

Rise of Totalitarianism (LHM)

World War II

Unit 8

Key Idea:	A) Rewrite the Key Idea as a question:
The economic and political conditions after World War 1 encouraged the rise of dictators.	

B) Read and Annotate. No Annotation, no grade.

During the 1930s, economic devastation and political instability ravaged much of Europe and Asia. New leaders emerged, drawing on resentment about their countries' fates after World War I and the suffering endured by their people. These leaders aspired to gain control over every aspect of people's lives. They also aimed to expand their nation's territory. The brutal authority and military aggression of these leaders would change the lives of millions of people and cause mass destruction around the world.

The fighting of World War I had left much of Europe in ruins. Farms, factories, and towns were destroyed and many areas suffered astonishingly high death tolls during the war. By 1930, a worldwide depression had begun as long-lasting downturns in businesses and jobs were rampant. Declines in consumer spending and investment caused steep drops in industrial production and employment as failing companies were forced to close. As the number of closed businesses increased, so did unemployment. A large portion of unemployed people became homeless and often went hungry.

The conditions in some countries were so horrible that people began to look for a different type of government. Individuals in many countries wanted a government that would rebuild their country, restore their national pride, and deliver them from their troubles. Political and economic conditions in Europe and Asia led to the rise of another far more serious threat: totalitarianism. In a totalitarian state, a single party controls the government and every aspect of people's lives. Citizens must obey the government without question, or face severe punishment. Most totalitarian regimes are led by a dictator. A dictator, or head of the government, is a single individual who has total authority. A distinctive feature of totalitarianism is the overriding importance of the leader, who is viewed as invincible. Focus on total unity, control, and obedience makes totalitarian dictatorships the opposite of democracy. It abolishes opposing political parties and denies individual freedoms, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of the press. The nation and its power are what matters, not the life of the individual.

Following World War I, totalitarian leaders gained control in Italy and Germany. These dictators were fascists. Fascism is a political philosophy in which total power is given to a dictator and individual freedoms are denied. It is rooted in militarism, extreme nationalism, and blind loyalty to the state. Fascist regimes often emphasize racism by targeting minority groups in an effort to rally support for their leadership. Fascist dictators often won support among business leaders and landowners by vowing to create new empires through military conquests.

Benito Mussolini, founder of the Italian Fascist party, seized power of Italy in 1922. Mussolini played on fear and anger to gain power. Many Italians were unhappy about the Treaty of Versailles following World War I and were frustrated with economic hardships. Mussolini promised to restore the greatness of Italy. Once in power, he exercised complete control over the country, banning criticism of the government. Critics were arrested or murdered. He used military aggression to distract from problems within the nation and appease citizens that wanted territorial expansion. In 1935, Mussolini invaded, and captured the African nation of Ethiopia.

In Germany, Adolf Hitler brought the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or Nazis, to power. Like Mussolini, Hitler played on anger about the Versailles Treaty. The treaty forced Germany to accept blame for World War I, and made them provide huge payments for damages caused during the war. Hitler capitalized on economic hardships and political unrest to gain power as chancellor of Germany in 1933. Within two years he had ended democratic rule and established a totalitarian state. In defiance of the Versailles Treaty, he began to build up Germany's armed forces. The League of Nations condemned his actions, but did nothing to stop him. In 1936, German troops marched into the Rhineland, near the border with France and Belgium, disobeying the Treaty of Versailles once again. France and Great Britain protested, but they took no other action.

Joseph Stalin led a totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union. He gained power following the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924. The Soviet Union was a communist government, which differed from fascists. Communists rallied the working class to support their cause, while fascists found support among business leaders and landowners. Stalin took drastic measures to modernize Soviet industry and agriculture. Those that resisted were executed or sent to labor camps. Millions of people were known to have perished by the hand of Stalin's ruthless dictatorship.

Japan also became a totalitarian state. Japan had an Emperor named Hirohito. Most of the real power in Japan, however, was in the hands of a group of military leaders. Hideki Tojo was one of those military leaders during the 1930s. He was appointed prime minister in 1941 by Emperor Hirohito, and eventually assumed the role of dictator. Tojo and other military leaders set out to expand into Asia during the 1930s. In 1931, Japanese forces seized a region in northeastern China known as Manchuria. The region was rich in coal and iron, resources that were scarce in Japan. Japan set up a state in Manchuria called Manchukuo. China called on the League of Nations for help. The League of Nations condemned Japanese aggression but did little else.

The totalitarian governments that arose during the 1920s and 1930s had strong imperial ambitions. They continued advancing into surrounding territories. Many world leader hoped to avoid war, however, military aggression from totalitarian regimes would become impossible to ignore. Germany, Italy, and Japan became known as the Axis Powers. Together, these countries and their dictators threatened the peace of Europe, Asia, and the world.

C) Based on what you read, complete the worksheet.

1) Complete the following chart.

	What was it?	When did it occur?	Why did it occur?
Totalitarianism			

2) Complete the following chart.

Totalitarian Rulers				
Leader				
Country				
When did he gain power?				
How did he gain power?				

3. How did the fascists differ from the communists?

4. How is totalitarianism the opposite of democracy?

5. In general, how did the League of Nations and world leaders respond to military aggression by dictators during the 1930s? Why do you believe they responded the way they did?

6. Circle statements that are correct. Mark an X over statements that are NOT correct.

By 1930, a worldwide depression had begun.	Italy invaded, and captured, Manchuria in 1935.	Fascist regimes often emphasize racism.	Tojo was the Emperor of Japan.	The Soviet Union was a fascist government.
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7) Complete the following chart.

	Definition	Picture to show its meaning.
Fascism		

D. Summary: Rewrite the questions made from the Key Idea at the beginning and summarize this worksheet by answering it below.

Key Idea as a Question:
