

Strengths and weaknesses of the League of Nations

- Divide a page into the following sections:
 - a) Problems with the structure of the League of Nations.
 - b) Problems with the sanctions that the League of Nations could impose.
 - c) Issues with the membership of the League of Nations
 - d) Issues with the post-war Treaties.
 - e) Good points of the League of Nations.

Go onto the History website and download the PowerPoint on the Strengths and Weaknesses of the League of Nations. Use the PowerPoint to create your notes on each section.

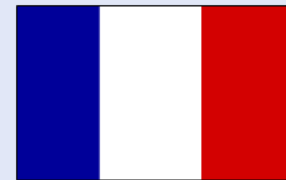
Organization of the League

The League's structure was complicated. This was because there was a lack of **consensus** about how it should work.



Britain and **America** did not want the smaller states to have too much power as they feared that the smaller countries would drag them into international disputes that had little to do with them.

France, however, felt that states like Czechoslovakia and Poland needed to be strengthened through inclusion in the League if the peace treaties were to work.



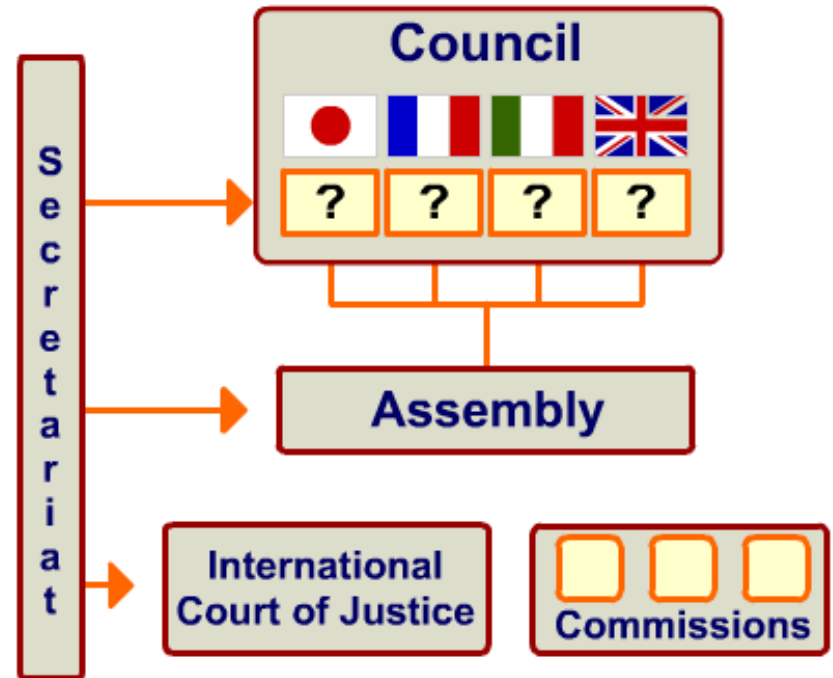
Organization of the League

So the structure of the League was a **compromise**.

The smaller states could have their say in the assembly and through being non-permanent members on the council.

However, as most decisions in the council had to be **unanimous**, the powers could easily **veto** any proposals made by the smaller League members.

This meant that the concerns of small countries could easily be ignored if they were inconvenient to the leading members.



- If a country acted illegally the League could use the following sanctions;
- MORALLY CONDEMN the offending country- tell them off.
- INVOKE A TRADE EMBARGO- ensure that no League country would trade with the offending country.
- SEND TROOPS IN- although the League had no army of its own, it could send in troops that belonged to its member states.



Problems with the Sanctions

- SANCTION 1: Telling off the offending nation was not particularly effective- a nation could simply ignore the telling off.
- SANCTION 2: A trade embargo (block) was only useful if all the powerful trading nations were members of the League- the USA was powerful and wasn't in the League. Also, if other League members would lose money by not trading with an offending nation they might not stop trading.
- SANCTION 3: Using force was only possible if a member nation would lend their troops- the League did not have its own army. After WWI, most countries were reluctant to use force again- and the people in those countries would certainly not support military action.

Surprisingly, America did not join the League of Nations.

Although Wilson was in favour of the League, which had been largely his idea, the **American Senate** was opposed to it. Wilson unfortunately suffered a stroke in September 1919 and was unable to push his views through.



In addition, **Soviet Russia** was excluded from the League.

Without the USA or Russia, the League became a largely European organization, dominated by France and Britain.

Neither of these powers were particularly keen to act outside of Europe unless their interests were directly threatened.



Membership- the USA did not join the League



What do you think the cartoonist is trying to say about the League of Nations?

It was not only the USA and Russia that did not join the League.

Germany and the other defeated powers were barred from joining until they had shown their willingness to abide by the terms of the peace treaties.

Many people saw the League as a “**winners’ club**”.

As part of the League’s job was to uphold the peace treaties, it often appeared to be acting against Germany and the defeated nations.



The League of Nations suffered from frequent changes in its membership.



Press **start** to learn more about the various countries that joined and withdrew from the League.

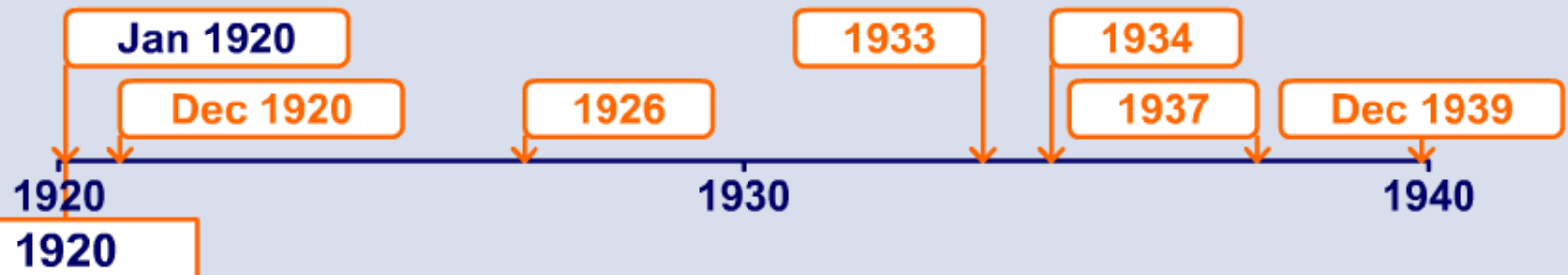
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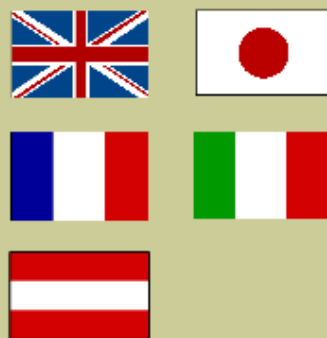
The League of Nations leading members



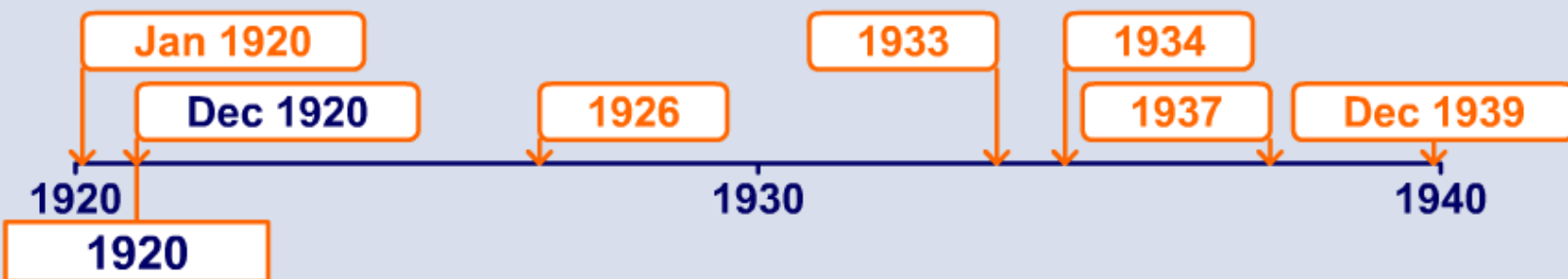
The League of Nations first met in January 1920. Of its 42 founding members, the most important were **Britain, France, Italy and Japan.**



The League of Nations' leading members



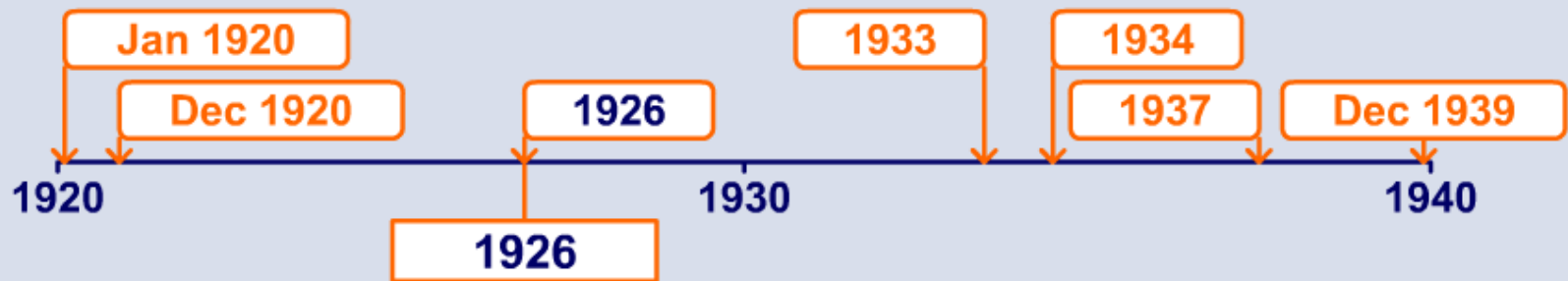
In December 1920, **Austria** was granted membership of the League.



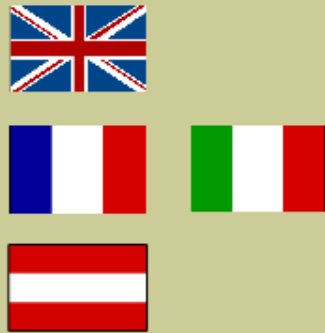
The League of Nations' leading members



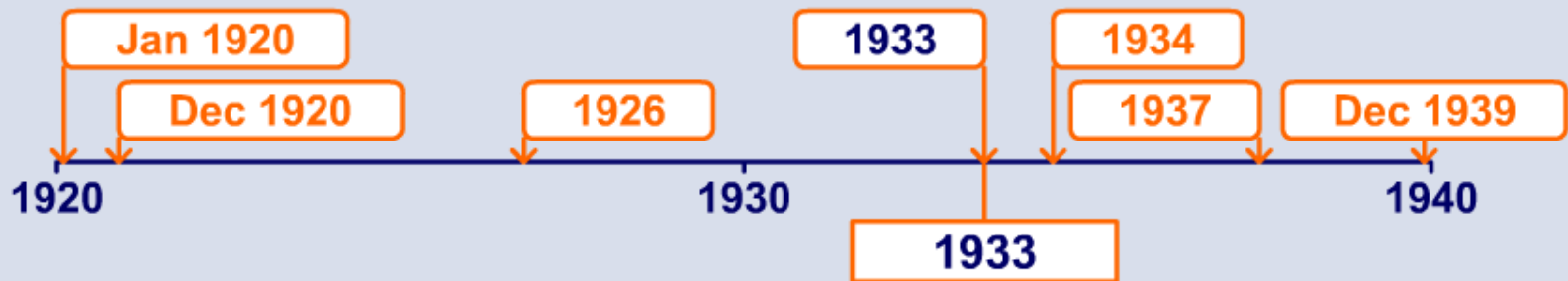
By 1926, **Germany** had accepted its new western boundaries and seemed to be making every effort to comply with the treaties. As a result, it was allowed to join the League.



The League of Nations' leading members

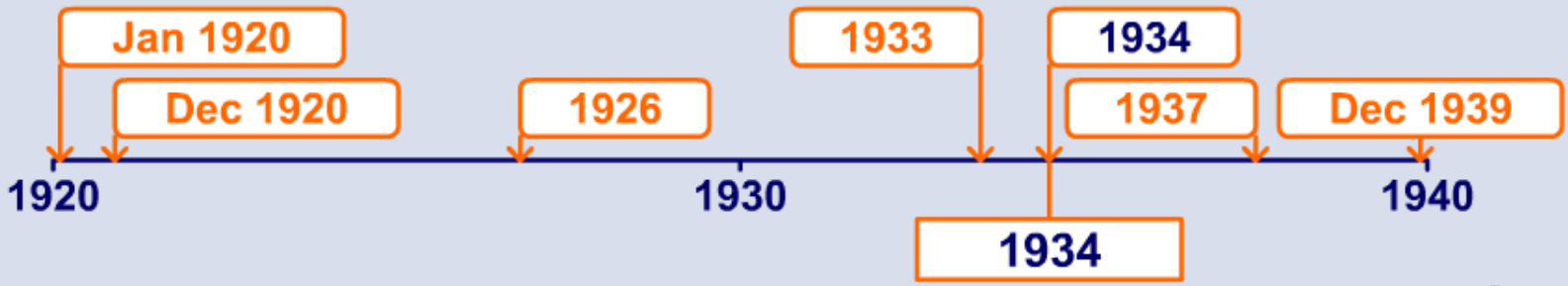


In 1933, the Nazi party came to power in Germany. Hitler immediately **withdrew Germany** from the League. **Japan** also withdrew when the League condemned the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.





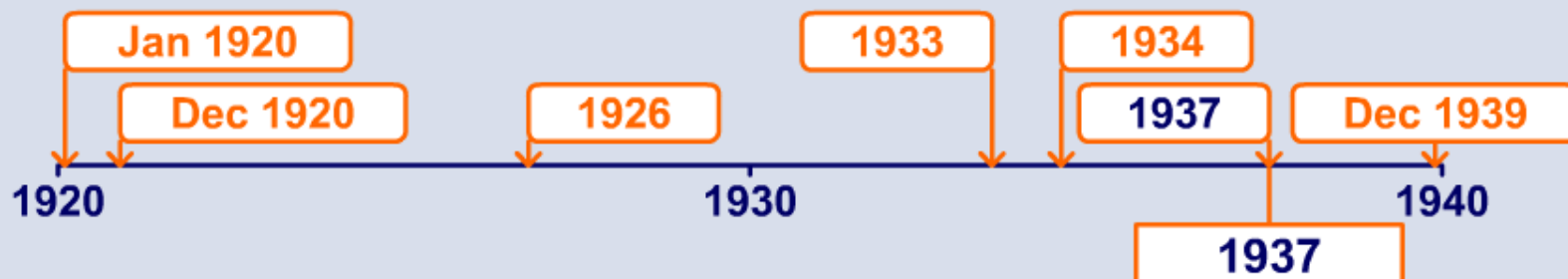
In 1934, the **Soviet Union** was allowed to join the League.



The League of Nations' leading members



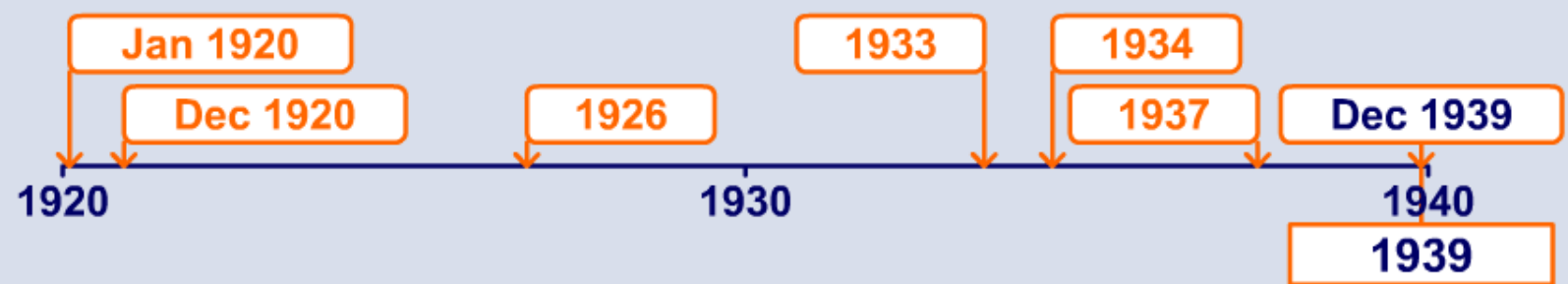
By 1937, Italian relations with France and Britain had deteriorated badly. **Italy withdrew** from the League.



The League of Nations' leading members



When war broke out in the winter of 1939, Germany's allies, **Austria** and the **Soviet Union**, withdrew from the League.



A league for all nations?

As you can see, the League of Nations was quite fluid in terms of who joined and who left (or was removed!).

The effect of this was to make the League seem **less binding**. If a nation was at odds with what the League did or said, they could simply leave and face few, or no, consequences.

If the League was going to bring effective pressure to bear on offending nations through warnings and economic sanctions, then membership of the League needed to be as **wide** as possible.

If membership was too **limited**, 'outcast' nations could simply trade or deal with each other and ignore the League.

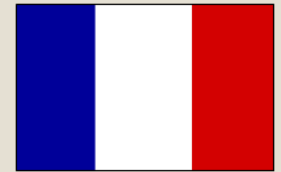


Britain and France were the only two major powers



continually represented in the League.

This meant that in effect, they pretty much ran the League as they wanted to.



However, both countries had suffered terribly during the war. Their economies and armed forces were badly weakened.

This meant that they were usually **unwilling to intervene** in conflicts when this might cost them money or men.

After the horror of 1914–18, the French and British **public** were very much against conflict. This meant their governments were unwilling to go to war, even to protect long-term peace.

In addition, Britain and France did not always **agree**.



The fact that the League was bound to the peace treaties also led to problems.

The **Covenant of the League** had formed part of all of the treaties that were signed with the defeated powers. This meant that the League was, to some extent, bound to defend these treaties.



The problem was that as time went on, the treaties came under more and more **criticism**. Many people began to think that they were **too harsh**.

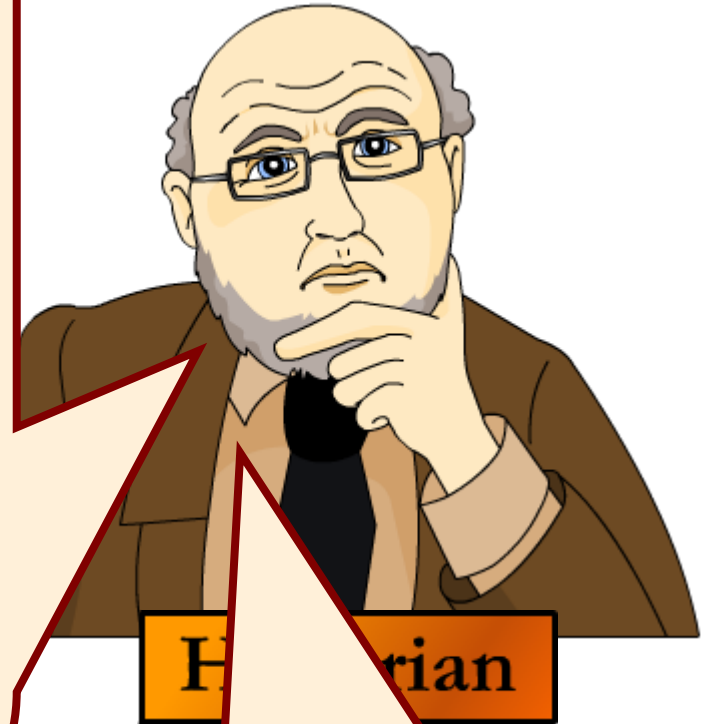
This meant that it was hard for the League to present a united front against countries who sought to challenge the treaties.



The League's good points

The League of Nations had some good points! It had a clear structure and set procedures for dealing with aggressive nations. It had an initial membership of 42 nations. The League provided a forum in which both large and small nations could discuss international problems.

The League was a step away from the old system of secret treaties and alliances.



The League also undertook useful humanitarian work.





Weigh up the strengths and weaknesses in the structure of the League of nations.

**Commissions dealt with humanitarian issues.
The League could impose sanctions on aggressive nations.**

The League was a departure from the old alliance system.

The League had a lot of popular support.

Strengths

Weaknesses



The League's strengths and weaknesses

Weigh up the strengths and weaknesses in the structure of the League of nations.

