

What If ?

The What If? essay assignment is an exercise in what is commonly known as counterfactual history and requires critical thinking and analysis. Counterfactual history explores the consequences that would follow from slight or major changes to historical events. For example, what consequences would have followed from the successful German invasion of Britain during World War II? As we all know, the Germans never invaded Britain, but what if they had? How would our world be different today? In this essay you are to consider what would have happened if the Germans had invaded the Mideast and secured the oil supplies of the Mideast. Would the outcome of the war be the same or would the Germans have won? A successful essay requires historical research. Your speculations about history must be based on actual historical events. Your analysis must be plausible. The inferences you make must be reasonable.

In order to analyze the historical record, consider the factors noted below:

- The Germans suffered from a chronic shortage of fuel throughout the war. The German controlled oilfields at Ploesti were insufficient to meet the demand.
- German control of the Suez Canal would have severed a vital British lifeline to India.
- The German suffered catastrophic losses in a vain attempt to invade the Soviet Union.
- German occupation of North Africa and the Middle East would have made the Mediterranean a German lake and forestalled the invasion of Italy or southern France.
- The Germans could have gained a valuable ally in Turkey, if the Turks felt that they could regain some of their former glory.
- German occupation of the Middle East and the possible cooperation of Turkey would grant the Germans the opportunity to invade the Soviet Union from the south if they later chose to invade Russia.
- The Arabs did not like the British and might have made common cause with the Germans.
- The Germans would not have to divert resources into the production of synthetic oil.
- The oil would be of higher quality.

You may also wish to consider some counterarguments.

- The allies would still be capable of outproducing the Germans.
- The allies would still have more manpower.
- The Arabs could easily turn on the Germans.
- Hitler would continue to make erratic decisions.
- The Turks might insist upon neutrality.
- NAZI aggression was fueled by racial hatred and NAZI ideology.
- NAZI supply lines would be very long.
- Stalin was an opportunist and would attack if he perceived any German weakness.

Begin with a funnel introduction mentioning that history is filled with turning points. Provide meaningful examples. Consider writing a transitional sentence. The last sentence of the introduction should be the thesis. Make use of this thesis: **If the Germans had invaded the Middle East instead of the Soviet Union, it is quite possible that they could have been the victors of World War II.**

Suggested Topic Sentences

- The invasion of the Middle East would have....
- A German invasion of the Middle East would have yielded several strategic advantages.
- A German invasion of the Middle East would have allowed the Germans to obtain an inexhaustible source of fuel.

You are not writing a five paragraph essay, so do not make lists!

Write in the third person: no you or I!

Introduce your quotations.

Provide adequate documentation.

Create an original, descriptive title.

Make use of transitional words and phrases. You may find list of these in Rules for Writers.

Be sure to conduct adequate research.

Accuracy is important!

Follow **MLA guidelines** and provide at least two academic sources. Do not make use of **Wikipedia, About.com, or Encarta**. Provide adequate documentation throughout your paper. Your paper should be a **minimum** of two to three pages. Good papers will be longer.