

How the Treaty of Versailles Led to World War II

Cause-and-Effect Activities

1. Cause-and-Effect Chain: From Treaty to War





Purpose

Students trace how decisions made in 1919 created political, economic, and social conditions that contributed to World War II.

Student Task

Create a written or visual chain connecting:

- War Guilt Clause
- Reparations
- Economic collapse
- Political extremism
- Outbreak of WWII

Guiding Question

How did punishment meant to prevent war instead help create another one?

2. Newspaper Front Page: Germany 1919 vs. Germany 1939

TREATY SIGNED; WAR OVER



The Evening World.



PRICE TWO CENTS.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 1919.

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14 PAGES

PRICE TWO CENTS.

WILSON LEAVES PARIS; SAILS SUNDAY GERMANS PLEDGED TO ACT IN GOOD FAITH

CITY'S BELLS RING TIDINGS AS PEACE TREATY IS SIGNED; FLEET JOINS IN CELEBRATION

Flagship Pennsylvania in Hudson Fires Salute of 21 Guns as Men "Dress Ship."

JOY IN WALL STREET.
Star-Spangled Banner Flies From Fleet in North River as Bands Play.

The signing of a peace treaty... The signing of the peace treaty... The signing of the peace treaty...

BEST DAY IN HISTORY SINCE BETHLEHEM, SAYS SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

Dispatch Orders Every Ship and Navy Yacht to Fly Salute of 21 Guns for Peace.

WASHINGTON, June 28.—Secretary of the Navy... The signing of the peace treaty...

TREATY SEVERE ON GERMANY, SAYS WILSON, BUT IMPOSES NOTHING SHE CANNOT DO

President in an Address to the American Public Says It Furnishes a Charter for a New Order and Ends Rule of Selfish Groups

WASHINGTON, June 28.—As soon as the signing of the Peace Treaty was... The signing of the peace treaty...

GUNS BOOM, PLANES FILL AIR; FRENCH CROWDS CHEER PEACE

GERMANS PLEDGED TO ENFORCE TREATY; NO RESERVATION

Delegates in Statement Say Nation Will Earn Right to Place in League.

VERSAILLES, June 28.—Foreign Minister... The signing of the peace treaty...

WILSON, STARTING FOR HOME, BIDS FRANCE GODSPEED

Expresses Sympathy for People, With Belief in Her Future Confirmed.

PARIS, June 28.—President Wilson... The signing of the peace treaty...

Mueller Signs for Germans at 3.12, Bell a Minute Later—Wilson's Name Comes Next, Followed by Lloyd George and Clemenceau.

Soldiers Break Ranks and Join in the Demonstrations of Joy—Chinese Refuse to Attend Ceremony and Gen. Smuts Signs Under Protest.

VERSAILLES, June 28 (Associated Press).—The World War was formally ended to-day by the signing of the Peace Treaty with Germany.

The epochal meeting in the Hall of Mirrors began at 3.10 o'clock. The treaty was signed by Dr. Hermann Mueller at 3.12 o'clock (9.12 New York time) and by Johannes Bell at 3.13 P. M. They were followed by the American delegates, headed by President Wilson, and then by the plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The representatives of the minor powers, signed in alphabetical order.

LATEST PRICES

IT'S CLEAR
Nicholson's
Gin
IT'S GOOD

Evening Standard

To-morrow's Weather—
Bright periods.

Lighting-up Time
To-night 8.47.

No. 35,000 LONDON, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1939 ONE PENNY

LATE NIGHT FINAL

La Coquille
RESTAURANT FRENCH
No. 21, MONTAGNE LAFAYETTE W.C.C.
Paris and other
Branches in London

**GERMANS INVADE
AND BOMB POLAND
BRITAIN MOBILISES**
*Warsaw, Cracow, Nine Other Towns
Bombed: Danzig is "Annexed"*
FRANCE DECLARES "STATE OF SIEGE"

GERMANY INVADED POLAND TO-DAY. COMPLETE MOBILISATION HAS BEEN ORDERED IN BRITAIN.

Orders in Council for the complete mobilisation of the Navy, Army and Air Force were signed by the King at a Privy Council to-day. The King also approved other Orders in Council dealing with the emergency.

Warsaw has been bombed. Other German aircraft raided Kursk, Gdynia, Thorn, Bialystock, Grodno, Diliwó and Bydgoszoz. A few hours later, Cracow, Katowice and Czenstowice were bombed.

THE EVENING STANDARD LEARNS THAT THE POLISH AMBASSADOR SAW

'BRITAIN WILL FULFIL HER OBLIGATIONS'
Parliament Meeting Tonight
THE BRITISH CABINET MET TO-DAY. THEY BROKE UP AFTER ONE HOUR AND FIFTY

Purpose

Students compare immediate reactions to the treaty with later consequences.

Student Task

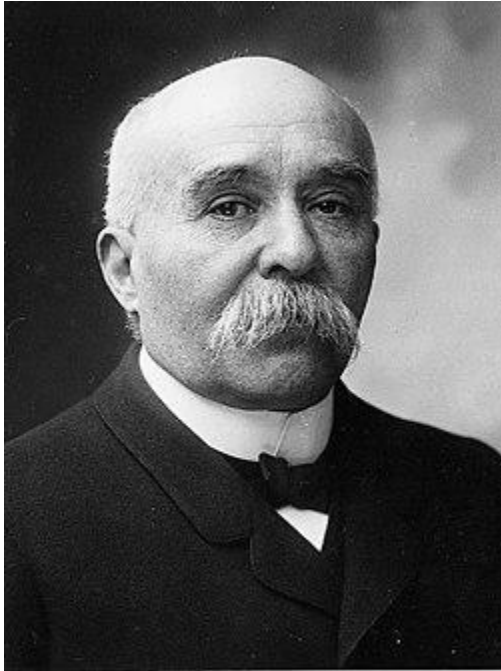
Create **two front pages**:

- **1919**: Germany reacts to the Treaty of Versailles
- **1939**: Germany invades Poland

Required Elements

- Headline
 - Short article
 - Editorial paragraph explaining how 1919 led to 1939
-

3. Mock Trial: Is the Treaty of Versailles Responsible for WWII?



Purpose

Students evaluate historical causation and responsibility.

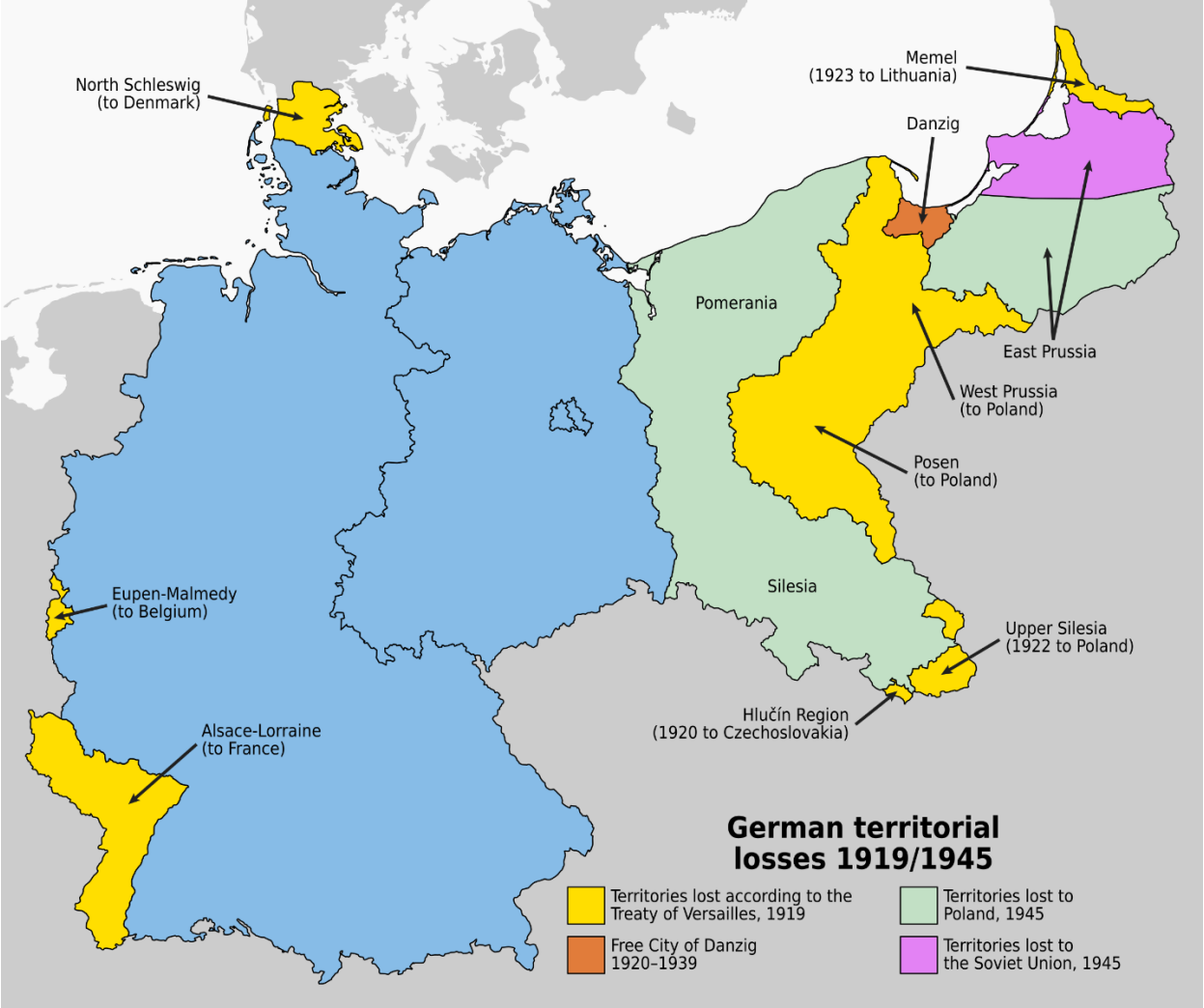
Roles

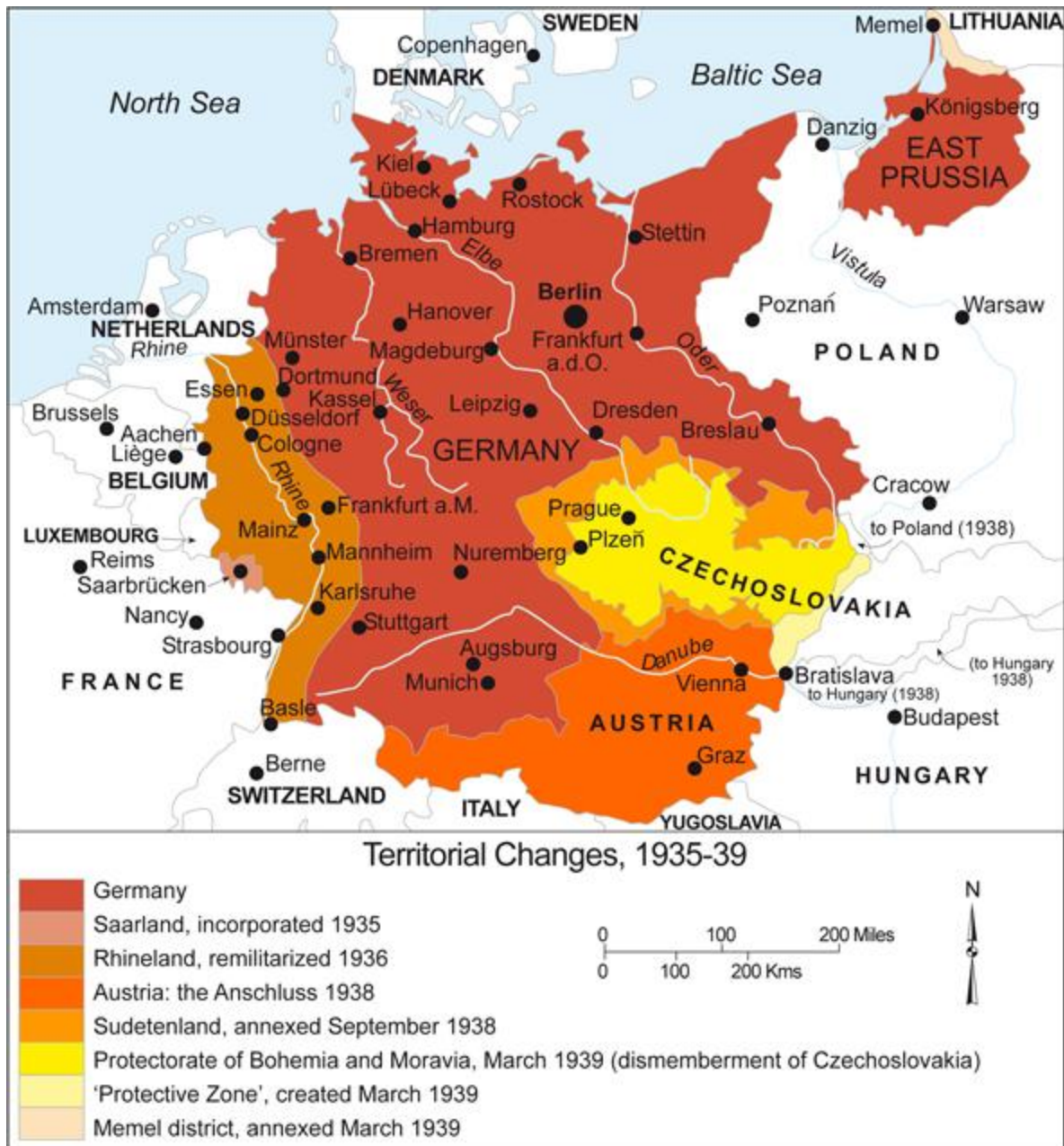
- Prosecutors: Argue the treaty caused WWII
- Defense: Argue other factors were more important
- Witnesses: German civilians, Allied leaders, economists, veterans

Outcome

A jury issues a verdict explaining **how much responsibility** the treaty bears.

4. Map Analysis: From Punishment to Expansion





Purpose

Students visually analyze territorial grievances.

Student Task

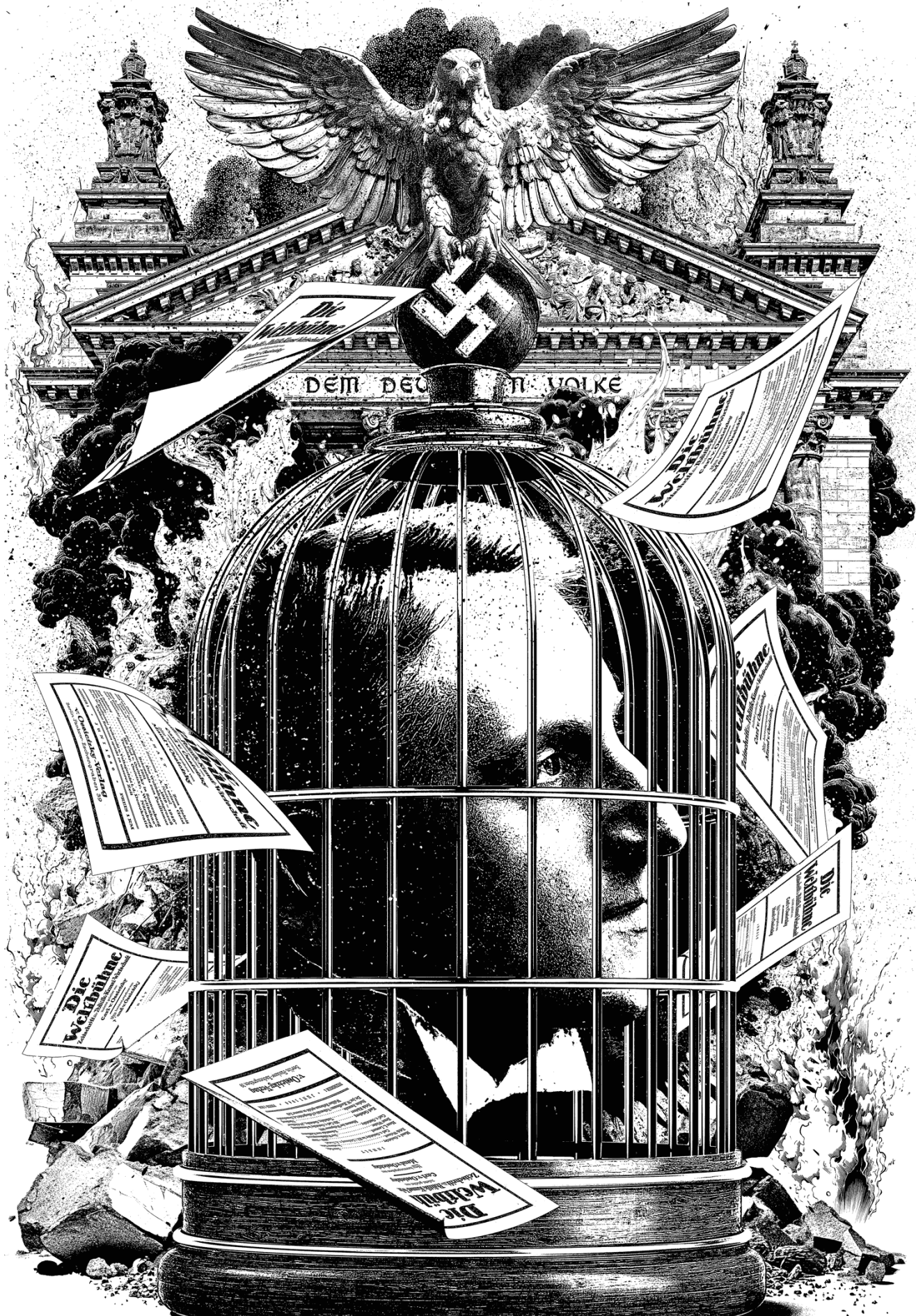
Compare Germany's borders in:

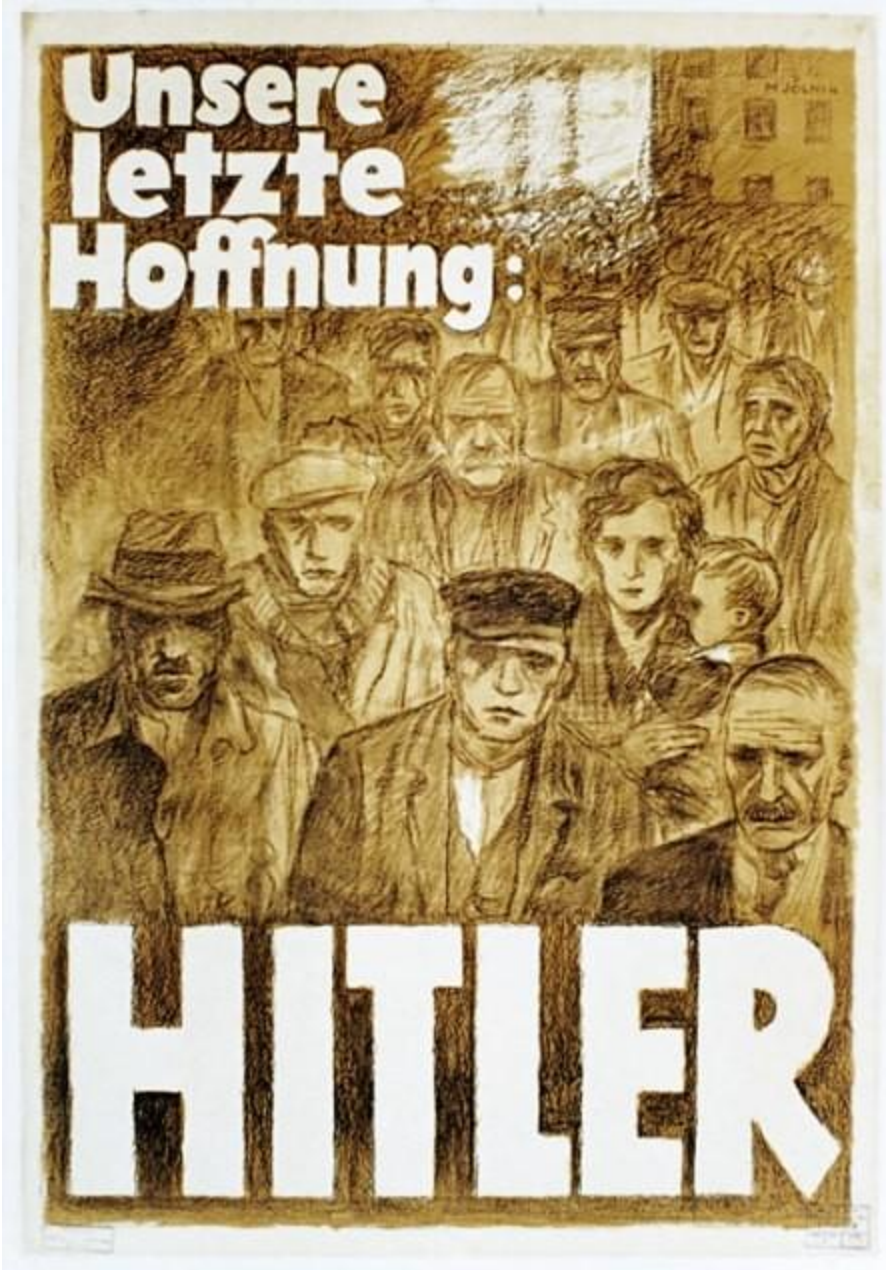
- 1919 (after the treaty)
- 1939 (after expansion)

Analysis Questions

- What lands were lost?
 - Which lands were reclaimed first?
 - Why were these territories emotionally and strategically important?
-

5. Propaganda Analysis: Turning the Treaty into a Weapon





Purpose

Students understand how resentment was manipulated.

Student Task

Analyze propaganda that references the Treaty of Versailles.

Guiding Questions

- How is the treaty portrayed?
- What emotions are targeted?
- Why did this message appeal to struggling Germans?

6. Ranking Activity: What Really Caused WWII?

THE
TREATY OF PEACE
BETWEEN
THE ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS
AND
GERMANY,

The Protocol annexed thereto, the Agreement respecting
the military occupation of the territories of the Rhine,

AND THE
TREATY
BETWEEN
FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN
RESPECTING
Assistance to France in the event of unprovoked
aggression by Germany.

Signed at Versailles, June 28th, 1919.

[With Maps and Signatures in facsimile.]



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Purpose

Students weigh multiple historical causes.

Student Task

Rank the following:

- Treaty of Versailles
- Great Depression
- Failure of the League of Nations
- Appeasement
- Rise of dictators

Writing Prompt

Would World War II have occurred without the Treaty of Versailles? Explain.

7. Letter Across Time

(No images — writing-focused activity)

Purpose

Students humanize historical cause and effect.

Student Task

Write a letter from a German citizen in the 1920s warning Europe about the future.

Required References

- Reparations
- Unemployment
- Political extremism
- Loss of faith in democracy

Exit Ticket / Assessment

- How did the Treaty of Versailles weaken Germany?
- Why did economic consequences matter more than military limits?
- Which treaty clause had the greatest long-term impact?

Teacher Tip (AP-Style Thesis Frame)

The Treaty of Versailles contributed to World War II by economically destabilizing Germany, humiliating it politically, and fostering resentment that extremist leaders later exploited.
