More than four million Americans served in the war. Afterward, the United States demilitarized and reaffirmed neutrality and isolation.
The stock market crashed and a serious economic depression began worldwide. At the height of the Great Depression, one quarter of the American workforce was unemployed.
1933: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler Came to Power

President Roosevelt delivers his first inaugural address in Washington, DC, on March 4, 1933.

Source: Library of Congress

Adolf Hitler greets members of the SA, or Nazi Storm Troopers, in Nuremberg, Germany, after being appointed as chancellor in January 1933.

Source: Yad Vashem
1933: At Least 24 African Americans Were Lynched

At least 24 African Americans were lynched in the United States in 1933. Throughout the 1930s, African Americans were subjected to government-sanctioned segregation, social ostracism, and racially motivated violence.

This flag hung from the offices of the NAACP in New York City from the early 1900s through 1938 every time a lynching was reported. Source: Library of Congress
On August 31, 1935, Congress passed the first in a series of laws designed to prevent the United States from being embroiled in a foreign war. The 1935 Neutrality Act prohibited the export of “arms, ammunition, and implements of war” from the United States to foreign nations at war and required US arms manufacturers to apply for an export license.

Senator Gerald Nye of Nebraska argued that the Neutrality Act of 1935 would help the United States stay out of future wars. Source: Library of Congress
“Do you think there will be another serious depression?”

Source: AIPO Poll

November 1936 Public Opinion Poll

33% No

67% Yes
January 1937 Public Opinion Poll

“Do you think it was a mistake for the United States to enter World War I?”

Source: Gallup

30% No
70% Yes
A new recession, which lasted from May 1937 until June 1938, was America’s third major economic downturn in 20 years.

Real GDP dropped 10 percent and unemployment hit 20 percent.
German troops occupied Austria and incorporated it into the German Reich, an event known as the Anschluss. Nazi sympathizers attacked Jewish people and destroyed their property throughout the spring, summer, and autumn of 1938.

Austrian Nazis and local residents look on as Jews are forced to get on their hands and knees and scrub the pavement. March 1938–April 1938. Source: National Archives and Records Administration
Nazi Party members and sympathizers burned synagogues, looted Jewish homes and businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and arrested approximately 30,000 Jewish men, imprisoning them in concentration camps. Many German and Austrian Jews applied to emigrate out of German-occupied territory.
Germany invaded Poland, starting World War II. Honoring an alliance with Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east a few weeks later. After Poland’s defeat, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union partitioned the country.

German soldiers parade through Warsaw, Poland, on October 5, 1939. Source: National Archives and Records Administration
November 1939: Final Neutrality Act Passed

The Neutrality Act lifted the arms embargo and put all trade with nations in a state of war (such as Great Britain and France) under the terms of “cash-and-carry.” The ban on loans remained in effect and American ships were barred from transporting goods to ports in those nations.
“Do you think the United States should declare war on Germany and send our army and navy abroad to fight?”

Source: AiPO Poll

May 1940 Public Opinion Poll

7% Yes

93% No
In the summer of 1940, students at Yale University founded the Committee for America First, opposing US intervention in the war. America First, which grew to have 800,000 members, included isolationist, peace, and anti-war activists.
This bill required all male citizens between the ages of 26 and 36 to register for the country’s first peacetime military draft. While the United States was not yet involved in World War II, Congress voted to train American men for military service so the country could defend itself against the growing threat of the Axis powers.
In a radio address, President Roosevelt said: “We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war. We have furnished the British great material support and we will furnish far more in the future.”
The Museum wishes to acknowledge and thank the following donors to the Americans and the Holocaust Initiative:

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