More than four million Americans served in the war. Afterward, the United States demilitarized and reaffirmed neutrality and isolation.

Source: Imperial War Museum
1929: Stock Market Crash

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.

Gangster Al Capone opened this soup kitchen for the hungry and homeless in Chicago during the Great Depression. November 16, 1930. Source: National Archives and Records Administration
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
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.
March 11–13, 1938: Anschluss

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
Responding to political pressure, President Roosevelt called for an international conference to facilitate the emigration of refugees from the German Reich. Delegates from 32 countries attended. Most countries, including the United States, refused to admit more refugees.
November 9–10, 1938: Kristallnacht

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.
In the aftermath of Kristallnacht, President Roosevelt extended visas to allow refugees to stay in the United States for up to six months.

Source: New York Times, November 19, 1938
February 9, 1939: Wager-Rogers Bill Introduced

S. J. RES. 64

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

February 9, 1939

Mr. Wagner introduced the following joint resolution, which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Immigration.

JOINT RESOLUTION

To authorize the admission into the United States of a limited number of German refugee children.

Whereas there is now in progress a world-wide effort to facilitate the emigration from Germany of men, women, and children of every race and creed suffering from conditions which compel them to seek refuge in other lands; and

Whereas the most pitiful and helpless sufferers are children of tender years; and

Whereas the admission into the United States of a limited number of these children can be accomplished without any danger of their becoming public charges, or dislocating American industry or diminishing American labor; and

Whereas such action by the United States would constitute the most immediate and practical contribution by our liberty-loving people to the cause of human freedom, to which we are inevitably bound by our institutions, our history, and our profoundest sentiments: Now, therefore, be it

1. Referred to the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2. That not more than ten thousand immigration visas may be issued during each of the calendar years 1939 and 1940,

3. in addition to those authorized by existing law and notwithstanding any provisions of law regarding priorities or preferences, for the admission into the United States of children fourteen years of age or under, who reside, or at any time since January 1, 1933, have resided, in any territory now incorporated in Germany, and who are otherwise eligible: Provided, That satisfactory assurances are given that such children will be supported and properly cared for through the voluntary action of responsible citizens or responsible private organizations of the United States and consequently will not become public charges.

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