

Teacher Overview Objectives: *Causes of WWII*

NYS Social Studies Framework Alignment:

| Key Idea | Conceptual Understanding | Content Specification |
|---|---|---|
| 10.5 UNRESOLVED GLOBAL CONFLICT (1914–1945): World War I and World War II led to geopolitical changes, human and environmental devastation, and attempts to bring stability and peace. (Standards: 2, 3, 4, 5; Themes: TCC, GEO, GOV, CIV, TECH, EXCH) | 10.5a International competition, fueled by nationalism, imperialism, and militarism along with shifts in the balance of power and alliances, led to world wars. | Students will compare and contrast long- and short-term causes and effects of World War I and World War II. |

| Objective | Guiding Question and Activity Description |
|--|--|
| Explain how the causes of WWII led to the start of the conflict. | What caused WWII? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● primary and secondary source analysis ● graphic organizer ● video analysis ● formative writing task ● Regents MC questions |



What caused WWII?

Objectives: Explain how the causes of WWII led to the start of the conflict.

Introduction

Directions: Read through the scenario below and answer the questions that follow.

On the first day of school, all the students signed a classroom contract promising to respect one another and resolve conflicts without fighting. If fighting occurs, the contract stated that the principal would call the family for a conference and there would be further consequences.

Greg is a 10th grader who is still mad about last year because he felt like he was always blamed for starting problems and, as a result, he wasn't allowed to attend any of the school field trips or go to school dances. Greg didn't want to sign the contract, but he did anyway.

In the second month of school, Greg got into a fight with Jeremiah, Jacob and Craig. Jeremiah, Jacob and Craig ended up with bloody noses. After the fight, the principal did not call Greg's parents and there were no additional consequences.

Two weeks later, Greg got into a fight with Calvin, and Greg broke Calvin's arm. Again, after the fight, the principal did not call Greg's parents and there were no additional consequences.

Only a week later, Greg got into a fight with Justin and Michael in the lunchroom leading to a large brawl involving half the school. After the lunchroom brawl, the principal threatened to call home and Greg laughed in her face.

Two days later, Greg started a fight in front of the school and a window was broken that cost the school thousands of dollars to replace.

1. Why didn't Greg want to sign the contract?

2. Why does Greg's behavior escalate or get worse?

3. How do you think the students Greg fights with feel? Why?

4. What did the principal do after Greg's first two fights? Do you think the principal made a good decision?

5. What do you think Greg thinks of the principal? Why?

What was World War II?

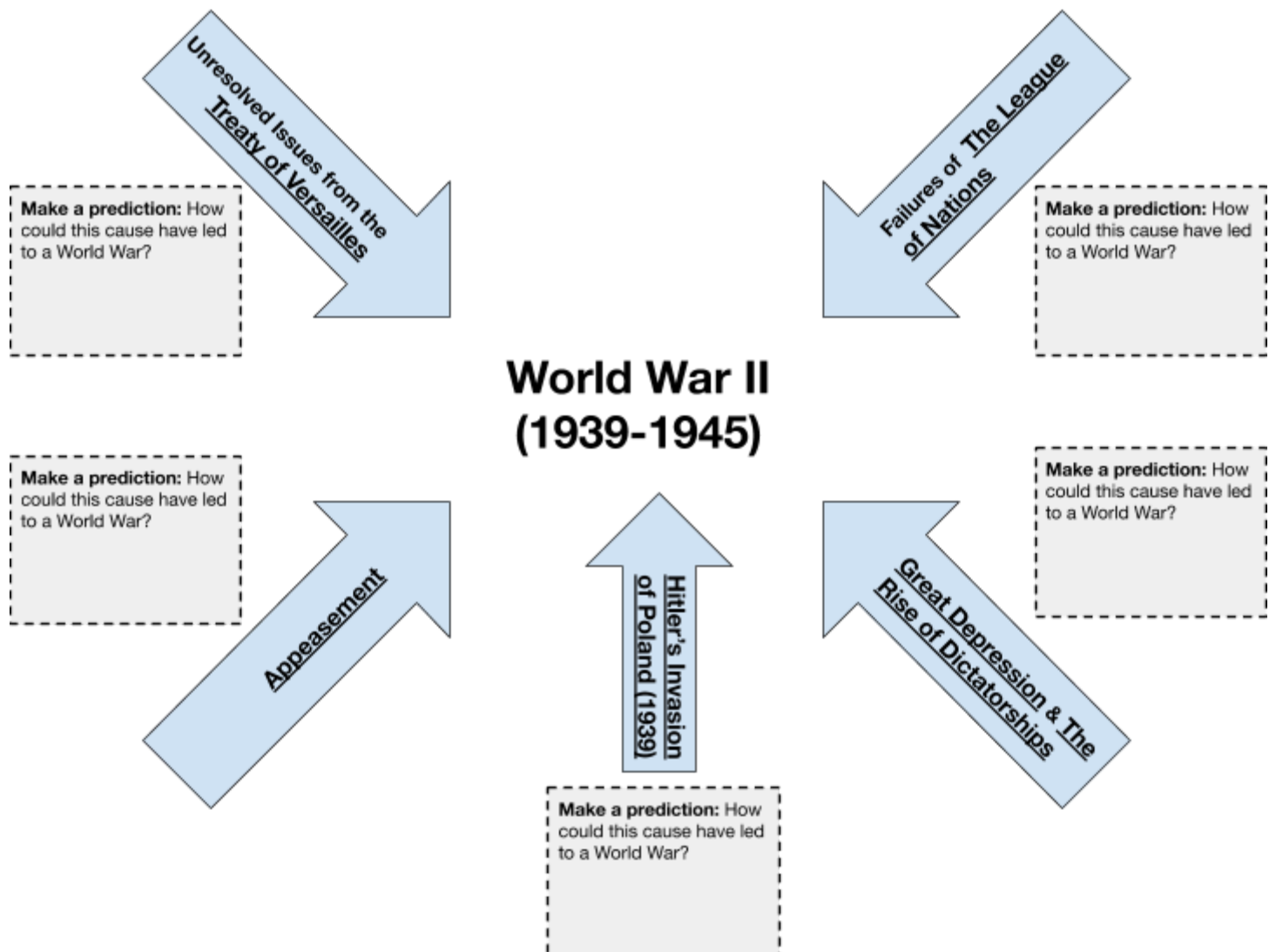
World War II was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945 involving over 30 countries. During the war, two opposing military alliances formed: the Allies and the Axis. World War II launched countries into a state of **total war**, and it became the deadliest conflict in human history with the loss of an estimated 50 to 85 million lives. Mass death was caused by the **Holocaust** and the **atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki**.



Watch this [History Channel Video on WWII](#) then answer the questions below about WWII.

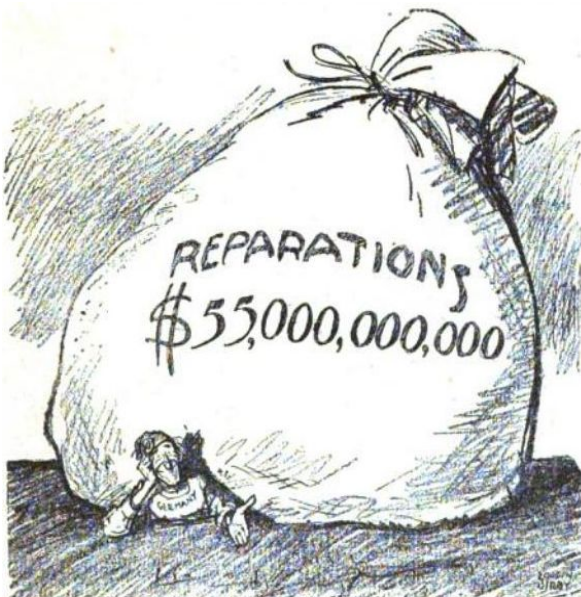
Even though World War II began 21 years after the end of World War I, some historians believe that the two wars were part of one vast global conflict. Why do the historians in this clip argue that the wars were connected?

What were the causes of World War II?



Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.

The **Treaty of Versailles** was one of the peace treaties at the end of World War I and it officially ended the war between Germany and the Allied Powers. The terms of the Treaty of Versailles were announced in June 1919. Even though German politicians were not consulted about the terms of the Treaty, they had very little choice but to sign it. This resulted in many unresolved issues. Germany and its allies were the losers in World War I and as such were held responsible for all of the destruction and costs. In the Treaty of Versailles, Germany lost territory, was forced to pay huge reparations (payments by a defeated country for the destruction it caused in a war), was forced to take responsibility for the war through the War Guilt clause, and forced to demilitarize or greatly reduce their military. After World War I, Germany suffered from economic problems like inflation and unemployment and Germany was often unable to meet reparation payments. These problems left many Germans angry at the Treaty of Versailles which they saw as unfair. Germans were bitter and wanted their overseas and European territories back, as well as freedom to operate as they wish.



American contemporary view of German World War I reparations. Political cartoon 1921.

[Image](#) is courtesy of wikimedia commons and is in the public domain

Check for Understanding:

1. What were the unresolved issues of the Treaty of Versailles?

Synthesis:

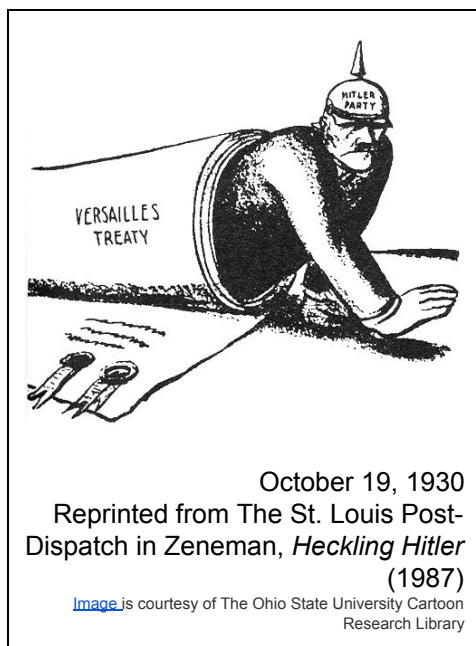
2. How could the unresolved issues of the Treaty of Versailles have led to the beginning of World War II in 1939?

Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.

One major cause of the global Great Depression was the American Wall Street Crash of October 1929. America had given the Weimar Republic huge loans in 1924 to help with reparation payments. However, after the Wall Street crash, America needed these loans repaid to assist its troubled economy. Because Germany lost its loans from America, it was unable to make reparation payments. Germany's failure to make reparation payments meant that France and Britain were unable to make their loan payments. Throughout the world, trade began to slow down and production decreased. The Wall Street Crash had a ripple effect throughout the world that resulted in high unemployment throughout Europe. Unemployment forced many Europeans, especially in Germany, to rely on soup kitchens and other government support.

European governments seemed unable to handle the crisis. The traditional approaches to handling economic crises seemed to only cause more problems. With the current governments unable to ease the pain and suffering of unemployment and inflation, Europeans were drawn to **totalitarian** leaders who promised economic recovery. **Totalitarianism** is a system of government in which one party tries to rule with complete control over every aspect of the lives of its citizen. There have been a number of **totalitarian** rulers in history. While they all try to run their **totalitarian states** with complete control over the people that live in them, they often have different **ideologies** [beliefs] that guide their decisions. For example, the first totalitarian ruler you learned about, **Joseph Stalin**, was a **Communist**. He used totalitarianism to make Russia into the first state inspired by Karl Marx's ideas. **Adolf Hitler** and **Benito Mussolini** were other totalitarian rulers influenced by an ideology called **fascism**. Fascists also wanted complete control over their countries. While these totalitarian leaders in Europe were motivated by different ideologies, they were all deeply **nationalist** and **militaristic**, believing that they needed to fight for the survival and superiority of their nations while building up a strong military that could defeat other nations that may have attempted to take away their power. In Japan, **Emperor Hirohito** emerged as a nationalist and militaristic leader fixated on overseas expansion.

Together, Joseph Stalin (Russia), Adolf Hitler (Germany), Benito Mussolini (Italy) and Emperor Hirohito (Japan) were all **dictators** or rulers who have complete control over their countries. These dictators also aggressively sought control over other nations.



| Observations | Inferences |
|---|------------|
| | |
| <p>What is the message of this political cartoon?</p> | |
| <p> </p> | |

Check for Understanding:
 1. What caused the rise of dictators during the interwar period? What was the main focus of these dictators?

Synthesis:
 2. How could these dictators have caused the beginning of World War II in 1939?

1931-1939 Aggression & Failures of the League of Nations

Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.

The Treaty of Versailles included the planned formation of the League of Nations, an international forum and an international collective security arrangement. The nations that joined the League of Nations agreed to settle disputes rather than go to war. The **League of Nations** was set up after World War I to keep the peace, however, the U.S. did not join and other nations were too concerned with their own problems to take on global peace. When an issue of global peace did arise, the League of Nations did not have the power to do anything about it.

In the early 1930s, the invasion of Manchuria and Abyssinia (current-day Ethiopia) destroyed people's belief in the ability of the League to stop wars or keep any kind of peace. In both situations, the League acted slowly and made poor decisions about how to suppress aggressive nations. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, a Northeastern region of China. The Chinese called on the League of Nations to condemn the act and stop the Japanese, but the League did not act and the Japanese left the League of Nations. In 1935, Italy, under the leadership of fascist leader Benito Mussolini, invaded Abyssinia (current-day Ethiopia) using poison gas. The Ethiopians called on the League of Nations to condemn the invasion. Instead, Britain and France signed a secret pact to give Abyssinia to Italy. By 1936, Italy had conquered Abyssinia and in 1937, Italy left the League.

1. How did the League of Nations respond to the crisis in Manchuria (1931) and Abyssinia (1935)?

While Manchuria and Abyssinia were being invaded, Hitler announced that Germany was leaving the League and in 1935, Hitler broke the Treaty of Versailles and started rearming Germany. The League calls a Disarmament Conference but it failed and Germany continued to arm. In 1936, in defiance of the League of Nations, Germany began to recapture territories lost under the Treaty of Versailles including the Rhineland. In 1938, Germany informed the League that in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany and Austria were uniting.

2. How did the League of Nations respond to Hitler's violation of the Treaty of Versailles?

There were many effects of the League of Nations failures. First, small nations soon learned that they could not expect protection from the League of Nations and that aggressive totalitarian states could act without consequence. Second, the League of Nations inability to act and their slowness made the League appear incompetent, scared and ineffective. Third, by the 1930s, the four major powers - Japan, Italy, Britain and France - all betrayed the League's goals. Fourth, because Britain and France knew the League could not stop aggressive nations, they instead followed the policy of **appeasement** or giving Hitler what he wanted to stop Germany from going to war. This policy allowed Hitler to quickly advance with his plans.

Check for Understanding:

3. What was the purpose of the League of Nations after World War I?

4. Did the League of Nations meet its goals? Explain.

Synthesis:

5. How could the failures of the League of Nations have led to the beginning of World War II in 1939?

1935-1939 Appeasement

Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.

What is appeasement? Why did leaders take this route?

In the 1930s, when Britain and France knew the League could not stop aggressive nations, they instead followed the policy of **appeasement** or the policy of giving aggressive or enemy nations what they want in order to avoid conflict. The term is most often applied to the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's actions towards Nazi Germany between 1935 and 1939. There are several reasons why several Western democracies like Britain and France appeased Hitler. First, the British were not prepared to go to war and wanted to avoid war at all costs. Additionally, having remembered the slaughter of World War I, many leaders thought another world war would destroy civilization. Finally, some thought that Hitler's complaints and ideas were reasonable. From 1935 until 1938, Britain and France gave Hitler what he wanted such as land, control over nations, and the freedom to remilitarize because they assumed that if they gave Hitler what he wanted, he'd eventually stop and war could be avoided. Instead, this policy of **appeasement** empowered Hitler to want more and take more. The greatest example of this appeasement policy is the **Munich Agreement**.

1. What is appeasement?

2. Which nations appeased Hitler and Nazi Germany?

3. Why did these nations appease Hitler and Nazi Germany?

4. What do you predict are the dangers of appeasement? What are the possible benefits?

The Road to World War II



British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain cheerfully greeted by Adolf Hitler at the beginning of the Bad Godesberg meeting on 24 September 1938, where Hitler demanded annexation of Czech border areas without delay.

Image is courtesy of wikimedia commons and is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany](#) license

Hitler wanted to unite all German-speaking people into the Third Reich [Nazi Germany] and he began on the road to create a “living space” for German in Eastern Europe. To create the “living space” for Germany, Hitler believed that he should do whatever was necessary. One of his first steps in creating this “living space” was the **Anschluss** or union between Austria and Germany in 1938. Even though the Anschluss violated the Treaty of Versailles, Western democracies did nothing to stop Hitler.

5. What did Hitler want?

6. How did he go about getting it?

7. What did Western democracies do in response to the Anschluss? What message might this send to Hitler?

8. How is this an example of appeasement?

Having built confidence that he could not be stopped, Hitler turned to Czechoslovakia. In western Czechoslovakia, there was a region called **Sudetenland** where there were German-speaking people he believed needed to be reunited with their German homeland. Britain and France were not willing to go to war so a deal was reached on

September 30 between Adolf Hitler, Neville Chamberlain (Britain), Benito Mussolini (Italy), and Édouard Daladier (France) called the **Munich Agreement**. The Munich Agreement permitted German annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. Czechoslovakia was informed by Britain and France that they could either fight Germany alone or surrender to Germany. The Czechoslovakian government agreed to abide by the agreement because they knew they could not fight Hitler alone since Britain and France were unwilling to help them fight. The settlement gave Germany the Sudetenland and control over the rest of Czechoslovakia as long as Hitler promised to go no further.

9. What did Hitler want?

10. How did he go about getting it?

11. What did Western democracies do in response to the Anschluss [annexation of Czechoslovakia]? What message might this send to Hitler?

12. How is this an example of appeasement?



Source: The History Department at the United States Military Academy (adapted)

13. Based on the information provided by this map, how did adopting the policy of appeasement at the Munich Conference in September 1938 change Europe?

After the signing of Munich Agreement, Chamberlain returned to Britain and announced, "My good friends, for the second time in our history, a British Prime Minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time."

14. Why do you think Chamberlain was so excited after the Munich Agreement? How might other nations have felt about the Munich Agreement? Why?

14. If you were Chamberlain, would you have signed the Munich Agreement? Explain.



British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, landing at Heston aerodrome on 30 September 1938 after his meeting with Hitler at Munich. In his hand he holds the peace agreement between Britain and Germany.

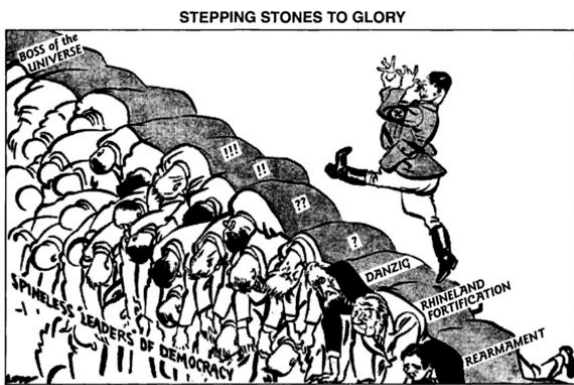
[Image](#) is courtesy of wikimedia commons and is in the public domain

However Winston Churchill, a British statesmen and staunch opponent of Chamberlain's appeasement of Adolf Hitler, delivered a speech to the House of Commons in October 1938 where he stated,

I will, therefore, begin by saying the most unpopular and most unwelcome thing. I will begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat, and that France has suffered even more than we have. [...] I venture to think that in the future the Czechoslovak State cannot be maintained as an independent entity. You will find that in a period of time which may be measured by years, but may be measured only by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi regime. [...] we are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France. Do not let us blind ourselves to that. It must now be accepted that all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will make the best terms they can with the triumphant Nazi Power. The system of alliances in Central Europe upon which France has relied for her safety has been swept away, and I can see no means by which it can be reconstituted. [...] This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.

Source: <https://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/munich.htm>

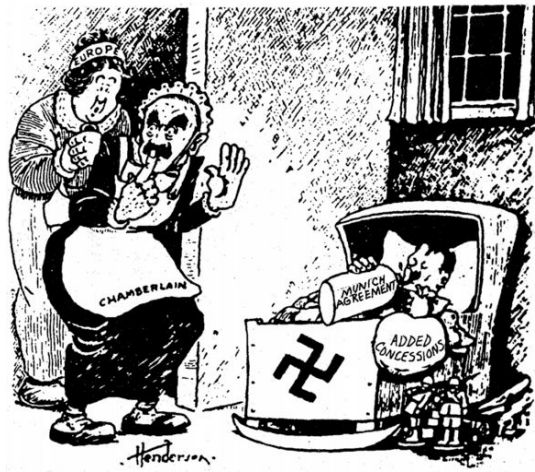
16. What did Winston Churchill fear the impact of the Munich Agreement would be?



Source: David Low, *Evening Standard*, July 8, 1936 (adapted)

| Observations | Inferences |
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| What is the message of this political cartoon? | |
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| Observations | Inferences |
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| What is the message of this political cartoon? | |
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"SHH-HH! HE'LL BE QUIET NOW—MAYBE!"

[Image](#) is courtesy of humanitiesappeasementinwwii.weebly.com

'Remember . . . One More Lollypop, and Then You All Go Home!'



Remember... one more lollypop, and then you all go home, August 13, 1941, Dr. Seuss Political Cartoons.

Special Collection & Archives, UC San Diego Library

[Image](#) is courtesy of UC San Diego

| Observations | Inferences |
|--|------------|
| | |
| What is the message of this political cartoon? | |
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Check for Understanding:

17. What is appeasement? Why did Western democracies like Britain and France chose this policy?

Synthesis:

18. How could appeasement have led to beginning of World War II in 1939?

Sept. 1, 1939 Hitler invades Poland and World War II Begins

Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.



[image.js](#) courtesy of [researchgate.net](#)

Alliances Form

Many nations realized that after the annexation of Sudetenland, Poland would be Hitler's next target. In April 1939, Russia, Britain and France met to form an alliance to defend Poland. The Allies thought that Hitler would not invade Poland if it instigated a war with Russia. By August 1939, Russia changed its mind and left the alliance with France and Britain. In August 1939, Hitler and his enemy, Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Russian dictator, signed the **Nazi-Soviet Pact**, a nonaggression pact that publicly stated that the rival nations would maintain peaceful relations. This pact was surprising to the world because Hitler and Stalin had dramatically different ideologies. Even though these dictators did not like one another, they used each other for political ends. Secretly, this pact also said that they would invade Poland and split it between them.

1. After Sudetenland, what was Hitler's next target? How did Russia, Britain, and France respond?

2. What was the Nazi-Soviet Pact? Why was the Nazi-Soviet Pact surprising?

3. What was the secret agreement in the Nazi-Soviet pact?

4. What does this secret agreement reveal about appeasement and Chamberlain's argument that the Munich Agreement would bring "peace for our time"?

| Observations | Inferences |
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| | |
| What is the message of this political cartoon? | |
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World War II Begins

On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland. Only two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany and World War II officially began. Nazis stormed Poland with the power of **blitzkrieg**, or lightning war. The theory of the blitzkrieg was to defeat opponents using a series of short military campaigns. These military campaigns made use of tanks, planes and artillery to quickly attack opponents. These quick attacks would disorganize and shock opponents, making them more vulnerable. While Germany attacked Poland from the west, Stalin and the Soviet Union attacked from the east, annexing land promised under the secret parts of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Within a month, Poland no longer existed as an independent country, and instead became absorbed under Hitler and Stalin's dictatorships.

5. Which country did Hitler invade on September 1, 1939? How did Britain and France react?

6. What is blitzkrieg? Why was it a successful military tactic?

Images of the German Invasion of Poland



View from the bow pulpit of a plane Heinkel He 111, gunner on machine gun, Poland, 1939

[Image](#) is courtesy of wikimedia commons under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany](#) license



Graudenz, Poland, cheering people next to a German Panzer IV, 1939

[Image](#) is courtesy of wikimedia commons under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany](#) license



Panzer IV while driving through a trellis of cheering people (currently with "Hitler salute")

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Warsaw during World War II: Burning grain silos at intersection of Bema and Prądzyńskiego Streets.

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A Ju 87 Stuka dive bomber formation flies over Poland.

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**GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND
SEPTEMBER 1, 1939**



Image is courtesy of United States Holocaust Museum

7. How did Poland's location make the country particularly vulnerable to attack by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union?



Watch this [Discovery Channel Video on WWII](#) (0:00-09:00) then answer the questions below about WWII.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| 8. How did Hitler justify his attack of Poland? | 9. Why did Britain and France declare war on Hitler after the invasion of Poland? | 10. What advantages did the German military have? |
| | | |
| 11. What was Poland's military like? | 12. Which other country invaded Poland? Why? | 13. After Poland surrendered, what did Germans begin to do to Jewish people? |
| | | |



Image is courtesy to the New York Times



Hitler Invades Poland
Image is courtesy of the telegraph.co.uk



German troops parade through Warsaw after the invasion of Poland. Warsaw, Poland, September 28-30, 1939. — National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Md.

Image is courtesy of United States Holocaust Museum

Check for Understanding:

14. What happened on September 1, 1939? Why?

Synthesis:

15. How did this event lead to the beginning of World War II in 1939?

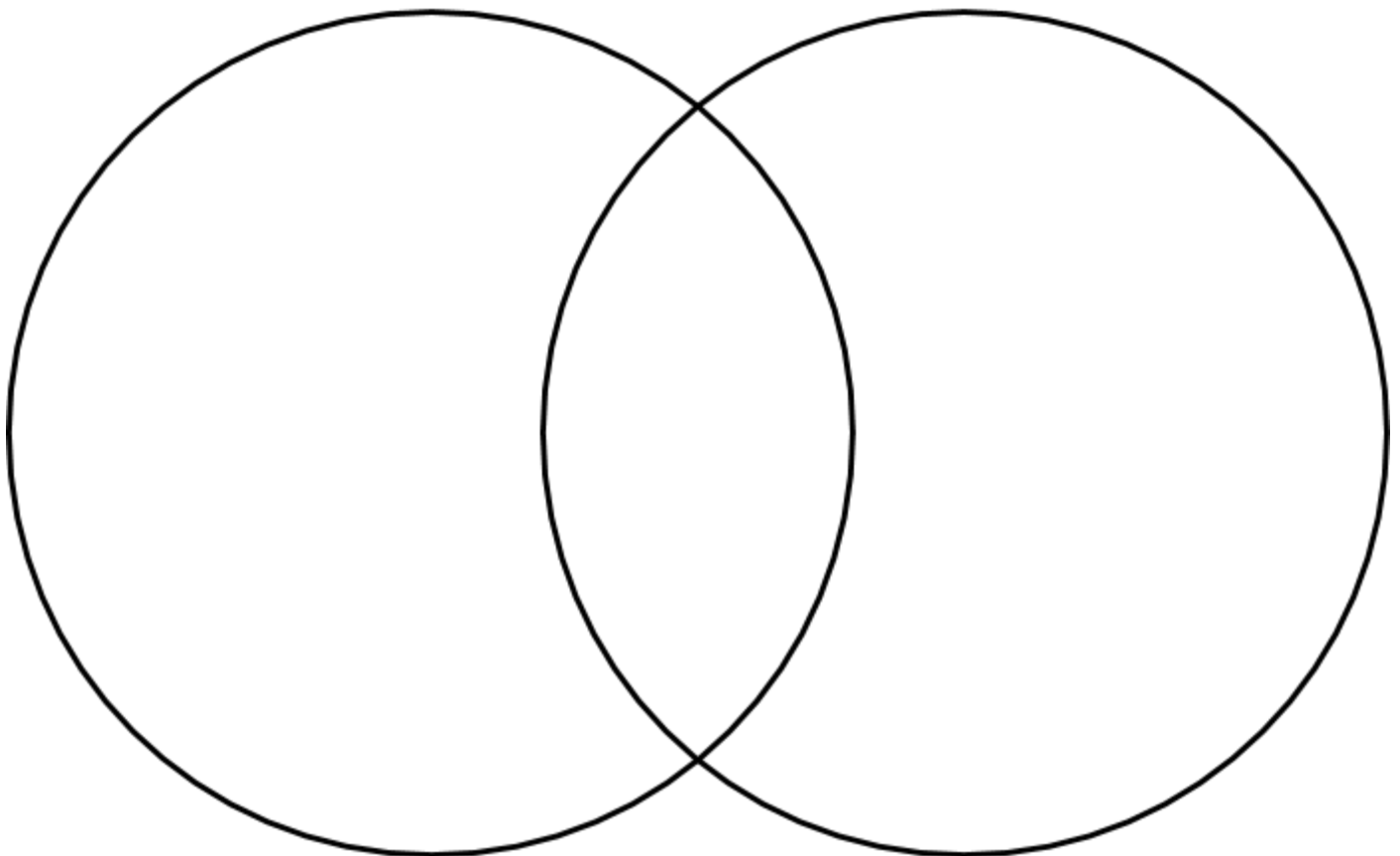
Synthesis

Directions: Complete the venn diagram below.

How were the causes of World War I similar or different from the causes of World War II?

World War I Causes

World War II Causes



Formative Assessment Writing Task

Task: Using your knowledge of global history, write a response in which you

- Identify five causes of WWII
- Explain how these causes led to the start of WWII



Regents Multiple Choice Check for Understanding

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Which event occurred first and led to the other three?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) rise of fascism in Europe(2) Bolshevik Revolution(3) World War I(4) signing of the Treaty of Versailles | <p>6. Which agreement was labeled by the Nazis as unfair to Germany?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Treaty of Versailles(2) Soviet Nonaggression Pact(3) Munich Pact(4) Treaty of Brest-Litovsk |
| <p>2. One major reason the League of Nations failed was that it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) was not included in the Versailles Treaty(2) was controlled by communist Russia(3) frightened many nations with its large military force(4) lacked the support of many of the major world powers during crises | <p>7. Which development occurred in Germany as a result of the terms imposed by the Treaty of Versailles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) Soviet occupation(2) political instability(3) overseas expansion(4) economic prosperity |
| <p>3. Which term is defined as payment for damages?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) mandate(2) armistice(3) reparation(4) militarism | <p>8. One way in which the Treaty of Nanking and the Treaty of Versailles are similar is that in both treaties the provisions called for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) monarchs to be returned to their rightful places(2) reparations to be paid by defeated countries(3) existing borders to be maintained(4) peacekeeping organizations to be established |
| <p>4. In Europe during the 1930s, economic instability led to the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) rise of fascist dictatorships(2) development of nuclear arms(3) abandonment of colonial territories(4) establishment of the League of Nations | <p>9. The Treaty of Versailles angered many Germans after World War I because the treaty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) divided Germany into Communist and non-Communist zones(2) made Germany restore its emperor(3) required all German-speaking Europeans to return to Germany(4) forced Germany to pay large war reparations |
| <p>5. Which newspaper headline illustrates a policy of appeasement?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) "Dien Bien Phu Falls; French to Leave Vietnam"(2) "Chamberlain Agrees to German Demands: Sudetenland to Germany"(3) "Marshall Plan Proposes Economic Aid Program for Europe"(4) "Soviet Troops and Tanks Crush Hungarian Revolt" | <p>10. The policy of appeasement helped cause World War II because this policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) reduced the armaments of major European powers(2) gave too much power to the United Nations(3) increased sea trade between England and the United States(4) allowed the aggressive actions of Germany to go unchecked |

Base your answer to the following question on the passage below and on your knowledge of social studies.

"It took the Big Four just five hours and twenty five minutes here in Munich today to dispel the clouds of war and come to an agreement over the partition of Czechoslovakia. There is to be no European war, after all. There is to be peace, and the price of that peace is, roughly, the ceding by Czechoslovakia of the Sudeten territory to Herr Hitler's Germany. The German Führer gets what he wanted, only he has to wait a little longer for it. Not much longer though — only ten days. . . ."

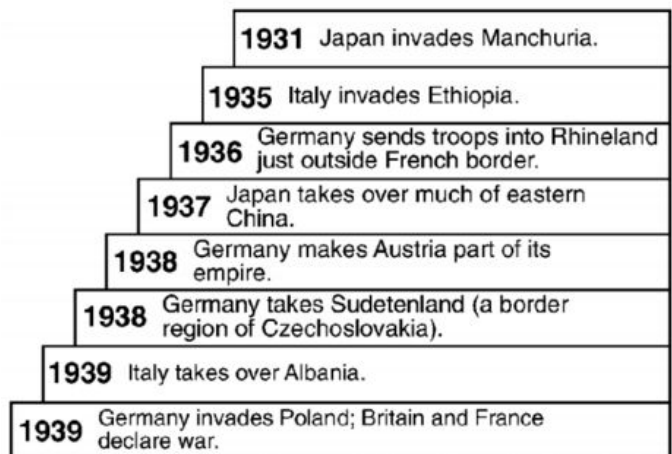
Source: William Shirer, recording of CBS radio report from Prague, September 29, 1938

11. The policy that France, Britain, and Italy chose to follow at this meeting is known as

- (1) appeasement
- (2) self-determination
- (3) liberation
- (4) pacification

12. One reason for the outbreak of World War II was the

- (1) ineffectiveness of the League of Nations
- (2) growing tension between the United States and the Soviet Union
- (3) conflict between the Hapsburg and the Romanov families
- (4) refusal of the German government to sign the Treaty of Versailles



Source: *Guide to Essentials*, Prentice Hall

13. Based on the information provided by the diagram, which statement is a valid conclusion about the 1930s?

- (1) The United States led international peace-keeping efforts.
- (2) Aggression led to the start of World War II.
- (3) The actions of Italy, Germany, and Japan united Europe.
- (4) Economic and social upheaval led to the rise of democracy in Asia.

14. Which situation is an example of totalitarianism in Germany in the 1930s?

- (1) frequent meetings of the German Reichstag
- (2) decline of the German economy
- (3) strict government control of the press
- (4) negotiation of a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union