



GRADE 8 LOUISIANA SOCIAL STUDIES

The World at War

Student Volume

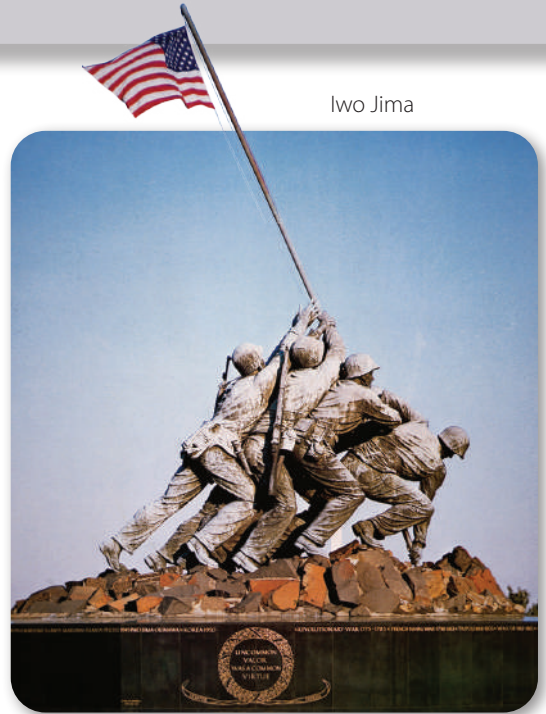
Attack on Pearl Harbor



Rosie the Riveter



Iwo Jima



Higgins boats



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The World at War

Student Volume



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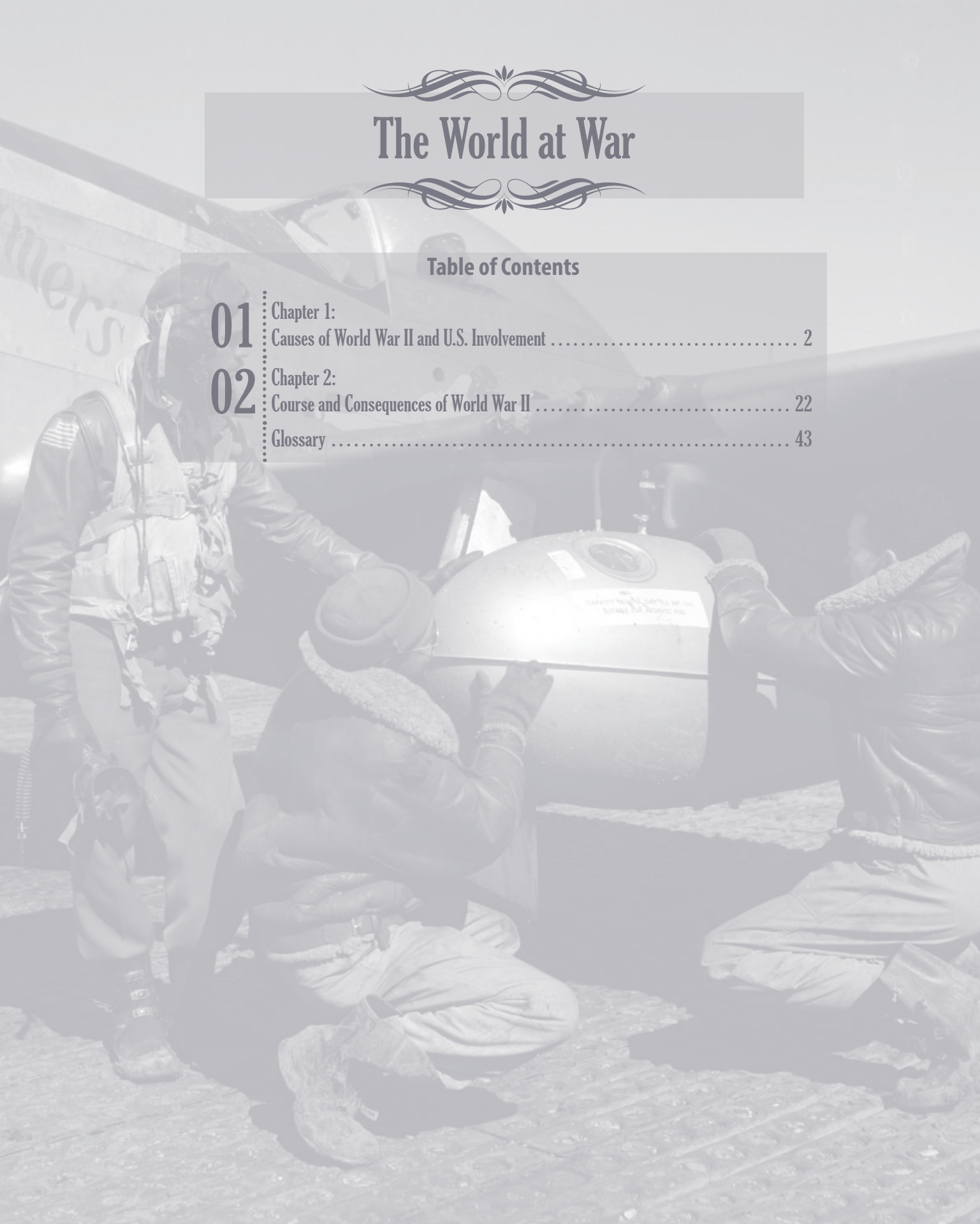


The World at War



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Chapter 1

Causes of World War II and U.S. Involvement



A World Consumed by War

The Second World War, also called World War II, took place from 1939 to 1945. It was the largest and most destructive conflict in history. Fifty million people died during the war; millions of others were wounded or driven from their homes. Two opposing forces battled around the world for global supremacy. Great Britain and France led the Allied Powers until 1941, when they were joined by the Soviet Union and the United States. The Axis Powers were led by Germany, Italy, and Japan. The stakes of World War II were huge. The very existence of free, tolerant, and democratic nations was threatened, as were the lives of millions.

The Framing Question

What were the main causes of the Second World War, and why did the United States become involved?



Adolf Hitler is seen here saluting members of the SA "brownshirts" in 1927. The SA was a paramilitary group and instrumental in the Nazis' rise to power in Germany.



Origins of the Second World War in Germany

How did this terrible war start? Might it have been avoided? The origins of World War II are rooted in the ending of World War I. The emperor of Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II, was forced to step down as the German leader on November 9, 1918. In place of the kaiser's government, the people of Germany proclaimed a new, democratic republic. It was known as the Weimar Republic, named after the city where it was created. Life in the Weimar Republic was difficult for most people. The population faced unemployment and malnutrition. The German economy had been battered by World War I, and the new republic owed 132 billion marks to the Allies for damages. Germany's inability to pay caused a political and economic crisis. In 1922, France sent soldiers into Germany's main industrial area to seize manufacturing equipment, which caused Germany's economy to fail.

As well as hunger and joblessness, one aspect of the crisis that shocked Germans was hyperinflation. The German government was forced to print massive

amounts of money to cover its expenses. This sent the value of Germany's money into free fall. By November 20, 1923, one U.S. dollar was worth 4.2 trillion German marks. German money had become virtually worthless.



Think Twice

What might be some of the effects of hyperinflation for everyday people?

These economic and political crises prompted people to take extreme political positions. The Communist Party became popular in Germany. So did parties of the racist and nationalist far right. One far-right leader was Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). Hitler was an Austrian who moved to Germany and fought for the German army during World War I. Like a lot of former soldiers, he was angry at the Weimar government. He also believed that all of Germany's problems could be blamed on Jewish people and others whom he thought were "impure."



The Rise of Hitler

Hitler joined the German Workers' Party in 1919. This was a right-wing party that wanted to win workers away from

socialism to German nationalism. By 1920, he was in charge of the party's messaging, and he had its name changed to the National Socialist German Workers' Party. They became known as the Nazis.

By 1921, Hitler was the leader of the Nazis. In 1923, Hitler and other Nazis tried to seize control of the government of Bavaria, a large German state. Hitler was arrested, tried, and imprisoned for nine months. While in jail, he wrote a book called *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*). The book described his ideas and his vision of history and society. It described "Aryans"—Germans and other northern Europeans—as racially superior. It also spelled out his anti-Semitism—his hatred of the Jewish people. He wanted to remove multiple groups from Germany, including Jews, Roma, people with disabilities, communists, and anyone else he could call an enemy of the state. He wrote also of Germany's need for *Lebensraum*, "living space." By *Lebensraum*, Hitler meant that Germany needed to expand its territorial holdings so as to give people of German language and culture more space in which to live.

The Weimar government stabilized slightly over the 1920s. Then the U.S. stock market crashed in October 1929.

The resulting global depression hit Germany hard. The already-strained German economy crumbled. Banks failed, and unemployment rose.

It was amid this political dysfunction and economic hardship that, under Hitler's leadership, the Nazis attracted and gained supporters. In 1932, the Nazis received enough votes for Hitler to be appointed chancellor of Germany. He took office as chancellor on January 30, 1933.



Think Twice

How might political conflict and economic hardship in Germany have led to the rise of Adolf Hitler?



Totalitarianism in Europe

Totalitarianism is a form of government in which a single party, headed by a powerful leader, gains total control of the governance of a country. It is a form of rule in which individual liberty is subservient to state power. Benito Mussolini had coined the term *totalitario*—the root word for *totalitarianism*—in the early 1920s. By this he meant, as he said, “all within the state, none outside the state, none against the state.” Individual liberty—so cherished

in the United States—was pushed to the side in totalitarian governments. In the years leading up to the Second World War, absolutist, single-party totalitarian rule came to govern through **fascism** in Mussolini's Italy, through Nazism in Hitler's Germany, and through communism in Joseph Stalin's Soviet Union.

Vocabulary

totalitarianism, n. a political system in which the government controls the people completely

fascism, n. an extreme nationalism in which a dictator controls the public absolutely

Think Twice

Why is absolutist, single-party totalitarian rule a threat to democracy?



Mussolini's version of totalitarianism and fascism combined an extreme nationalism that placed strong military values, or militarism, with staunch opposition to communism and democracy. Mussolini came to power in Italy in 1922, and once in power, he became a dictator. He outlawed opposition political parties and censored the press. Fascist “blackshirts”—gangs of men who dressed in black shirts—roamed the streets. They used

violence against those they judged to be opposed to Mussolini's fascist rule, including workers who went on strike for higher wages and socialists or communists. Mussolini himself spurred support for his fascist dictatorship with large public rallies. He captivated listeners with the emotional intensity of his speech and his dramatic physical gestures. Hitler would copy many of Mussolini's methods in his own rise to power.

In the Soviet Union, totalitarianism took the form not of fascism but of communism. In 1917, under Vladimir Lenin, the Bolshevik-led communists



Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler in Munich, Germany

overthrew a provisional government in Russia that had replaced the regime of Czar Nicholas II. After Lenin's death in 1924, Joseph Stalin took over as dictator of the Soviet Union. He promoted "socialism in one country," a view that held that the Soviet Union should strengthen itself economically and build socialism at home before focusing on exporting its communist ideology to other countries. Wielding the dictatorial powers of the Soviet state, Stalin implemented a series of "Five-Year Plans"—economic targets for industry and agriculture. Stalin's Five-Year Plans were successful in building the Soviet Union's industrial capacity, especially its "heavy industries" of coal, oil, and steel. But in agriculture, Stalin's command economy was a disaster. Farmers resisted demands that they abandon family farms to work on large, state-controlled **collectivized** farms. Farmers who resisted were shot or sent to gulags (forced labor camps where many died). Amid the turmoil, severe famine struck the Soviet Union.

Vocabulary

collectivized, adj. organized into group or state ownership rather than private ownership

The Holodomor

Within the 1931–34 famine that plagued the Soviet Union as a whole was a human-caused famine in Ukraine now known as the Holodomor. It occurred in 1932 and 1933. Similar to the famine sweeping the Soviet Union as a whole, the collectivization of agriculture was a major cause of famine in Ukraine, but conditions were made worse by the obstruction of aid. This obstruction was caused by Soviet officials who, fueled by long-standing prejudices toward the Ukrainian people, prevented food from entering Ukraine. The famine resulted in the deaths of an estimated 3.9 to 7.5 million people, mostly ethnic Ukrainians. The Holodomor is considered a **genocide** committed by the Soviet government against the Ukrainian people. It was a deliberate attempt to destroy the Ukrainian nation by starving Ukrainians to death. The Soviet government denied the existence of the Holodomor for decades, and it is still not recognized by all countries as a genocide.

In the 1930s, Stalin also introduced the Great Purge, a campaign of political repression in which the Soviet secret police rounded up millions of people suspected of opposing

Vocabulary

genocide, n. the deliberate and systematic extermination or attempted extermination of an entire group of people based on race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or other characteristics

his rule. Some rounded up in the Great Purge were shot on the spot. Others were put to death or sent to gulags after “show trials” in which they were forced to declare their guilt.

In Spain, from 1936 to 1939, the sharp ideological conflicts of the 1930s revealed themselves in a civil war. In the Spanish Civil War, Spain’s government—the leftist Second Spanish Republic—was overthrown by Nationalist forces under the leadership of Francisco Franco. The Soviet Union sold arms to the republic while Hitler’s Nazis and Mussolini’s fascist government actively supported Franco’s Nationalist forces with air support, armaments, and soldiers. Nazi and Italian fascist military forces gained experience in the Spanish Civil War.



Hitler Consolidates Power

Within months of coming to power in 1933, Hitler had outlawed other political parties, dissolved democracy, and instituted a

secret police force—the Gestapo. In 1934, he became both chancellor and president of Germany. Hitler’s version of totalitarian rule—Nazism—self-consciously borrowed from Mussolini’s fascist methods. In Italy, Mussolini had taken the name *Il Duce*—Italian for “The Leader.” In Germany, Hitler and his supporters promoted a cult of Hitler as *Der Führer*—German for “The Leader”—to celebrate his absolute, authoritarian, dictatorial rule. This cult of personality, or a quasi-religious system created around a charismatic leader, portrayed Hitler as a person of vitality and genius. (In actuality, Hitler was filled with hateful and misguided ideologies.) As the cult of *der Führer* grew, photographs and paintings of Hitler were placed on display everywhere in Germany. Ordinary Germans greeted one another with the Nazi salute—arm thrust forward, hand extended—and the words “Heil Hitler! (Hail Hitler!)” The Hitler Youth and similar children’s organizations indoctrinated the young into the cult of Hitler and the Nazis. Freedom of thought and expression was viciously repressed. In 1933, groups of Nazi university students in the German Student Union held book burnings in which they set fire to books that opposed Nazism, among them books written by



Nazi rally with Hitler Youth members

Jewish authors. Among the authors whose books were targeted were Bertolt Brecht, Karl Marx, August Bebel, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway, and Stefan Zweig.

The Nazis called their government the Third Reich. They were, they said, successors of two earlier empires, the Holy Roman Empire (800–1806 CE) and the German Empire (1871–1918). The Nazis reinforced their rule through massive propaganda rallies in which Hitler gave speeches before large crowds and fanned the flames of anti-Semitism, blaming the Jewish people for Germany’s loss in the First World War and for its economic problems. In September 1935, a series of anti-Semitic laws known as the Nuremberg Laws were implemented by Nazi Germany. These laws targeted Jewish

people and systematically discriminated against them in various aspects of German society. The Nuremberg Laws stripped Jewish people of their citizenship. Marriage between Jewish and non-Jewish people was prohibited, officially to protect the purity of German blood. The laws also effectively restricted Jewish people from holding public office, owning businesses, and practicing many professions. These discriminatory laws laid the groundwork for the widespread persecution and eventual genocide of millions of Jewish people.

On November 9 and 10, 1938—known as *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of the Broken Glass—Nazi mobs launched a **pogrom**, or mass attack, resulting in the murder of more than ninety Jewish people. They engaged in the mass arrest of thirty thousand Jewish men and burned and desecrated more than 250 synagogues. Finally, they shattered the windows of several thousand Jewish-owned shops and looted or destroyed them. *Kristallnacht*'s unprovoked attacks were a prelude to the Holocaust of the Second World War.

Vocabulary

pogrom, n. an organized attack on people who belong to a minority group, often Jewish people

Think Twice



What conditions in Germany made it possible for *Kristallnacht* to occur?

In the years after becoming chancellor, Hitler began to defy the terms outlined in the Treaty of Versailles, the peace treaty between the Allied Powers and Germany at the end of World War I in 1919. In defiance of the treaty, he added soldiers, airplanes, tanks, and equipment to Germany's military. In 1936, though the treaty forbade it, he sent troops into the Rhineland—an area of Germany that borders France—to reoccupy it. Hitler kept testing Britain and France: would they step up and tell him that he had to stop? Some historians think that if Britain and France had sent troops into the Rhineland in 1936 in response to Hitler's actions, they might have prevented further military aggression from Germany.

Britain and France, however, did nothing, and Hitler became bolder. In keeping with his claim that the German people needed *Lebensraum*, in March 1938, he annexed Austria, making it part of the German Reich. The annexation is known as the *Anschluss*, from the German word meaning connection. Six months later, in September 1938, Hitler met with the leaders of

Britain and France in Munich, Germany. There, Hitler promised that if Britain and France would allow Germany to seize the Sudetenland (the westernmost part of the country of Czechoslovakia), this territorial expansion would be his last land grab. Rather than telling Hitler “no,” the leaders of Britain and France sought to appease him. They agreed to allow Hitler to seize the Sudetenland. The prime minister of Great Britain, Neville Chamberlain, upon returning to England after signing the Munich Agreement, said it had brought “peace for our time.” But the British politician Winston Churchill disagreed. Churchill called the Munich Agreement “a total and unmitigated defeat.” He thought that Britain ought not to have adopted a policy of **appeasement**.

Vocabulary

appeasement, n. the practice of meeting someone’s demands in order to avoid trouble, especially when one does not agree with them

Hitler had lied when he signed the Munich Agreement. And by March 1939, the German armed forces had seized all of Czechoslovakia. That July, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a nonaggression treaty, known as the



British prime minister Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler met at the signing of the Munich Agreement in 1938, which allowed the German annexation of Sudetenland.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in which Germany and the Soviet Union agreed not to fight each other. (Two years later, in June 1941, Hitler would violate the pact and invade the Soviet Union.) Hitler initially set out to take over much of the land in Europe. As time progressed, it became clear that he wanted to take over the world. As Germany continued its aggressive behavior, Britain and France finally gave Germany an ultimatum. They told Germany that if it invaded Poland, they would declare war on Germany. Germany did invade Poland on September 1, 1939. After briefly waiting to see if Germany would withdraw, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Second World War had begun.

German and Soviet Invasion of Poland, 1939



Hitler's invasion of Poland led to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Blitzkrieg Invasion of Poland

In its invasion of Poland, the German military—the *Wehrmacht*—deployed its blitzkrieg method of warfare. Blitzkrieg is the rapid, overwhelming use of force against an opponent. The Germans used airplanes, paratroopers, tanks, armored vehicles, and infantry in coordinated lightning, or blitzkrieg, attacks. Within weeks, Poland was defeated.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about Germany's blitzkrieg method in relation to the invasion of Poland.



The Fall of France

The next spring, France fell to Germany. The fall of France was all the more astounding given that in the 1930s, nervous of German aggression, the

French had built a series of defensive walls and fortifications along their border with Germany. This barrier was known as the Maginot Line. The German forces, as they advanced, went around the Maginot Line, invading France from neighboring Belgium.

In May 1940, German soldiers began their blitzkrieg into France; soon, more than three hundred thousand French and British forces had retreated to the coastal town of Dunkirk in northern France. Hundreds of ships evacuated the troops to England. Dunkirk was the largest naval

military evacuation in history. In June 1940, Hitler's advancing army captured Paris. Soon, all of France was under Nazi control. The southern part of France, called Vichy France, was not captured as Paris and the north were, but it was under the control of a **puppet government** set up by the occupying Nazi forces.

Vocabulary

puppet government, n. a government that looks like it is working independently but is instead controlled by another power



Civilian and naval vessels were used to evacuate hundreds of thousands of soldiers from Dunkirk. The evacuation began on May 26 and ended on June 4, 1940.

Charles de Gaulle, the leader of the Free French, rallied and organized resistance against the German occupation of France after the country fell. He established a government-in-exile, coordinated with Allied forces in France's interest, and sought recognition for the Free French as the legitimate representatives of France in international matters.



Find Out the Facts

Research what was involved in Dunkirk, the largest military evacuation in history.



Writers' Corner

Using your research on the Dunkirk evacuation, imagine you are a soldier waiting to be rescued on a beach at Dunkirk, and write an account of the events happening around you.



Winston Churchill and the Battle of Britain

On May 10, 1940, Winston Churchill became Britain's prime minister. It was the same day that the German forces began their blitzkrieg to conquer France.

Churchill was an inspiring **orator**. In a speech at the House of Commons, Churchill said, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat."

Vocabulary

orator, n. a public speaker

Once France fell in June 1940, Hitler turned his attention to invading Britain. But Hitler's attack against Britain was not successful. From July through October 1940, the British Royal Air Force (RAF) successfully defended the island nation. This months-long battle was called the Battle of Britain. It took place in the skies over England with repeated aerial attacks by the German air force, the Luftwaffe. In October, Hitler gave up on trying to invade Britain. Nevertheless, he continued the Luftwaffe's aerial bombing raids against London and other British cities in a campaign the British called "the Blitz."

Think Twice

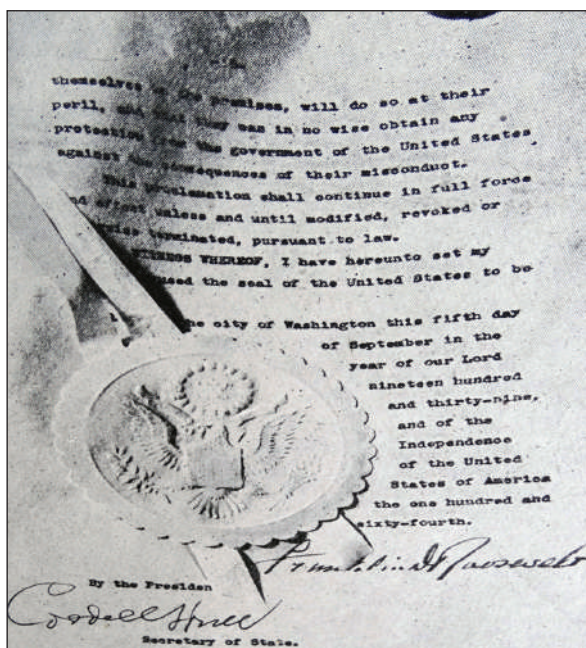


Do you think the fact that Britain is an island nation made it more difficult for Hitler's forces to invade? Explain your answer.



The Neutrality Acts

The United States did not immediately enter the Second World War. There were twenty-seven months between the war's beginning in September 1939 and the United States' entry into the war in December 1941. Americans remembered their experiences in the First World War. They had been gripped in the 1920s and 1930s by a desire to avoid involvement in future foreign wars. Beginning in the mid-1930s, Congress passed a series of acts—known as the Neutrality Acts—meant to keep the nation out of future conflicts. Although President



The Neutrality Proclamation was signed by President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull in 1939.

Franklin Roosevelt was concerned about the rising power of Nazi Germany, he signed the Neutrality Acts into law.

Americans' powerful isolationist sentiments gave rise to organizations such as the America First Committee. This group had many prominent members who wanted America to steer clear of military involvement in Europe. In addition, there were some notable Americans who sympathized with fascist objectives. For example, Charles Lindbergh and the poet and author Ezra Pound were known sympathizers. Isolationist sentiment in the United States ran deep; the America First Committee was founded in September 1940, a year after Hitler had invaded Poland and during the Battle of Britain. Other Americans disagreed, among them members of the Fight for Freedom Committee. They believed that the United States had a responsibility to stand up militarily and fight against German aggression.



Lend-Lease

The Neutrality Acts required Britain to pay cash for armaments purchased from the United States. When Britain ran

short of cash, the Neutrality Acts kept the United States from selling arms to the British. In November 1940, President Roosevelt came up with a work-around in order to help Britain. He called his idea lend-lease. He introduced it in January 1941. By March, Congress had enacted the Lend-Lease Act. This act allowed the United States government to lend or lease supplies to Britain or other nations the president identified as “vital to the defense of the United States.” President Roosevelt explained the idea of lend-lease to the American people in a radio broadcast. “Suppose,” he said, “my neighbor’s home catches fire, and I have a length of garden hose. . . .” He went on to say that the United States would be wise to “lend” that length of hose (military equipment and supplies) to its neighbor (Britain). That way, its neighbor, rather than the United States, could engage in the fight to put out the fire.

Over the course of the war, the United States sent billions of dollars in lend-lease aid overseas. It came in the form of planes, tanks, trucks, guns, ordnance, and more. It went to Britain and later to the Soviet Union, China, and other Allied Powers. Due to the constraints of

the Neutrality Acts, lend-lease aid was, in effect, the American people’s gift of military supplies to those countries.

Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the impact of the Lend-Lease Act.



The Four Freedoms

In January 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt delivered his Four Freedoms speech. In the speech, he framed the war as a fight for human freedom. It was, he said, not simply a war of revenge against wrongs committed or a war about territorial expansion. It was a fight for freedom. His words were spoken sixteen months after Hitler’s invasion of Poland and eleven months before Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbor. With his words, Roosevelt prepared a reluctant United States for war. For the United States, it increasingly seemed that war was no longer a question of “if” but “when.”

Roosevelt’s speech also inspired people around the world. In the speech, Roosevelt said that “the democratic way of life is at this moment being directly

assailed in every part of the world”
by “**tyranny**.”

Vocabulary

tyranny, n. an act in which one person or group seizes all government power, usually ruling in a harsh and brutal way

Two of the four freedoms—freedom of speech and freedom of religion—were

Roosevelt and Universal Human Freedom

Roosevelt’s appeal to universal human freedom was grounded in centuries-old language of human rights. The four freedoms, he said in a 1942 radio address, make clear “the crucial difference between ourselves and the enemies we face today.” Elements of the four freedoms were later incorporated into the United Nations Charter and, in 1948, into the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Elements of the four freedoms were also incorporated into the Atlantic Charter of August 1941. This was a statement by Roosevelt and Churchill of American and British like-mindedness. It was a statement of their shared vision of international freedom and democracy for the postwar world.

central ideals in America’s founding.
He explained:

We look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want . . . which will secure for every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants. . . . The fourth is freedom from fear—which . . . means a worldwide reduction of armaments.

In closing, he said, “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere. . . . To that high concept there can be no end save victory.”

Think Twice



In what ways did Roosevelt’s idea of the four freedoms oppose Hitler’s view of how a society should function?

Nazis Invade the Soviet Union

In June 1941, in violation of the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. (In October,

President Roosevelt extended lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union.) Hitler thought that Stalin would surrender fairly quickly in the face of German blitzkrieg attacks. But Stalin did not surrender. The Siege of Leningrad (St. Petersburg), for instance, began in September 1941 and did not end until the siege was lifted by Soviet forces in January 1944.



Think Twice

Why do you think Stalin put up such a fight against Hitler's forces?

Japan and the Coming of the War in the Pacific

In 1910, Japan took control of Korea and occupied it. The occupation was brutal and harsh, and the Korean people were severely punished if they resisted. And during the 1930s, Japan undertook a wider campaign to establish its own empire. This was driven by military and political leaders advocating for imperialist land expansion to accommodate its growing population of sixty-five million people. They emphasized the potential benefits of acquiring food, oil, raw materials, and finished products through territorial conquest in East Asia

and Southeast Asia. In 1931, Japanese emperor Michinomiya Hirohito authorized the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, seizing control of the region from China. The international community's response to this aggression was relatively quiet. The League of Nations (an organization formed by Allied Powers after the First World War) condemned the invasion but did not impose sanctions against Japan. The League of Nations responded to the reluctance of the United States to support sanctions. It was afraid of creating more conflict and held the misguided belief that Japan could be appeased. Japan further demonstrated its disregard for international cooperation by withdrawing from the League of Nations in February 1933.

On July 7, 1937, the Japanese claimed that one of their soldiers was missing and demanded to search the Chinese-held town of Wanping. When the Chinese refused, a battle broke out near the Marco Polo Bridge in Beijing, China. This event, known as the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, led to the Japanese army overpowering Chinese defenders and capturing Beijing. Later, on December 13, 1937, the Japanese moved toward Nanjing, which was at the time China's capital. The Nanjing Massacre lasted for several weeks. During this time,

an estimated three hundred thousand people, mostly civilians, were killed. The Japanese committed horrifying acts, including the killing of women and children. They also looted and set fire to the city. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident and the subsequent Nanjing Massacre revealed Japan's willingness to use extreme military force to achieve its objectives.

The United States was not content to ignore Japanese aggression. From the late 1800s, the United States had been committed to an Open Door policy of free trade with China. President Roosevelt began applying economic pressure on Japan to leave China. In 1940, Roosevelt placed an **embargo** on the sale of industrial machinery to Japan; he then banned the export of aviation fuel, which was followed by a ban on scrap iron. But Japan doubled down on its commitment to imperial expansion. In September 1940, Japan joined with Germany and Italy to form the Axis Powers. The three nations signed the Tripartite Pact, an agreement committing each of the nations to come to the aid of the others if they were attacked.

The next summer, in July 1941, the Roosevelt administration froze Japanese **assets** in the United States. In August, it imposed a total embargo on exports of oil from the United States to Japan. Japan was setting

out to build what it called the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a way to ensure Japan's place as a world power. The sanctions angered the Japanese government. Within weeks, Japan—now headed by Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, a general of the Imperial Japanese Army—decided that its navy would attempt to sink the American naval fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor.

Vocabulary

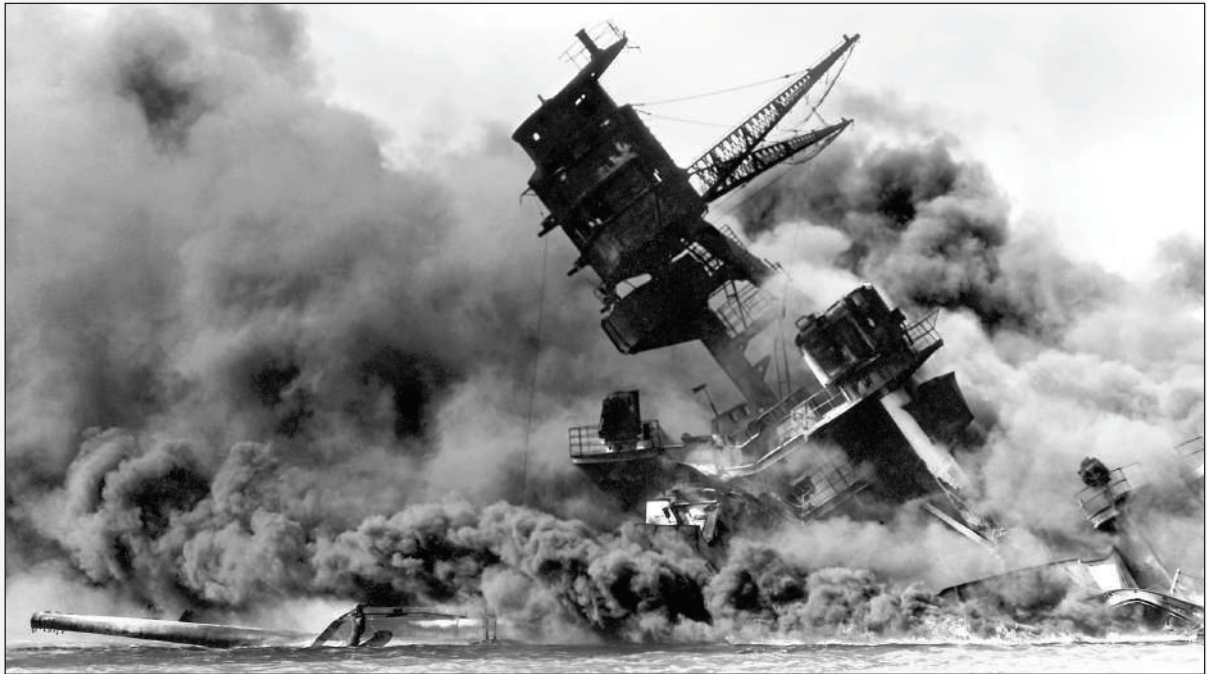
embargo, n. a government order that limits or stops trade

asset, n. something that is owned by a person, company, or country



Pearl Harbor

On Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as part of a larger coordinated attack on several Pacific islands. The devastating attack resulted in the loss of 2,402 lives and the destruction of nineteen U.S. Navy ships, including eight battleships. The following day, President Franklin Roosevelt addressed Congress, describing December 7, 1941, as “a date which will live in infamy.” Roosevelt urged Congress to declare war



The USS Arizona (BB-39) after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941

on Japan, emphasizing the determination of the American people to respond to the premeditated attack by achieving absolute victory. Congress swiftly responded by declaring war that same afternoon.

Four days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Adolf Hitler declared war on the United States. Americans rallied to the flag. The United States was now involved in two theaters of war. In the European theater, it joined the British and Soviets in the fight against Nazi Germany. In the Pacific theater, the enemy was Japan.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Think Twice



What were the key factors that led up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Writers' Corner

Using your research, imagine you are a journalist living in 1941. Write a report about the attack on Pearl Harbor for your local newspaper.



Think Twice



If you had lived during the early 1940s, would you have been persuaded by the America-first point of view or by the view that America should join the fight against Japanese and Nazi aggression?

PRIMARY SOURCE: PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS (DECEMBER 8, 1941)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. . . .

I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger. . . .

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Source: Roosevelt, Franklin D. *Speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York Transcript*. December 8, 1941. Pdf.

Chapter 2

Course and Consequences of World War II

The Framing Question

How did the Allies achieve victory in World War II, and what were the consequences of the war?

War Rages

When the United States entered the Second World War in 1941, the global conflict had already been raging for more than two years. The Axis Powers, led by Germany, Italy, and Japan, had made extensive territorial gains in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Germany had successfully invaded and occupied many countries. Japan had launched a series of aggressive campaigns in the Pacific, culminating in the attack on Pearl Harbor.





At this point, the Allies, led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, were struggling to push back against the Axis Powers and restore peace and stability. The United States' entry into the war brought significant resources, capabilities, and manpower to the Allied cause and was important in securing victory. However, amidst this global conflict, a dark and horrific chapter, known as the Holocaust, began to unfold.



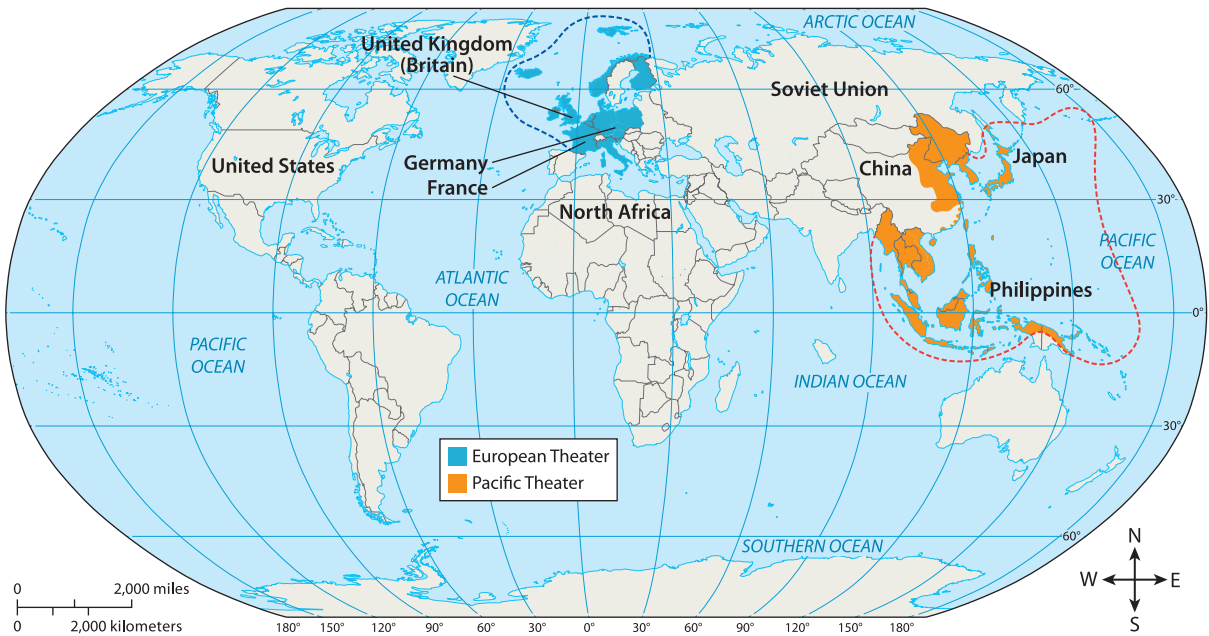
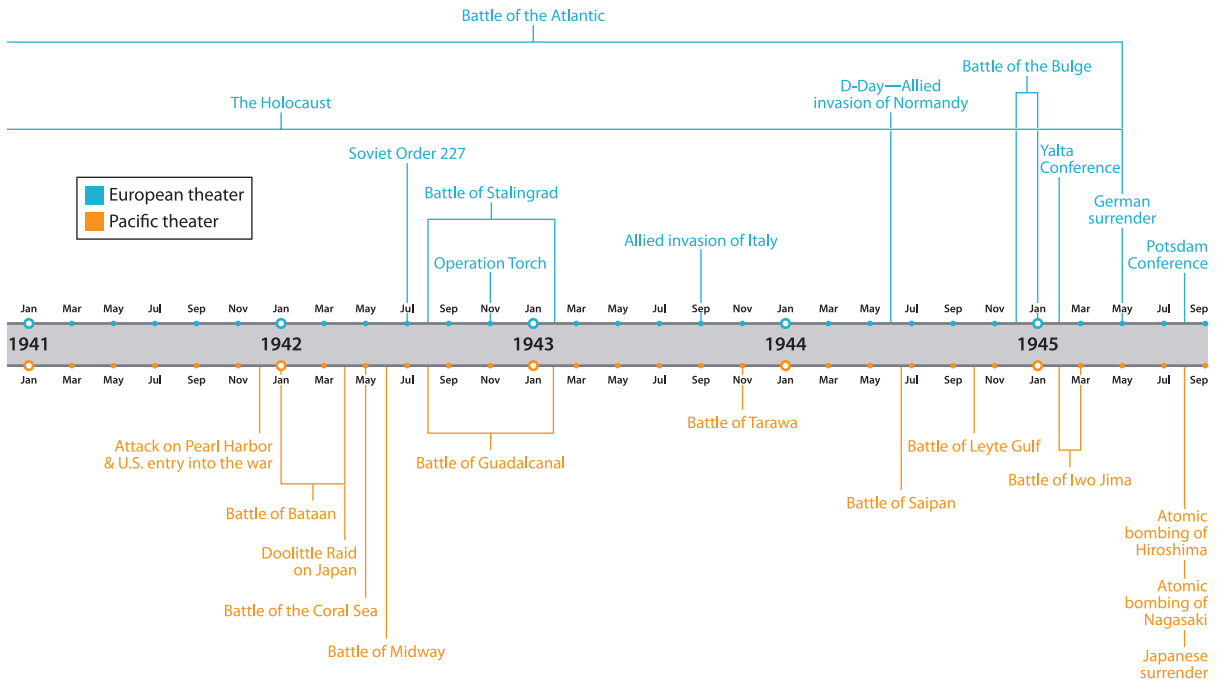
The Holocaust

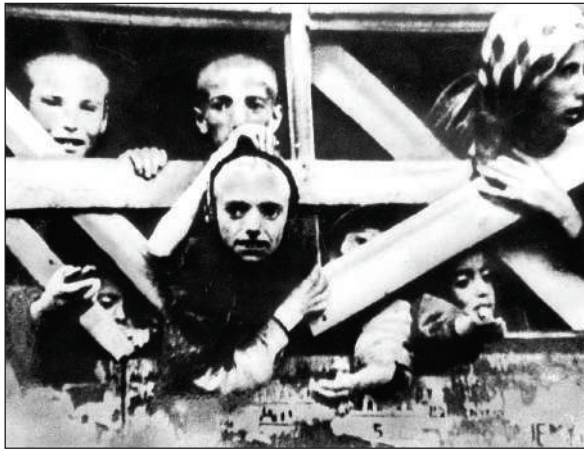
Central to Germany's policies during the Second World War was the Holocaust, a genocide committed by the Third Reich, led by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. The Holocaust was driven by deep-rooted anti-Semitism and discrimination against Jewish people. During the Holocaust, Nazi Germany and other groups in Europe under German control killed six million Jewish men, women, and children. The Nazis labeled the Holocaust the "final solution," and they set out to kill every Jewish person on Earth. In addition to targeting and killing Jewish people, the Nazis killed five million other people they considered inferior or who questioned their authority.

The Nazis opened concentration camps and death camps, including those at Auschwitz, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, and Dachau. The concentration camp system played a central role in the Holocaust. These camps were

The United States produced propaganda posters that aimed to influence public opinion, rally support for the war effort, and promote patriotic values such as unity, sacrifice, and demonizing the enemy.

Timeline of World War II, 1941–45





This photograph captures Jewish children being transported to a concentration camp.

established by the Nazis to imprison, exploit, and ultimately exterminate millions of people. Conditions in the camps were dehumanizing. Prisoners endured forced labor, starvation, torture, and mass murder.

Despite facing immense oppression, some individuals and groups organized resistance efforts against the Nazis. People smuggled food, shared information, and planned revolts in the ghettos (urban areas where Jews were required to live) and concentration camps. Other resistance groups, known as Jewish partisans, were guerrilla fighters who attacked Nazi supplies and soldiers from hiding places deep in forests.

One well-known figure of the Holocaust is Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl who documented her experiences hiding with her family in an attic in Amsterdam. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* provides insight into the daily lives and struggles of those targeted by the Nazis. The diary contains Anne Frank's own words as edited by her father. Incredibly, even while she was hiding, Anne Frank wrote in her diary, "I keep my ideals, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart." Anne Frank and her family were turned in to the Nazis, and she died in a German concentration camp.

Think Twice



How difficult do you think it would be to have to hide for so long from a dangerous enemy?

Elie Wiesel, who was taken to Buchenwald camp as a boy, later described the horror of his experiences in his book *Night*. In his book, he paints a vivid picture of the train ride to the camp, the unimaginable human suffering and disregard for human life, and the terrible feeling of hunger: "I was a body. Perhaps less than that even: a starved stomach." Elie Wiesel survived

to write and talk about what happened. Toward the end of the war, Allied forces liberated the camps, ending the immediate physical suffering of those who were still alive inside them.



The Eastern Front

The Nazis faced challenges in the Soviet Union, including the harsh winter climate. The course of the war began to change during the siege of Stalingrad (1942–43). Stalingrad was a city that held great significance for both sides. More than two million Soviet and German troops engaged in the Battle of Stalingrad, one of the largest battles in history. Soviet leaders strategically evacuated key resources from the city but decided to keep civilians there to boost the morale of Soviet troops.

In the summer of 1942, Stalin issued Order Number 227, which commanded Soviet troops to take “not one step back!” All Soviet troops were ordered to halt retreats and stand and fight. Soviet resistance at Stalingrad eventually led to victory. The German forces were trapped in the city, cut off from resupply. They began to starve. In February 1943, the Soviet military recaptured Stalingrad and captured over



In the Battle of Stalingrad, the Soviets suffered great losses but were eventually victorious.

one hundred thousand Nazi soldiers. The Soviets were victorious but only after millions lay dead. Still, this marked a turning point, as it was Germany’s first major defeat and turned the tide against Hitler in the war.

Find Out the Facts



Research what happened during the long and hard-fought Battle of Stalingrad.



The Home Front

War brought changes to both the American economy and American society. The federal government established the

War Production Board to support the war effort. Many businesses transformed their operations to produce materials needed for the war.

In December 1940, President Roosevelt had declared that the United States would be the “arsenal of democracy.”

The country lived up to this declaration by outproducing all its enemies combined. This included 7,400 ships, 88,000 tanks, 300,000 airplanes, 2.4 million trucks, 6.5 million rifles, and 40 billion bullets. The contributions of American workers, managers, and business owners were crucial in achieving these production levels.

Rationing was implemented on the home front to ensure that troops would have enough supplies. The government issued ration cards and stamps. People could use these to purchase limited amounts of items like gasoline, oil, cloth, shoes, sugar, meat, dairy, coffee, and cooking oil. Americans also started “victory gardens.” By growing their own vegetables to supplement their rations, they contributed to the nation’s food supply. Recycling campaigns were launched, with people collecting metals, rubber, clothing, and paper. Recycled materials were used

to create military supplies. High levels of production for the war effort resulted in full employment. The unemployment problems that had plagued the country during the Great Depression of the 1930s were gone.

Find Out the Facts



Research the extraordinary achievements of the American home front.

Americans bought **war bonds** to finance the war effort and demonstrate their support. The war also led to an increase in **income taxes**. In 1942, Congress expanded the income tax to include most Americans. It also raised tax rates for wealthy individuals. A tax withholding system was implemented, deducting taxes directly from workers’ paychecks.

Vocabulary

ration, v. to limit the portion or amount of a resource, such as food or fuel, that can be bought or used

war bond, n. a document that promises to pay back with interest money loaned to the government for war expenses

income tax, n. money based on a percentage of income that people are required to pay to support the workings of the government

The federal government engaged in massive deficit spending to fund the war.

The United States in WWII

Over sixteen million American men served in the United States military in the Second World War. Around 40 percent of them enlisted, and the others were drafted into service. They fought on land, on the sea, and in the air as soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. Newsreels often portrayed them as heroes, but the realities of war were tough. Many suffered physical injuries or psychological trauma, and tragically, over four hundred thousand Americans lost their lives.

As men were called to serve in the armed forces, more workers were needed to replace them and meet wartime production demands. This opened up new job opportunities for others. Women played a vital role in the war effort by taking on various jobs. They worked as secretaries and office clerks, but they also stepped into positions that were traditionally held by men. An iconic figure known as “Rosie the Riveter” emerged in propaganda during the war. Rosie represented the women who worked in factories and shipyards

as welders, riveters, mechanics, and production-line workers. These women contributed to the production of airplanes, ships, bombs, bullets, helmets, backpacks, and other important supplies for the war. The Women’s Army Corps (WAC) was a branch of the U.S. Army that employed women in a variety of roles. Women in the WAC served as nurses, clerks, radio operators, and more. Their contributions were vital to the war effort, as they took on essential support positions to free up men for combat roles.



War propaganda featured Rosie the Riveter to encourage women to enter the workforce.

Over a million African American men served in the military during the war. However, segregation and racism meant that they were assigned to segregated units. They were often given noncombatant support roles away from the front lines. One famous exception to this was the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African American pilots trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, beginning in 1941. By 1943, they formed the 332nd Fighter Group and the 477th Bombardment Group. They were given the nickname “Red Tails” for



The Tuskegee Airmen are hailed as heroes for their bravery during the Second World War.

The Tuskegee Study

While the heroic achievements of the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II showcase the resilience of African Americans in the face of adversity, the Tuskegee study represents a dark chapter in American history. The Tuskegee study was a medical research study conducted on African Americans. The Public Health Service started the study in 1932 in collaboration with Tuskegee University (then the Tuskegee Institute), a historically Black college in Alabama. Its purpose was to study the progression of a specific disease when deliberately left untreated. The study was deeply unethical and had severe consequences. Study participants,

mostly poor sharecroppers, were told they were receiving free medical treatment for “bad blood,” a term used to describe various conditions. The researchers knowingly withheld treatment from the participants, even after effective treatments like penicillin became available. As a result, many participants suffered from severe health complications, were subjected to unnecessary pain, and even died. It wasn’t until 1972, when a whistleblower exposed the study, that it finally ended. The Tuskegee study is an example of medical and ethical misconduct and a reminder of the systemic racism that has affected African Americans throughout history.

the red paint on the tails of their airplanes. The Tuskegee Airmen flew over fifteen thousand missions in the war, earning respect for their skill and bravery. Sixty-six Tuskegee Airmen lost their lives in combat.



Louisiana's Role in the Second World War

Louisiana played an important role in the war effort. Large-scale military exercises known as Louisiana Maneuvers were held in the state. These maneuvers allowed soldiers to practice and train for combat. The Louisiana Maneuvers not only improved the military readiness of American forces but also provided valuable lessons for future military strategies.

Louisiana also produced Higgins boats. These boats were originally designed by Andrew Higgins from New Orleans to look for oil and gas in the Louisiana bayous. Higgins boats played a crucial role in the Allies' successes during **amphibious landings**. These vehicles

Vocabulary

"amphibious landing" (phrase) a coming to shore from the sea

were designed to operate in shallow waters, and they allowed troops and equipment to quickly disembark onto beaches.

Find Out the Facts



Find out more about Higgins boats, their production in New Orleans, and how they were used in World War II.

Additionally, Louisiana became home to several prisoner of war (POW) camps during the war. These camps held captured enemy soldiers, usually Germans. Many prisoners in the POW camps in Louisiana worked as laborers due to the labor shortage from the war effort. The conditions in these camps were closely monitored by the International Committee of the Red Cross to ensure appropriate treatment of prisoners under the Geneva Conventions (treaties established to protect the rights and well-being of captured soldiers).

Think Twice



Why do you think the International Committee of the Red Cross closely monitored the conditions in the POW camps in Louisiana?

During the war, Cajun soldiers from Louisiana, affectionately called "Frenchies,"



Higgins boats contributed to the success of the Allies.

played an important role. They served in various branches of the military, and their ability to speak French was useful for translation and intelligence.

The European Theater

The Allied forces relied heavily on the Atlantic Ocean for transporting troops, equipment, and supplies. The German

navy sought to disrupt Atlantic supply lines by deploying U-boats to sink Allied ships. A battle of wits and technology unfolded over several years as the Allies worked to outmaneuver German submarines. The Battle of the Atlantic, which took place from 1939 to 1945, was a major military campaign in the European Theater. It was the longest continuous battle of the war. It also directly impacted Allied supply lines and prevented the Axis from receiving crucial resources. By sinking

merchant ships, the Allies were able to disrupt enemy logistics and maintain control over the Atlantic.

Beginning in late 1942, Operation Torch was an Allied invasion of French North Africa led by U.S. General George Patton. The success of Operation Torch played a crucial role in weakening Axis influence and shifting the balance of power in favor of the Allies, paving the way for further offensives in Europe. The next year, they became involved in Italy.

During this time, the United States joined the ongoing British aerial bombing of German sites. Targets included strategic military and industrial centers and cities inhabited by civilian populations. The firebombing of Dresden, a German city, is one example. Over the course of



The ruins of a church in Dresden, Germany, after extensive bombing by American and British troops

three days, American and British planes dropped nearly four thousand tons (3,600 mt) of high explosives and bombs. Approximately twenty-five thousand people were killed. This type of total war, which also took place in the Pacific, resulted in the loss of many innocent civilian lives.

Think Twice



Why do you think the Allies tried to take out industrial centers?

D-Day: Operation Overlord

Allied leaders met in Tehran, Iran, from November 28 to December 1, 1943. Franklin Roosevelt of the United States, Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union represented the principal Allies. The conference took place to plan the Allied strategy against Germany. The leaders discussed military coordination, resource allocation, and the future of postwar Germany. They even talked about the possibility of creating a United Nations organization. One important decision made during the conference was to launch Operation Overlord, the invasion

of German-occupied western Europe, later known as D-Day.

On D-Day, June 6, 1944, American and British forces landed on the beaches of Normandy in France under General Dwight Eisenhower's command. Led by the U.S. 101st Airborne Division, paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines. Their objective was to provide support for the Allied forces landing on the beaches. Despite facing heavy enemy fire and obstacles like hedgerows and enemy strongholds, the 101st Airborne was brave and determined. They established a defensive front against German counterattacks.

This successful amphibious landing laid the foundation for victory in western Europe. It was followed by the repulsion of a German offensive at the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944–45, despite heavy casualties, including over a hundred thousand U.S. Army casualties. After the Battle of the Bulge, U.S. and British forces continued their advance into Germany.



Find Out the Facts

Research the events that occurred on D-Day.



The Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944 marked the beginning of the end of Nazi control of western Europe.

By the spring of 1945, American and British tank and infantry units were advancing across western Germany. At the same time, from the east, the Soviets were approaching Germany's capital city of Berlin. On April 30, with Soviet forces only half a mile (0.8 km) from his bunker, Adolf Hitler died by suicide. On May 8, Germany agreed to unconditional surrender. The war in Europe was over.



War Against Japan

For six months after its successful attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan swept from victory to victory in the Pacific. The Battle of Bataan took place in the Philippines from January to April 1942, as Japanese forces overwhelmed American and Filipino troops.

General Douglas MacArthur was forced to leave behind American and Filipino soldiers. President Roosevelt had ordered the retreat. On departing the Philippines, MacArthur said, "I shall return." Japanese forces soon captured seventy thousand American and Filipino soldiers and forced them on the Bataan Death March. It was a six-day march of more than sixty miles (97 km). During the entire journey, the prisoners received only one meal of rice. In addition, the Japanese beat and bayoneted many of the starving and exhausted prisoners.

Another notable event in the Pacific was the Doolittle Raid on April 18, 1942. In a daring operation, a group of U.S. Army Air Force B-25 bombers led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle launched a surprise attack on Tokyo, Japan. Although the raid caused only minimal damage, it carried significant symbolic value. American morale was boosted.



Think Twice

What symbolic value do you think the bombing of Tokyo held for the Allies?

An important turning point in the war occurred with the Battle of the Coral Sea. Between May 4 and May 8, 1942, the United States and Japan engaged in a

naval battle. The battle was the first time in history that opposing fleets engaged each other with only aircraft, as the opposing ships never came into direct contact. The result was a strategic victory for the Allies.



The Battle of Midway

In June 1942, the United States turned the tide of war in the Pacific with the Battle of Midway, intercepting and successfully attacking the Japanese fleet. American forces sank four Japanese aircraft carriers and a cruiser and destroyed numerous aircraft. This victory dealt a major blow to the Japanese navy, halting its expansion and forcing it into a defensive stance for the rest of the war.

From 1942 to 1945, American forces engaged in an island-hopping campaign in the Pacific in their advance on Japan. They bombed, shelled, and conducted amphibious assaults on islands like Guadalcanal, New Guinea, Tarawa, and Saipan.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf was another important battle in the war. It took place in October 1944 in the waters surrounding the Philippine island of Leyte. Involving both

American and Japanese forces, this battle marked the largest naval engagement in history. It also signaled the beginning of the end of Japan's naval control in the western Pacific. U.S. forces further weakened the Japanese navy and paved the way for Allied advances toward the Japanese mainland. The battle also allowed U.S. forces to begin liberating the Philippines, which had been under Japanese occupation since 1942. Two and a half years after he left, MacArthur returned to retake the Philippines. After wading ashore, he declared, "People of the Philippines, I have returned."

By early 1945, U.S. forces were closing in on Japan. They sought to capture the islands of Iwo Jima and Okinawa as bases for further attacks. Members of the Navajo Nation in the United States, called the Navajo code talkers, were instrumental in the ensuing Allied victories. Code talkers used their native language to create a code that the Japanese could not decipher. Their services played a vital role in maintaining secure lines of communication amidst the challenging and chaotic conditions on Iwo Jima.



Think Twice

What does it mean when one side has to fight defensive battles?



This sculpture of the raising of the flag by the U.S. Marine Corps on Iwo Jima stands as a memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, in Washington, D.C.

After thirty-six days of fierce fighting in February and March 1945, U.S. forces captured the small volcanic island of Iwo Jima. A month later, the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific took place in Okinawa, against which the Japanese deployed kamikaze attacks. Kamikaze attacks consisted of pilots who flew aircraft loaded with explosives and deliberately crashed into enemy targets. These pilots knew that they would die. The three-month ground campaign on Okinawa was successful but resulted in eighty thousand U.S. casualties.

Prisoners of War

During the war, the treatment of captured prisoners varied amongst the countries involved. The Geneva Conventions, established to protect the rights and well-being of captured soldiers, provided a framework for their humane treatment. Nazi Germany often subjected prisoners, especially captured Soviets, to harsh and brutal conditions, including forced and cruel labor, malnutrition, and mistreatment, resulting in a significant

number of deaths. The Soviet Union, driven by ideological motivations and a desire for retribution, imposed severe hardships on German captives, including harsh labor and difficult living conditions, which also led to high mortality rates.

Many civilians in the United States suffered mistreatment during the war. The federal policy of Japanese internment, for instance, involved forcibly relocating and detaining Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants. These actions were driven by a combination of fear, prejudice, and wartime hysteria. Approximately 120,000 Japanese



Japanese American internment was the forced removal and detention of approximately 120,000 people of Japanese heritage—62 percent of whom were U.S. citizens—from the West (Pacific) Coast of the United States during World War II.

Americans and Japanese immigrants were forced to leave their homes, businesses, and communities. They were sent to remote internment camps located mostly in the western interior of the United States. Japanese Americans faced significant economic hardships due to their forced removal. They lost businesses, homes, and property. Internment caused long-lasting trauma and stigmatization for Japanese Americans and Japanese immigrants.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more about the internment camps in which Japanese Americans were held.



Writers' Corner

Using your research, write a letter from the perspective of a Japanese American person interned in a camp describing the experience.

Even as Japanese Americans were interned, members of the community contributed to the Allied war effort. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was a unit entirely composed of Japanese Americans. Many of its soldiers came from internment camps. The 442nd became one of the most highly decorated units in U.S. military

history, earning numerous medals for courage and sacrifices in combat.



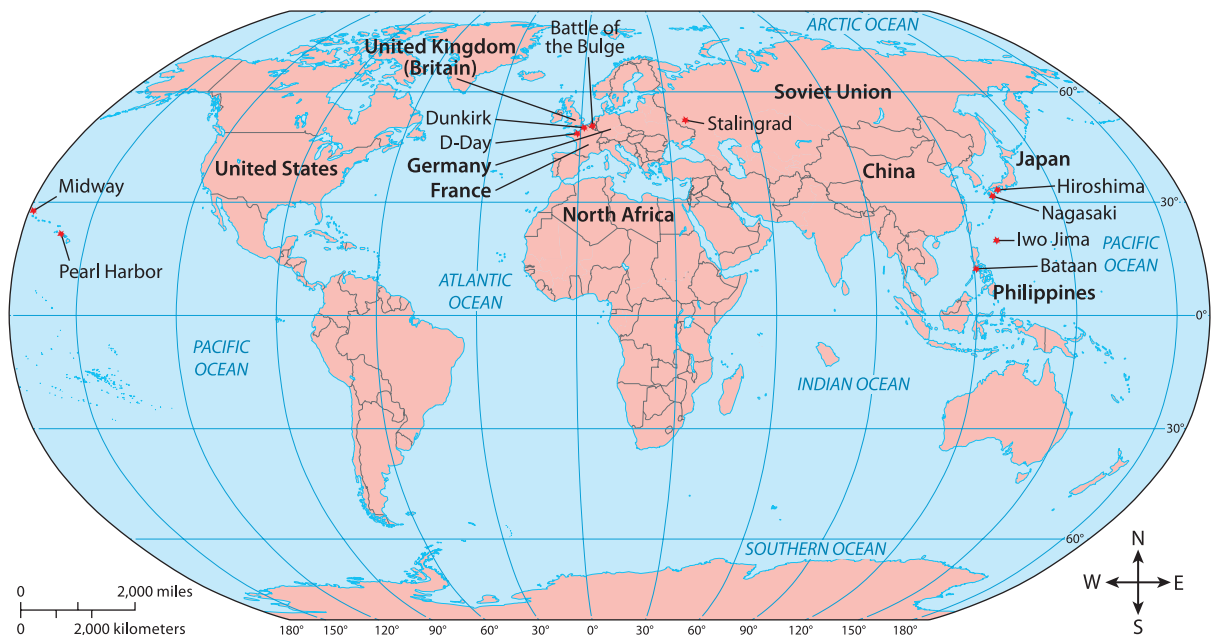
Manhattan Project

During the war, the United States government funded the Manhattan Project to build an **atomic bomb**. Developed at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, the bomb was first successfully tested on July 16, 1945. Later that day, a coded message was handed to President Harry Truman, who was attending the Potsdam Conference. Truman had become president after the death of President Roosevelt in April of 1945. President Roosevelt had served an unprecedented four terms in office. The message to Truman indicated positive results, and within days, he ordered the use of the bomb against two Japanese cities.

Vocabulary

atomic bomb, n. a bomb powered by energy that is created by splitting atoms

The first atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. It resulted in the near-complete destruction of the city and



This map shows the locations of some major events that occurred during the Second World War.

killed an estimated 140,000 people. Three days later, on August 9, the United States dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki, causing further devastation and tens of thousands of casualties. As a result of these attacks, Japan unconditionally surrendered, marking the end of the Second World War.



Find Out the Facts

Find out more about what happened in Japan after the United States dropped two atomic bombs on that nation.

in command. And even today there remain a number of U.S. military bases in Japan. During the occupation, a democratic constitution was drafted, granting men and women the right to vote, establishing representative democracy, and committing Japan to a pacifist future. The constitution explicitly renounced war as a sovereign right and the use of force to settle international disputes.



The Aftermath of War

After Japan's defeat, the United States directly occupied the country for the next seven years with General MacArthur

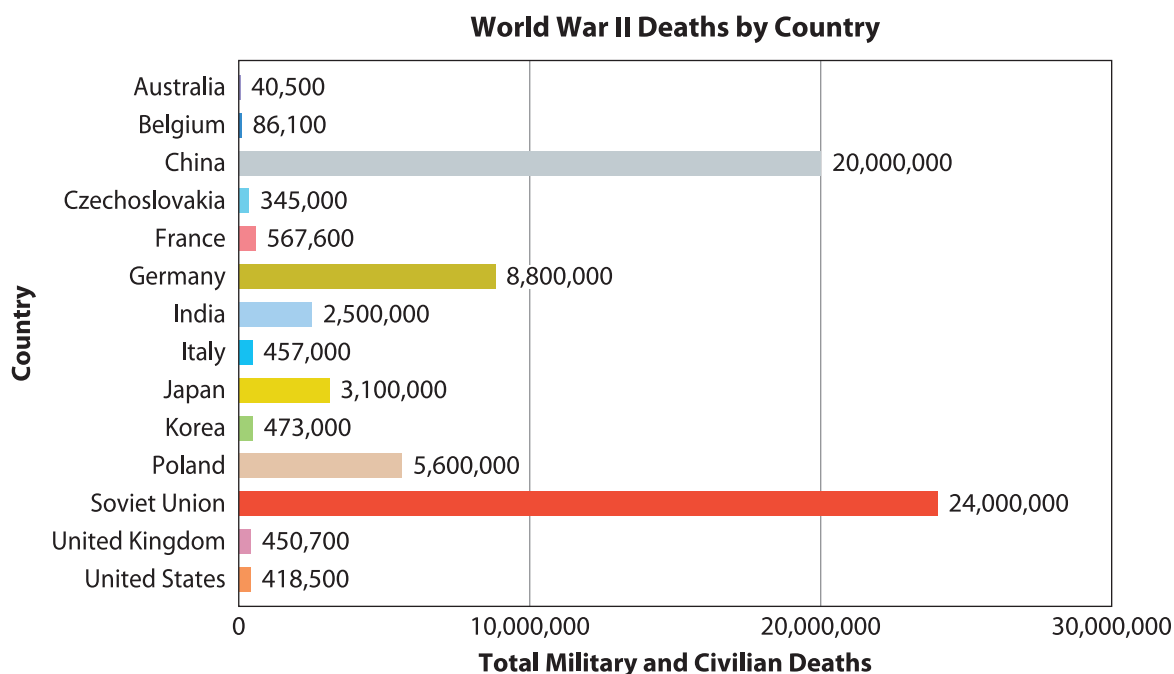
In February 1945, the Big Three (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) met in the Crimean town of Yalta to discuss the postwar

organization of Europe. The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union were represented by their respective leaders. At the Yalta Conference, they agreed that Germany would be divided into occupation zones respectively controlled by the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. Berlin, Germany's capital, would also be divided into zones among the four nations, despite being located within the Soviet-designated zone in eastern Germany.

In July 1945, the Allies convened again at Potsdam, Germany, to negotiate further details of the postwar international order. Due to Franklin Roosevelt's death in April of that year, President Harry

Truman represented the United States at the conference.

The Allied victory in Europe also paved the way for the Nuremberg trials. The Nuremberg trials were conducted for the purpose of bringing Nazi war criminals to justice. They were a series of military tribunals held in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1945 and 1946. Twelve former leaders of Nazi Germany were convicted of "crimes against humanity" and sentenced to death by hanging. Others were sentenced to prison. Additional war crimes trials were held both in Germany and in Japan. Hideki Tojo, leader of Japan for most of the war, was sentenced to death and, in 1948, was hanged.



Source: U.S. National World War II Museum

Across the world, the cost of the war was high.



Think Twice

What impact do you think the Nuremberg trials and others like them had on the legacy of the Second World War and for international justice?



Life After the War

In 1944, the United States Congress enacted the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as the G.I. Bill (G.I. for general infantry). The act provided for veterans' medical care. It offered them low-interest-rate loans to buy homes. And it paid tuition and expenses for veterans to attend college or trade school. More than eight million veterans of the war made use of the provisions to pay for college or vocational training. Veterans who took advantage of the bill's opportunities for further education were able, in turn, to earn higher wages, purchase consumer goods, buy houses, and help in other ways to fuel the nation's postwar economic boom. However, not all veterans were able to benefit from all the provisions of the bill. African American veterans, for instance, were often unable to qualify for mortgages or be accepted as homeowners in all neighborhoods.

In October 1945, the United Nations (UN) was established as an international organization aimed at promoting peaceful dialogue between nations. The UN Security Council—which includes the United States, Great Britain, China, France, and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) as permanent members—is responsible for maintaining global peace and security.

One of the earliest achievements of the United Nations was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This important document demands the recognition of fundamental freedoms and rights for all individuals, regardless of factors such as nationality, gender, religion, or ethnicity. Eleanor Roosevelt (Franklin D. Roosevelt's widow) played a significant role by chairing the committee that drafted the declaration. The United Nations remains an important global forum for diplomatic discussions, humanitarian efforts, and the promotion of peace and human rights.

Think Twice

How do you think the G.I. Bill and the establishment of the United Nations shaped international relations after the war?



PRIMARY SOURCE: GENERAL EISENHOWER'S D-DAY STATEMENT (JUNE 1944)

Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hope and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good luck! And let us beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Source: Eisenhower, Dwight D. "D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force," June 1944. Principal Files, 1916–1952; Collection DDE-EPRE: Eisenhower, Dwight D: Papers, Pre-Presidential; Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

PRIMARY SOURCE: PRESIDENT TRUMAN'S STATEMENT ON THE USE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB (AUGUST 6, 1945)

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese Army base. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam" which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East. . . .

The fact that we can release atomic energy ushers in a new era in man's understanding of nature's forces. Atomic energy may in the future supplement the power that now comes from coal, oil, and falling water, but at present it cannot be produced on a basis to compete with them commercially. Before that comes there must be a long period of intensive research.

It has never been the habit of the scientists of this country or the policy of this Government to withhold from the world scientific knowledge. Normally, therefore, everything about the work with atomic energy would be made public.

But under present circumstances it is not intended to divulge the technical processes of production or all the military applications, pending further examination of possible methods of protecting us and the rest of the world from the danger of sudden destruction.

Source: Truman, Harry S. "Statement by the President Announcing the Use of the A-Bomb at Hiroshima." August 6, 1945. Harry S. Truman Library (National Archives).

Glossary

A

“amphibious landing” (phrase) a coming to shore from the sea (30)

appeasement, n. the practice of meeting someone’s demands in order to avoid trouble, especially when one does not agree with them (10)

asset, n. something that is owned by a person, company, or country (18)

atomic bomb, n. a bomb powered by energy that is created by splitting atoms (37)

C

collectivized, adj. organized into group or state ownership rather than private ownership (6)

E

embargo, n. a government order that limits or stops trade (18)

F

fascism, n. an extreme nationalism in which a dictator controls the public absolutely (5)

G

genocide, n. the deliberate and systematic extermination or attempted extermination of an entire group of people based on race, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or other characteristics (7)

I

income tax, n. money based on a percentage of income that people are required to pay to support the workings of the government (27)

O

orator, n. a public speaker (13)

P

pogrom, n. an organized attack on people who belong to a minority group, often Jewish people (9)

puppet government, n. a government that looks like it is working independently but is instead controlled by another power (12)

R

ration, v. to limit the portion or amount of a resource, such as food or fuel, that can be bought or used (27)

T

totalitarianism, n. a political system in which the government controls the people completely (5)

tyranny, n. an act in which one person or group seizes all government power, usually ruling in a harsh and brutal way (16)

W

war bond, n. a document that promises to pay back with interest money loaned to the government for war expenses (27)

Subject Matter Experts

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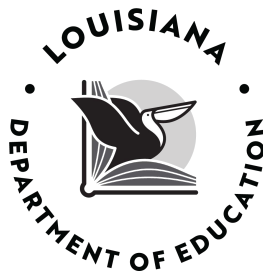


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