Japan established a constitutional monarchy in the 1890s. Japan still had an Emperor but all real power in Japan lay with the Prime Minister and the legislative branch. The Japanese military gained power in the late 1920’s. After World War I, political divisions in Japan grew worse because of the worldwide depression. In 1930, Japan's liberal prime minister was assassinated, causing political chaos. Within two years, a group of military leaders controlled the Japanese government and civilians had effectively lost any power they had in government. These military leaders kept the Emperor Hirohito as the symbolic leader of Japan’s government. The military leaders had a vision of an “Asia for Asians” dominated by a powerful Japan. In September of 1931, a small group of Japanese army officers staged a fake attack on the railway in China’s province of Manchuria. Manchuria had been under Japan’s “Sphere of Influence” since 1906. Blaming the attack on China, Japanese forces in Manchuria quickly took control of the entire province. The League of Nations condemned Japan’s aggression but was not willing to take military action to protect China. Japan responded to the condemnation by withdrawing from the League of Nations.

![Propaganda Poster used by the Japanese government to encourage children to support the governments’ war efforts.](image)

Japan was encouraged by this lack of real opposition and announced its intention of extending its influence into all of China and throughout East Asia and the western Pacific. Six years later in 1937, the Japanese captured the Chinese capital of Beijing. Chinese forces led by Jaing Jieshi and Mao Zedong fought hard to protect their country. By 1939, the Japanese controlled about one fourth of China, including all seaports.

- In 1928, Japan controlled the islands of Japan, parts of Sakhalin Island (from Russia), the Korean Peninsula, and the island of Formosa to the south.
- By the end of 1933 the Japanese controlled the northern Chinese province of Manchuria and were pushing south across China.
- 1936 Japan joins a military alliance with Germany and Italy (Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis)
- By 1941 the Japanese had conquered the eastern and southern sections of China and extended their control over French Indochina (Vietnam)
- Beginning in 1941, the Japanese began pushing into the western pacific extending their control of island strings leading to the U.S. Hawaiian Islands by December of 1941.
- Japan attacks Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, bringing the United States into World War II
Italy was disappointed with the outcomes of the Paris peace conference and the Treaty of Versailles after WWI. As one of the Allied delegates to the peace conference, Italy’s Prime Minister Orlando wanted territory as part of the peace settlement but he was ignored and Italy did not gain territory. This made Italians angry and contributed to social and political unrest. Economic problems caused by the worldwide depression of the 1930 created additional economic strain on many Italians.

- Rising inflation and high levels of unemployment caused political instability in Italy.
- Multiple political parties developed, promising to solve the governments’ problems. Socialist and Communist political organizations were common. People searched for a leader who could calm their fears.
- Benito Mussolini formed the Fascist Party in Italy in 1919, promising to rebuild Italy’s economy and armed forces. He gained popularity and support as the effects of the depression spread into Italy. Mussolini promised to lead Italy “back to the greatness of ancient Rome”

Mussolini wanted overseas territories to provide more natural resources for Italian industries. Italy needed room to expand and lacked colonies to bring wealth and power to the country.

- Italy invaded Ethiopia (Africa) in 1935 and ignored the economic sanctions imposed by the League of Nations for this aggression. No member nation of the League of Nations was willing to put forward military force to stop Italy’s invasions.
- Mussolini saw strength in what Hitler was doing in Germany and signed a military alliance with Hitler in 1936. Mussolini called the new alliance the “Rome Berlin Axis”.
- On November 25, Germany made the Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, pledging mutual support against the Soviets (Russia). Mussolini joined this agreement in November 1937, extending the Axis from Tokyo to Rome. Now there were three Axis Powers: Italy, Germany, and Japan.
- In April 1939, Italy invaded Albania (in the Balkan Peninsula) and occupied the whole country.
- In the Tripartite Pact of 1940 Japan, Italy, and German formally agreed to help each other economically, politically and militarily if any of them were attacked by any nation that they were not already engaged in conflict with. This pact led Italy into World War II on the side of the Germans.
Adolph Hitler fought in the German army during World War I. He won two medals for bravery. After the war, Hitler settled in Munich Germany and became politically active. He joined the National Socialist German Worker's Party (Nazi) whose main goal was to fight against the harsh treatment Germany received from the Treaty of Versailles. The Nazi Party talked about law and order but often turned to violence to achieve control and power. The Nazi party adopted the swastika or crooked cross as its symbol, it set up a private militia (citizen army) called brownshirts to enforce Nazi ideas. The Nazis used propaganda to gain new recruits.

Hitler rose to power in the Nazi party. Following the example of Mussolini's march on Rome in 1923, Hitler tried to lead the Nazi party in a take over of the German government. His “Beer Hall Putsch” failed and Hitler was sent to jail for five years (he was out in nine months). While in jail, Hitler wrote a book called “Mein Kampf” (My Struggle) where he laid out his goals for Germany. In the book, Hitler said:

- Germans were a master race and other groups such as the Jews, Slavs, and Gypsies were inferior and should be eliminated.
- He promised to gain back all territory taken from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles.
- He promised to expand Germany’s territory to give it needed living space (Lebensraum). He planned to take this land from Eastern Europe and Russia.

The effects of the depression created unrest in Germany during the 1930’s and Hitler’s Nazi party grew in power. By 1932 the Nazi Party was the largest political party in Germany. Hitler was made Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and began consolidating power and control. By 1934, Hitler was an absolute dictator in Germany, with a select police force, the SS that quickly eliminated his opponents through force and arrest. Between 1933 and 1936, Hitler and the Nazi party improved Germany’s economy. To do this Hitler ignored the Treaty of Versailles and began massive programs to build weapons and a military. These efforts provided jobs and income to German workers. Hitler also began to rebuild the German army, which helped him carry out his goals of getting more territory for Germany.

**Between 1935 and 1939, Hitler led Germany to regain its pre WWI strength.**

- In 1935, Hitler publicly announced Germany would no longer follow the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- In March of 1936, Germany retook the Rhineland (from the French) that had been taken away from them by the Treaty of Versailles. England and France did nothing to try and stop Hitler.
- In October of 1936, Germany entered a military alliance with Italy and then later Japan to strengthen its position in Europe.
- In 1938, Germany annexed Austria and reunified Germany and Austria, something that was prohibited by the Versailles Treaty.
- In 1938 Hitler annexed half of Czechoslovakia (the “Sudetenland”). Some nations called for war to stop Hitler and protect Czechoslovakia but the Munich Conference allowed Hitler convince British Prime Minister Chamberlain that he would not continue to annex land in Europe and that he wanted peace.
- Hitler took the other half of Czechoslovakia early 1939 and again he was warned to stop “or face the consequence of war”.
- Unaffected by this threat, Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. England and France declared War on Germany on September 4, 1939. World War II had begun in Europe.
Use your text and the readings provided to summarize how each of the following contributed to the outbreak of World War II.

**Japan**

Leader(s) of country: ____________________________

How did this country and its leaders contribute to the outbreak of World War II:

____________________________________________________________________________________

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**Italy**

Leader(s) of country: ____________________________

How did this country and its leader contribute to the outbreak of World War II:

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**Germany**

Leader(s) of country: ____________________________

How did this country and its leaders contribute to the outbreak of World War II:

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