Unit 5. Destruction and Liberation, WWII, Postcolonialism

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## Assignments

### WAR AND DESTRUCTION

In this section you follow the ultimate cataclysm of the competing nations in the Western world, and how most likely the greatest global disaster led to the destruction of historically significant, but also modern and advanced cities. We move from what we have considered a forward moving progress in urban development, technological achievements, to the global disaster of WWII. It ends in a destruction of major European cities and an infrastructure which has enabled the power of industrialized European nations. One new aspect in WWII– aside from the Holocaust, the systematic extermination of Jews around the world, and the Jewish ghettos, such as the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, is a new form of warfare which include not only military targets but also civilians.

In this context, the modern air force and its capacity to bomb vast areas of the enemy without having soldiers on the ground, turns into a powerful weapon of both sides of the war: Hitler and the Nazi regime, on the one hand, and the Americans, the British and the Soviet Union (Russia), on the other. This leads to a new dimension of destruction of both lives and the physical existence of a city. As Germany invade and take control of countries in Europe and beyond, the British and American forces engage in a new form of warfare: “moral bombings”. The term and the idea were pushed by the British general Arthur Harris who thought a break down of moral in the civilians in Germany would turn them against Hitler. As a result, starting in 1942, the Royal Airforce begins its strategic bombings of German cities. Some of the most damaged cities with the most casualties were Hamburg and Cologne. There are different standpoints as far as the “moral bombings are concerned”. Some maintain that they provoked the opposite of what was intended. Germans supposedly became more patriotic and less inclined to turn against their own leaders and their regime. However, on May 8, in 1945, Hitler was finally defeated and Americans, British, Russian, and French forces could take control of a nation that had been a threat to the world for the past 12 years. It is estimated that 40 million people had died when the war was over.

One of the most problematic bombing raids of the allies during the war were the bombings of Dresden in February 1945 by British forces. The city had little defense and was not posing much of a threat to the allies. Since the war, a discussion has evolved. Some historians believe this air raid was a war crime, while others defend it as a necessity on the path to defeat Hitler and Nazi Germany.

In this section you will watch authentic footage and listen to eyewitnesses of those who were alive at the time. There is a great deal to take in and think about. As a first, make sure you have a clear idea of the time and the geography of the places mentioned in the

videos. Make sure you know the beginning and end of WWII and the main actors in the war.

### A. Listening Exercise

**Berlin 1945.** – (Watch the first 11 min.)

Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhyifvjSHbU&feature=emb\\_err\\_woyt](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhyifvjSHbU&feature=emb_err_woyt)

Watch the video of Berlin after the war was over in May 1945.

Take notes: what do you see? What catches your attention the most?

Can you compare this to something you know or have experienced?

**Free Writing:** Write down your thoughts about what you saw in the video. Write for 10 min.

### B. Reading Exercise - Reading for global understanding.

**Source:** [Bombing Berlin: The Biggest Wartime Raid on Hitler's Capital](#)

#### 1. VOCABULARY

NOUN	MEANING	VERB	MEANING	ADJECTIVE OR ADVERB	MEANING
raid		reel		defiant	
foe		decimate		devastating	
counter-offensive		inflict		undefended	
assaults		abate		contentious	
hindsight		intercept			
casualties		owing to			
		prevent from			

## 2. TRUE OR FALSE

Statement	True	False
March 18 was the largest American air raid during WW II.		
One main idea of the text is that the Germans were not extremely dangerous in March 1945.		
Germany was only threatened by the Russians, not the Americans or British troops.		
45 000 tons of bombs were dropped on Germany between 1944- 1945,		
The bombs in the cities often targeted civilians.		
The city of Dresden had a great defense.		
The Messerschmitt had recently been built.		
The American P- 51 Mustang was superior to Messerschmitt.		
24 American bombers were lost in the mission.		
The majority of bombs could still be dropped on Berlin.		

3. Explain why so many bombs were dropped on civilians in this air raid. What was the original intention? Why didn't it work out as planned?

## C. The City of Dresden – a Disputed Act of War

### Sources:

British News Reel February 1945

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTOu\\_54csQw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTOu_54csQw)

The Allies: British veteran

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rkIlCxOyiC8>

German Witness- Different viewpoints for or against a war crime.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwkMo1\\_rWMO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YwkMo1_rWMO)

The bombings of the city of Dresden have long been an object of discussion. In the beginning of 1945, allied forces including the Red Army are pushing forward into Germany. On May 8, 1945, the Germans will capitulate, and Russian, American, and British forces will take over Berlin and occupy Germany for the next 45 years. This was not an easily fought victory. In February 1945, the Soviet army is 50 miles away from the city of Dresden. The city is in a strategic position as far as supply of war materials are concerned and an important railroad hub. However, it is also a city known for its beauty and cultural riches. The new strategy of breaking people's moral (a strategy applied on both sides in the war), is a form of diminishing the will to fight and to turn against your leader and government. The bombings of Dresden will become one of the most severe examples of this strategy.

In this listening exercise you will watch and listen to a number of different viewpoints regarding the complexity of this particular example, but also to current difficult discussions about hatred, violence, and war crimes, and the justification of war in general.

### 1. Watch the British News Reel in its entirety.

Find five adjectives that best describe your impression of the video.

### 2. The Allies – A British War Veteran

Victor Gregg was a British prisoner of war of the Germans in February 1945. He experienced the bombings of the Royal Airforce first-hand.

- a. Watch the video in its entirety. After you watch, write down what you remember.
- b. Watch again. Stop and take notes as you go.

c. Read the questions, then watch the video a third time. Answer the questions according to your own observations.

1. Who are the participants at the beginning of the video?
2. What is the purpose of their gathering?
3. Why do you think they are holding hands?
4. Describe their faces. What do you see?
5. How does Victor Gregg feel about the bombings?
6. Which feelings stand out?
7. Which experience seems to matter the most to Briggs according to his personal story?

**3. A German Witness – Are the bombings of Dresden a war crime?**

1. Watch the video and take notes.
2. How old was Ernst during the bombings?
3. Ernst says: “A documentary is the most impressive historical witness”. DO you agree with Ernst? Explain your thinking.

4. Fill in the chart below according to the different voices in the video.

Can or should Dresden be viewed as a war crime?	Argument against	Argument for
Ernst Hirsch		
Historian: John Berwick		
Reporter		

## **D. Reflective Journal – Fact and Fiction in Historical Narratives**

The historian, John Berwick, points to the controversy that surrounds the different viewpoints about the bombings of Dresden. There are legal and moral implications that make it hard to determine. However, there is a consensus among historians, he says, that by the standards of the time, it was not a war crime. This is the interesting aspect of research. Different experts may arrive at different conclusions. And therefore, we need to cite our sources and compare different results and analyses of facts, records, and documents to arrive at conclusions that seem the most valid. In the video, the reporter mentions current far-right groups in Germany who exploit the bombings and distort history to boost their political ideology. Can you think of other examples where such distortions of historic facts are taking place? What, in your opinion, do we need to counteract such falsehoods and unfounded opinions?

## **E. The Berlin Airlift**

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

After the end of WW II, Germany was split up into different zones. Berlin itself was divided into four sectors: An American, British, French, and Russian sector. The Russian part of Germany and of Berlin were the largest. This is often explained by the fact that the Soviet Union fought the longest ground battles and were the first to invade on the ground in Berlin. The Soviet Union also lost the most soldiers during WWII. As a result of these partitions, the city of Berlin, despite the western sectors, was now surrounded by territory controlled by the Soviet Union. However, as the war came to and end, it soon became clear that the clashing systems between capitalism in the West, and communism in the East, would lead to conflict. This was the introduction to what became the “Cold War”; a dangerous competition between the two superpowers, United States, and the Soviet Union. This conflict lasted until the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

In 1948, the hostilities between the Western allies and the Soviet Union escalated. IN June 1948, the Russians decided to cut off West Berlin form all essentials supplies that were going to the city through the Soviet zone of Germany. Railroads, canals, and highways were blocked for entry from the West. As a response to this unique move by the Russians, the U.S. and their allies started the famous and unprecedented Berlin Airlift. For over a year, food, and other essential supplies were flown from Frankfurt A.M. airport to West Berlin in a steady stream of aircrafts lifting from Frankfurt or Berlin every minute of the day. The airlift lasted for over a year.

## 1. Listening and Writing Exercise

- a. Watch the video. Take notes. Watch the video a second time and fill in the chart below.

Fill in the main dates, events, and decisions that are made on both sides before and during the airlift of Berlin in 1948.

<b>Soviet Union/ events / people</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>Western Allies/ events/ people</b>	<b>DATE</b>

### b. Summary Writing

When you examine the events that led up to the airlift you can observe a long sequence of cause and effect and a long strain of actions and reactions that ended in what is called the “Cold War”. Summarize the developments that led up to the airlift and the cold war. Who did what and why, what were the reactions?

Min. 100 Words