VCE 20th Century History (1 & 2)

Unit 1: Twentieth century history, 1900–1945
The first half of the twentieth century was marked by significant change. From the late nineteenth century up to World War I there was still a sense of a certain and natural order of society. This order was challenged and overturned. Revolution, civil war and international conflict overshadowed the first fifty years of the twentieth century. Many of the recurring conflicts of the twentieth century had their origins in the post-World War I political treaties and agreements.

The Unit 1 Course consists of three areas of study: Crisis and conflict; social life and cultural expression. Within this broad framework, students explore the monarchical and imperial system at the turn of the century and how this was replaced by a new order as a result of the First World War. Social life and customs are explored through a study of social class, as represented in the film, Titanic. A major research task helps students to understand the real-life experiences of soldiers in the war.

Students learn about the economic and social unrest that followed the war and explore the rise of new political ideas such as communism, socialism, fascism and Nazism. They also look at how poster art became a means for cultural expression and propaganda.

As well as studying the broad patterns in history, students also look at daily life in the first half of the twentieth century as communist or fascist regimes increasingly influenced the private world of the family and home, and the public sphere of employment, education and politics. The Second World War caused major disruption and change to the patterns of everyday life, and students look at the impact of the Blitz and the Battle of Britain.

Unit 2: Twentieth century history, 1945–2000
Unit 2 consists of three areas of study: ideas and political power; popular movements and issues for the millennium.

The unit picks up from the defeat of Japanese imperialism and German and Italian fascism. Students explore war crime trials as a way to develop understanding of new ideas about peace and justice. They also examine the origins of the Cold war. The United States of America and the USSR emerged from the destruction of World War II as the new world superpowers. The relationship between these allies soon dissolved into acrimony and suspicion and for the next forty years the Cold War was waged between opposing ideologies. The Cuban Missile Crisis becomes at focus at this time.

Students research the decolonisation process in a non-European country, such as India, Indonesia or South Africa. They explore the disintegration of colonial empires that once controlled the globe, and they look at the costs and benefits of European imperialism, as well as the implications for present-day international relations.

Closely related to this is a study of popular movements of the people, such as the Civil Rights Movements in the US and Australia, the Women’s Liberation Movement, and Liberation
movements like the Red Brigades and the IRA.

Finally, students explore some of the issues in the news today, to trace their historical roots. Events in places like Libya, Afghanistan and Syria have their origins in history and students learn that a study of the past helps us understand the present.