

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. In 1917, Russia experienced a Revolution in which the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin had seized power. In order to consolidate their power Lenin had to ensure the Bolsheviks were successful in the **Civil War**. The methods he employed to ensure success had a devastating impact on the people of Russia and under the dictatorship of Josef Stalin which followed, the Russia people continued to live in fear especially in the 1930's when he launched the **Great Purges**. This was also 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 First World War also had a considerable impact on the USA – its economy prospered as the demand for food, raw materials and manufactured goods increased. As a result, the 1920s saw much of America experience a '**boom**' period. However, in 1929, the shares prices on Wall Street, New York's stock exchange, collapsed. Many people were ruined. They stopped buying things, firms went bankrupt and by 1932, over 12 million people were out of work. This period became known as the **Great Depression** with many Americans finding themselves homeless, living at the edge of cities in shacks made of tin and old crates.

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.
'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
Boom – A time when the economy is doing well, with a growth in production, exports, employment and often wages.
Chancellor of Germany –the German equivalent of Britain's Prime Minister.
Civil War – A war between people from the same country. In the Russian Civil War, the Red Army and White army fought against each other.
Dictator –a political leader who rules without parliament.
Great Depression – A period of extended and severe decline in a nation's economy, marked by low production and high unemployment.
Great Purges – From 1934-1938, millions of Russians in the Communist Party, the army, the arts and sciences, and many other walks of life were arrested and either sent to the labour camps or shot.
Hyper-inflation –when the prices of goods and services rise very fast and wages don't keep pace.
Nazi party The National Socialist German Workers' Party started by Hitler.
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:

25th October 1917 - The Bolsheviks seize power in Russia
Summer 1918 - The Russian Civil War
11th November 1918 - End of the First World War
1920's - The economic boom in America
29th October 1929 - The Wall Street Crash
1929-1933 - The Great Depression
30th January 1933 - Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany
1st December 1934 - The start of the Great Purges

