Claims and Conquests

Compare Hitler's stated reasons with his wider aims

SS24.HOS.11a "Analyze Hitler's motivations for the annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland and the invasion of Poland."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the three moves in order, underline Hitler's public reason for each, and circle a phrase that shows a broader goal or strategic gain.

What Lay Behind the Demands?

1. In March 1938, German troops entered Austria, and Nazi leaders proclaimed its union with Germany. Hitler called this union a way to bring German-speaking people together, a promise that appealed to some Austrians. But he had also threatened Austria's government and backed local Nazis who weakened it. Annexation broke the post-World War I settlement that barred union between the two countries. It added people, industry, and soldiers to German power without a major war. For Hitler, the move tested whether Britain and France would stop his expansion. Their limited response encouraged him to press further.

2. Next Hitler demanded the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia with many German speakers. He claimed these people needed protection and self-rule, while Nazi pressure helped fuel a crisis. The region also held important border defenses and industries. Taking it would weaken Czechoslovakia and strengthen Germany's position in central Europe. At the Munich meeting in September 1938, Britain and France accepted the transfer without Czechoslovakia at the negotiating table. German forces occupied the area in October. Hitler presented the demand as his last territorial claim in Europe, but Germany seized the rest of the Czech lands in March 1939.

3. Poland posed a different challenge. Hitler demanded the return of the largely German city of Danzig and a route across Polish territory to East Prussia, presenting these demands as corrections to the postwar borders. Yet his plans went far beyond border changes: he sought land for a German racial empire in eastern Europe and expected to dominate Poland. In August 1939, Germany signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union that secretly divided Poland into spheres of influence. Hitler hoped this deal would reduce the risk of a war on two fronts. Germany invaded Poland on September 1; Britain and France declared war two days later.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Hitler's public reason for annexing Austria differ from two gains he expected from the move?

2. Why did Hitler want the Sudetenland for more than the protection of German speakers?

3. How did Hitler's plans for Poland go beyond his demands about Danzig and a route to East Prussia?

4. How did the Soviet pact make Hitler's larger goal in Poland seem less risky to him?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence advisory note to a European leader in late August 1939. Use evidence from Austria, the Sudetenland, and Poland to argue whether Hitler's stated reasons predict how far he will go, and explain a danger of treating his latest demands as a limited border dispute.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the three moves in order, underline Hitler's public reason for each, and circle a phrase that shows a broader goal or strategic gain. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Hitler's public reason for annexing Austria differ from two gains he expected from the move?	**He spoke of uniting German-speaking people, but annexation also increased Germany's people, industry, and soldiers and tested whether Britain and France would resist.**
2	Why did Hitler want the Sudetenland for more than the protection of German speakers?	**Its border defenses and industries would strengthen Germany and weaken Czechoslovakia.**
3	How did Hitler's plans for Poland go beyond his demands about Danzig and a route to East Prussia?	**He sought land for a German racial empire in eastern Europe and expected to dominate Poland, not merely change a border.**
4	How did the Soviet pact make Hitler's larger goal in Poland seem less risky to him?	**The pact secretly divided Poland into spheres of influence, and Hitler hoped it would reduce the risk of fighting on two fronts.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would not assume Hitler will stop after a border settlement. In Austria, his promise to unite German speakers accompanied threats and a gain in German power. In the Sudetenland, his claim to protect German speakers was followed by the seizure of the rest of the Czech lands, despite his claim that he had no further demands. His demands involving Danzig and a route across Poland may likewise hide his goal of dominating Poland. Treating them as a small border dispute could leave Poland exposed to a larger attack.

Accept accurate paraphrases that distinguish public claims from strategic or ideological goals. For the advisory note, look for evidence from all three cases and reasoning grounded in what was known by late August 1939.