

Chronology, events and people

The First World War ended on **11 November 1918**, now known as **Remembrance Day**, after the USA joined the fighting with Britain and German offensives failed. The date was decided by politicians and the killing carried on until 11.00am on that day. A year later, at the Paris Peace Conference, the Allied victors met namely Britain, France, Italy and the USA. Despite disagreements the '**Big Four**' came up with the **Treaty of Versailles**, which punished Germany by taking away territory and colonies, restricting the size of German armed forces and imposing heavy fines called **reparations**. After WWI many European countries were unstable. They had massive debts resulting from the war and many lives, especially young men had been lost. It was a time when **dictators** rose to power in some European countries because they seemed to offer stable government in uncertain times. This was the time when **Adolf Hitler** and the **Nazi party** were able to become very powerful in Germany. Many Germans were angry about the **Treaty of Versailles** and felt they'd been treated too harshly. Germany was also experiencing high unemployment and **hyper-inflation**, made worse by the **reparations**. Hitler promised German people strong and stable government and many turned a blind eye to his more extreme ideas, such as **anti-Semitism** and he was elected **Chancellor** of Germany in 1933. Once in power, Hitler virtually tore up the **Treaty of Versailles** and started building up German armed forces and weapons. The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain tried a policy of **appeasement**, giving in to Hitler's demands to try to keep the peace, mainly because few wanted another war so soon after the devastation of the WWI, and also because countries, including Britain were not ready for war. **Appeasement** failed as Hitler broke promises and agreements. From 1935 Hitler also started passing the **Nuremburg Laws** which targeted and punished **Jews** in Germany increasingly harshly; this became known as the **Holocaust**. **Concentration camps** were set up to imprison Jews, Gypsies, gay men who didn't fit Nazi ideas of a **master race**, as well as people who opposed the **Nazis**. Many Jews fled the country and some went into hiding, like the Frank family in Amsterdam. Over time the **persecution** escalated and industrial-scale mass murder of Jews took place in **ghettos** and **gas chambers**, called the **Final Solution**.

Key words

Adolf Hitler –German political leader, who dreamed of creating a master race of pure Aryans, who would rule for a thousand years.
Anti-Semitism –prejudice against Jews.
Appeasement –means giving people what they want to prevent them from causing harm.
Aryan –white, non-Jewish [German] people.
'Big Four' –the four main decision makers: the Presidents of France and the USA and Prime Ministers of Britain and Italy who, at the Paris Peace Conference who drew up the Treaty of Versailles
Chancellor of Germany –the German equivalent of Britain's Prime Minister.
Concentration camp –a place where large numbers of people, especially political prisoners or members of persecuted minorities, are imprisoned with inadequate facilities, sometimes to provide forced labour or to await mass execution.
Dictator –a political leader who rules without parliament.
Final Solution –the Nazi plan to kill all Jewish people.
Gas chamber –large chambers used in **Nazi** death camps in which people were locked and mass executed by poison gas.
Ghetto –areas in towns and cities set up to segregate Jews from the rest of the population.
Holocaust –destruction or slaughter of Jews on a mass scale
Hyper-inflation –when the prices of goods and services rise very fast and wages don't keep pace.
Jews –people who follow the religion of Judaism; Jews live all over the world.
Master race –a pure **race** of white people suited to rule the world.
Nazi party The National Socialist German Workers' Party started by Hitler.
Nuremburg Laws –anti-Jewish laws aimed at removing Jewish influences from Aryan / German society.
Remembrance Day –annual event on 11 November when soldiers who have been killed in all wars since WWI are remembered by the symbol of the poppy.
Reparations –money Germany had to pay to Britain, France and Italy for damage caused by WWI.
Treaty of Versailles –the agreement drawn up by the '**Big Four**' at the Paris Peace Conference which punished Germany after WWI.

Key dates:

30th January 1933 – Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
16th September 1935 – The Nuremburg Laws were passed
9-10 November 1938 – Kristallnacht – A night of violence when Jewish shops and synagogues were attacked and over 100 Jews killed
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22nd June 1941– The Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads) are assigned to kill Jewish people during the invasion of the Soviet Union
8th December 1941–The first killing center (Chelmno) begins operation
20th January 1942 – The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution

