

World history topic 11: Causes and effects of 20th century wars

This topic focuses on the causes, practice and effects of war in the 20th century. The topic explores the causes of wars, as well as the way in which warfare was conducted, including types of war, the use of technology, and the impact these factors had upon the outcome. Examination questions for this topic will require students to make reference to specific 20th-century wars in their responses, and some examination questions will require discussion of wars from more than one region of the world. Please note that the suggested examples for this topic include “cross-regional” wars such as the First and Second World Wars. In examination questions that ask students to discuss examples of wars from different regions, students may use these wars in a regional context (for example, the Second World War in the Pacific) but may not then use the same war in a different region (for example, the Second World War in Europe) in the same response.

Topic	Prescribed content
Causes of war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic, ideological, political, territorial and other causes Short- and long-term causes
Practices of war and their impact on the outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of war: civil wars; wars between states; guerrilla wars Technological developments; theatres of war—air, land and sea The extent of the mobilization of human and economic resources The influence and/or involvement of foreign powers
Effects of war	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The successes and failures of peacemaking Territorial changes Political repercussions Economic, social and demographic impact; changes in the role and status of women

Suggested examples

Please note that the examples provided here are **suggestions only**. Teachers are free to use examples from this list or any other appropriate examples, depending on the particular needs and interests of the teacher and students.

Africa and the Middle East: Algerian War (1954–1962); Nigerian Civil War (1967–1970); Iran–Iraq War (1980–1988); North Yemen Civil War (1962–1970); First Gulf War (1990–1991)

The Americas: Chaco War (1932–1935); Falklands/Malvinas War (1982); Mexican Revolution (1910–1920); Contra War (1981–1990)

Asia and Oceania: Chinese Civil War (1927–1937 and/or 1946–1949); Vietnam (1946–1954 and/or 1964–1975); Indo-Pakistan Wars (1947–1949 and/or 1965 and/or 1971)

Europe: Spanish Civil War (1936–1939); the Balkan Wars (1990s); Russian Civil War (1917–1922); Irish War of Independence (1919–1921)

Cross-regional wars: First World War (1914–1918); Second World War (1939–1945); Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905)