

III. THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

While the Allies were fighting in Europe, they still had to worry about Asia. Most of the fighting there was done by the Americans. The Soviet Union did not even go to war with Japan until after V-E Day. The British had some forces in Asia, as did Australia, which was directly threatened by Japan, but it was the American navy that stopped the Japanese advance. It was the American navy, army, and marines that began slowly hopping from one island to another back toward the Japanese home islands. It was the U.S. that finally ended the war by using the newly invented atomic bomb on two Japanese cities.



THE FURTHEST EXTENT OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE DURING WWII

Pacific Turning Point

Japanese Victories. Like their Nazi allies, the Japanese won tremendous victories early in the war. After Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Japan launched successful attacks all over southeast Asia. The British colony of Hong Kong and the American islands of Wake and Guam were taken in December. Thailand fell within hours. From Thailand, the Japanese army moved into the Malay Peninsula, capturing the British city of Singapore in February of 1942. The oil rich islands south of the peninsula fell the next month. To the north, the Japanese moved into Burma and were threatening India. They also cut off the Burma Road, the main route used to get supplies to the Chinese still fighting the Japanese army in their homeland.

The only place the Japanese faced serious fighting was in the American colony in the

Philippines. The Philippines were attacked a few days after Pearl Harbor. The American army there was under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. The Americans retreated to a peninsula called Bataan at the mouth of Manila Bay. At the southern end of the peninsula was an island fortress called Corregidor.

The Americans fought bravely, but they did not have enough food. There was no way for the U.S. navy to bring them new supplies with the Japanese navy protecting the islands. The Americans held out until April on the peninsula and until May on Corregidor, but they were forced to surrender because they were so weak from lack of food. The Japanese cruelly forced their prisoners to march for miles to prison camps. It was called the "Bataan Death March." The men who collapsed on the way were killed.

MacArthur was ordered to leave before the army surrendered because FDR wanted to have him to lead the army in the Pacific. He left, as he was ordered, but promised, "I will return." Thus, the Japanese Empire reached its largest size by the summer of 1942, leaving the Allies with nothing except a string of losses.



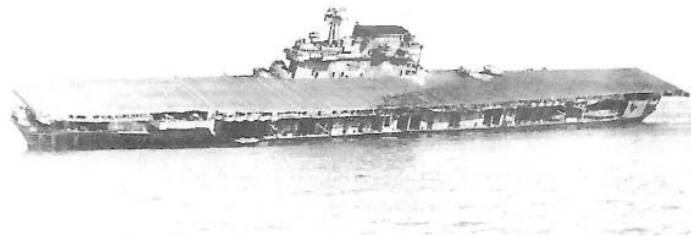
ONE OF DOOLITTLE'S B-25'S TAKING OFF FROM THE U.S.S. HORNET

Problems for Japan. The American fleet in the Pacific was very weak after Pearl Harbor. The main survivors of the attack were the aircraft carriers. These were huge floating air fields. They were used to carry airplanes into battles on islands and coastlines. Most of

America's fighting in 1942 was done by airplanes off of these carriers.

Americans wanted to punish Japan after the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle led a daring raid to do just that. Big bombing planes called B-25's were changed so they could take off from an aircraft carrier. Sixteen of these bombers took off from the carrier *Hornet* in April and bombed Tokyo, the capital of Japan. The planes had no safe place to land, so they crash landed in China. The Chinese people got most of the pilots home safely. It was called "Doolittle's Raid." It did not hurt Japan much, but it was a big boost for the Americans, who had only seen Japanese victories in the Pacific up until then.

Japan controlled the northern part of the island of New Guinea, just north of Australia, in 1942. In May they sent an invasion force by sea to attack Port Moresby, the Allied base on



THE U.S.S. YORKTOWN JUST BEFORE IT SANK AT MIDWAY

the south coast of the island. If they could take Port Moresby, the Japanese would be within easy reach of Australia. The invasion fleet was met by the U.S. navy at the Battle of the Coral Sea just east of New Guinea.



U.S. NAVY FIGHTERS READY TO TAKE OFF FOR MIDWAY

The Battle of the Coral Sea was a very unusual navy battle. It was the first navy battle in history in which the ships *never came within sight of each other*. It was fought completely by airplanes which came off the Japanese and American aircraft carriers to attack the enemy ships. Neither side clearly

won the battle, but the Japanese retreated, leaving Port Moresby and Australia in Allied hands.

The U.S. suffered a serious loss in this battle, the aircraft carrier *Lexington*. It was hit and sank slowly. The American sailors very calmly abandoned ship, lining up their shoes on the edge of the deck before they left. Some of the men even filled their helmets with ice cream from the freezer to eat as they went. The other American ships picked up the men. The U.S. only had a few of these ships and would not be able to quickly replace the carrier that was lost.

Midway. Midway is a small American island about halfway between the U.S. and Asia. It was the next target of the Japanese navy. The Japanese fleet had four times as many ships as the Americans at Midway. They had four large aircraft carriers and three smaller ones in their large attack fleet. The Americans had only three large carriers plus about forty-five other ships, but because the Americans had broken a Japanese code, they knew their enemies were coming. The U.S. fleet laid a trap which the Japanese sailed into in June of 1942.

The Battle of Midway, like the Coral Sea, was fought by airplanes. The American planes caught the Japanese carriers while they were preparing their own planes to be launched. The decks of the Japanese ships were covered with parked planes, bombs, and fuel. All four of Japan's large aircraft carriers were sunk. They also lost 200 planes and their pilots. The Americans lost one aircraft carrier, the

Yorktown, and 150 planes. It was a huge American victory.

Midway was the turning point of the war in the Pacific. The Japanese navy lost four out of its nine large aircraft carriers in one day. The attack fleet retreated back to safer waters. They would not win another important battle for the rest of the war.

Island Hopping

Strategy. The U.S. came up with a great strategy for conquering the Japanese Empire. It was called "island hopping" or "leapfrogging." The Empire was made up of thousands of islands in the South Pacific. Many of these islands were heavily fortified

and filled with determined Japanese soldiers. The U.S. navy decided to skip (hop) these islands. Instead, the navy and the marines attacked less fortified islands. As the American navy gained control of the seas and the sky over the islands, the Japanese soldiers on the islands that were not attacked were cut off from their supplies and had no one to fight. The Americans simply bombed them and left them alone to sit out the war while their supplies ran low.

The plan worked very well. The U.S. airplanes would bomb an island first. Then, the marines would invade it. An airfield would be built on the newly captured island. From there, planes would bomb the next island, starting the process all over again. Each island "hop" brought the Americans closer and closer to Japan.

First Islands. The first island the Americans attacked was Guadalcanal in August of 1942. The island was at the southwest end of the Japanese Empire, just north of the Coral Sea. The Allies needed to capture a Japanese airfield on the island that was used to attack Allied ships bringing supplies to Australia. It took six months of hard fighting to take the island.

The Allies under the command of General Douglas MacArthur were also fighting for control of New Guinea in 1942. The Japanese controlled the northern part of the island, the Allies controlled the south. MacArthur began a hopping plan of his own to retake the island at the end of 1942. He had the army hop along the coast, capturing key places as they went. Each place that was captured was used as a starting point to attack the next spot. It worked very well, even though MacArthur had to work with limited supplies and men. Most of the army was still needed in Europe. Still, he was able to push the Japanese off the island by the middle of 1944.

Other Islands. Island hopping was brutal warfare. The Japanese had very strict ideas about how to fight a war. They believed it was a disgrace to be captured, so they fought to the death and almost never surrendered, even when they clearly could not win. As a result, thousands and thousands of Japanese and Americans died on every island. The island of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands was a good example. A thousand U.S. service men died

taking the island, and only 17 out of the 20,000 Japanese soldiers surrendered. The rest had to be killed, one by one. This was true on *every island* the Americans attacked.

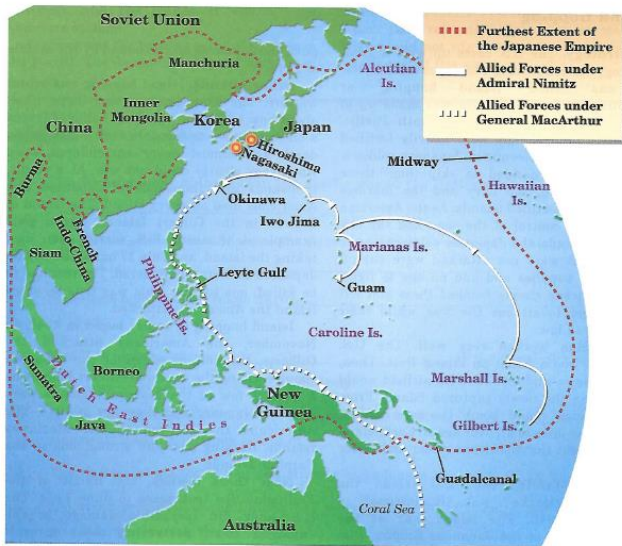
Island hopping seriously began in 1943. In November, the Americans attacked the Gilberts, the bottom corner of the Japanese Empire. Using the captured Gilbert Islands as a base, a few of the Marshall Islands were taken in January and February of 1944. The Americans then moved to the Marianas Islands, hopping over the strongholds in the Caroline Islands.

Near those islands, the Battle of the Philippine Sea took place in June 1944. The U.S. navy did incredible damage to the Japanese fleet, destroying three aircraft carriers and about 500 planes. The Allied victory left the Japanese navy very weak. Moreover, the Marianas Islands were close enough to Japan to allow American planes to begin bombing Japanese cities. They would do that until the end of the war.

MacArthur fulfilled his promise to return to the Philippines in October of 1944 when he hopped north from New Guinea. The last major naval battle of the war took place at Leyte Gulf. Japan gambled by sending most of what was left of their fleet to stop the U.S. invasion of the Philippines. The Japanese fleet was destroyed, and the U.S. recaptured the islands after months of hard fighting. The last of the Japanese soldiers did not surrender until the war ended.

The Last Islands. Two of the last islands that had to be taken, before conquering Japan, were among the most difficult to overcome. The first was Iwo Jima. The U.S. needed it for an airfield. It was so close to Japan that small fighter planes, which could not fly as far as the big bombers, could use it. They could fly with the bombers and protect them as they attacked the Japanese cities. Iwo Jima could also be used as an emergency landing place for the bombers when they were damaged and could not fly all the way back to the Marianas.

Iwo Jima was a **volcanic** island. It was covered with thousands of tiny caves. The Japanese soldiers hid in those caves and fought to the death. The U.S. Marine Corps remembers Iwo Jima because 7,000 of their soldiers died taking the island. Over 20,000 Japanese soldiers also died.



"ISLAND HOPPING" IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN DURING WWII

The second important island was Okinawa, just south of Japan. The U.S. needed it as a base to prepare for the invasion of Japan. It had been part of Japan for hundreds of years. The Japanese people thought of it as part of their nation, and the Americans knew they would defend it fiercely. They did. Over 100,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians died before the island was in U.S. hands in June.

After Germany surrendered in May of 1945, America was ready to focus all of her efforts on



the invasion of Japan. There was little hope that the enemy would surrender. The Americans would have to fight their way up the Japanese islands, one by one. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were expected to die. Then, the U.S. found a dreadful alternative, the atomic bomb.

Final Victory

New President. Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for president again in 1944. He easily won reelection. Most people did not want to change leaders in the middle of a war, especially when

things were going so well in November of 1944. However, FDR was old and growing weak. He died April 12, 1945 just after his fourth term started. He had been elected four times and had served as president for just over 12 years. No other president would ever equal that. Vice President Harry S. Truman became the nation's new leader for the last few months of the war.

Manhattan Project. Both Nazi Germany and the U.S. had been working hard to create a new weapon during the war. It was called the atomic bomb. It was a superbomb that could destroy most of a city by itself. The very secret U.S. program to create one was set up on a desert base in New Mexico. It was code named the "Manhattan Project."

The Manhattan Project secretly put hundreds of scientists together on the base. They lived there for much of the war. It was a small, hidden town that did not communicate much with the outside world. Children who were born there did not even have their birthplace written on their records. Only a few people outside of the town even knew it existed.

The German project was stopped when they surrendered in May of 1945. However, the American scientists kept working. On July 16, 1945 the first atomic bomb exploded in the desert of New Mexico. President Truman was told about it at once.

Truman then had to make a very important decision. The atomic bomb could be used against Japan. It would destroy most of a city. Many of the people who survived the bomb would die later of burns and illnesses from the **radiation** the bomb made. It might be enough to convince Japan to surrender and save all the lives that would be lost in an invasion. Truman decided to use the bomb.

Hiroshima. A U.S. bomber named the *Enola Gay* carried the first atomic bomb to its target. The bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. It went off above the center of the city creating a huge, mushroom-shaped cloud that rose high into the atmosphere. About five square miles of the city were completely destroyed. Buildings and people near "ground zero," where the bomb went off, were reduced to dust. As many as 100,000 people may have died that day from the bomb. Four times that many may have died

later from the effects of the radiation.

Truman had warned Japan to surrender or be destroyed before he sent the bomb. Japan did not respond to that message, nor did it react after the first bomb fell. So, Truman ordered a second bomb (the only other one the U.S. had) dropped on the city of Nagasaki on August 9th. That was enough. Japan offered to surrender on August 10th.

The Japanese Empire surrendered on September 2, 1945 (V-J Day), ending World War II. The surrender ceremony took place on board the *U.S.S. Missouri*, which was part of the U.S. fleet in Tokyo Bay. Douglas MacArthur became the military governor of Japan. He



LEFT: THE ATOMIC BLAST THAT DESTROYED HIROSHIMA ON AUG. 6, 1945
RIGHT: JAPAN SIGNS SURRENDER PAPERS AND ENDS WWII ON SEPT. 2, 1945

helped the nation write a new constitution and rebuild as a democracy. The emperor kept his throne, but he no longer had any real power.

Results of the War. About seventeen million soldiers, Allied and Axis, died in World War II. The largest number of dead were in the Soviet Union where seven and a half million died. The United States lost 400,000 service men. As many as thirty-six million ordinary people also died. They were killed by bombs, starvation, and murder. When the war ended, millions of people in Europe and Japan were without homes. Millions of **refugees** moved around in Europe, trying to find a safe place to live. The U.S. was the only nation in good enough shape to help, and this time, unlike World War I, America did not return to isolationism.

United Nations. The Atlantic Charter, written by Roosevelt and Winston Churchill in 1941, called for a new association of nations after the end of the war. The old League of Nations had proved worthless. The free nations wanted a place where they could meet,

talk about problems, and take actions to protect the peace. This time the U.S. would support the effort. The result was the United Nations.

Delegates from fifty nations met in San Francisco, California in April of 1945, just days after FDR died. The important Allied nations (the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union) had already agreed on the main plan for the new organization. The delegates to the San Francisco Conference wrote a charter which explained the new organization's goals, powers, and methods of working. The new organization was named the United Nations. Its charter went into effect on October 24, 1945, a little over one month after the end of World War II. Its main office was built in New York City.

The United Nations would work better than the League of Nations because of the support it received from the rich democracies, especially the United States. The United Nations, U.N. for short, gives the nations of the world a safe place to talk about problems. Even

nations that are at war or enemies will meet there. The U.N. also tries to help with worldwide problems like hunger and pollution. Moreover, the United States and other democracies have often obeyed the U.N. to stop trading with some nations and even send soldiers to fight them when they act aggressively. This has forced some warlike nations to stop what they were doing wrong.

Name: _____

War in the Pacific

Fill in the Blank

Four	Lexington	Philippine Sea	MacArthur	Guadalcanal	Corregidor
Island Hopping	Bataan	Okinawa	Surrender	Yorktown	7,000

1. The U.S. lost the carrier _____ at the Coral Sea and the _____ at Midway
2. In the Philippines, the American army retreated to the _____ peninsula and the fortress island of _____
3. General _____ was ordered to leave the Philippines before the American army surrendered, but he promised to return.
4. Japan lost _____ large aircraft carriers at Midway
5. The U.S. strategy in the Pacific was called _____
6. Most Japanese soldiers would not _____
7. The first island invaded by the U.S. in August of 1942 was _____
8. The U.S. navy heavily damaged the Japanese fleet in June of 1944 at the Battle of _____.
9. _____ marines died taking Iwo Jima
10. In June of 1945, the U.S. captured _____ to use as a base to invade Japan.

Find the answers for the questions below:

11. American prisoners in the Philippines were killed when they collapsed walking to prison camps during the _____
12. The Americans knew the Japanese were attacking Midway because they had _____.

Write True or False in the blank

13. _____ The Manhattan Project was the name of the U.S. program to build a new League of Nations.
14. _____ The U.S. and Nazi Germany were trying to build an atomic bomb.
15. _____ V-J Day was August 6, 1945
16. _____ The surrender ceremony for Japan was held on the U.S.S. Arizona in Pearl Harbor
17. _____ The first atomic bomb explosion happened in the desert of New Mexico on July 16, 1945
18. _____ The first city destroyed by an atomic bomb was Tokyo
19. _____ The United Nations charter was written by Great Britain, the U.S. and the Soviet Union at a meeting in the Atlantic Ocean near Canada.
20. _____ The atomic bomb at Hiroshima released radiation that killed more people than the explosion did.

21. _____ Truman decided to use the atomic bomb to avoid invading Japan.
22. _____ FDR was elected president three times and served 14 years as president
23. _____ Harry S Truman was elected president in 1944
24. _____ World War II ended when the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on two Japanese cities.
25. _____ America returned to isolationism again after World War II.