AS-Level HISTORY

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Britain 1906-1951

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2012-3 edition

Welcome to the Revision Guide to Britain 1906-1951. This booklet contains the essential content and detail you will need for your exam.

**Quick Introduction – what you need to know**

This course in a nutshell –

Britain between 1906 and 1951 underwent many crises (Two world wars, General Strike, Great Depression, poverty and ill health) **– how well did the Governments of the time respond to these?**

There were also lots of changes during this time (votes for women, people getting richer and poorer, Ireland, political change) – **but just how much did Britain change or stay the same?**

**EXAM STRUCTURE**

The exam will always consist of three questions, of which you choose two.

The two questions are broken down into a 12 mark and a 24 mark question.

The 12 mark question asks you to explain an event or a process.

The 24 mark question asks you to weigh up or evaluate how important or successful something was.

*These questions could be on anything in the course, so it is vital that you not only learn your content but practice applying it in questions. Use the structure and the question bank contained in this pack to start revising and practicing as soon as possible.*

You can **always** send questions, comments and practice answers to:

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**Britain 1906-1951: Part One –**

**THE LIBERAL LANDSLIDE AND REFORMS**By 1906, the Conservative Party had been in power for over 20 years. In the 1906 election, however, the Liberal Party, led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman won a massive majority of over 125 seats.   
  
**What were the reasons for the Liberal Landslide?**

**The Boer War (1899-1902)**

* The **Boer War** had begun in 1899 with expectations of an early and easy victory. But in the first year the British Army suffered a series of heavy defeats.
* British casualties were heavy; 6% of the 450,000 men recruited. The war showed up the inadequacy of the army and the unhealthy state of many recruits; **37% failed the medical**.
* The financial cost of the war was far greater than had originally been anticipated.
* The effect on national morale was even more serious: Britain had only just managed to defeat an army made up largely of farmers. This led to the debate over ‘National Efficiency’ and poverty.

**The Lib-Lab Pact**

* The Conservatives failed to take action to tackle the effects of the Taff Vale judgment, so the Labour Party sought an alliance with the Liberal Party.
* The Lib-Lab Pact was formed in 1903. The Two parties agreed not to fight against each other in constituencies at the next general election.
* Labour would then support Liberal reforms which would reverse Taff Vale. The Liberals also offered the prospect of social reforms

**The Education Act, 1902**

* Balfour’s Education Act (1902) brought all elementary schools under local council control. This was a much needed reform which was intended to establish parity between the schools across the country.
* But the Act angered Non-Conformists, whose schools were now largely controlled by Anglicans. They feared this would mean Anglican control of religious education.
* Some Non-Conformist schools refused to accept council supervision and went independent, but by 1906 most had been forced to give in because of lack of funds.

**Chinese Labour**

* In 1903, a Commission reported on the use of coolie (mostly Chinese) labour in the British Empire.
* Coolies were indentured labourers who had been brought to the West Indies and South Africa. The Commission criticised their treatment and there was a national scandal.

**Taff Vale Case (1901)**

* In 1901, the Taff Vale Case threatened the right to strike. The Taff Vale Railway Company sued the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants for damages after a strike.
* The company won and the ASRS had to pay damages and costs of £51,000.
* After Taff Vale, there was an increased willingness of trade unions to affiliate to the LRC. Membership rose from 376,000 (1901) to 998,338 (1906).

**Tariff Reform (1903)**

* In 1903, Joseph Chamberlain (Colonial Secretary) and the Tariff Reform League proposed duties on many imports to counter competition from cheaper foreign goods. The Empire would have been given preferential treatment.
* Balfour refused to accept the proposals because they would have increased the price of food and ended the policy of free trade that had been followed since the 1840s.
* Chamberlain resigned in September 1903 to campaign for Imperial Preference. This split the Unionist (Conservative) Party and gave the Liberals a major advantage.
* Balfour attempted to bridge the gap by using a threat of retaliation to force other countries to reduce tariffs.
* This only served to make Balfour look weak and indecisive.
* The Liberals were able to use Tariff reform in the 1906 campaign, when the Unionists (Conservatives) were painted as the party of expensive food.

**Why were reforms needed?**

* The work of Booth in London and Rowntree in York indicated that there was probably about **one third** of Britain’s urban dwellers living in absolute poverty.
* The publication of their reports in 1901-2 showed that the main cause of poverty was low pay and not idleness or profligacy. There was therefore little that the poor could do to improve themselves. Many Liberals were shocked by these findings.
* The case for the state to provide some kind of assistance for these people was growing stronger.
* The Boer War (1899-1902) showed the poor health of recruits. 37% of recruits were refused entry to the army on grounds of physical unfitness. In some city centres the number who failed the medical reached 90% (national efficiency)
* Medical inspections had resulted in the discovery that working class children were as much as 8 cm shorter than those from the middle class.

**Four reasons for STATE INTERVENTION and the NEW LIBERALISM**

* The above conditions prompted Liberals after 1906 to advocate financing social reform by such a means of taxation.
* The concept of ‘New’ Liberalism – this emerged from changing attitudes within the Liberal Party. It was held that state intervention was justifiable so people could be free **from** things like poverty and unemployment.
* The Majority Report of the Commission was in favour of moving away from the principle of deterrence and suggested that in future, the Poor Law should prevent and cure destitution rather than approach it in a punitive manner.
* Lloyd George was a catalyst. There is much debate whether Lloyd George was a ‘New’ Liberal, but he was aware that Liberalism would have to change if it was to succeed in the future.

## The 1906 General Election, the ‘Liberal Landslide’

* The Liberals won 377 seats and the Conservatives slumped to 157.

##### The Liberal Reforms 1906-1914

* Campbell-Bannerman was replaced as Prime Minister in 1908 by Asquith and Lloyd George became Chancellor of the Exchequer. .
* The Liberals now embarked on a ‘Radical crusade’ which was led by Lloyd George- he sought to blunt the power of the House of Lords and at the same time maintain and increase the appeal of the Liberal Party.

**The 9 essential Liberal reforms**

* **1906: Trades Disputes Act**. This reversed the Taff Vale Judgment (workers were now not to be liable for damages incurred in a strike).

#### This act has often been interpreted as a means of appeasing the Labour MPs and also the Labour Movement. The Liberals had been committed to some sort of action after the MacDonald-Gladstone Pact of 1903. Trade Union membership rose from 1.9m to 4.1m in 1914

* **1906- -Education (Provision of School Meals) Act**, local authorities could provide free school meals for children if their parents were too poor to do so, by 1914, the School Meals Service was providing more than 14 million school meals for about 158,000 children. This even included holidays and Saturdays.
* This act followed Labour pressure and seemed to indicate that the Liberals were not masters of their own fate.
* **1907-Education (Medical Inspection) Act**. This provided an annual inspection for all elementary school children in an effort to counteract diseases such as tuberculosis. This act resulted in the establishment of a medical department within the Board of Education.
* **1908- Children and Young Persons Act (Children’s Charter)** – borstals and juvenile courts introduced, buying of alcohol and tobacco by children banned and parents became legally responsible for their children’s welfare for the first time.
* **1908 Old Age Pensions** - non-contributory, giving 25p per week to single people over 70 and 37.5p to married couples. Income could not exceed £31, and those earning between £21 and £31 were on a decreasing sliding scale. Average life expectancy was 57, however.
* **1909 Trade Boards** set up to assist workers in the ‘sweated’ industries. These consisted of representatives of employers and workers and were intended to set minimum pay levels in occupations where there was no trade union representation. Further trade boards were set up by a second act in 1913.
* **1910 Labour Exchanges** were set up to assist the unemployed find out about job vacancies. Until then the only way of finding work was to walk from factory to factory. About 410 Labour Exchanges were set up. While at first they were greeted with enthusiasm, there were soon complaints of queues and excessive bureaucracy.
* **1911 National Insurance Act** provided a payment of 50p a week to a person who was off work because of illness. This was for 26 weeks. There were to be free medicines and medical treatment for the insured person. This was for all workers earning up to £160 per year and was funded by payments from the worker-4d, employer- 3d and the state- 2d

Remember them as TEEN COLT

**Trade Disputes Act**

**Education Act (Free school meals)**

**Education Act (medical inspections)**

**National Insurance Act**

**Children’s Charter**

**Old Age Pensions**

**Labour Exchanges**

**Trade Boards**

**How successful were the Liberal reforms?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Successful** | **Unsuccessful** |
| * Many now regard these social reforms as the beginnings of what became the **welfare state**. * The Health Insurance legislation covered 13 million people by 1914. * By 1914, almost one million people were claiming the old age pension and the cost to the exchequer was about £12 million. This was indicative of the new ‘interventionist’ role of government. * The O.A.P. act virtually ended outdoor relief to those over the age of seventy. * The reforms brought about a shift in attitudes to some of the most distressing social issues. It has been pointed out (Aikin) that the reforms of the Liberals softened the impact of the 1930s depression. | * Old Age Pensions were only paid at the age of 70, when average life expectancy was about 47. * Only the lowest paid workers were covered by National Insurance, and it only included men. * Health Insurance was not administered on a national basis. There was as yet no Ministry of Health – this was set up in 1919. * The medical treatment offered by the act did not include dentists and opticians and only covered the worker, NOT his family. * The Poor Law and the workhouses were not abolished. When benefits ended after 26 weeks or 15 weeks, the worker had to go to the workhouse. The Poor Law remained in place until 1929. |

**Constitutional Crisis: the Liberals and the House of Lords**

**FOUR reasons there was a crisis**

* 1. The Conservatives had used the House of Lords to block the **Home Rule Bill**.
* 2. In 1906-8 a series of key acts of policy (education, licensing, plural voting) had been defeated in the Lords.
* 3. Balfour made no secret that he was using the massive majority of Conservatives in the Lords to stop the Liberals.

**4. But the key factor in the crisis was the 1909 Budget.**

* A crisis flared up for the Liberals in 1909 because of the budget- the so-called ‘People’s Budget’. It was estimated that about £6 million would be needed to pay for the introduction of the old age pensions.
* The government had underestimated the number of people who would be entitled to claim Old Age Pensions.
* The budget was presented by Lloyd George as a ‘war budget’ which would fight poverty and would do so by raising taxes.
* Monies also had to be raised in the budget to pay for the defence of the country by building the new class of battleship- the ‘Dreadnought’.

**FIVE KEY FEATURES of the People’s Budget**

1. Death duties – tax on the property of those who died
2. Income tax for those earning more than £3,000
3. Duties on petrol, spirits, tobacco (a new road fund licence was introduced)
4. Supertax was imposed on those earning more than £5,000 per year.
5. A tax of 20% on land sold at a higher value than the purchase price.

* The budget seemed to be aimed at the rich. It was opposed by the Conservatives and rejected by the House of Lords, which in doing so broke a constitutional convention of 200 years.

**EFFECTS of the People’s Budget**

* There was fierce argument and debate in parliament throughout 1909. The Conservatives complained that the budget was a ‘class budget’. In all aspects they said the proposed taxes were aimed at the rich especially the landowner.
* The budget was not passed and Asquith called a general election in January 1910.
* The result was:

Liberals 275

Conservatives 273

Irish Nationalists 82

Labour 40

* The Liberals remained in office with the support of the Irish Nationalists who expected Home Rule to be introduced whenever the power of the Lords was reduced.
* The budget became law following the election.

**THE PARLIAMENT BILL – Reform of the House of Lords**

**Reasons for the Bill**

The Lords were Conservative, the House was Liberal, they could not agree and nothing could get done. Therefore reform was needed, and there were the following three reasons:

1) the People's budget (see above). Needed for reforms, passed by the House of Commons, rejected by House of Lords. Lords now interfering in financial matters, stopping the Liberals achieving their reforms.

2) the Third Home Rule bill. Needed to sort out Irish Problem. Passed by Commons, rejected by Lords. lords worried about losing their money and privileges in Ireland, loyal to the Protestant minority there. Lords therefore stopping Liberals sorting out a major problem in GB.

3) to make the country more democratic. Reducing power of Lords = more power to Commons who are elected. Country becomes more democratic as people are more in charge and can decide fate of country through elections, Lords can no longer stop bills only delay them.

Asquith then introduced a Parliament Bill which would limit the power of the House of Lords and would prevent them from rejecting a money bill. Other bills would only be delayed by two years.

* Asquith intended to ask the king (Edward VII) to create new peers so that the Conservative majority in the Lords would be surpassed. However, King Edward died in May 1910 and the crisis was held in abeyance for a period.
* A Constitutional Conference in July 1910 failed to break the deadlock and a second general election was held in December that year.

**HOW was the Bill Passed?**

* The Parliament Bill received its third reading in the Commons in May 1911 but it was savaged in the Lords. The Unionists were informed in early July that King George was prepared to create as many peers as were necessary in order to secure the passage of the Parliament Bill through the Lords.
* The third reading of the Parliament Bill in the Lords saw the Liberals win by a majority of 17, 37 Conservatives and 13 bishops had voted with the Liberals. There was now no need to create new peers.

**CONSEQUENCES OF THE PARLIAMENT ACT**

* **The Parliament Act of 1911** ensured that in future, finance bills could not be rejected and other bills could be delayed for only two years. In addition, the life of a parliament was reduced to five years.
* There were now no obstacles to further Liberal social reforms and the government was also in a position to introduce Home Rule for Ireland.

**Votes for Women**

**The Suffragists**

Their main aims was to use peaceful tactics that would persuade the general public and parliament that women ought to have the vote because they could act in a responsible and sensible way

* In 1910 they raised a petition of 280,000 signatures. Four years later, they arranged a ‘pilgrimage’ with women marching on London from several different directions and meeting in London on 26 July.

**The Suffragettes**

* More extreme during the period of 1905 to 1914.
* From 1905 to 1908 the emphasis was on marches, rallies and pestering Liberal candidates at elections. This began in October 1905 when Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst were arrested after interrupting a Liberal free trade meeting.
* From 1908 to 1910 the suffragettes began to throw stones at the windows of Downing Street and London clubs. They ambushed Cabinet Ministers and sometimes attacked them.

**How did the Liberals attempt to deal with Women’s Suffrage?**

* The government responded from 1909 by longer jail sentences and suffragettes retaliated with hunger strikes.
* The authorities responded with force-feeding, which, in turn, provided even greater sympathy and publicity.
* The problem was that the Liberals were divided over the issue of women’s suffrage. Lloyd George and Churchill favoured giving women the vote, but Asquith appeared to be against.

**How did the Suffragettes respond?**

* The result was a new outbreak of violence by the Suffragettes. Only a few days later, the WSPU organised a rally outside the Houses of Parliament, which ended in a fight with the police.
* In 1913 Emily Wilding Davison was killed when she threw herself in front of the King’s horse at the Derby. Lloyd George’s house was bombed in 1913.
* Many more suffragettes were arrested and went on hunger strike. The government responded, in 1913, with the Cat and Mouse Act
* This allowed hunger strikers to be released on licence if their health was threatened and then re-arrested if their health improved.

**Successes and Failures of the Suffragettes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Successes | Failures |
| * Militancy brought publicity and more support. * The anti-suffragists were forced to become more organised in order to counter the propaganda and impact of the suffragette campaign. * For example, a National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage was founded in 1911. It attracted women in its work. * There was a series of suffrage bills in the period 1908-11. Votes for women was back on the political agenda. * The apparent success of the WSPU forced the NUWSS into a more active role and membership increased. | * In many ways the activities of the suffragettes were counter-productive. * The violence of 1912-14 appears to have alienated public opinion. Moderate opinion was shocked by the extreme actions of the suffragettes. * The WSPU did not win over the leading Liberals such as Asquith. Indeed their harassment of leading ministers turned many against women’s suffrage. * They made it very difficult for Asquith to give way as this might set an unfortunate precedent for other pressure groups. Violence and militancy might be seen as a legitimate means of forcing reform. * Suffragette tactics also lost the support of many MPs. Suffrage bills before 1908 had usually achieved majorities on their second readings. The 1912 Conciliation Bill was defeated by a small majority. |

**Part Two- the Impact of the First World War**

**Between 1914 and 1918, Britain fought in the First World War against Germany and her allies. The war had several significant impacts upon Britain.**

**THE IMPACT OF THE WAR ON BRITAIN**

# **The Defence of the Realm Act**

* In the early months of the war the government gave itself extensive powers by passing The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) was passed in August 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War.
* It gave the government extensive powers, many of which were never used, for example, the following all became illegal; writing letters in code, using a camera without a permit, lighting bonfires, ringing church bells, buying binoculars, feeding bread to dogs and horses.
* Some of these powers were used, but most were not. For example, the numbers of horses were collected, in case of an emergency.
* More serious were restrictions on hoarding food and profiteering and the fact that suspected spies could be held without trial. Trade Union rights were limited and the government took the power to control rents and prices and seize land and horses.
* To increase the hours available for work, British Summer Time was introduced in 1916 for the first time.
* The opening hours of public houses were limited to prevent drunkenness. Alcoholic drinks were also watered down and buying rounds of drinks was banned.
* Convictions for drunkenness fell from 3388 in 1914, to 449 in 1918.
* Asquith’s policy of ‘business as usual’ continued into 1915, but the signs were already there that the war was not going to be won in that way.
* The turning point came in May 1915, when the army on the Western Front almost ran out of shells. The ‘Great Shell Shortage’, as it became, known had profound and far-reaching effects upon the war and upon the country.

**Formation of a National Coalition**

* The crisis also led to the creation of a National Coalition government. The Conservatives joined along with some Labour politicians. Thus marked the end of the last Liberal government.
* Asquith resigned at the beginning of December 1916 and Lloyd George replaced him.

**ECONOMIC impacts – STATE INTERVENTION  
Munitions**

**In 1914, the Liberals thought that the economy would provide for the war if it was left alone. By 1918, the government had taken control of almost all the economy. However in 1915, there was a ‘Shells Crisis’ not enough bombs were being made and the Generals were complaining that this was losing them the war.   
By early 1915, two million shells (bombs) had been produced, by 1918 this was 187 million. 270 machine guns were made in 1914, 120,000 were made in 1918.   
  
To do this, a Ministry of Munitions (weapons) was set up – the government took over and set up its own factories to make weapons. One in Leeds employed 16,000 people and made 25 million shells a year. The Ministry of Munitions managed 250 factories, controlled 20,000 more and employed 4 million people. They controlled wages, prices, profits and bought 90% of all imports to the country.**

* The most immediate effect was the creation of a new ministry, the Ministry of Munitions. The new minister was David Lloyd George. He became responsible for reorganising the munitions industry on a proper war footing.
* By the end of 1915 seventy-three new factories had been set up to manufacture and repair munitions.
* To ensure that supplies of raw materials were forthcoming, Lloyd George also brought quarries, mines, and many private firms under government control. Businessmen were brought in to run the new industry.
* After Shells Crisis of 1915 - Ministry of Munitions – 73 new factories set up  
  18 x ammunition produced after 1915, 400 x grenades, 12 x machine guns, 20 x mortars  
  120 railway companies taken over by government  
  Coal production after state intervention – 262m tonnes – an all time record  
  Supertax on those earning over £2,500
* After Lloyd George's changes there were no further problems with the supply of weapons and ammunition.
* He galvanised production. He had increased the rate of production of ammunition 18 fold; grenades four hundred fold, machine guns 12 fold and trench mortars 20 fold.

In 1913, the government was spending £200m a year. This rose to £2,600 million by 1918. Britain’s national debt rose by 1200%. This had to be borrowed from its own people or other countries (USA).   
  
JP Morgan (a US banking firm) financed much of these loans and allowed Britain to keep spending. Britain loaned $5,000 million from US banks and government in 1915. The war cost Britain $5m a day, of which $2m came from the USA.   
  
Taxes had to be increased, on both the middle class and workers. Income tax (a tax which affects the rich) was greatly extended. There was a huge tax on land, with 25% of the lands of the rich families having to be sold off between 1917-21.

**Other examples of State Intervention during World War One**

* The railway network was taken over so that transport could be co-ordinated in the national interest. In 1914 there had been more than 120 railway different companies.
* All coalmines were taken over by the government. In 1917 coal was the most important fuel. It not only heated most homes, but was also needed to produce iron and steel and provided the power for trains and most ships.
* Once again State Intervention was very successful and in 1917 production reached an all time record of 262,000,000 tonnes. At the same time wages in the industry rose and the safety record improved.
* This was the first time that the British government had assumed such responsibility for the people of Britain and for its economy. His policies were major factors in the winning of the war.

**Conscription**

**Before 1914, Britain relied on volunteers to join its army. ‘Voluntarism’ continued for the first two years of the war and was very successful – 2 million men volunteered to fight up to 1916: the largest volunteer army in History.   
However, the war was so brutal, with hundreds of thousands of casualties in battles like Ypres and the Marne, that conscription was introduced for the first time. All single men 18-41 were forced to fight by the Military Service Act of January 1916. This was then extended to married men.  
In February 1918 this was extended to men 18-50.   
Men who refused were imprisoned, those who deserted from the army were shot.**

**SOCIAL IMPACTS  
WOMEN**

* In 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War there were nearly 5,900,000 women working in Britain, out of a total female population of 23,700,000.
* The most common job was Domestic Service. About 1,500,000 women worked as Domestic Servants.
* About 900,000 women also worked in Textiles and another 500,000 in the Sweated Trades.
* Women were normally paid two-thirds of a man’s wage, or even less, and were rarely promoted above men.

# **Why did the situation change?**

* The Great Shell Shortage in May 1915 meant that many new factories were opened.
* Lloyd George became Minister for Munitions and began to recruit women to work.
* In July 1915 the Suffragettes organised a Right to Work march in London.
* By the end of the year things were very different. As more and more men joined the Army more and more women were needed to take their places.
* In 1916 Conscription was introduced. Now even more women were needed. Women began to take over many more jobs that men had left to go and fight.

# **What work did women do during the First World War?**

* **Munitions workers** got good wages, £3 a week. This was the most common job that women took on, working in munitions factories making shells and guns. 62 new factories were opened in 1915 alone.

**The extent to which changes to the opportunities and the status of women outlasted the war**

* When the war ended most women were sacked and their jobs were given to men.
* The number of women in domestic service rose again to 1,850,000. This was higher than the number before the First World War. The increase was caused by the slump which began in 1920.

**BUT there were some changes**

* Women began to be accepted as lawyers, doctors and schoolteachers.
* Women got the vote at 30 in 1918 and at 21 in 1928. The first woman MP took her seat in 1919.

#### **Why were some women given the vote in 1918?**

* In 1916 a new register of voters was compiled. The government realised that many men who had served in the war were no longer able to vote.
* Men got the vote because they had been conscripted during the war and forced to fight and die for their country. It would have looked very unfair if men who had fought for their country had lost the right to vote.
* A special clause in the Representation of the People Act (1918) actually allowed men aged 18 and over to vote in the December 1918 general election if they had served in the armed services during the war.
* In 1918 all men got the vote at 21 and women got the vote at 30. But women had to be householders or married to a householder..

**IRELAND**

* Home Rule Bill (granted more power to Catholics) opposed by Conservatives in House of Lords (who sympathised and were supported by Protestants) in 1912.
* UVF attracts 200,000 Protestants and 30,000 rifles into a private army against Home Rule in 1912 – Irish Volunteers formed as a Catholic army in 1914 – Civil War approaching
* First World War breaks out in 1914 – issue shelved – UVF becomes 36th Ulster Division of British Army, and Irish Catholics sign up en masse to fight
* However, in 1916 – the Easter Rising takes place in Dublin – rebellion in Ireland with the perpetrators executed, creating great sympathy for Irish independence
* 1919-1921 the Anglo-Irish War breaks out with great atrocities on both sides- British send ‘Black and Tans’ which commit harsh actions on population
* 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty signed dividing (partitioning) the country

**EFFECT OF THE WAR on The Liberal Government**

**The result of the 1918 election was a disaster for the Liberal party.**

* 484 National Coalition MPs were returned (338 Cons, 136 Lloyd George Liberals, 10 Lab), 63 Lab but only 28 Squiffites (Asquith lost his own seat).
* This increased the hatred felt by the two wings of the party for each other at a time when the new changes in franchise (1918 Act) together with the huge social and political changes throughout post-war Europe meant that the Liberals needed to be united.

**PART THREE – POSTWAR: 1918-1929  
Post-war changes**

* Lloyd George wanted to build on the successes of the pre-war Liberal Reforms and build a ‘Land Fit for Heroes’
* Lloyd George’s plans were not fully carried out.

**HOUSING**

In 1919, Addison’s Housing Act provided subsidies to private builders to and placed responsibility for dealing with housing shortages on local authorities.

* Addison’s scheme proved expensive and was opposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain.
* It transpired that houses costing £800 could be built for £300, but nevertheless h the scheme did result in 213,000 being built and 110,000 in 1922 alone.
* Addison was sacked in 1921 and used as a scapegoat for the overall failure of Lloyd George’s plans and the need for retrenchment, which resulted in the ‘Geddes’ Axe’..

**Why did the British economy suffer after the First World War?**

* Britain had borrowed £850 million from the USA and had to pay it back. At the same time, £1.75 million had been loaned to Russia, which was not paid back.
* Britain’s total debt was £8bn
* During the war all British industries had worked at maximum production. They had produced exclusively for the war effort.
* Exports dropped very quickly because the government bought up everything that was produced. In textiles, for example, Britain almost stopped exporting altogether. The balance of payments went from a surplus to a deficit
* Many British firms were smaller than those abroad. In 1917 all of the coalmines had been nationalised (taken over by the government) but in 1919 they were handed back to their previous owners..
* In turn, the fall in decline for ships hit the iron and steel industries and then the coal industry. During the 1920s unemployment rose steadily.

**Unemployment**

* After a short post-war boom in 1919, unemployment rose in 1920. It never fell below 1 million throughout the decade.
* The Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 extended the 1911 scheme and gave unemployment insurance to all workers and also did away with the period of benefits.
* The system was extended by creating the ‘Dole’, or ‘uncovenanted benefit’. This offered payments to the unemployed to tide them over extreme difficulty. It became widespread, and very unpopular, in the 1930s.
* It was not part of National Insurance and therefore created a deficit in government finance.
* In 1913 only 5.5% of national income went on health and welfare, but by 1924 the figure had risen to 10.3%.
* National Insurance cost £3m in 1911 to £12m in 1921

**Why did the Coalition Government come to an end in 1922?**

**FAILURES OF THE COALITION**

* Lloyd George’s promises of a ‘home fit for heroes to live in’ did not materialise. Housing and education both suffered severely in the post-war slump.
* Increasingly, Lloyd George was the Liberal prime minister of a Conservative government. Whilst most leading Conservatives supported him, the rank and file began to turn against him.
* New members elected in 1918 were much less likely to support Lloyd George.
* His policy over Ireland (partition and independence) was unpopular with the Unionist wing.
* The Lloyd George fund sold honours for donations made to the Government, suggesting dishonesty and corruption. Lloyd George was accused of ‘selling’ honours - £10,000 for a knighthood, £40,000 for a title (90 created by this scheme)
* His support for Greece against Turkey and the Chanak incident were the final straw. It seemed that he was taking Britain to war over a minor incident.
* Rebellion was led by Stanley Baldwin, the President of the Board of Trade, who won the support of Conservative back-benchers at a Carlton Club meeting in October 1922. Conservatives voted 187-87 to abandon Lloyd George in 1922

**The Conservatives in power 1922-4**

* Bonar Law resigned as prime minister because of ill health and was replaced by Baldwin in May 1923.
* Baldwin decided to put forward a scheme for imperial preference, which meant protective tariffs and cheaper imports from the Empire and Commonwealth.
* This did not go down well at the election in December 1923. The Liberals and Labour supported free trade as did the press.
* Ramsay MacDonald formed the first Labour government in 1924 with Liberal support.

**THE FIRST LABOUR GOVERNMENT, 1924**

* Labour could only take office if supported by Liberals.
* Asquith believed that Labour in power would be irresponsible and would pander to the Trade Unions.
* Liberals would be in control of the timing of a Labour government’s defeat and the subsequent election.

**Policies**

* There was no provocative legislation; Wheatley’s Housing Act was both responsible but responding to need of working class.
* Minor increases in welfare provision including increase in pensions.
* MacDonald (also acting as Foreign Secretary) also signed Geneva Protocol and Dawes Plan – seen as great successes.

**Labours link to COMMUNISM**

* Anglo-Soviet treaty showed Labour’s weaknesses to accusations of softness on Communism, as in 1924 they agreed to trade links and aid to the Soviet government.
* Zinoviev Affair – the publication of a forged letter by the Daily Mail from Soviet Union leader Zinoviev, ordering British communists to bring down the government and infiltrate the Labour Party.
* The Campbell Affair – Macdonald uses influence to overcome trial of a left-wing journalist, holds vote of confidence in Parliament, which he loses.

**Results**

* Whilst there was some scandal in the Campbell case and controversy over the Zinoviev letter, nevertheless MacDonald did achieve his electoral aim in the 1924 General Election, yet the Conservatives formed the next government

**CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT 1924-29**

* Baldwin became prime minister with the aim of restoring stability. He wanted to increase exports and reduce unemployment.
* It had been assumed since 1919 that a key part of this policy was restoring parity with the dollar, which in turn would allow Britain to reclaim its title as the financial capital of the world.
* In April 1925, Britain reverted to the gold standard at $4.85. This had the effect of raising the prices of British exports and making imports cheaper and London was to recover its pre-war position.

**The General Strike, 1926**

**Why was there a General Strike in 1926?**

* Syndicalism, an extreme form of Trade Unionism that called for confrontation between workers and employers appeared in Britain from France and the USA. Syndicalism led to unions forming alliances to fight the employers and the government.
* Prices began to rise, but wages rose more slowly. Imports were cheaper than British goods.
* The Triple Alliance of the Transport Workers, Railwaymen and the Coal-miners was formed. This raised the possibility of a **sympathy** strike.

**What happened after the War?**

* The owners announced an immediate wage cut, because the price of coal had fallen by more than 50%.
* Britain could now import cheap coal from Germany and Poland. The miners retaliated by calling on the Triple Alliance to back them in a strike.
* The strike was fixed for Friday 15th April 1921, but at the last moment the Transport Workers and railwaymen backed out. The miners had to accept wage cuts. This became known as 'Black Friday'.
* The price of coal began to rise from 1922 to 1925, wages also rose, but from 1925, when the price began to fall again.

**How did the Government respond?**

* It wanted to build up coal stocks so that it could defeat the strike. By April 1926, there was nine months supply of coal in Britain.
* It wanted the strike to take place in the spring, when heating would not be important.
* It wanted to lay plans to deal with the strike and move soldiers to important places in the country. It set up the O.M.S., the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, and called for volunteers to help keep the country running. 70,000 people came forward.
* It set up the 'British Gazette', a government run newspaper to attack the strike using propaganda.

**What happened in April 1926?**

* The government suddenly announced that the subsidy was coming to an end. The mine owners announced wage cuts and longer hours. The miners went on strike on 1st May.
* Talks began between the government and the TUC. But when printers at the Daily Mail refused to print an article describing the unions as revolutionaries, the government used this as an excuse to break off talks on 1st May.
* The TUC announced that a General Strike would begin at midnight on 3rd May.

**What happened during the General Strike?**

* Workers came out on strike in two waves, on 4th and 11th May.
* On 4th May printers, transport workers, iron and steel, gas, electricity and building workers were called out. On 11th May engineers and shipbuilders were called out.
* At first the atmosphere was calm, even friendly, but after a few days there was growing violence. Buses were attacked and volunteer drivers heckled. Some trains were derailed.
* This disturbed the TUC leaders, who had expected an easy victory. They were also not ready for the attacks that were made on them in the British Gazette.
* On 12th May, the TUC announced that the strike was over. It believed that the miners would get a fair deal from the government, but the government had made no promises and regarded the end of the strike as surrender.

**Why did the General Strike fail? (SEVEN REASONS)**

* The O.M.S. proved very successful. Many students and middle class people volunteered. They were not able to replace the strikers, but they managed to keep services running.
* The TUC was not ready for action and was taken by surprise by the governments plans.
* The police were used to protect volunteer bus-drivers and the army protected convoys of lorries moving in and out of the docks. The navy patrolled waters of the main seaports. 70,000 volunteers were used in all
* The government set up a huge prefabricated village in Hyde Park, which was to be used as a distribution centre for food and other essentials. In fact this was hardly used, because by the time it was built the strike was over.
* The propaganda published by the British Gazette proved very effective. It was edited by Winston Churchill, who decided to attack the strikers as being unconstitutional.
* Churchill accused the strikers of trying to overthrow the government and bring about a revolution. The TUC had no answer to these attacks.
* The TUC leaders were divided. Many were reluctant to strike in favour of the miners an looked for a way to bring the strike to an end as soon as possible.

**What happened after the end of the General Strike?**

* The miners stayed out on strike for another six months, but then went back and had to accept lower pay and longer hours.
* The Trade Disputes Act was passed in 1927; this made sympathy strikes illegal. This meant that a general strike could never be held again.
* The Trade Union Act stated that in future trade unions could only collect money from their members to support the Labour Party if the members agreed individually.
* The number of people contributing to the Labour Party fell by 35%. Trade Union membership fell by 30%.
* Many strikers, particularly railwaymen, were victimised by their employers. They lost their jobs, or were demoted.

**Why was the end of the General Strike a ‘missed opportunity’?**

* There had been considerable opposition in the Labour Party and the TUC to the General Strike. The end could have been an occasion for reconciliation.
* The Trade Disputes Act and Trade Union Act were seen as vindictive. The treatment of strikers went far beyond what most people regarded as acceptable.
* Baldwin failed to take advantage of the ground swell of support for the government. His overall policy was safety first’.
* Neville Chamberlain’s attempts to reform health and welfare were resisted in the Cabinet as unemployment rose and exports fell.
* Unemployment had risen steadily since 1924. Baldwin seems to have believed that the problem would sort itself out in the end.

**Why did Baldwin lose the 1929 election?**

* Most voters wanted a change. The Liberals, led by Lloyd George, proposed a massive series of policies to tackle unemployment and industrial and social problems in the ‘Yellow Book’. But most voters turned to Labour.

**PART FOUR - BRITAIN, 1929-1940  
A Great Depression, triggered by the 1929 Wall Street Crash, causes massive social and economic problems for the Governments of the 1930s.**

**THE GREAT DEPRESSION**

**Initial Responses**

**LABOUR responses, 1929-1931**

* Labour Party policies were aimed at improving social conditions; the Housing Act, 1930, encouraged slum-clearance; the Coal Mines Act stabilised wages.
* There were also plans for amalgamation of industry and schemes for public works. However, the latter would only be undertaken if they were self-supporting.
* Almost all of the Party’s plans, however, were overwhelmed when, in October 1929, the Wall Street Crash sparked off the Great Depression.

**The National Government**

* A National Government was set up in Britain in August 1931, when the Labour Cabinet resigned rather than agree to cuts in unemployment benefit.
* A National Government was formed of four Labour ministers, four Conservatives and two Liberals.

**Why was the National Government set up in 1931?**

* By the end of 1930, the number of unemployed in Britain had reached 2,660,000. Industrial profits fell by 16% in that year, but wages had fallen only by 1.5% in the same period.
* The economic crisis was worsened by the gold standard. Since 1925, gold reserves (needed for essential imports) had risen by just £7 million; at the same time, French reserves had risen by £565 million.
* There were considerable stocks of foreign reserves held in London, but these began to be withdrawn after the US banks recalled loans from Europe.
* A ‘run on the bank’ - £2.5 million had been withdrawn on average every day in the previous fortnight.
* The Government set up the May Committee to investigate the problem. It reported on 31 July 1931 that urgent measures were needed to avoid complete financial collapse. It predicted a deficit of £120 million
* The Government appealed to the USA for loans, but the US banks insisted on cuts in government spending, including possible reductions in unemployment payments.
* When the Labour Cabinet discussed the proposal a majority (12-7) voted against making the cuts. Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were among those in favour.
* MacDonald went to see King George V to resign. The King persuaded MacDonald to stay on as Prime Minister because he believed that the crisis would only get worse if there was a general election.
* MacDonald agreed because he believed that there was a national crisis. He was regarded as a traitor by the Labour Party and was expelled. .

**How did the National Government try to tackle the Depression?**

**Short Term Measures**

* These were designed to restore confidence in Britain abroad and persuade the American banks to lend money to the government. There were anticipated deficits of £275 million in the next two years.
* An emergency budget was introduced in September 1931. Income tax and excise duties were raised. These raised about £170 million.
* Cuts in the pay of people employed by the government, e.g. teachers, the police, the armed forces etc. these cuts raised a further £52 million. Unemployment benefit was also cut by 10% and raised £14 million.
* £80m was loaned from the USA
* Unemployment benefit was reduced to one year, as a temporary measure. After that, claimants would receive ‘uncovenanted benefit’ ‘the Dole; the ‘Means’ Test’ was introduced. This meant that people had to have their houses inspected after one year. They could be forced to sell possessions if they wanted to go on getting benefits.
* Britain went off the gold standard, which was in effect a devaluation of sterling, after £200 million had been withdrawn from London since the beginning of September.
* Gold standard abandoned in September 1931, value of pound drops from $4.86 to $3.40
* The Budget did not go unchallenged. At Plymouth and Invergordon there were protests by sailors at pay cuts. The ‘Invergordon Mutiny’ took place on 13-14 September when men on shore leave refused to return for duty. The Mutiny was easily settled and there was no disciplinary action.

**Medium Term Measures**

* The Import Duties Act put a 10-20% duty on all imports. This increased the cost of all foreign goods and encouraged people to buy British.
* The Ottawa Agreements allowed the Commonwealth countries to trade with each other on preferential terms.
* The Exchange Equalisation Account, which kept reserves of gold and foreign currency in Britain.

**What did the government do to get industry going again?**

* The National Government tried to help the old industries by encouraging amalgamation and rationalisation.
* Amalgamation meant trying to persuade small companies to join together with other ones to grow bigger. This would make it possible to produce goods at lower prices.
* Rationalisation meant reducing competition by closing down smaller and less profitable companies.
* These policies were followed in cotton, coal, shipbuilding and iron and steel. The new, large companies were given governments grants to help them find work. It was fine if you had a job, but in many areas it only made the problem worse.
* In 1934, the government passed the Special Areas Act, which offered grants to companies that would move to the worst hit areas of unemployment, but only £2,000,000 was offered.
* The result was that unemployment only came down very slowly in those areas.
* In agriculture, Marketing Boards were set up to guarantee minimum prices for produce and to stabilise production. The first was in the Wheat Act in 1932 and was followed by the Milk Marketing Board in 1933.

**The effects of the Depression**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **The Depression had a large effect** | **The Depression had a minimal effect** |
| * The Old Industries were worst affected. These were the industries that Britain had developed during the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. * The Old industries had developed around the coal-fields of the north because they had depended upon steam power. They mostly produced raw materials or heavy goods, such as ships. * Worst hit of all was shipbuilding. If no one wanted to buy and sell anything, then no new ships were needed. * From shipbuilding unemployment spread to steel making and coalmining. During the First World War both these industries had worked at full capacity, but after the war they faced foreign competition. German and Polish coal was cheaper than British coal in the 1920s. * Textiles were also affected as man-made fibres were invented in the 1920s and soon become popular. British textile industries also faced increasing competition from Japan and the USA during the 1920s * The worst affected areas were south Wales, the North West, the North East and central Scotland. These were the areas where the Old industries were concentrated. | * In the South East and the Midlands the effects of the Depression were much less serious. Here the New industries developed. Here unemployment was often only 3-5%. * The new industries developed in the 1920s. They were able to take advantage of the new production methods such as the Assembly Line and they used electricity as their source of power. * The opening of the National Grid in 1926 meant that the new industries could be located anywhere. * The new industries mostly produced consumer goods, such as wirelesses, cookers, bicycles, motor cars and vacuum cleaners. * The assembly line meant that these products came down in price. The price of a car fell by 70% in the 1920s. * The products produced by the new industries made life easier, so many people bought them. They found that they had more leisure time and more money to spend on entertainment. * Therefore, the majority of people in Britain living in the south and the Midlands found that their standard of living went up.   The cinema boomed and Billy Butlin set up holiday camps. People had time and money to spare. |

**How did standard of living change?**

* In Britain, during the 1930s, about 10% of the population suffered great hardship. The remainder found that life became easier.
* Not only did prices fall substantially, but it was the prices of basic products, clothing and food that were affected.
* New chain stores appeared that offered more choice, more competition and lower prices.
* There was also whole new range of labour saving devices and new forms of entertainment that not only made life easier, but also more exciting.

**But the picture was very different in the north.**

* In the areas of Britain where the Old industries had grown up, unemployment soon became very high.
* The worst affected town of all was Jarrow, near Newcastle, where unemployment reached 80% at one point. This was because most people in the town depended upon one shipyard for their livelihood.

**The Jarrow Crusade - causes**

* The town of Jarrow was a famous shipbuilding town, mostly building warships, demand for which was falling.
* The end came in 1934. A group of shipyard owners set up National Shipbuilders' Security Ltd. They decided to buy up smaller yards and then scrap them.
* The result for Jarrow was appalling. Unemployment reached 80% at one point. When the novelist J.B. Priestley visited the town in 1934, he recorded that only one in three shops was open and men were standing around on street corner in there hundreds.

**The Jarrow Crusade**

* In 1936, Jarrow made one last effort. A march was organised by the people of the town from Jarrow to London. The object was to attract attention to the plight of the town.
* 200 men marched from Jarrow to London, some 270 miles, led by the mayor, the MP Ellen Wilkinson and town councillors.
* They marched in step in their best clothes so that they would have the greatest possible impact on the people that they passed. They met great support and sympathy on their way to London, but when they arrived, nothing happened.
* The Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin refused to make any comment in the House of Commons. He was almost totally immersed in the Abdication Crisis.

**How successful was the National Government in tackling the Depression?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Successes | Failures |
| * There were no dramatic actions, as in the USA and Germany. The National Government was essentially a Conservative government and followed conservative principles. * By 1939, unemployment was down by about one third from its peak and was still higher than it had been in 1929. * Industrial production was 20% higher in 1937 than it had been in 1929. In France and the USA it had fallen. * The greatest successes of the National Government were in stabilising national finances. Abandoning the gold standard and the Exchange Equalisation account were key moves, as were, to a lesser extent, the Ottawa Agreements. * National Government wins 2/3 of overall votes in 1931 * Unemployment – 2.64m in 1931, 2m in 1935, 1.6m in 1939 * 1m affordable houses made available, 2.5m more on the market * 1924-1935 cinema audiences rise from 36,000 per year to 8m per year | * There were no large scale programmes of public works and the only area of real expansion was in housing, which was mostly in private hands. * Government sponsored schemes in ship-building, only benefited limited areas; there was no help for small yards such as Palmer’s in Jarrow. Jarrow – 80% of town unemployed * The Special Areas Act was half-hearted and lacked the finance that would have been necessary to have had a real impact. Special Areas Act gave only £2m to help affected areas * Exports showed an overall decline. |

#### **Political extremism in the 1930s**

#### During the second Labour government, one of its junior ministers, Oswald Mosley, urged it to adopt a radical programme of public works to tackle the Depression.

#### When the Cabinet refused, he resigned and formed the ‘New Party’; this became the British Union of Fascists in 1932.

#### In the 1931 election, Mosley and all of his supporters lost their seats; in 1935, he was unable to fight after events in Germany resulted in many supporters leaving the party.

#### In 1936, he adopted more aggressive tactics, including the Battle of Cable Street. The government passed the [Public Order Act 1936](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_Order_Act_1936), specifically to deal with the BUF.

#### It banned political uniforms and military style organisations and came into effect on [1 January](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_1) [1937](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1937).

* The Communist Party of Great Britain during this time sold 80,000 newspapers and had high-level recruits at Cambridge University, who went on to spy for the Soviet Union (the Apostles). However CPGB membership peaked at 18,000 members.
* British Union of Fascists had 50,000 members at its height  
  October 1936, serious disorder at the Battle of Cable Street  
  Daily Mail announced support for the fascists  
  Communist Party of Great Britain won 27,000 votes in 1935, sold 80,000 newspapers  
  CPGB recruited ‘Apostles’ famous Cambridge graduates who spied for Soviet Union  
    
  **LABOUR RECOVERY DURING THE 1930s**

#### **Labour had all but destroyed itself during the Macdonald years, but by 1940 was ready to join the wartime coalition and by 1945 won a great victory. Why?**

#### **They were the major opposition party since the Liberals had split apart in 1931 – therefore any anti-Conservative feeling would automatically go to Labour**

#### **Unemployment rose to 3 million in 1932, with Labour seen as a workers party**

#### **Moderates like Ernest Bevin took charge of trade union affairs, reducing the worry that Labour would bring back extreme socialism**

#### **Clement Attlee took over in 1935 – he was quiet but driven, and known as a moderate**

#### **Attlee drove the party away from pacifism and took an active stance against Nazi Germany in the 1930s, driving up their popularity**

**As Stalin industrialised Russia and Russia eventually joined the war in 1941, left-wing became more respectable. Not only this, but Labour was able to portray a firm belief in moderate Parliamentary democracy. Cripps and the Socialist League were expelled.**

#### **PART FIVE - The Second World War 1939-1945**

The Second World War began as a dispute over the Polish border – it grew into a World War with huge social and political consequences for Britain. It started with a Conservative government and Britain creeping out of a depression – it ended with victory abroad and political revolution at home, with a Labour government and a welfare state.

**APPEASEMENT**

**Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister from 1937, decided to ‘appease’ Hitler, hoping through diplomacy to satisify Hitler’s territorial demands and avoid war.**

**In 1936 – Britain and France did not respond to remilitarization of Rhineland  
In 1938 – Britain and France did not respond to Anschluss  
In 1938 – Munich Conference hands over Sudetenland to Germany  
Only in 1939, with German moves against Czechoslovakia and Poland, was appeasement abandoned. Appeasement was wildly popular, with a war on a weak economy and low readiness not favoured by the public.**

**How did the government react when war broke out?**

* Gas-masks had been produced for everybody in the population and air-raid shelters had been constructed.
* Cinemas and theatres were closed and new regulations were introduced by the Defence of the Realm Act. It became an offence to be seen without a gas-mask
* Otherwise, the prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, reacted slowly to events. Rationing was only introduced in January 1940.
* He clung on to the hope that there would be peace; this was reinforced by the ‘Phoney War’ from September to April 1940.
* Chamberlain resigned after the disastrous Norway campaign in May 1940 and was replaced by Winston Churchill.
* After the invasion of France, Churchill was put under great pressure to reach a negotiated peace, particularly from Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary.
* Churchill insisted that Britain must fight on and was supported by his deputy prime minister, Clement Attlee (Labour)

# **Evacuation**

* Evacuation was the moving of children and other vulnerable people from areas that were likely to be bombed during the Second World War.
* The whole transport system was taken over for the purpose.
* The people who were moved were children, their teachers, pregnant women and the elderly. Altogether about 1,250,000 people were evacuated

### What effects did evacuation have upon people in Britain?

* Evacuation led to a complete mixing of social classes. Children from middle class families were sent to live with working class families and vice versa.
* Many people were horrified at the state of health of evacuees who came from city centres. In 1941 the Women’s Institute compiled a report on the health of evacuees and listed the problems that they suffered from.

# **Rationing**

* Rationing began in January 1940 and continued throughout the war. At first only some food were rationed, but clothing, soap and furniture were all added later.
* Rationing did not end in 1945, but lasted until 1953. Some foods, notably bread, were rationed for the first time after the end of the war.

**Why was rationing introduced?**

* To ensure that there were adequate supplies of food. Britain in 1914 and 1939 only produced about 45% of its food supply, the rest was imported.
* To try to ensure that people in Britain were as healthy as possible; this had two purposes, not only would people be fit to work, but they would also needs little hospital care or other medical treatment.  **The impact of ‘total war’ upon society and attitudes**

**What happened to people’s health during the Second World War?**

* During the war people began to get healthier. This was partly because the British Government wanted them to and partly because rationing stopped the eating of foods that were unhealthy and compelled the consumption of foods which were healthy.

**What were the consequences of rationing?**

* The ease with which the nation's health was improved was noticed by many people, including the playwright George Bernard Shaw. He commented on the improvement in complexions and the reduction in obesity.
* Consumption of potatoes rose by 40%, vegetables by 30% and milk by 30%.
* More than 50% of working people began to keep allotments. These were part of the ‘Dig for Victory’ campaign that encouraged people to grow as much of their own food as possible. By 1943 there were 1,400,000 allotments in Britain.
* Rationing also affected clothing, furniture and petrol. The number of points for clothing fell throughout the year and cheap good quality furniture, with the ‘utility mark’ was produced.

### Women during the Second World War

* During the Second World War the number of women working in Britain doubled; more than 7,000,000 altogether. More than 500,000 women were in the armed services. Of 16m eligible females, 45% performed some sort of war service
* 1.85m in munitions, 3.1m in full time jobs, 467,000 in non-combat army roles
* Conscription for unmarried women was introduced in 1942. This was later extended to married women without children.
* Conscription was introduced so that women could fill non-combatant roles in the armed forces. This would release men for active duties. Women took over many roles in planning, secretarial work, support duties, administration and maintenance.
* Many of the new aircraft produced for the RAF were delivered by women pilots, although they were not allowed to fly missions. One woman pilot said that she had to know how to fly twenty-nine different planes.
* The Butler Education Act gave all girls secondary education for the first time and this was the beginning of equality.

**Social Change during World War Two**

* By 1941, 3 million men in uniform, of which 1 million were volunteers
* Unemployment was 1 million in 1939, falling to 500,000 in 1942 and disappearing by 1943
* People were working 12 hour days, and strike restrictions emant only 2m working days were lost 1940-5 compared to 5m in the First World War
* Membership of Trade Unions grew from 6.3m to 8.9m
* Average male weekly earnings grew 80% 1938-1945, but service pay was quite low
* Middle and Upper classes were hit with death duties, high taxation and limits on profit
* Housebuilding was stopped during the war – in fact 4 million were destroyed by Luftwaffe
* 60,000 civilians killed by German bombing
* By the end of the war, 93% of British males registered for war service (14.9m)
* National Service Act passed to enforce conscripton – 1.5m join by end of 1939
* 3.5m houses destroyed, 22.5m people moved house  
  Unemployment falls to 500,000 in 1942 and 0 in 1943  
  Number of strikes rises from 940 in 1939 to 2,300 in 1945  
  Government expenditure rose from 1.4bn to 6.1bn
* Emergency Powers Act 1939 - 1,800 British subjects interned during war

# **The Beveridge Report**

* In 1941, in the middle of the **Second World War** the British Government asked Sir William Beveridge to lead a Royal Commission to consider how Britain should be rebuilt after the war. The Beveridge Report was published in 1942.

### What did the Beveridge Report recommend?

* Beveridge recommended that the people of Britain should be protected from Five Giant Evils, Squalor, Ignorance, Want, Idleness and Disease. It went on to explain how this could be done.
* Beveridge said that the Government should take responsibility for the people of Britain, ‘From the Cradle to the Grave’. It recommended that a Welfare State should be set up in Britain.

**Why did Beveridge recommend that a Welfare State set up in Britain after the Second World War?**

* Beveridge was a civil servant and he had been involved in the Liberal reforms of the years from 1906 to 1914.
* A second Rowntree Report in 1936 had shown that poverty still existed in Britain and about 10% of the population suffered real hardship.
* In 1941 a report was published by the Women's Institute that described the physical state of many evacuees. It revealed that they suffered from infestations of lice and many diseases caused by malnutrition.
* **Rationing** showed that government intervention could be effective.
* In addition to RATIONING the government provided dietary supplements for the first time, such as orange juice and cod liver oil. These had major impact on the health of children.
* The Beveridge Report became a best seller. The British Government said that it was going to set up a Welfare State as soon as the war ended.

**THE FIVE WANTS - Ignorance**

* The first part of the Welfare State was put into place in 1944. The Coalition government passed the Butler Education Act. This was based on the Hadow report of 1926 and the Spens report of 1938.

**How did the 1944 Act change education in Britain?**

* It set up a Ministry of Education to replace the Board of Education. This immediately suggested that the government was giving education greater priority.
* All fees for state schools were abolished.
* The school leaving age was raised to fifteen.
* All children would attend secondary schools for the first time. They would go to primary schools from the ages of five to eleven and then to secondary schools from the ages of eleven to fifteen.
* At the age of eleven, all children would take a test, the 'eleven plus', to decide what form of secondary education was appropriate for them.
* There were to be three types of schools, Grammar. Secondary Modern and Technical. All three types of schools were to enjoy of equal status and equal resources.

#### **PART SIX – LABOUR IN POWER**

**The Labour Landslide 1945**

**6 REASONS FOR THE LABOUR VICTORY**

* Winston Churchill said that a general election would be held as soon as the war was over. In fact it was held in July 1945.
* The Labour Party won the election because it promised to set up the Welfare State. This had been outlined in the Beveridge Report. Winston Churchill made a speech attacking the idea of a Welfare State, saying Labour would set up a GESTAPO
* Many people remembered that the Conservatives had done little to help the unemployed in the 1930s. They had introduced the Means’ Test and reduced benefit.
* The War had changed people’s outlook; the extent of sacrifice deserved the reward of a better way of life.
* Lloyd George’s attempts to create ‘homes fit for heroes to live in’ had failed at the end of the First World War. There was a determination that this should not happen again.
* **KEY REASON** - The idea of state intervention and socialism had been proved successful, not only through state control of the economy during the war but also the gigantic battles won by the Soviet Union, Britain’s ally and saviour of Europe from Nazi Germany.
* Results:

Labour 393  
Conservative 213  
Liberal 11

**Why did Britain face an economic crisis at the end of the War?**

* Lend-lease (US aid to Britain) was ended almost immediately, which meant that Britain was forced to start repayments to the USA.
* Britain faced a massive balance of payments deficit because, in order to finance the war overseas, assets had been sold and exports had been severely reduced.
* The government was able to negotiate loans with the USA and Canada worth $5 billion to cover deficits, but these were exhausted by 1947 when it was hoped that they would last until 1951.
* The situation was worsened by the establishment of the Welfare State and a major export drive, in which prices were subsidised. The government was aiming to increase exports to 175% of the pre-war figure.
* Maintaining the British zone of occupation in West Germany also leaked much needed cash as did the attempt by the government to support the Greek government in its civil war against communist rebels.
* By the beginning of 1947, therefore, the situation looked bleak. The dollar loans were being used up to pay for the Welfare State; consumer goods were in limited supply because the majority were being exported.
* In January 1947, there was a widespread transport strike, which needed to use of troops to keep supplies of fuel moving. Then on 23 January, the worst winter since 1880-81 hit Britain.
* £200 million worth of exports were lost in the bad weather that lasted until March. By the autumn, the dollar loan was finished and the economy appeared to be in tatters.
* Appeals for improved productivity had fallen on deaf ears and the TUC had shown little inclination to help the government.

**Why did the situation improve from November 1947?**

* Hugh Dalton, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer since 1945, resigned after a budget leak. He was replaced by Stafford Cripps.
* He announced austerity measures that followed Dalton’s budget, in which he had raised £200 million in taxes.
* The TUC accepted a plan for directed labour, which had been published in October 1947. This in effect gave the government the right to tell workers where they were going to work.
* Marshall Aid (aid from the USA) had been agreed in September 1947 and began to arrive in 1948.
* Restrictions on imports were increased and industry, especially motor cars, began to boom. The government claimed that output was at 160% of the 1938 level.
* The recovery was short-lived. Marshall Aid was only a short term solution and a balance of payments problem reappeared in late 1948 and 1949.
* In September 1949, sterling was devalued and fell from $4.03 to $2.8. This was a massive fall and raised immediate questions about the Labour government handing of the economy.
* In fact, in the three years to 1950, exports had risen by 60% and imports by only 14%, but there were other areas of policy that were not as successful.
* The government had failed to abolish many wartime controls and industry was still handicapped in many ways.
* Rationing was still in existence and had actually been extended. Bread had been rationed for the first time and the amount of bacon had been reduced.
* The East African Ground Nut Scheme in 1948 had been a financial disaster.
* The Conservatives had also gone through a revival. Although Churchill was still the leader, many of the politicians who would dominate the 1950s and early 1960s were now in key positions.

**The achievements of the Attlee government and the birth of the welfare state**

##### The Welfare State

* The Welfare State was set up in the years from 1944 and was based upon the ideas put forward by Sir William Beveridge in his report in 1942 – ‘Cradle to Grave’ support for British citizens

**How was the Welfare State organised?**

* National Insurance had begun in 1911 under the Liberals, when only 2,000,000 workers had been included. Now it became compulsory for everyone.
* For one payment every week, everyone received a whole range of benefits, Unemployment Benefit, Old Age Pension, Sickness Benefit, Widow's pensions.
* Family Allowances were paid to help support children.
* Benefits were paid to everybody and there was no limit to the length of time that they could be claimed.
* The National Health Service was set up in 1948 and provided Medical services free of charge.
* It included: free visits to a GP and free prescriptions; free hospital treatment and operations; free dental treatment and false teeth; free visits to opticians and free spectacles; free ambulances and emergency treatment and free vaccinations and free clinics.
* The National Assistance Act set up the National Assistance Board, which gave grants to people who fell below the poverty line.
* The Housing Acts of 1946 and 1948 built more than 800,000 council houses and over 150,000 prefabricated houses, or prefabs were built in the years after the war.
* The effects of bombing meant that a major house-building programme was essential.

**How did The Welfare State change the lives of people in Britain?**

* Until 1948 most people had to pay for medical treatment and for medicines. Usually only the wage earner was insured by National Insurance.
* Often parents would save up so that their children could be treated when necessary, but would refuse treatment themselves.
* The extent of the problem became clear in 1948 when a huge number of people came for treatment for the first time.
* It became clear that many women had needed gynaecological surgery for years, but had been unable to pay for it.
* Consequently there was an immediate rush for the services that were being supplied free of charge for the first time. The government was taken by surprise by the number of people who came forward for treatment and it was forced to introduce charges for prescriptions in 1951.

**Nationalisation**

* Nationalisation is the taking over of businesses by the state and then running them in the public interest.
* This has taken place to some extent in Britain during both world wars, but the main example was during the Labour ministry of 1945 to 1950.
* In these years the Bank of England, air transport, coalmining, gas, railways, electricity and iron and steel were all nationalised.

**Why did the Labour government nationalise so many industries?**

* **T**o try to guarantee standards of safety: this was important in coalmining, where some pits were very small and the owners could not afford improvements.
* To provide reliable services for the people of Britain: most of the industries nationalised supplied people with essential services. In the past these had been unreliable.
* To provide essential services as cheaply as possible: the nationalised industries were non-profit making.

**Was nationalisation a success?**

* At first it was very successful. Electricity and gas became much more reliable, but railways and road transport did not.
* The National Coal Board also faced real difficulties, particularly in the severe winter of 1946-7.
* Iron and steel were nationalised in 1950, but were denationalised by the Conservative government in 1953.
* There seemed to be less reason to take over this industry, because it made a profit and was not vital in the public interest.

**Why did the Labour Government fall in 1951?**

* Attlee was forced to announce increased defence a spending after the invasion of South Korea by the North in June 1950. This would cost £3,600 million over three years.
* The Conservatives attacked Britain’s lack of preparedness. Rearmament would also hit exports and increase the balance of payments deficit.
* Conservatives were also more prepared – they pledged to build 50% more houses than Labour and built an electoral machine based on fund raising and new members.
* The expense of the NHS had surprised ministers. It had been assumed that after an initial burst of high expenditure, the level would settle down. In fact, it remained high.
* In the 1951 budget, prescription charges were introduced and patients were forced to contribute towards the cost of spectacles and false teeth. Income tax was raised.
* There were obvious disagreements between the left and right wings of the Labour Party. Aneurin Bevan resigned over the issue of prescription charges and after arguments with Hugh Gaitskell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
* In 1951, the balance of payments worsened yet again and there were major wage increases in many industries.
* In October 1951, the general election produced a slight swing to the Conservatives.

**In summary:**

National Insurance Act 1946 – universal and compulsory coverage for unemployment/sickness/retirement  
National Health Service Act 1946 – a national health service set up  
National Assistance Act 1948 – to deal with those in poverty or hardship

Health budget 1949 - £597m, 4.7% of GDP  
1946-49, coal, electricity, gas, Bank of England, steel nationalised  
  
**Financial issues**  
1945 – debts of £4bn, deficit of £1bn  
A 60% drop in exports  
Defence spending rising from £2.3bn to £4.7bn (14% of GDP)

**Solutions**  
$6bn loan from the USA and Canada  
Pound devalued from $4 to $2.80  
$1.5bn more from USA due to Marshall Aid  
1947-1950 exports rise by 60%  
800,000 new council houses built  
  
**How successful was the Welfare State?**

**Success –**

* 187,000 prescriptions in first year, 5.25m spectacles issued
* 8.5m dental patients treated
* 95% of people enrolled with NHS, 88% of doctors, 95% of dentists
* 200,000 houses built per year
* **Rowntree report in 1951 noted a ‘vast improvement’ in poverty and welfare from reports in 1899 and 1935**

**Unsuccessful**

* Significant regional health variations due to regional health boards – not ‘national’
* Shortage of staff and buildings
* 10,000 dentists for 47m people in 1948

**How successful was nationalisation?**

* Coal output goes from 181m tonnes in 1945 to 222m
* 20% of economy nationalised, employing 10% of population
* Nationalised companies were not privatised again until 1980s
* Cost £2.7bn

**Part Six – Exam materials**

**Writing Guide**

**Conclusion**

**Overall the most important reason was….**

**However, they are linked together because they all show…**

e.g. Q: Explain why Labour came to power in 1924

**12 mark question – Explaining why something happened.(12 minutes)**

**Reason #3**

**POINT –  
EVIDENCES –  
Explanation –**

**Reason #2**

**POINT –Another reason was….   
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to Labour coming to power because because…**

**“There were a variety of reasons why Labour came to power**

**Reason #1  
POINT - One of these was….  
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to Labour coming to power because…**

**24 mark question – How important or successful was something.(25 minutes)**

**Reason #2  
POINT - Another of these was….   
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to success because…**

**Reason #3  
POINT - Another of these was….   
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to the success because…**

**Against**

**However, it could be argued that the Liberal reforms were unsuccessful  
POINT – One reason is  
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to a lack of success because…**

**“There were many ways how the Liberal reforms were successful.”**

**Reason #1  
POINT - One of these was….   
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to success because…**

**Overall I believe that…**

**Although I agree there are other important factors such as…. I think that…**

**Conclusion**

**POINT - Another of these was….   
EVIDENCES – This is shown by…., furthermore…., additionally….  
Explanation – This led to a lack of success because…**

**For**

e.g. Q: How successful were the Liberal reforms 1906 – 1914? (24)

**Question bank**12 mark questions (might also be phrased – ‘why did X happen?’

Explain why the Conservatives lost the election of 1906  
Explain why the People’s Budget was rejected  
Explain why the Constitutional Crisis occurred  
Explain why a coalition government was formed in 1914  
Explain why Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1916  
Explain why Lloyd George won the election in 1918  
Explain why Bonar Law came to power in 1922  
Explain why Labour won in 1924  
Explain why Britain was put back on the Gold Standard  
Explain why the General Strike occurred  
Explain why the Suffrage Act was passed in 1928  
Explain why Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister in 1929  
Explain why the National Government was formed in 1931  
Explain why Protective Tariffs were introduced in 1932  
Explain why the Public Order Act was passed in 1936  
Explain why Neville Chamberlain replaced Baldwin as Prime Minister  
Explain why Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940  
Explain why the Beveridge Report was issued in 1942  
Explain why the Labour Party won in 1945  
Explain why the NHS was launched in 1948  
Explain why the Labour Party won with a reduced majority in 1950  
Explain why the Labour Party lost the election in 1951

24 mark questions  
How far was the failure of the General Strike due to the Conservative Government?  
How successful was the National Government in dealing with the economic crisis 1931-35?  
How successful was Attlee’s government in overcoming the economic problems of 1945-1951?  
How important was the aim of reducing poverty in explaining the Liberal governments’

social reforms in the years 1906 to 1914?  
How important were Lloyd George’s own mistakes in explaining his fall from office

in 1922?  
How successful were the Labour governments in implementing the Beveridge Report’s

proposals in the years 1945 to 1951?  
How important was the work done by women on the home front during the First World

War in changing the position of women in British society by 1928?  
How successful were the National governments in bringing economic recovery

to Britain in the years 1931 to 1939?  
How successful were Attlee’s governments in dealing with health and housing

in the years 1945 to 1951?  
How successful were Liberal social reforms in dealing with poverty in Britain from 1908 to 1914?  
How important were the policies of the National Government in bringing about economic

recovery in Britain by 1939?  
How important to the revival of Labour Party fortunes between 1935 and 1945 was

the British public’s experience of the Second World War?

More will be added on –

www.felthamhistory.com

**Mark scheme**

12 Mark questions:

Level One (0-2) – simple statements  
Level Two (3-6) – mainly descriptive content or insufficiently explained points  
**Level Three (7-9)** – relevant explanations and good selection of content  
**Level Four (10-12)** – a range of focused explanations chosen, well backed up and linked together

24 Mark questions:

Level One (0-6) – descriptive statements  
Level Two (7-11) – understanding of question but mainly descriptive use of content  
**Level Three (12-16)** – show full understanding of the question, have developed and supported points, and show understanding of historiography (see writing guide).  
**Level Four (16-21)** – have a good argument which is backed up by appropriate evidence, with a good understanding of historical interpretations  
**Level Five (22-24**) – Well argued throughout, tightly focused, and coming to a strong conclusion, backed up with evidence throughout and linked to debate and historiography

**MODEL ANSWER – 12 Marks**

1 (a) Explain why the Conservatives lost the General Election of 1906. *(12 marks)*

The 1906 General Election is known as the Liberal Landslide; the Liberal Party

gained a significant number of votes in comparison to other parties, triggered by a

variety of reasons. The Conservatives lost power because they had been

weakened by a series of failings; the Boer War had revealed the extent of poverty

in those called up to fight, reflected in the findings by Booth and Rowntree that

10% of people in major cities lived below the poverty line. Similarly there had

been moral outcry over the methods used to detain the prisoners of war.

The 1902 Education Act and the 1904 ‘Brewer’s Bill’ upset non-conformists. Firstly

the government proposed that local rates pay for religious schools and the

Brewer’s Bill stated a reduction in pubs; but compensation for landlords, traditional

Tory support. The Chinese Labour issue similarly weakened the Conservatives;

trade unionists worried that the cheap Chinese labour would affect British wages

and the Taff Vale case, whereby the Lords prevented strikers ever being able to

call a successive strike again furthered the lack of trust the working class had for

the Conservative government.

Perhaps the most significant reason for the loss of the Conservatives was the

policy of Tariff Reform which Stanley Baldwin made a key policy. Voters feared

dearer food prices as a result of protectionism whereas the Liberals were united

under the banner of free trade.

The Liberals offered reform whilst reformation under the Conservatives had been

minimal.

**MODEL ANSWER – 24 Marks**

1 (b) How important was the aim of reducing poverty in explaining the Liberal

government’s social reforms in the years 1906 to 1914? *(24 marks)*

In many ways it is possible to propose that the aim of reducing poverty in Britain

was a major factor in explaining the Liberal governments reforms.

The Boer War had highlighted the issue of poverty, particularly in cities, and

therefore the issue was becoming increasingly important. Furthermore, throughout

the 19th century the population itself trebled, therefore there were far more people

in Britain and consequently far more poor people. Subsequently many Liberal

supporters or left wing historians may argue that the Liberals chose to introduced

reforms such as the 1906 Education Act’s to reduce poverty as it was a growing

issue that needed adressing.

However, a number of other interpretations can also be seen. The Boer War had

highlighted the fact that around 1/3 of the army was malnourished and

subsequently the government may have become concerned about the health of

the nation and introduced the reforms in order to ensure that Britain remained a

strong power, with a fit army, as competition from the USA and Germany

threatened Britain’s status.

Some critics of the Liberal government may claim that certain reforms were

introduced in order to ensure the party was not overtaken by the somewhat more

socialist Labour Party, or more extreme left-wing parties. Measures such as Lloyd

George’s 1911 National Insurance Act, which provided a small amount of money

for unemployed or ill workers may have been to ensure that working class votes

saw improvement in their lifestyles and were not tempted to vote for the Labour

Party, therefore certain critics may argue that the aim of reducing poverty was not

the main factor in explaining the Liberal’s social reforms and that, it was instead a

purely political tactic.

However, in general, I feel that the aim of reducing poverty was extremely

important and I believe it was the most significant factor which motivated the

Liberal government to introduce social reforms in 1906–14. I feel that reforms

such as the 1906/7 Education Acts, which, to an extent, provided free school

meals and medical injections, and the later Children’s Act were deployed to

improve the health of young people and relive poverty, however it is also possible

to acknowledge and interpret the motivation of improving there general health of

the nation in order to ensure a fit army and industrial efficiency may also hav

been a factor which provoked these reforms.

I believe that in general the public were becomming increasingly aware of the

issue of poverty and the fact that the franchise was extended throughout the 1800s

meant more working class people could vote, therefore the Liberals may have

introduced measures such as National Insurance and Trade Boards in order to

reduce poverty and subsequently gain more votes, maintaining popularity and

power.

Furthermore, I believe that Asquith the Liberal PM and Churchill, the Chancellor of

the Exchequer, recognised the importance of reducing poverty for social,

economic and political reasons, therefore they introduced reforms such as the Old

Age Pensions Act to ensure that the public saw and improvement in living

standards and that poverty fell.

In conclusion I would be inclined to adopt a more moderate and sympathetic

approach to the Liberal government as I feel that the main reasons as to why the

Party introduced the reforms was the aim of reducing poverty. Although I feel it is

possible to note that the other factors, such as the desire to maintain a strong

army and increase industrial efficiency to maintain Britain’s status as a great power

may also have been motivation, I believe this most significant fact in explaining the

1906–14 reforms was the case of reducing poverty.

**Prime Ministers**

**1906-1908** – Bannerman (Liberal)  
**1908-1916** – Asquith (Liberal)  
**1916-1922** – Lloyd George (Liberal)  
**1922-24** Baldwin (Conservative)  
**1924** Macdonald (Labour)  
**1924-1929** Baldwin (Conservative)  
**1929-1931** Macdonald (Labour)  
**1931-1935** – Macdonald (National)  
**1935-1937** – Baldwin (Conservative)  
**1937-1940** – Chamberlain (Conservative)   
**1940-1945** – Churchill (Conservative)  
**1945-1951** – Attlee (Labour)  
**1951** – Churchill (Conservative)

**Timeline  
1899-1902** – Boer War  
**1906** – Liberal Landslide  
**1908** – Liberal Reforms begin  
**1910** – Constitutional Crisis of the House of Lords  
**1911** – Parliament Act  
**1914** – WW1 begins  
**1915** – Shells Crisis  
**1916** – Coalition under Lloyd George   
**1918** – WW1 Ends. Representation of the People Act  
**1922** – Coalition falls  
**1924** – First Labour Government  
**1926** – General Strike  
**1928** – Suffrage Act - Equal votes for Women  
**1929** – Wall Street Crash  
**1931** – National Government  
**1936** – Public Order Act  
**1938** – Munich Conference  
**1939-45** – WW2  
**1942** – Beveridge Report  
**1945** – Labour Landslide  
**1948** – NHS set up  
**1951** – defeat for Labour