

# The Road to War

## Thinking on Your Own

Take outline notes on the important information in this lesson. Use the dates on the timeline as the basis for your notes. Write down the date and the information from the timeline. Then list details from the text to help you remember why each event was important.

**D**uring the 1930s, Germany, Japan, and Italy prepared for war. Hitler and Mussolini were firmly in control of their nations. The emperor ruled Japan, but military leaders made most of the decisions. In each nation, these dictators wanted to build great empires. They were ready to use their armies and navies to do this.

### Japan and Italy on the March

Japan faced serious economic problems in the early 1930s. Like other industrial nations, it suffered from the Great Depression. But Japan had its own special problems. A small island nation, it lacked iron ore, oil, rubber, and other resources. It also needed markets beyond Japan for the goods it produced. The Japanese government decided to expand into Asia to get control of resources and to sell its goods.

#### focus your reading

Explain why Italy and Japan seized territory in the 1930s.

Describe how Germany took control of neighboring nations in the 1930s.

Why did Great Britain and France finally act to stop Hitler?

#### vocabulary

appeasement

Anschluss

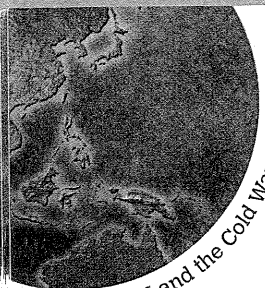
blitzkrieg

isolationist

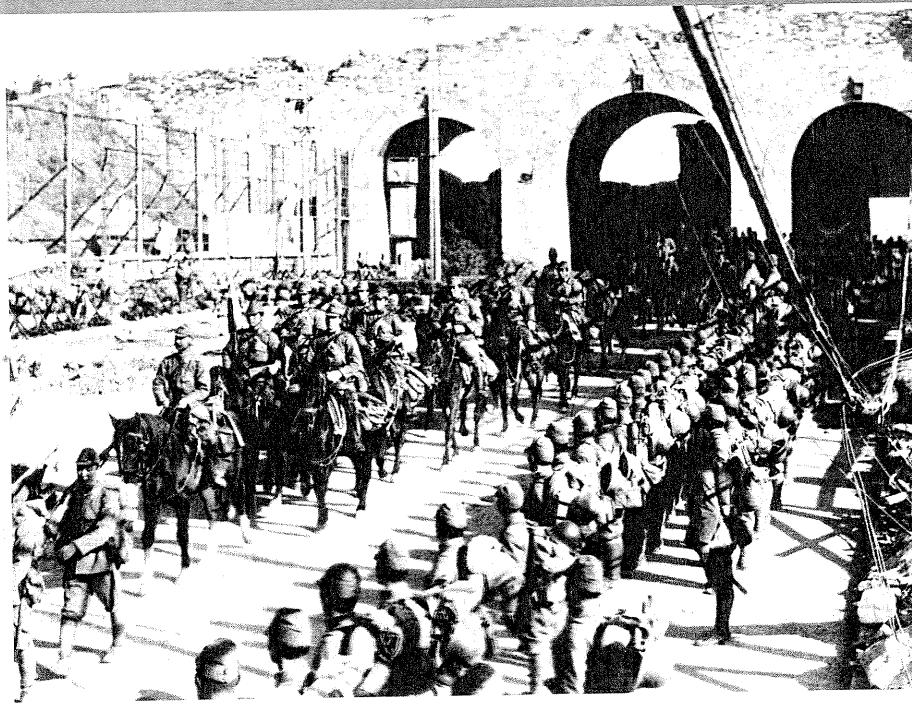


Hitler salutes tanks in 1936 during the re-arming of Germany.





World War II and the Cold War, 1931-1955



Japanese troops in Nanjing, China, in 1937

In 1931, Japanese troops took control of Manchuria, a region in northeastern China. The Japanese claimed that Chinese troops had attacked their railroad in that region. The Japanese had actually staged the attack themselves. They dressed up in Chinese army uniforms and raided their own railroad.

Chiang Kai-shek, the head of China's government, tried to limit the spread of Japanese power in China. He agreed to let Japan govern parts of northern China. However, by 1937, China and Japan were fighting a full-scale war.

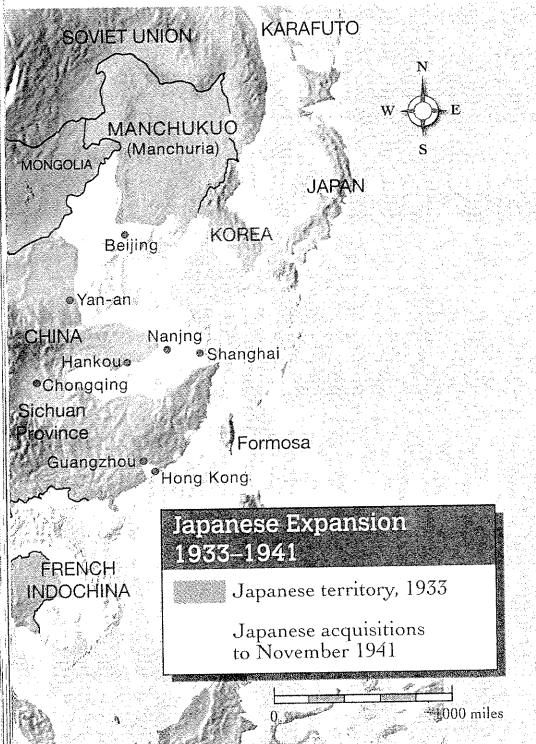
In 1940, Japan moved farther south to the French colony of Indochina. The United States warned the Japanese that it would stop selling them oil and scrap iron if they did not retreat. Japan did not retreat.

The League of Nations had objected to each of Japan's invasions and seizures of territory. However, it had no power to force Japan to give up the territory. This also was true when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935.

Ethiopia had resisted European domination longer

**stop and think**

Pretend that you are an American citizen living in 1937. Write a letter to the League of Nations pointing out how the actions of Germany, Italy, and Japan are a threat to world peace. What would you ask the League to do to preserve the peace?



than any other African nation. But in 1936, the nation fell to Italy. Mussolini had finally conquered the kingdom that defeated Italy in 1896.

### Germany on the March

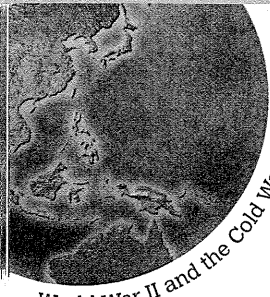
In Germany, Adolph Hitler also decided to ignore the Treaty of Versailles and defy the League of Nations. By the terms of the treaty, Germany's air force was abolished and its army reduced in size. In 1935, Hitler began to create an air force and expand the army. The League of Nations did nothing to stop him.

The treaty also created a zone along Germany's border with France that the German army could not enter. This area along the Rhine River belonged to Germany, but it was demilitarized to help protect France. In 1936, Hitler sent a German army into the Rhineland. Again, the League did nothing.

France and Great Britain protested Hitler's re-arming of the Rhineland. France would have fought to force Germany to remove its soldiers but needed Great Britain's help. The British, however, would not fight. This was the beginning of Britain's policy of **appeasement**. Appeasement is giving in to the demands of a hostile person or group in order to keep peace.

Hitler was now convinced that Great Britain and France would not fight. His next goal was **Anschluss**, or union of Austria with Germany. Austria was a nation that Hitler wanted to control, in part because he had been born there. By 1938, the Nazis had become an important political party in Austria. Hitler warned the chancellor of Austria to appoint Nazis to government positions of power or Germany would invade Austria. The chancellor agreed to Hitler's demand. Later, when Hitler made further demands, the chancellor refused. Hitler sent troops and proclaimed Austria part of Germany.





World War II and the Cold War, 1931-1965

Next on Hitler's list was Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was created by the Treaty of Versailles. It had a number of ethnic groups within its borders. One large group was German. Many lived in a region called the Sudetenland. In 1938, Hitler demanded the return of the Sudetenland to Germany.

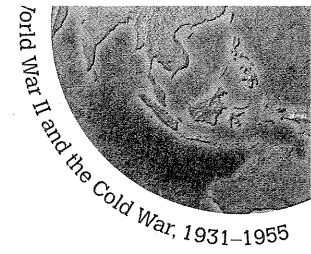
In 1938, British and French officials met with Hitler in Munich. At the Munich Conference, these officials again gave in to Hitler. They agreed that Hitler could take control of the Sudetenland. In return, Hitler promised that Germany would not take control of additional regions of Czechoslovakia. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain said the settlement had achieved "peace in our time." The following spring, Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia.

### WAR!

Hitler and Mussolini established an alliance between Germany and Italy in 1936. That same year, Germany and Japan signed a defense pact, or agreement. This set up the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. These three nations became known as the Axis Powers. Hitler signed his final alliance in August 1939 with Joseph Stalin. They agreed to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. The pact stated that the two nations would not fight one another. In addition, the Soviet Union was promised part of Poland if conquered by Germany.

German panzer division rolling into Poland on Sept. 1, 1939





The Non-Aggression Pact left Hitler free to invade Poland. He had feared that Stalin would join with western European nations to resist an invasion of Poland. On September 1, 1939, Hitler launched his **blitzkrieg**, or lightning war, against Poland. The blitzkrieg included armored columns, known as panzer divisions, each containing about 300 tanks. They were accompanied by airplanes and support troops. The speed and efficiency of the blitzkrieg stunned Polish forces, who surrendered after only four weeks of fighting.

On September 3, 1939, Great Britain and France, which were Poland's allies, declared war on Germany. However, it was too late to help Poland. Hitler's modern army quickly overran the western section of the country. Stalin's forces attacked from the east. Within one month, Stalin and Hitler had divided Poland.

In the meantime, the United States decided not to join the fighting. **Isolationists** in the United States believed that the country should stay out of European problems. They defended their argument by pointing out the number of deaths and money spent during World War I. President Franklin Roosevelt, however, was determined to help the Allies — the British and French. British and French leaders had hoped to avoid war by agreeing to Hitler's demands. Instead, appeasement allowed Hitler to buy time. He used that time to build a mighty war machine.

### Putting It All Together

With a partner, create a timeline of the steps Hitler took that ignored the Treaty of Versailles. Then write a brief paragraph in your notebook to explain what Britain, France, and the League of Nations might have done to stop Hitler.

#### Time Box

- 1931
  - Japan seized Manchuria
- 1936
  - Germany seized the Rhineland
  - Italy conquered Ethiopia
  - Italy and Germany created the Rome-Berlin Axis
  - Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact
- 1937
  - Japan seized much of eastern China
- 1938
  - Germany annexed Austria
  - Germany took over the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia
  - Munich Conference
- 1939
  - Germany seized the rest of Czechoslovakia
  - Hitler and Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact
  - Germany seized Poland
  - Great Britain and France declared war on Germany