

The Berlin Blockade and Airlift for GCSE Modern  
World History with OCR and AQA Exam Boards

# The Origins of the Cold War

The National Cold War Exhibition and this resource pack will assist in the learning of GCSE Modern World History.

As you enter the National Cold War Exhibition read the three information boards on the 'Origins of the Cold War'.

This resource pack has been selected to meet the demands of the OCR and AQA examination boards for GCSE Modern World History

For AQA Topic 4: The Origins of the Cold War 1945–1960

Why did the USA and USSR become rivals in the years 1945–1949? (In the style of AQA Exam Board)

Include the following aspects:

- Ideological differences between capitalism and communism and their effects;
- The Yalta and Potsdam Conferences;
- The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan;
- The Berlin Blockade and Airlift.

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For OCR AO10 Core content (Previously A971) – Aspects of International Relations –The Cold War 1945-1975 Key Question 4.

Who was to blame for the Cold War?

Why did the USA-USSR alliance begin to break down in 1945? (OCR Exam Board)

Specified content includes the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, Soviet control of Eastern Europe, the 'Iron Curtain', The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan and the Berlin blockade and airlift and its consequences.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift?

- During WWII the USA, USSR and Britain had been allies in the war against Hitler's Germany. As WWII entered its final stages the political leaders of the three great powers met first at Yalta and then at Potsdam in July 1945. Germany and Berlin was divided into four occupation zones.
- The divisions between the USA and the USSR quickly appeared. The new USA President Harry Truman distrusted Stalin the Soviet leader.
- The USA wished to see free and fair elections in all the countries of Europe while Stalin was determined to protect the USSR from any further aggression from the USA and its allies.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift?

- The USSR took parts of Eastern Poland into Soviet Russia and compensated Poland with parts of what had been Eastern Germany. They also imposed Communism on Poland.
- The British and American zones of Germany were allowed to trade freely – this was known as the ‘Bizonie’. Stalin realised that political unity would quickly follow from economic unity and indeed this did happen with the creation of West Germany from the U.S., British and French zones.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift?

- President Truman created a new post-war policy. Known as the 'Truman Doctrine' its aim was to prevent the further westward expansion of Communism.
- Truman believed that Communism grew from poverty, misery and want. He therefore asked the American government to pour millions of U.S. dollars into the destroyed countries of Europe to allow them to rebuild as democratic nations.
- The Western zones of Germany benefited from an influx of Marshall Aid. However, Stalin ordered those parts of Europe under Soviet control to refuse the aid offered by the USA. By 1948 the difference in living standards between East and West Germany and Berlin in particular were increasingly obvious. The East having less consumables and domestic items.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift?

- Truman secretly planned to introduce a new currency into the U.S., British and French sectors of Germany (and Berlin). Known as the Deutschmark this was introduced in 1948 to provide economic stability to Germany, a key stepping point to recovery.
- For Stalin, already unhappy with the Marshall Plan which he saw as an attempt to bribe the countries of Europe towards a capitalist system, the introduction of the Deutschmark and the prospect of a separate West Germany led him to cut all road, rail and canal links to the western sectors of Berlin in June 1948.
- This blockade was interpreted by the U.S. Government as the first stage of an attack on West Germany.
- The West responded by organising an Airlift of supplies to West Berlin.



# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift? (Exam style question (OCR))

(b) Explain why the Soviet Union blockaded West Berlin in 1948. [8 marks]  
(OCR Exam Board)

Top tip – this type of question follows a message cartoon question and is compulsory. In this case the key skill is to explain a point or issue.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift? (Exam style question (OCR))

(c) The following were equally to blame for increasing Cold War tensions before 1950:

- i) Soviet control of eastern Europe
- ii) The Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan
- iii) The Berlin blockade and airlift

How far do you agree with this statement? [10 marks] (OCR Exam Board)

Top tip – here you need to assess all three factors and reach a supported judgement. While you can argue that all are equally important, a strong answer that assesses ‘how far’ you agree with this opinion would put the events into an order of importance and justify this judgement.

# What were the causes of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift? (Exam style question (AQA))

The period 1945-1949 saw relations between the USA and the USSR deteriorate, resulting in what became known as the 'Cold War'. Was the 1945 Potsdam Conference or the 1948-1949 Berlin Blockade and Airlift the main reason for this deterioration? [10 marks]

Top tip – to answer this question you must describe, explain and assess to reach a clear judgement on both the named events in the question.

# How effective was the airlift?

## Museum task

Find the display and watch the film on the Berlin Blockade and Airlift. Use the information points to gather evidence to answer the following questions:

- Why was West Berlin such a flashpoint of conflict between the USA and the USSR?
- How did the Western Powers respond to the Soviet Blockade of West Berlin?
- How well organised was the Airlift? Explain your answer.

# How effective was the airlift?

## Museum task

Find the Dakota transport aeroplane.

This was the main transport aeroplane used by both the British and the American's at the start of the Airlift.

- Describe the aeroplane in your own words.
- Explain how much the Dakota can carry? Analysis - How easy would this aircraft be to load and unload? The cargo would have been coal for fuel or flour for bread. What problems might have been encountered?
- Compare and contrast the Dakota with the Avro York aeroplane. To what extent is the York better as a transport aeroplane for the Berlin Airlift?

# Consequences

- Even with the Airlift there were drastic power cuts, food was strictly rationed and fresh vegetables were scarce.
- Whatever the politicians believed, the soldiers and airmen of the allied forces looked upon the Airlift as a humanitarian mission.
- On May 12 1949 the Soviet Union raised the blockade. Their intention of 'starving out' West Berlin had failed.
- The Airlift continued for a further four months so that stocks could be built up in case the blockade was re-imposed.

# Summary Task – The Berlin Blockade and Airlift

Which view best explains the Berlin Blockade and Airlift?

- a) The Berlin Airlift halted Soviet expansion in Europe.
- b) The Berlin Airlift was merely the first chapter of a deepening conflict between the USA and the USSR.