

GRADE 11 STUDY GUIDE | 2025

The Inter-War Years (1919-1939)

History

1. Rise of Totalitarianism

Fascism in Italy -- Benito Mussolini

- Italy dissatisfied with WWI peace settlement (mutilated victory)
- Economic crisis, unemployment, fear of communism
- Mussolini's Blackshirts intimidated opposition; March on Rome 1922 => became Prime Minister
- Il Duce (the Leader); banned political parties; glorified the Roman Empire
- Invaded Ethiopia 1935 -- condemned by League of Nations; left League

Nazism in Germany -- Adolf Hitler

- Resentment over Versailles; Weimar Republic weak; Great Depression => unemployment
- Nazi Party exploited anti-Semitism, nationalism and fear of communism
- Hitler became Chancellor January 1933; Reichstag Fire Decree and Enabling Act => dictatorship
- Key features: totalitarian state, anti-Semitism (Nuremberg Laws 1935), rearmament, expansion
- Propaganda by Goebbels; youth movements; secret police (Gestapo)

2. The League of Nations and Appeasement

- League of Nations: created by Treaty of Versailles to maintain peace; USA never joined; no army of its own
- Failures: could not stop Japan seizing Manchuria 1931 or Italy invading Ethiopia 1935
- Appeasement: Britain and France allowed Hitler's demands to avoid war
- Munich Agreement 1938: Hitler given Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia); Chamberlain -- "peace in our time"
- Hitler invaded rest of Czechoslovakia 1939; then invaded Poland September 1939 => WWII began

3. Impact of the Great Depression (1929-1939)

- Wall Street Crash October 1929: US stock market collapsed; banks failed; credit dried up
- Worldwide: unemployment, poverty, social unrest; international trade collapsed
- Germany worst hit: 6 million unemployed by 1932; middle class impoverished
- Impact on SA: commodity prices fell; gold standard abandoned 1932; farmers and workers hit hard
- Political impact: extremist parties gained support; democracies seemed unable to cope