(a) What were the aims of the League of Nations?

The League aimed to discourage aggression by any nation, to promote international cooperation (especially in trade), to encourage nations to disarm, and to improve living and working conditions for people throughout the world.

(b) Why did the League of Nations have some successes during the 1920s?

The League had some successes in the 1920s through its ability to arrange plebiscites. This was particularly useful in solving the disputes in Upper Silesia in 1921. Upper Silesia was an industrial region, famous for its production of iron and steel. However, both German and Polish people occupied the region, so there were disputes over the nation to which the population should belong. Therefore, a plebiscite was ordered by the League, and it was voted that the industrial areas should go to Germany, and the rural areas to Poland. Both nations accepted the decision. Through their ability to arrange plebiscites, the League settled this dispute peacefully - a success on their part.

Moreover, the League had some successes in the 1920s through their power to make final decisions through the council regarding disputes. This was particularly helpful in settling the disputes over the Aaland Islands in 1921. The islands lie midway between Sweden and Finland. Both countries were claiming control over the islands, and were prepared to fight over them. However, the League decided through the council that the islands should go to Finland. Sweden accepted this decision. The League's power to impose a final resolution to a dispute through the council settled the disputes peacefully, allowing the League to successfully prevent aggression from the two nations.

(c) How far can the failure of the League of Nations in the 1930s be blamed on the Great Depression? Explain your answer.

The Great Depression was a significant cause of the Failure of the League, because it meant that the allies were economically weak, and so could not afford to impose economical sanctions such as trade terminations with aggressive nations who relied on the allies for trade. An example of this was the Manchuria crisis of 1931-1932. The League could not afford to send an army into Japan, so their only defence would have been to cease trade with Japan, and stop the manufacturing and supplying of warfare to the Japanese army. However, unemployment and poor economical stability of the allies meant they could not afford to stop selling weapons to the Japanese, and so continued. This allowed the Japanese army to maintain control of Manchuria and to expand their invasion even further into Chinese territory. In this way, the Great depression weakened the allies' economies, preventing them from being able to impose the necessary economical sanctions on Japan - a failure from the League.

Moreover, the Depression meant that the League lacked the financial means to achieve ‘collective security’, and were unable to raise an army to combat Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. If they lacked the economical strength to deal with this, they knew that they would certainly be unable to cope with Hitler’s rearmament of Germany and future attacks from Hitler. Therefore, in desperation, they had to sign the Stresa pact with Mussolini in 1935, which made a pact between Britain, Italy, and France against German re-armement, and in return, the Leage turned a blind eye to Mussolini’s invasion of Mussolini, allowing him to keep two thirds of his conquered land. The financial desperation brought about by the Great Depression forced the allies to engage in this corrupt policy of appeasement with Mussolini, directly defying their objective of discouraging aggressive behaviour - once again a failure from the League.