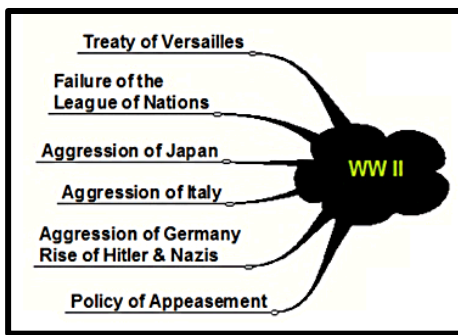


# World War II

## 1939 - 1945



**Enduring Understanding:** The influence of both world wars and the worldwide Great Depression are still evident. To understand the effects these events had on the modern world you will summarize the causes and course of World War II. This includes drives for empires, appeasement and isolationism, the invasion of Poland, the Battle of Britain, the invasion of the Soviet Union, the “Final Solution”, the Lend-Lease program, Pearl Harbor, Stalingrad, the campaigns in North Africa and the Mediterranean, the D-Day invasion, the island-hopping campaigns, and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



World War II was mainly caused by military aggression from Italy, Germany, and Japan in the years prior to the war, as well as the discontent caused by provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. All three countries wanted to establish empires. Little was done by the international community to stop them, as the Great Depression continued to consume attention within each nation.

### Section Review:

- 1) What were the two underlying causes of World War II?
- 2) Why did the international community not stop Italy, Germany, and Japan from expanding their empires?

Italy was very dissatisfied with the outcome of World War I. Although Italy was on the victorious side, the Treaty of Versailles did not reward a large amount of land to the country. Because of this, Italy began to use military aggression as the driving force for growing their empire. In 1935 Mussolini attacked Ethiopia. The League of Nations protested the attack but did nothing to stop the Italians.

Germany was devastated by World War I and furious with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. In particular, the “War Guilt Clause” placed the high cost of war reparations and the loss of valuable territory, on Germany. When coupled with the aftermath of war, these conditions hastened the onset of the Great Depression in Germany. This led to political dissatisfaction and the perfect opportunity for Adolf Hitler’s rise to power. Germany also began using military aggression in its drives for a new stronger empire. The League of Nations also failed in preventing Hitler from militarizing his country and then occupying the Rhineland, which is the demilitarized buffer zone between France and Germany.

Germany and Italy sent troops and weapons to Spain to assist Francisco Franco in winning the Spanish Civil War in 1936.

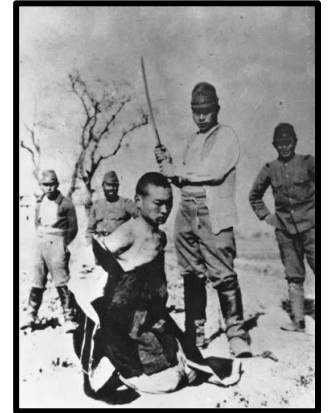
### Section Review:

- 3) Why did Italy dislike the Treaty of Versailles?
- 4) How did Italy respond to the Treaty of Versailles?
- 5) How did the Treaty of Versailles punish Germany?
- 6) Why was Hitler able to take control of Germany?
- 7) How did Hitler violate the Treaty of Versailles?
- 8) Why did Great Britain and France attempt to appease Hitler?
- 9) What is the Rhineland?



Japan engaged in military aggression in its own drive for an empire. When the Great Depression occurred, Japan was a newly industrialized country still heavily dependent on its export earnings. These earnings financed its imports of raw materials and fuel. As the Japanese economy suffered, military leaders pushed for expansionism as a solution to address problems of markets and shortages of natural resources. This built on the nationalist feelings that had made the country a world power just prior to the turn

of the century (1900s). The Japanese first acted on this policy beginning in 1931 with the invasion of the Chinese province of Manchuria. The League of Nations could only voice its disapproval of the invasion, and the Japanese responded by withdrawing from the League in 1933. Japan attacked China again in 1937, which caused communist and noncommunist forces in China to unite to fight the foreigners. Various countries of the world responded sympathetically to the aggression with **economic sanctions** (trade restrictions) against Japan.



### Section Review:

- 10) Which two imports were critical for the newly industrialized Japanese economy?
- 11) Why did the Japanese want to expand their empire?
- 12) Why couldn't the League of Nations stop Japanese expansion?
- 13) Why did Japan withdraw from the League of Nations?
- 14) Which two countries did Japan attack?



Axis Alliance

Germany, Italy, and Japan formed the **Axis Alliance** in 1936. World War II would have two theaters of fighting: European and Pacific.

While these events were taking place in the 1930s, the United States chose a foreign policy of isolationism. They passed a series of **Neutrality Acts** that prohibited the United States from loaning money or selling weapons to countries at war. This was in the hopes of preventing some of the issues that led the United States entering into World War I.

Great Britain and France falsely believed that a policy of **appeasement** would prevent another world war. Great Britain and France used appeasement by giving in to Hitler's demands in order to avoid conflict. This lack of a firm hand against aggression allowed Hitler to annex (take over) Austria in 1938, another violation of the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler then demanded the **Sudetenland** in western



Czechoslovakia. During the **Munich Conference of 1938**, the British and French agreed to allow Hitler possession of the Sudetenland in return for the promise that his demands for additional territory would cease. The policy of appeasement was proven a failure in early 1939 when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia and Italy invaded Albania soon after.



World War II began in September 1939 when Hitler invaded Poland. Poland's British and French Allies came to its defense, abandoning appeasement.

### Section Review:

15) Which three countries formed the Axis Alliance?

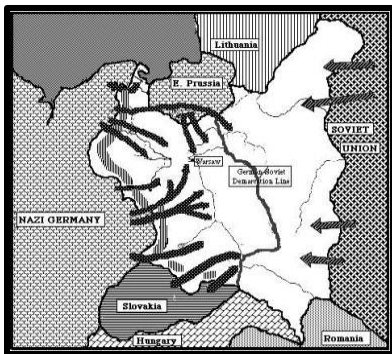
16) What is isolationism?

17) What were the Neutrality Acts?

18) How did Great Britain and France try to avoid another war in Europe?

19) What was decided at the Munich Conference?

20) When and why did World War II begin?



The Germans conducted a **blitzkrieg** or “lightening war” against Poland and the Soviets attacked Poland from the West. The Soviet Union and Germany had become allies in 1939 due to the **Soviet Non-Aggression Pact**, which stated that Hitler would not attack the Soviet Union. Denmark and Norway soon fell to Germany, and France surrendered to the Germans in 1940. Hitler then focused on invading Great Britain.

During the **Battle of Britain** (1940-1941), the German air force repeatedly bombed the country. The British, however, used radar to prepare for attacks and had technology that enabled them to decode German secret messages. The British, under the leadership of **Prime Minister Winston Churchill**, refused to surrender. Hitler instead had to focus on attacking other areas in Europe.



## Section Review:

- 21) What is a blitzkrieg? Which country practiced this type of fighting?
- 22) Which two countries became allies due to the Non-Aggression Pact?
- 23) Which two countries were involved in the Battle of Britain?
- 24) What technology helped the British hold off the Germans?
- 25) What was the prime minister of Great Britain during the Battle of Britain?

Fighting also occurred in North Africa and in the Balkans. The Germans wanted to control the **Suez Canal**, which connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, in order to have access to the oil-rich Middle East. Yugoslavia and Greece fell to the Axis Powers in 1941. Hitler then betrayed his ally, the Soviet Union, and attacked that country in 1941. The Germans were unsuccessful in taking both Leningrad and Moscow and 500,000 Germans died during the invasion.



Despite the passage of several **Neutrality Acts** between 1935 and 1937, President Franklin Roosevelt recognized the necessity of United States involvement in the war. The United States would need to become involved in order to prevent the defeat of the Allies and subsequent Nazi takeover of Europe. In 1939, Congress amended its isolationist policy of neutrality to allow the United States to sell weapons to the Allies. These were paid for with cash and transported on their own ships. This was known as a **cash and**

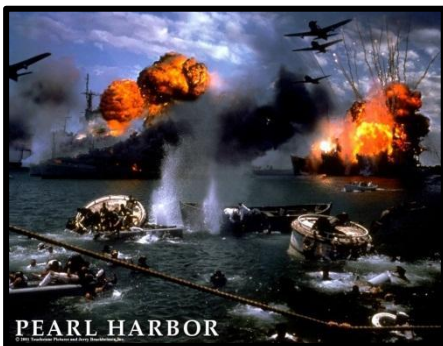
**carry policy**. The United States did this as a way to seek a solution different from that which drew the United States into World War I.

This alternative, however, was not enough to help the Allies. In 1941 Congress stepped even further away from its professed neutrality when it passed the **Lend-Lease Act**. The Lend-Lease Act allowed Roosevelt to lend or lease weapons and other supplies to countries that were important to the interests of the United States.

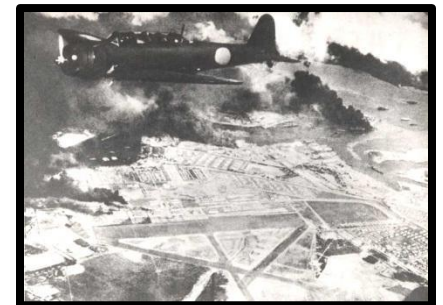


## Section Review:

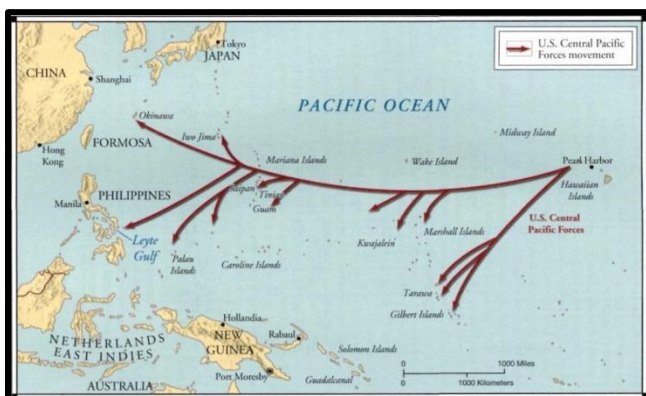
- 26) Why did Hitler want to gain control of the Suez Canal?
- 27) How did Hitler violate the Non-Aggression Pact?
- 28) Was Hitler successful in taking Leningrad and Moscow?
- 29) Why did President Roosevelt believe the US should to get involved in the war?
- 30) What was the Cash and Carry Policy?
- 31) What did the US do when the Cash and Carry Policy proved insufficient?



Japan invaded the French colony of Indochina in 1941, prompting the United States to place an **oil embargo** on Japan to prevent further aggression. An embargo is the decision of one country to refuse to trade with another country in response to hostile or unacceptable actions. Japan attacked **Pearl Harbor**, a U.S. naval base in Hawaii, on December 7, 1941, and Congress declared war on



Japan the next day. The Japanese moved quickly throughout the Pacific taking over Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, and Burma. The tide began to turn in favor of the United States in 1942. The United States defeated Japan in the Battle of Coral Sea, saving Australia from a Japanese invasion. Next, the United States defeated Japan in the **Battle of Midway**, heavily damaging hundreds of Japanese planes and all of their aircraft carriers.



After the Battle of Midway, the United States began engaging in an **island-hopping** or “leapfrogging” strategy. This allowed the United States to bypass islands heavily secured by Japan in favor of taking islands that were strategically located in reach of the main islands of Japan. These were easier to seize and saved countless American lives. A turning point occurred when the Japanese experienced a devastating loss at the **Battle of Guadalcanal**, the first offensive against Japan launched by combined Allied forces on land, sea, and air.

## Section Review:

- 32) Why did the US place an oil embargo on Japan in 1941?
- 33) How did the Japanese respond to the oil embargo?

34) What was the result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

35) Why was island-hopping a successful strategy?



By the end of 1942, the tide was turning in favor of the Allies in the Mediterranean and along the Eastern Front. Allied forces, led by **American General Dwight Eisenhower**, defeated German General Rommel's forces in North Africa.

The Germans were also on the defensive after they were defeated by the Russians in the **Battle of Stalingrad** in February 1943. This was a major turning point in the war in Europe. As the Soviets continued to push the Germans from the east, British and American forces invaded and conquered Sicily in 1943. Allied forces entered Rome in 1944 and Mussolini was killed by his own countrymen in 1945.



The **Invasion of Normandy**, called **D-Day**, to liberate German controlled France and northern Europe began on June 6, 1944. The Allied forces were able to liberate France by September. Hitler's final attempt to achieve victory against Allied forces was at the **Battle of the Bulge**. Despite breaking through American defenses, the Germans were ultimately pushed back and forced to retreat. The United States and Great Britain moved into Germany from west and the USSR

moved into Germany from the east, causing the Germans to surrender on May 7, 1945. This is known as **Victory in Europe Day** (VE Day).

### Section Review:

36) What was the result of the Battle of Stalingrad?

37) Describe Italy's defeat.

38) What was the result of the D-Day invasion of Normandy?

39) What was the significance of V-E Day?

The United States moved closer to defeating Japan by victories at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Citing the need to hasten the war's end and save lives that would be lost in an invasion of Japan, President Harry Truman ordered the dropping of an **atomic bomb**. On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of **Hiroshima** and the Japanese city of **Nagasaki** was bombed three days later. Six days after the dropping of the second atomic bomb, Japan announced its intention to surrender, formally doing so on September 2, 1945. This is known as **Victory in Japan Day** (VJ Day).



Atomic Bomb

**Section Review:**

**40) Why did President Truman choose to use atomic weapons against Japan?**

**41) What lasting effects did the atomic bombs have on Japan?**

Throughout World War II, the Holocaust had been carried out by German Nazis, claiming the lives of more than six million Jews and numerous others. This will be discussed further in the following section.



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