

Causes of World War II

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Background

After Germany lost WWI, they were treated very harshly by the Allies, specifically England and France. **The Treaty of Versailles**, which is the peace agreement that ended WWI, did many things to hurt Germany, such as limiting the size of their army, taking land away from Germany, and forcing Germany to pay large amounts of money to Allied countries. Although many thought these were appropriate ways to punish Germany, it also left the German economy in ruins. The country was out of money and in an economic depression, the citizens were poor and some were starving, and the government was a mess.

All of this turmoil and chaos in Germany created a perfect situation for a man named **Adolf Hitler** to rise to power. Hitler was a soldier for Germany during WWI and, after the war, got into politics. While in politics, he realized he was extremely good at giving speeches and making people support what he was saying. This allowed him to rise quickly in the German government. Hitler presented a clear message to the country: others were to blame for the country's depression and hard times, not Germany. The citizens of Germany loved this message and supported Hitler all the way to him becoming the country's Chancellor and **Fuhrer**, or leader.

Hitler the leader of the Nazi political party rose to power in the German government. Hitler and his Nazi government allied themselves with Italy and their leader, **Benito Mussolini**. Mussolini and Hitler believed in **fascist** governments where the leader becomes a dictator, or someone who has complete control over their country. They also wanted to expand their country by attacking other countries and taking their land. Hitler began to rearm Germany, increasing their military power and creating a larger army, which was against the Treaty of Versailles. In 1935, Italy invaded and took over Ethiopia. Then, in 1938, Hitler took over Austria. The League of Nations nor any other country did anything to stop him, so, in 1939, Hitler took over Czechoslovakia.

During this time, Japan was also taking over countries in Asia. Despite all of this aggression European countries and America did very little to stop it. European countries were tired from WWI, only 20 years earlier, and did not want to get involved in yet another conflict. As a result, they took an approach known as **appeasement**. This meant that, instead of fighting Hitler and engaging in another war, they would give him what he wanted to keep him happy. The hope was that once Hitler got what he wanted he would stop and war would be avoided. Instead, this only made Hitler more confident and gave him more time to build a stronger army. During this time America was experiencing **The Great Depression**. This was an extremely difficult time for America and, as a result, they had no desire to go all the way over to Europe and fight in another war.

Finally, on **September 1st, 1939**, Hitler invaded Poland. At this point, Great Britain, France, and other countries declared war on Nazi Germany, officially starting WWII. America though did not declare war until 1941 when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, an American naval base. Russia also did not declare war on Germany until 1941 when Germany broke their **non-aggression agreement**, which said they would not attack each other.



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Fill-In-The-Blank

Use the information provided about World War II to fill in the blank in each sentence.

- 1) European countries, specifically England and France took an approach known as _____ when dealing with Germany's aggression.
- 2) The Treaty of Versailles left Germany's economy in _____.
- 3) Hitler allied himself with _____, Italy's Fascist dictator.
- 4) On September 1st, _____ Hitler invaded Poland and World War II officially began.
- 5) After getting into politics, _____ realized he was extremely talented at giving speeches.
- 6) After WWI and the treaty of Versailles, Germany was in an economic _____, some citizens were starving, and the government was a mess.
- 7) In 1938, when Hitler took over Austria, the _____ did nothing, so he attacked Czechoslovakia.
- 8) America did not join WWI until _____ bombed an American naval base at Pearl Harbor.
- 9) As Hitler rose to power, he became the leader of the _____ political party.
- 10) Russia and Germany had a _____ agreement which said they would not attack each other.