



Aggression Leads to War

Objectives

1. Learn why totalitarian dictators gained power after World War I.
2. Find out how Germany, Italy, and Japan embarked on a path of military conquest.
3. Discover how the United States tried to remain neutral in a new world conflict.
4. Understand how World War II began in Europe.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Use Word Clues to Analyze

Meaning Start with word clues when you encounter an unfamiliar term such as *economic depression*. It is helpful to know that the familiar word *depress* means "weaken or make less active." Then, you might conclude that an economic depression is a period of weak or less active economy. Finally, learn about a word from its place in a sentence. A verb, for example, will describe an action.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

superior, p. 803

inferior, p. 803

Key Terms and People

Josef Stalin, p. 802

totalitarian state, p. 802

Benito Mussolini, p. 802

fascism, p. 803

Adolf Hitler, p. 803

aggression, p. 804

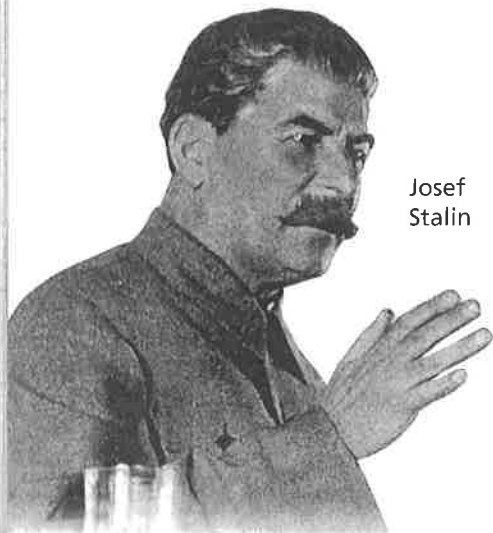
appeasement, p. 804

Winston Churchill, p. 807

★ **Background Knowledge** As you have seen, the early decades of the twentieth century saw a series of major world crises. World War I and the Russian Revolution destroyed millions of lives and altered the political map of Europe. The Great Depression of the 1930s caused worldwide economic hardship. In this section, you will see how these conditions helped set the stage for a new world war.

Main Idea

Postwar problems led to the rise of dictators in several nations.



Josef Stalin

The Rise of Dictators

In the 1920s and 1930s, people in several nations came to believe that democratic governments were too weak to solve their problems. They turned instead to dictators.

Soviet Communism By 1929, Josef Stalin was sole dictator of the Soviet Union. Stalin turned the Soviet Union into a totalitarian state. A totalitarian state is a nation in which a single party controls the government and every aspect of people's lives.

Stalin took brutal measures to control and modernize industry and agriculture. He ordered peasants to give crops, animals, and land to government-run farms. Millions of peasants who resisted were executed or sent to labor camps. In addition, an estimated four million Soviets, including many of Stalin's rivals in the Communist Party, were killed or imprisoned on false charges of disloyalty to the state.

Fascism in Italy After World War I, economic problems in Italy had led to unrest. Benito Mussolini promised to restore order through strong leadership. In October 1922, Mussolini and his

followers threatened to overthrow Italy's elected government. In response, the king appointed Mussolini prime minister.

Mussolini turned Italy into the world's first Fascist state. Fascism is a political system based on militarism, extreme nationalism, and blind loyalty to the state and its leader. Italy, he said, was a superior nation with a glorious destiny. He spoke of reviving the days when the Roman Empire dominated Europe. He also argued that a superior nation had a right and duty to conquer inferior nations.

Mussolini ended freedom of the press and banned all political parties except his own. Critics were jailed or murdered. In schools, children recited the motto "Mussolini is always right."

Nazi Germany Many Germans were angry over their defeat in World War I and the heavy reparation payments forced on them by the Allies. Among them was an extreme nationalist, **Adolf Hitler**. By 1921, Hitler had become leader of a small group known as the National Socialist, or Nazi, Party. Nazism was a form of fascism.

Racism lay at the core of Nazi beliefs. Hitler told Germans that they were a "master race," destined to rule over Slavs, Gypsies, and others they considered inferior. The cornerstone of Hitler's racial theories was anti-Semitism, or hatred of Jews. Hitler falsely claimed that Germany had not lost World War I but had been betrayed by Jews and other "traitors." This idea appealed to Germans eager to find a scapegoat, someone on whom to blame their problems.

The Great Depression increased Hitler's popularity. In 1933, he was named chancellor, or leader of the German parliament. Once in power, Hitler quickly created a totalitarian state. All other parties were outlawed. Hitler's secret police enforced strict loyalty.

Germany also passed anti-Semitic laws. Jews were banned from public schools and from professions such as medicine and law. Jewish communities were attacked. In 1938, troops began rounding up Jews and sending them to slave labor camps. But even worse was to come, as you will see.

Vocabulary Builder

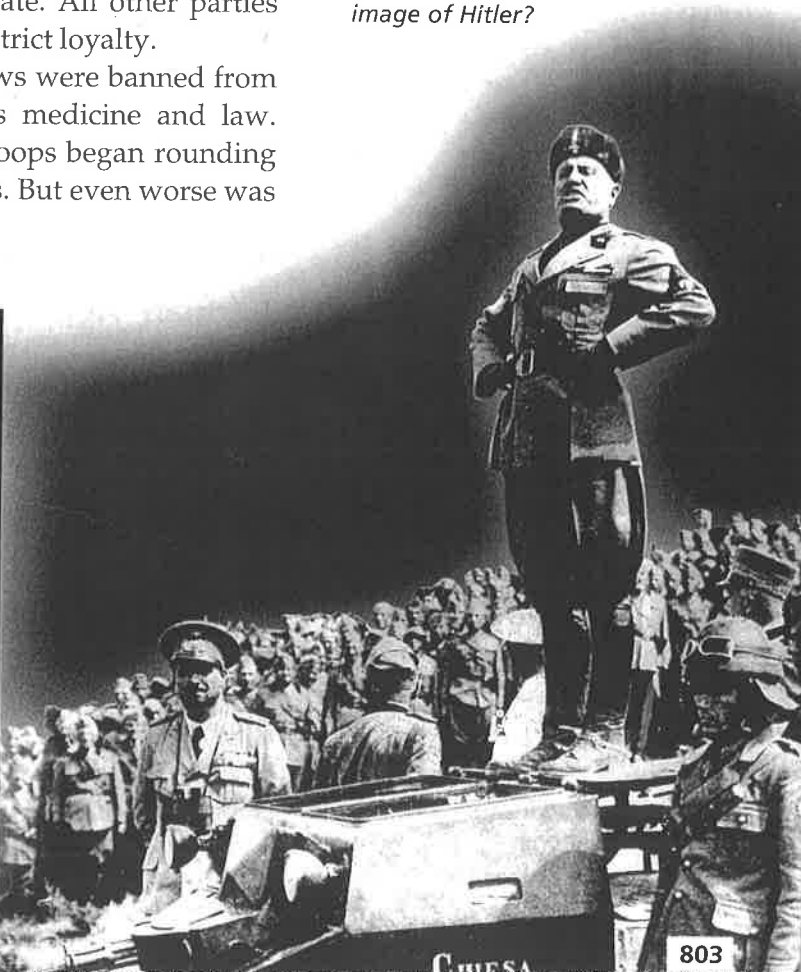
superior (soo PIR ee uhr) *adj.* of greater importance or value; of higher quality

inferior (ihn FIR ee uhr) *adj.* of lower rank or status; of poorer quality

Two Fascist Dictators

The Nazi propaganda poster (left) glorifies Adolf Hitler, dictator of Germany. At right, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini strikes a proud pose while standing atop a tank.

Critical Thinking: Evaluate Information How does the propaganda poster create a heroic image of Hitler?





Use Word Clues to Analyze Meaning

Use a familiar base word and ending to analyze the meaning of *militarism*.

Main Idea

The rulers of Japan, Italy, and Germany sought to expand their territories and conquer other nations.



Haile Selassie addressing the League of Nations

Militarism in Japan In Japan, too, the Great Depression undermined faith in democratic rule. Military leaders pressured the civilian government to take control of nearby countries. Militarists argued that their island nation needed more space, as well as raw materials for its booming industries.

By 1936, militarists were in complete control of the Japanese government. Like the Nazis in Germany, Japanese militarists preached racism. The Japanese, they said, were superior to other Asians as well as non-Asians.

✓Checkpoint How did the Great Depression aid Hitler?

Military Aggression

Italy, Germany, and Japan each followed policies of ruthless aggression. **Aggression** is a warlike act by one country against another without cause.

Japan Attacks China In 1931, acting without the approval of Japan's elected government, the Japanese army seized Manchuria in northeastern China. The League of Nations, which had been founded to halt aggression, protested but took no action.

After 1937, Japan stepped up its aggression in China. Japanese armies treated the Chinese brutally. For six weeks, Japanese forces pillaged the Chinese city of Nanjing. In the assault, more than a quarter of a million civilians and prisoners of war were massacred.

Italy Invades Ethiopia In 1935, Mussolini's armies invaded the African country of Ethiopia. Though the Ethiopians fought bravely, their cavalry and outdated rifles were no match for Italy's modern tanks and airplanes.

Ethiopia's emperor, Haile Selassie (Hĭ lee suh LAS ee), appealed to the League of Nations for aid. However, the League responded weakly. Britain and France were weary of war and caught up in their own economic crises. Without help, Ethiopia fell to the invaders.

German Aggression Hitler vowed to create an empire that united all German-speaking people, including those outside Germany. In defiance of the Treaty of Versailles, he began to rebuild Germany's armed forces. He further defied the treaty by sending troops into the Rhineland region of western Germany in 1936. Two years later, German armies occupied Austria. As Hitler predicted, the European democracies did nothing to stop him.

Still, France and Britain protested when Hitler threatened to invade Czechoslovakia. In September 1938, European leaders met in the German city of Munich to ease the crisis. The leaders of France and Britain hoped to appease Hitler. **Appeasement** is a policy of giving in to aggression in order to avoid war.

In the Munich Pact, Britain and France agreed to let the German leader occupy the Sudetenland (soo DET ehn land), a portion of Czechoslovakia populated largely by people who spoke German. In return, Hitler promised he would seek no further territory.






Aggression in Europe to 1939

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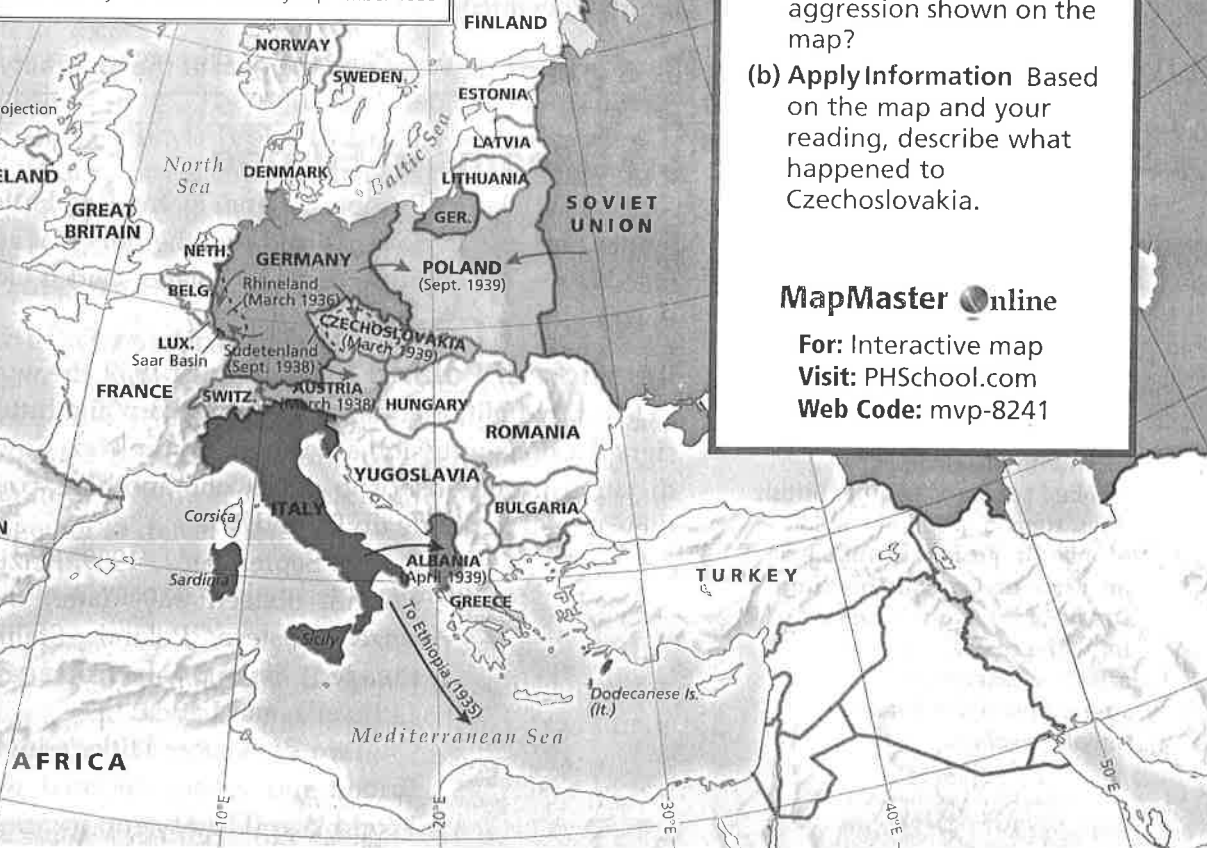
Skills Activity

KEY

-  Areas taken over by Germany by September 1939
-  Areas taken over by Italy by September 1939
-  Areas taken over by the Soviet Union by September 1939

0 km 400
0 miles 400
Azimuthal Equal-Area Projection

ATLANTIC OCEAN



In the late 1930s, aggressive acts by Italy and Germany threatened the peace of Europe and the world.

- (a) **Interpret a Map** What was the earliest act of aggression shown on the map?
- (b) **Apply Information** Based on the map and your reading, describe what happened to Czechoslovakia.

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The British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, returned from the Munich meeting announcing that he had won "peace for our time." But only a few months later, in March 1939, Hitler occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia.

Checkpoint How did the League of Nations respond to Italian and Japanese aggression?

American Neutrality

As you have seen, after World War I, the United States returned to a policy of isolationism. As aggression threatened to bring the world to war again, Americans were determined to avoid getting involved.

Neutrality Act In 1935, Congress passed the Neutrality Act. It was the first of several laws designed to keep the United States at peace. The Neutrality Act forbade the President from selling arms, making loans, or giving any other kind of assistance to any nation involved in war.

Main Idea

The United States sought to stay out of growing world conflict while strengthening ties to Latin America.

Good Neighbor Policy At the same time, the United States sought to strengthen ties to Latin America. In 1930, President Herbert Hoover rejected the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. The United States, he declared, no longer claimed the right to intervene in Latin American affairs.

Franklin Roosevelt went even further. Under what he called the Good Neighbor Policy, he withdrew American troops from Nicaragua and Haiti. He also cancelled the Platt Amendment, which had limited the independence of Cuba.

✓Checkpoint What was the goal of the Neutrality Act?

Main Idea

After invading Poland, German armies quickly conquered most of Europe.

The Bombing of London

For months, German planes bombed London and other British cities. Here, a group of London women sit outside the rubble of their homes. **Critical Thinking:**

Draw Conclusions Do you think the constant bombing attacks weakened or strengthened the British people? Explain.

War Begins in Europe

Meanwhile, in Europe, Poland loomed as Hitler's next target. France and Britain now realized that the policy of appeasement had failed. They promised to come to Poland's aid if Germany invaded Poland.

Invasion of Poland In late August 1939, the world was shocked to learn that Hitler and Stalin—two sworn and bitter enemies—had signed a nonaggression agreement. In the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the two dictators promised not to attack one another's countries. Secretly, they agreed to divide up Poland.

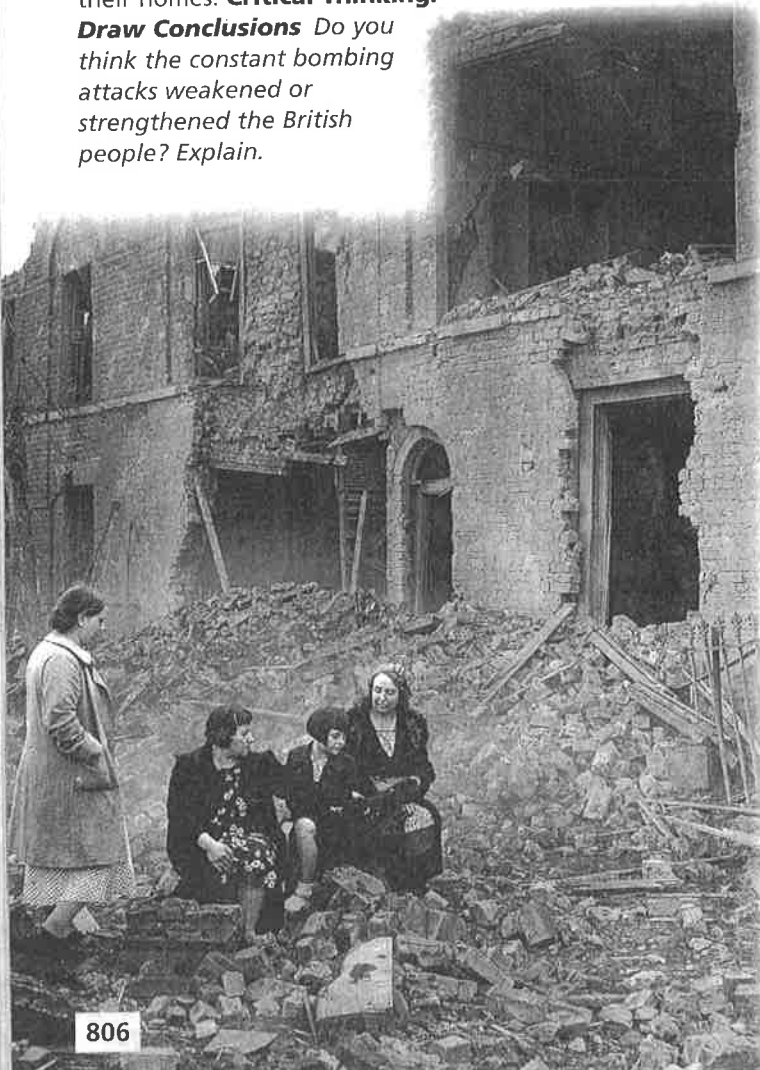
On September 1, 1939, Nazi troops invaded Poland. Sixteen days later, the Soviet Union seized eastern Poland. Stalin's forces also invaded Finland and later annexed Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia.

Two days after Hitler's invasion of Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

In the early days of the war, Hitler's armies seemed unstoppable. In April 1940, they moved north, seizing Denmark and Norway. In May, they marched west to conquer the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium. They then moved into France.

Fall of France Britain sent troops to help France resist the assault. The British and French, however, were quickly overpowered. By May, the Germans had forced them to retreat to Dunkirk, a French port on the English Channel. In a bold action, the British sent every available ship and boat across the channel to rescue the trapped soldiers.

Unhindered, German armies entered France and marched on to Paris, the French capital. On June 22, 1940, barely six weeks later, Hitler gleefully accepted the surrender of France.



Battle of Britain Now, Britain stood alone against the Nazi war machine. Few thought the island nation stood a chance. Still, Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, expressed confidence:

“We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches . . . we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.”

—Winston Churchill, speech, June 4, 1940

Hitler ordered an air assault on Britain. Day after day, German planes attacked British cities. The raids took tens of thousands of lives, yet the British spirit never broke. By night, Londoners slept in subway stations. By day, they cleared the wreckage, buried the dead, and tried to carry on. Overhead, the British air force fought invading planes. The Battle of Britain continued through the summer and into the fall. By then, Hitler had abandoned all plans to invade Britain.

Invasion of the Soviet Union On June 22, 1941, Hitler broke his pact with Stalin. A huge German force crossed into the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, which had remained out of the early days of the war, now joined Britain in fighting the Germans. Although Churchill and Stalin deeply mistrusted each other, they were now forced to work together to defeat their common enemy.

✓ **Checkpoint** What was the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939?

★ **Looking Back and Ahead** Only 20 years after the end of World War I, the world was once again plunged into conflict. As you will see, World War II would be even more destructive.

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. (a) **Describe** What kind of government did Hitler set up in Germany?
(b) **Compare** How was Nazi Germany similar to the Soviet Union under Stalin?
2. (a) **Recall** How did France and Britain respond to Nazi aggression?
(b) **Draw Conclusions** Do you think France and Britain could have prevented World War II if they had acted differently? Why or why not?

Reading Skill

3. **Use Word Clues to Analyze Meaning** Explain how the root parts of the word *totalitarian* help you understand the meaning of the word.

Vocabulary Builder

Answer the following questions in complete sentences that show your understanding of the key terms.

4. How does a totalitarian state such as Nazi Germany differ from a democratic nation such as the United States?
5. What are the main features of fascism?
6. How did Germany, Italy, and Japan practice aggression?
7. How was the Munich Pact an example of appeasement?

Writing

8. Use library or Internet resources to find more information about one of the topics in this section. Suggestions for topics include Mussolini and fascism, the rise of Hitler, the invasion of Poland, Winston Churchill, and the Battle of Britain. Identify at least three sources of nonprint material on the topic. List the sources you find and describe their contents.