**Causes of WW2**

**Treaty of Versailles**

The Treaty of Versailles ended World War I between Germany and the Allied Powers. Because Germany had lost the war, the treaty was very harsh against Germany. Germany was forced to "accept the responsibility" of the war damages suffered by the Allies and pay reparations. The problem with the treaty is that it left the German economy in ruins. Germans wanted revenge.

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**Failure of the League of Nations**

As well as imposing harsh conditions on Germany, the Treaty of Versailles included the move (suggested by Woodrow Wilson) to establish the League of Nations, an international organisation with the goal of maintaining peace. It did not have an army of its own and depended on member countries. The League ultimately failed to intervene in many conflicts leading up to WWII and was seen as weak. Additionally, the power of the League was limited by the US refusing to join.

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**Great Depression**

The period before World War II was a time of great economic suffering throughout the world called the Great Depression. Many people were out of work and struggling to survive. This created unstable governments and worldwide turmoil that helped lead to World War II.

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**Rise of Fascism, Nationalism & Militarism**

With the economic turmoil left behind by World War 1, some countries were taken over by dictators who formed powerful fascist governments. Common elements of fascism include extreme nationalism, a one-party state, control of most aspects of peoples lives and a close regulation of the economy and maintaining power through military strength and violence. The first fascist government was Spain which was ruled by the dictator Franco. Then Benito Mussolini took control of Italy. These dictators wanted to expand their empires and began to look for new lands to conquer. Italy invaded and took over Ethiopia in 1935. Adolf Hitler would emulate Mussolini in his takeover of Germany.

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**Hitler and the Nazi Party**

In Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party rose to power. The Germans were desperate for someone to turn around their economy and restore their national pride. Hitler offered them hope. In 1934, Hitler was proclaimed the "Fuhrer" (leader) and became dictator of Germany. Hitler resented the restrictions put on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles. While talking about peace, Hitler began to rearm Germany. He allied Germany with Mussolini and Italy. Then Hitler looked to restore Germany to power by expanding his empire.

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**Japanese Militarism and Expansionism**

In the period before World War II, Japan was growing rapidly. However, as an island nation they did not have the land or the natural resources to sustain their growth. Japan began to look to grow their empire in order to gain new resources. They invaded Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937.

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**Appeasement**

After World War 1, the nations of Europe were weary and did not want another war. When countries such as Italy and Germany became aggressive and began to take over their neighbours and build up their armies, countries such as Britain and France hoped to keep peace through "appeasement." This meant that they tried to make Germany and Hitler happy rather than try to stop him. They hoped that by meeting his demands he would be satisfied and there wouldn't be any war. Unfortunately, the policy of appeasement backfired. It only made Hitler bolder. It also gave him time to build up his army.

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