Claims and Conquests

Investigate the motives behind three acts of Nazi expansion

TOT.C.6.3 "Identify Hitler's motivations for the annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland, as well as the invasion of Poland."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that states a claim Hitler used to justify expansion, and circle one phrase that reveals an additional goal he pursued.

Three Steps Toward War

1. In March 1938, German troops entered Austria, and Hitler proclaimed its union with Germany, called the Anschluss. He wanted to bring German-speaking Austrians into a single German state, a goal tied to his nationalist ideology. He also sought to overturn the post-World War I settlement, which barred union without international approval. Hitler pressured Austrian leaders and threatened force before troops crossed the border. Some Austrians welcomed the takeover, but others opposed it, and Nazi authorities quickly arrested opponents. Gaining Austria also expanded Germany's power and gave it a stronger position near Czechoslovakia.

2. Next Hitler demanded the Sudetenland, a border region of Czechoslovakia where many ethnic Germans lived. He claimed that their rights were being denied and argued that they should join Germany. This appeal to German unity helped him justify expansion, but he also wanted the region's defenses and industry. Taking the borderlands would leave Czechoslovakia harder to defend. In September 1938, Britain and France agreed at Munich to let Germany take the Sudetenland; Czechoslovakia was not invited to the negotiations. In March 1939, Germany occupied the Czech lands, revealing that Hitler's goals reached beyond uniting German speakers.

3. Poland was Hitler's next target. He demanded the return of the largely German-speaking city of Danzig and a route across the Polish Corridor, territory that separated most of Germany from East Prussia. These claims invoked German unity and resentment of the postwar settlement, but his plans went further. Hitler sought *Lebensraum*, or living space, in eastern Europe through conquest and the removal or subjugation of people he deemed inferior. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union secretly agreed to divide Poland. German forces invaded on September 1. Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What two goals did Hitler pursue by taking Austria?

2. Beyond his claim about ethnic Germans' rights, what did Hitler hope to gain by taking the Sudetenland?

3. How did Hitler's plans for Poland go beyond his demands about Danzig and the Polish Corridor?

4. How did Germany's occupation of the Czech lands challenge Hitler's stated reason for taking the Sudetenland?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence briefing for a newspaper editor in late 1939. Explain one justification Hitler used repeatedly, then compare his broader aims in Austria, the Sudetenland, and Poland using details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Claims and Conquests

HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.C.6.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that states a claim Hitler used to justify expansion, and circle one phrase that reveals an additional goal he pursued. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two goals did Hitler pursue by taking Austria?	**He wanted to unite German-speaking Austrians with Germany and overturn the postwar restrictions on that union. The takeover also expanded German power.**
2	Beyond his claim about ethnic Germans' rights, what did Hitler hope to gain by taking the Sudetenland?	**He wanted its defenses and industry. Taking the border region would also make Czechoslovakia harder to defend.**
3	How did Hitler's plans for Poland go beyond his demands about Danzig and the Polish Corridor?	**He sought living space in eastern Europe through conquest and the removal or subjugation of people he deemed inferior.**
4	How did Germany's occupation of the Czech lands challenge Hitler's stated reason for taking the Sudetenland?	**Occupying the Czech lands showed that his goals went beyond bringing German-speaking people into Germany.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hitler repeatedly appealed to the idea of bringing German-speaking people together, but that claim hid other goals. In Austria, union with Germany also challenged the postwar settlement and enlarged German power. In the Sudetenland, he claimed to defend ethnic Germans while gaining border defenses and weakening Czechoslovakia. Germany's later occupation of the Czech lands showed that its ambitions did not stop at German-speaking areas. For Poland, Hitler invoked Danzig and the Polish Corridor, but he also sought eastern territory as living space for German expansion. His claims about national unity did not explain the full scope of his conquests.

Accept responses that distinguish Hitler's stated claims from other motivations supported by the passage. Students may identify more than one motive for any territory.