

History – Year 9

Curriculum Intent

In Year 9, students build on their understanding of power, empire and protest by studying the major conflicts and social changes of the twentieth century. Through the study of the World Wars, the Holocaust, civil rights and the Cold War, students deepen their understanding of cause and consequence, significance and interpretation. The curriculum is carefully sequenced to help students understand how conflict, ideology and inequality shaped the modern world, while encouraging thoughtful reflection on responsibility, human rights and democracy.

What Students Will Study Across the Year

Autumn Term – The First World War

Building on the Year 8 study of the Suffragettes and the fight for the vote, students begin Year 9 by examining how the outbreak of the First World War transformed British society and ideas about rights, duty and citizenship. They explore the causes and consequences of the war, considering why it began, why people fought and how the conflict affected soldiers and civilians, including life in the trenches and on the Home Front. The unit also examines the global nature of the war and its significance for medicine, society and the British Empire, helping students understand how the war accelerated social and political change begun before 1914.

Spring Term – The Inter-War Years and the Second World War

Students then explore what happened *after* the First World War to understand why peace failed and another global conflict broke out. They examine the impact of the Treaty of Versailles, political instability and economic change, including the post-war boom and the Great Depression, and how these conditions helped extremist ideas and dictators rise to power. Building on this context, students investigate the causes, key events and outcomes of the Second World War, studying major turning points such as the Battle of Britain, Stalingrad and D-Day. They also examine the impact of war on civilians, including life on the Home Front and in Plymouth, the role of Commonwealth forces, and debates about intelligence, warfare and the use of atomic weapons.

Spring Term – The Holocaust

Having studied the Second World War, students then focus on the Holocaust to examine how Nazi ideology and wartime conditions led to genocide. They explore the long-term causes of persecution, including antisemitism, propaganda and dictatorship, and how discrimination escalated into the ‘Final Solution’ during the war. This unit places the Holocaust firmly within the wider context of the Second World War and encourages students to consider resistance, survival and the importance of historical memory and human rights.

Summer Term – British Civil Rights

Students then turn their attention to Britain *after* the Second World War to explore how war, empire and migration reshaped society at home. Building on earlier work on empire and inequality, they study the arrival of the Windrush generation, experiences of racism and policing, and the growth of protest and activism. Through case studies such as the Bristol Bus Boycott and the Mangrove Nine, students examine how ordinary people challenged injustice and fought for civil rights in modern Britain.

Summer Term – The Cold War

Students finish the year by widening their focus again to the global stage, examining how the end of the Second World War led directly to new tensions between competing ideologies. They explore how the wartime alliance between the USA and the USSR collapsed, leading to the Cold War, and study key flashpoints such as Berlin, Korea, Cuba and Vietnam. The unit concludes by evaluating change and continuity over time and reflecting on how Cold War tensions shaped the modern world and brought humanity closer than ever to nuclear conflict.

Assessment and Progression

Year 9 students are assessed through extended written answers, source analysis and end-of-unit assessments that focus on explanation, analysis and judgement. By the end of Year 9, students will have a secure understanding of twentieth-century conflict, ideology and social change, preparing them for GCSE study and more complex historical analysis in Key Stage 4.