

# Causes Of World War 2 Worksheet Answer Key

FCPS World II SOL Standards: WHII 12a

## World War II: Causes (1919–1939)

You Mean World War I Was Not “The War to End All Wars”?

### Causes of World War II

The death and destruction of World War I was so horrible that it was called “the war to end all wars.” Yet, the agreement to end World War I did not resolve the problems of the world and, according to some historians, lead directly to the next **catastrophe**: World War II. The major causes of World War II were numerous. They include the impact of the Treaty of Versailles following WWI, the worldwide economic depression, failure of **appeasement**, the rise of **militarism** in Germany and Japan, and the failure of the League of Nations.

### Treaty of Versailles

Following World War I, the victorious Allied Powers met to decide Germany's future. Germany would be forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles. Germany had to accept guilt for the war and to pay **reparations**. Germany lost territory and was prohibited from having a large military.

### Economic Depression

The whole world was hit by an economic depression in the late 1920s. In a depression, economies shrink, trade is reduced, businesses close, prices fall, banks fail, and unemployment rises. Sometimes during a depression, people look for a strong political leader to resolve their problems. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany by promising to restore German wealth and power.

### Germany's Militarism

Hitler immediately began secretly building up Germany's army and weapons. Although Britain and France knew of Hitler's actions, they thought a stronger Germany would stop the spread of Communism from Russia. In 1936 Hitler ordered German troops to enter the German-speaking areas of the Rhineland (France), Austria, and Czechoslovakia. At this point neither France nor Britain was prepared to go to war. In 1936, Hitler made **alliances** with Italy and Japan. The military alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan was called the Axis Powers.



Map of Germany's advances  
Source: <http://worldhistoryclass.wikispaces.com/Map+of+WWII+Advances>  
WWII Map of Europe %2D1941



British Prime Minister Chamberlain holding up the Munich Peace Agreement  
Source: <http://www.historyonthenet.com/WWII/causes.htm> agreement with Hitler in 1938

### Failure of Appeasement

**Appeasement** meant agreeing to the demands of another nation in order to avoid conflict. During the 1930s, politicians in Britain and France began to believe that the Treaty of Versailles was unfair to Germany and that Hitler's actions were understandable and justifiable. This belief, adopted by Britain, was the Policy of Appeasement. An example of appeasement was the Munich Agreement of September 1938. In the Agreement, Britain and France allowed Germany to **annex** areas in Czechoslovakia where German-speakers lived. Germany agreed not to invade the rest of Czechoslovakia or any other country. In March 1939, Germany broke its promise and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Neither Britain nor France was prepared to take military action. Then, on September 1, 1939, German troops invaded Poland. Britain and France immediately declared war on Germany. World War II had begun in Europe.

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The causes of World War II are intricate and multifaceted, comprising a blend of political, economic, and social factors that led to one of the deadliest conflicts in human history. Understanding these causes is essential for grasping the larger narrative of the 20th century. This article seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the primary causes of World War II, which can serve as an answer key to a worksheet on this topic.

# **1. Treaty of Versailles**

One of the most significant factors that contributed to the outbreak of World War II was the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended World War I in 1919. The treaty imposed harsh penalties and reparations on Germany, leading to widespread resentment among the German populace.

## **Key Points:**

- Reparations:** Germany was required to pay massive reparations, which crippled its economy.
- Territorial Losses:** Germany lost significant territories, leading to a sense of national humiliation.
- Military Restrictions:** The treaty limited the size and capability of the German military, fostering a desire for rearmament.

# **2. Economic Instability and the Great Depression**

The global economic turmoil of the late 1920s and early 1930s had a profound impact on the rise of totalitarian regimes and militarism in several countries, particularly in Germany and Italy.

## **Key Points:**

- Hyperinflation in Germany:** The economic devastation led to hyperinflation, causing the middle class to lose savings and stability.
- Rise of Extremist Parties:** Economic despair fueled the rise of extremist political parties, such as the Nazi Party in Germany and the Fascists in Italy.
- Global Economic Crisis:** The Great Depression

**exacerbated social unrest and discontent across Europe, creating fertile ground for aggressive nationalism.**

### **3. The Rise of Totalitarian Regimes**

**The interwar period saw the emergence of totalitarian regimes that sought expansionist policies to unify their nations and gain power.**

#### **Key Points:**

- Nazi Germany: Adolf Hitler's regime promoted aggressive nationalism, militarism, and a desire for Lebensraum (living space).**
- Fascist Italy: Benito Mussolini aimed to restore Italy's former glory by expanding its territories.**
- Japanese Militarism: Japan sought to dominate Asia and the Pacific, leading to aggressive military actions in China and beyond.**

### **4. Failure of the League of Nations**

**The League of Nations was established after World War I to promote peace and prevent future conflicts. However, its inability to enforce decisions and curb aggression from member states rendered it largely ineffective.**

### **Key Points:**

- Lack of Authority:** The League lacked the military capability to enforce its resolutions.
- Key Absences:** Major powers such as the United States never joined, weakening the League's influence.
- Inaction Against Aggression:** The League failed to respond effectively to acts of aggression, including Japan's invasion of Manchuria and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia.

## **5. Expansionist Policies and Aggressive Actions**

**The 1930s were marked by several aggressive actions by countries that would later become the Axis Powers. These actions were indicative of expansionist policies that threatened global peace.**

### **Key Points:**

- 1. Japan:** The invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and subsequent aggression in China demonstrated Japan's imperial ambitions.
- 2. Italy:** Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 showcased Italy's desire for empire and a test of the League's effectiveness.
- 3. Germany:** Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 and the annexation of Austria in 1938 (Anschluss) challenged the post-World War I order.

## **6. Policy of Appeasement**

**The policy of appeasement, primarily adopted by Britain and France, aimed to prevent another war by conceding to some of Hitler's demands.**

**Key Points:**

- Munich Agreement:** In 1938, Britain and France allowed Germany to annex the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, hoping to satisfy Hitler's ambitions.
- Misjudgment of Hitler:** Western powers underestimated Hitler's ambitions, believing he would be satisfied with limited territorial gains.
- Consequences:** This policy ultimately emboldened Hitler, leading to further territorial expansion and the eventual invasion of Poland.

## **7. The Invasion of Poland and the Outbreak of War**

**The immediate cause of World War II was Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, which prompted Britain and France to declare war on Germany.**

**Key Points:**

- Nazi-Soviet Pact:** Prior to the invasion, Hitler and Stalin signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, dividing Eastern Europe between them and ensuring that Germany would not face a two-front war.
- Blitzkrieg Strategy:** Germany employed a new military

**strategy known as Blitzkrieg, or "lightning war," which involved rapid and coordinated attacks using air and ground forces.**

**- British and French Response: The invasion of Poland marked the failure of appeasement and prompted Britain and France to fulfill their pledges to defend Polish sovereignty.**

## **8. Conclusion**

**The causes of World War II are rooted in a complex web of political, economic, and social factors that evolved over two decades after World War I. The Treaty of Versailles, economic instability, the rise of totalitarian regimes, the failure of the League of Nations, aggressive expansionist policies, and the policy of appeasement all contributed to the environment that led to global conflict. Understanding these causes is essential for comprehending not only the war itself but also the subsequent geopolitical landscape that emerged in its aftermath.**

**In summary, the worksheet on the causes of World War II can be effectively filled out by recognizing these key elements and understanding how they interrelated to create a perfect storm that culminated in one of history's most devastating wars.**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**What were the main political causes of World War II?**

**The main political causes included the rise of totalitarian regimes, particularly in Germany and Italy, the failure of the Treaty of Versailles to create lasting peace, and the policy of appeasement adopted by Western powers.**

**How did economic factors contribute to the outbreak of World War II?**

**The Great Depression had devastating effects on economies worldwide, leading to high unemployment and social unrest, which facilitated the rise of extremist political movements and militarism, particularly in Germany.**

**What role did nationalism play in the causes of World War II?**

**Nationalism fueled aggressive expansionist policies in countries like Germany, Italy, and Japan, as they sought to assert dominance and reclaim territories they believed were rightfully theirs.**

**How did the Treaty of Versailles contribute to World War II?**

**The Treaty of Versailles imposed harsh reparations and territorial losses on Germany, leading to widespread resentment and a desire for revenge, which Adolf Hitler capitalized on to gain support for his expansionist agenda.**

**What impact did the failure of the League of Nations have on the onset of World War II?**

**The League of Nations failed to prevent aggression from Axis powers due to its lack of enforcement mechanisms**

**and the absence of major powers like the United States, leading to unchecked military expansion.**

**What were the immediate triggers that led to the outbreak of World War II?**

**The immediate triggers included Germany's invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939, which prompted Britain and France to declare war on Germany shortly after.**

**How did the ideology of fascism contribute to the causes of World War II?**

**Fascism promoted aggressive nationalism and militarism, leading to conflicts over territorial expansion and the suppression of dissent, which directly contributed to the tensions that sparked World War II.**

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