



This podcast helps you to understand why the League of Nations was set up and what its role was.

Teacher: The single most important method of international co-operation in the post-war world was the League of Nations. So what was its aim?

Student: Its most important aim was to solve international disputes without going to war. This was reflected in the Covenant – an agreement that was signed by all members.

Teacher: What did the Covenant say?

Student: All members had to promise not to go to war; they had to agree to open, just and honourable relations between nations; they had to agree that governments should act according to international law; finally they had to agree to maintain justice and respect for all treaty obligations.

Teacher: Whose idea was the League?

Student: Woodrow Wilson. And he had grand plans for it. He wanted it to be like a world parliament where representatives of all nations met regularly to solve problems.

Teacher: How was that supposed to work?

Student: All the major nations would join and sign the League Covenant. They would then disarm and if they had a dispute with another country, they would take it to the League and accept its decisions.

They also promised to protect one another if they were attacked – known as collective security.

Teacher: What happened if any member broke the Covenant?

Student: Other members would impose economic sanctions, for example they would stop trading with that member. Supporters of the League were excited by this new weapon – they believed it could be a powerful way of preventing aggression without war.

Teacher: So the League wasn't allowed to go to war?

Student: The League could take military action, but only as a last resort.

Teacher: Were all of the major powers as supportive as Wilson?

Student: The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, wanted a simple organisation that would meet only in emergencies. An organisation like this already existed, called the Conference of Ambassadors.

Lloyd George was also determined that membership of the League would not tie Britain's hands in an emergency and Britain should be free to act in its own interests.

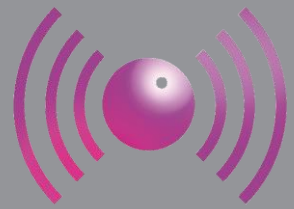
Teacher: How did the French leader, Georges Clemenceau, feel about the League?

Student: He was also quite sceptical about it. He too wanted France to be free to act independently. He also thought the League needed its own army to achieve anything.

Teacher: Was there any other opposition to the League?

Student: The US Congress refused to even let the USA join the League despite it being their President's big idea, which left the British and the French to try to make it work.

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This podcast helps you to understand the role of the League of Nations commissions.

Questioner: Hello my name's John Johnson and I want to welcome you to everyone's favourite gameshow *List of Three*. You have chosen to answer questions on the work of the League of Nations commissions. Start the clock ... NOW:

Question 1: List three desires the commissions had.

Student:

- To solve the problems left over by war.
- To make life better for ordinary people.
- To prevent war by alleviating social problems and poverty.

Questioner: Good. Let's look at the people of the member countries who carried out the work of the commissions.

Question 2: List three groups who worked together under the 'umbrella' of the League's organisation.

Student:

- Lawyers
- Trade unionists
- Financial experts

Questioner: Good. Let's now look at the many achievements of the commissions.

Question 3: Can you list three things the committees achieved?

Student:

- The Refugee Committee returned 400,000 people displaced by war to their homes.
- The International Labour Organisation successfully campaigned for workers' rights.
- The Health Committee funded research into deadly diseases such as malaria.

Questioner: Correct. But that's not all of the committees' successes.

Question 4: Can you list three more achievements?

Student:

- They brought in the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child.
- They fought campaigns against drug trafficking and slavery.
- The Financial Committee came up with an economic plan to help the economies of Austria and Hungary recover from collapse.

Questioner: Correct. The League was also an important meeting place for experts.

Question 5: List three fields of work these experts came from.

Student:



- Science
- Finance
- Law and healthcare

Questioner: Correct. An extra one too! The commissions also provided a place for activists to share information.

Question 6: Can you list three areas these activists campaigned for?

Student:

- Women's and children's rights
- Working conditions
- Anti-slavery

Questioner: Correct. Although the League was replaced by the United Nations, several of these agencies continued.

Question 7: List three agencies that still operate today.

Student:

- The International Labour Organisation
- The League's Health Committee is now the United Nations' World Health Organization.
- The financial planning done by the League's Financial Committee was the basis for the International Monetary Fund.

Questioner: Correct. So at the end of that round you scored seven out of seven; well done! Thanks for joining us and see you again for another *List of three*.

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This podcast helps you to understand the successes and failures of the League of Nations' attempts to prevent war between its member nations.

Narrator: As a result of the First World War, many countries were left with severe financial difficulties. To add to this, the new boundaries imposed on some countries by the treaties created a host of additional problems.

During the 1920s, the League had some successes in dealing with such problems.

Both Germany and Poland agreed to the League's decision to hold a plebiscite (which is a vote) to divide the disputed region of Upper Silesia. Additionally, the League averted war when Sweden agreed to its decision to hand the Åland Islands to Finland.

An incident in Bulgaria was seen as a major success for the League. In October 1925, Greek troops invaded Bulgaria after some Greek soldiers were killed on the border. The League, with Britain and France's backing, sent observers to assess the situation and judged in favour of the Bulgarians. The Greeks obeyed and withdrew their troops.

However, not every disagreement was dealt with so successfully.

After Poland took control of the Lithuanian capital, Vilna in 1920, Lithuania appealed to the League. However, France and Britain were not prepared to act because Poland was a potential French ally against Germany.

An incident in Corfu in 1923 also highlighted the weaknesses of the League. An Italian general called Tellini was supervising the new border between Greece and Albania when he and his team were killed. The Italian leader Mussolini blamed the Greek government and demanded Greece pay compensation; he then occupied the Greek island of Corfu. Fifteen people were killed. The League condemned Mussolini's actions, but also suggested that Greece pay compensation. The British were prepared to intervene but the French backed the Italians. In the end Mussolini got his way: the Greeks had to apologise and pay compensation directly to Italy. On 27 September, Mussolini withdrew from Corfu, boasting of his triumph.

The League largely failed in its responsibility to disarm its member states. It was particularly damaging to the League's reputation in Germany. Germany had disarmed – it had been forced to. But no other countries had disarmed to the same extent.

Despite such failures, the League did reach a number of agreements:

- The 1922 Rapallo Treaty helped to re-establish diplomatic relations between Germany and the USSR.
- The 1924 Dawes Plan averted economic crisis in Germany.
- The 1925 Locarno Treaties saw Germany accept its western borders as set out in the Treaty of Versailles.
- The 1928 Kellogg–Briand Pact saw 65 nations agree not to use force to settle disputes.
- Finally, the 1929 Young Plan reduced Germany's reparations payments.

These agreements highlighted one of the League's greatest successes – its creation of an 'internationalist mind-set' in which members were encouraged to think collaboratively.

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This podcast helps you to understand the problems brought on by the worldwide economic depression following the 1929 Wall Street Crash.

Teacher: In the late 1920s world trade had boomed. The USA was the richest nation in the world and most countries borrowed money from American banks. As a result of this trade, most countries were getting richer and international tension had reduced.

So what caused the Great Depression to happen?

Student 1: In October 1929 the American stock market, which is known as Wall Street, crashed. This wiped out the savings of millions of Americans. It also caused the collapse of American banks and businesses. The Crash started a long economic depression throughout the rest of the world.

Teacher: What impact did this have on relations between countries?

Student 1: Well, one of the first casualties of the Depression was economic internationalism. This meant that the internationalist spirit of the 1920s was replaced by a more nationalist approach.

Student 2: This was shown in two key ways. The first was protectionism. This saw countries such as Britain and France protecting their own industries by bringing in tariffs to stop imports. They also reduced the price of their goods so they could still export what they produced. This worsened trade and led to businesses going bust and to unemployment.

Secondly, many countries, including Germany, Japan, Italy and Britain, started to rearm to boost industry and provide work for the unemployed. This then increased the feeling of fear between states and caused other countries to do the same.

Teacher: What other problems were there?

Student 1: The most serious problem was the withdrawal of loans from the USA. When the Depression hit America many US banks started to run out of money. As a result they asked the European banks to pay back the money they had borrowed from US banks.

Teacher: What were the economic and political effects of this?

Student 1: Most of the US loans had gone to help rebuild the economy of Germany. But a lot of money had also gone to help some of the new states in central and eastern Europe, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Teacher: Was there an economic connection between these different states?

Student 2: Yes. One key factor was reparations. The US loans had enabled Germany to pay its reparations. The states that received this money then used it to build their own economies and also to buy industrial equipment and other resources from Britain, France and Germany.

Teacher: So US loans were like the blood pumping through the body of Europe's economy?

Student 2: Exactly. When Britain and France also put up tariffs and refused to lend money to Germany and other states, their economies rapidly collapsed and they felt very bitter and betrayed.

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This podcast helps you to understand the emergence of powerful dictatorships in Europe.

Questioner: Hello my name's John Johnson and I want to welcome you to everyone's favourite gameshow *List of Three*. You have chosen to answer questions on the emergence of powerful dictatorships in Europe. Start the clock ... NOW:

Question 1: List three problems faced by Germany when the USA asked for their money back in 1929.

Student:

- Businesses closed and unemployment rocketed.
- Germans felt the democratic parties running the country had let them down.
- People started to turn towards extremist political parties such as the Communists and the Nazis.

Questioner: Indeed. And by 1933 the Nazis had taken power.

Question 2: Can you list three radical solutions Hitler offered to Germany's economic problems?

Student:

- Rearmament to create jobs both in the forces and in the factories.
- State investment in projects such as road building.
- Getting rid of the Treaty of Versailles.

Questioner: Correct. You could have also mentioned that Hitler promised to end the hated reparation payments. Now let's move on to Hitler's other promises.

Question 3: Can you list three nationalist policies that would set Hitler on a collision path with his European neighbours?

Student:

- He intended to reclaim the land lost under the Treaty of Versailles.
- He planned to carve out Lebensraum (which is living space) for Germans in eastern Europe.
- He also wanted to challenge Communist influence in Germany and elsewhere.

Questioner: Well done. Now let's look at Italy.

Question 4: Can you list three plans Mussolini had for rebuilding Italy?

Student:

- He wanted to build an empire.
- He had his eyes on territory in Africa.
- He wanted to build an alliance with Germany.

Questioner: Correct. Let's move onto dictatorship in Russia.

Question 5: Can you list three facts about the Communists?

Student:



- They came to power after a revolution following the First World War.
- They brought state control of industry and the economy.
- They turned the Russian Empire into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (the USSR).

Questioner: Correct. Let's consider their leader Josef Stalin.

Question 6: Can you list three threats Stalin posed to international relations?

Student:

- He was a harsh dictator who clamped down on opposition.
- He set up an organisation called Comintern to spread communist ideas.
- Stalin ordered a massive programme of industrialisation to build up the USSR's industries and give it the resources to fight a major war.

Questioner: A very good effort. Six out of six – well done! Thanks for joining us and see you again for another *List of three*.

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This podcast helps you to understand the failure of the League of Nations in Manchuria.

The Depression hit Japan very hard.

In rural areas there was widespread hardship and even famine. High trading tariffs meant that Japan struggled to sell its exports, particularly silk and other textiles. This led to the prices for Japanese goods falling by 50 per cent.

The Japanese government began to take increasing control of the main industries and the economy as a whole. As in Germany, this led people to blame the government and to begin to support more hard-line nationalist politicians.

These politicians were allied to military commanders. They believed the solution to Japan's problems was to build up the military and take control of new territories. This would give them access to raw materials and markets for their goods. Japan effectively became a military dictatorship, which meant it was run by the army.

In 1931 an incident in Manchuria gave these nationalist leaders an ideal opportunity. The Japanese army controlled the South Manchurian Railway. The Japanese claimed that Chinese troops attacked the railway. They used this as an excuse to invade and set up a government in Manchuoko (Manchuria).

This was a critical moment in the history of international relations.

China appealed to the League of Nations.

The League was very cautious as Japan was one of its most powerful and important members. In September 1932, after a year-long investigation, the League presented its judgement: Japan had acted unlawfully and Manchuria should be returned to the Chinese.

But Japan would not be stopped. In February 1933, they announced their intention to invade more of China. They argued they needed to defend themselves because China was politically unstable. Japan also resigned from the League on 27 March 1933 and then it invaded Jehol.

The League was powerless. Britain seemed more interested in keeping up a good relationship with Japan than in agreeing to sanctions. Only the USA and the USSR had the resources to remove the Japanese from Manchuria by force and they were not even members of the League. The League did discuss banning arms sales to Japan, but the member countries could not reach an agreement as they were worried that Japan would retaliate.

The significance of the Manchurian crisis was obvious: the League was powerless if a strong nation decided to pursue an aggressive policy and invade its neighbours. Back in Europe, both Hitler and Mussolini looked on with interest. Within three years they would both follow Japan's example.

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This podcast helps you to understand the failures of disarmament.

Teacher: In the 1920s the League of Nations tried and failed to reach agreements on disarmament. By the 1930s the League was experiencing increased pressure to try to do something about the issue. So, why was it experiencing pressure?

Student 1: It was in the wake of the Manchurian crisis. It made them realise the urgency of the problem. The American president, Herbert Hoover, was also concerned and he tried to get the European states to come up with disarmament plans in return for reducing or cancelling any debts they owed to the USA.

Teacher: What was decided at the Disarmament Conference in February 1932?

Student 2: It produced resolutions to stop the bombing of civilian populations and to restrict certain types of weapons. While they might sound like useful steps, the Conference couldn't agree on ways to enforce the bans.

Teacher: What role did Germany play in this?

Student 1: Germany posed a real problem. Under the Treaty of Versailles Germany had been forced to disarm. Other countries were also supposed to disarm but they hadn't. By this stage, the Germans had been in the League for six years and most people now accepted that they should be treated more equally.

Teacher: So did they come to some sort of agreement?

Student 1: Yes, although it took some time. Initially, Germany asked that all countries disarm down to its level. But the Conference failed to agree to this principle of 'equality' and the Germans walked out. However, in December 1932 an agreement was finally reached to treat Germany equally.

Teacher: So was that the end of negotiations?

Student 2: Well, no, not quite. Although Germany announced it was coming back to the Conference in January 1933, at the end of the month Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and he immediately started to rearm Germany.

Teacher: Did the other nations know about this?

Student 1: No, he did it in secret at first. Publicly he promised in May 1933 not to rearm Germany if 'in five years all other nations destroyed their arms'.

Teacher: So what happened next?

Student 2: In June 1933 Britain produced an ambitious disarmament plan, but it failed to achieve support at the Conference. Just four months later, in October 1933, Hitler withdrew from the Disarmament Conference, and soon after took Germany out of the League altogether.

Teacher: Were any of the other nations suspicious by this stage?

Student 1: Yes. All the powers knew that Hitler was already secretly rearming Germany. They also began to rebuild their own armaments. Despite this, the Disarmament Conference struggled on for another year. It finally ended in 1934 and Hitler publicly announced his rearmament programme the following year.

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This podcast helps you to understand what the Abyssinian crisis revealed about international relations.

Britain, France and Italy all had colonies in northern and eastern Africa. Italy's leader Mussolini had his eye on Abyssinia and in December 1934 he invaded. The Abyssinian emperor, Haile Selassie, appealed to the League for help. It was a clear case of aggression: Abyssinia was close to British and French territories and Italy itself was in Europe. How would the League fare?

Phase one of negotiations lasted from January to October 1935.

Britain and France wanted to protect their own interests and to stay on good terms with Mussolini because they saw him as a possible ally against Hitler. In April 1935 they met with Mussolini and agreed the Stresa Pact – a commitment to stand against Germany. They did not discuss Abyssinia, which some historians believe Mussolini saw as a promise that Britain and France would ignore his actions in Abyssinia.

A report by a League committee was published after eight months in September 1935. The report stated that neither side was to blame and even proposed that Italy be granted some Abyssinian territory.

Phase two of negotiations lasted from October 1935 to May 1936.

In October 1935 Mussolini invaded Abyssinia. The League Covenant (its rules) made it clear that sanctions must be introduced. After a delay – which allowed Mussolini to build up his stockpile of war materials – the League took action.

- It banned arms sales and financial loans to Italy.
- It banned the export to Italy of rubber, tin and metals.
- It also banned imports from Italy.

However, the League delayed a decision for two months over whether to ban oil exports to Italy.

There was worse to come. In December 1935, British and French foreign ministers, Hoare and Laval, hatched a plan to give Mussolini two-thirds of Abyssinia in return for his calling off his invasion. Details were leaked to the French press, where it was seen as an act of treachery against the League. The real damage was to the reputation of the League, especially as the question about whether to ban oil sales was ultimately shelved.

The situation worsened when the US Congress, appalled by British and French actions, blocked support for the League's sanctions and stepped *up* their oil exports to Italy.

On 7 March 1936 Adolf Hitler marched his troops into the Rhineland. The French, desperate to gain the support of Italy, were now prepared to give Abyssinia to Mussolini.

Italy continued to defy the League's orders and by May 1936 had taken control of the whole of Abyssinia.

The consequences of the Abyssinia crisis were significant. Collective security had been shown to be an empty promise. In addition, British and French hopes for a strengthened position against Hitler were dashed when in November 1936 Mussolini and Hitler signed the Rome–Berlin Axis.