

The World Goes to War

Japan. Japan was a powerful nation by 1940. Just after the Civil War in America (1861–1865), the Japanese government began to make its nation into an industrial power. They also began to build up their army and navy. Once they had a modern military, the Japanese Empire began to conquer neighboring lands in Asia. It conquered Korea in 1905 and Germany's colonies in the Far East during World War I. The military became very powerful in Japan because of its success.

Japan was ruled by an emperor whose family had ruled for hundreds of years. However, the military was the real power in Japan after 1936, and they wanted conquest. They began in 1931 by capturing Manchuria, part of northern China. The League of Nations was not able to stop them. The League's failure ended any chance of controlling aggression by having the nations act together against it. It also demonstrated that the free nations of the world were not willing to go to war to stop aggression. There were several new, conquest-hungry dictators who were delighted to learn that.



**JAPAN'S AGGRESSION AGAINST
KOREA AND MANCHURIA**



BENITO MUSSOLINI

Italy. A dictator in Italy named Benito Mussolini took control of the government in 1922. He was called *Il Duce* (The Leader). He paid close attention when the Japanese succeeded in taking Manchuria without anyone trying to stop them. In 1935 the Italian army attacked and conquered Ethiopia in northern Africa. Again, the League of Nations and the powerful democracies did nothing to stop him.

Germany. Soon after World War I Germany had been hit by a time of rapidly rising prices called *hyper-inflation*. Prices went up so fast that baskets of money were needed to buy bread or shoes. Businesses would pay their workers twice a day and let them go buy things at lunchtime because the prices would be higher by evening! Later, Germany was hit

hard by the Great Depression. It still had huge war debts, and its lands near France were still occupied by the French army. The people were desperate, and they did not get an elected leader like Franklin Roosevelt. Instead, they got Adolf Hitler.

Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party in Germany. He believed the Germans were a superior people, a master race, better than the people of other nations, especially the Jews. He believed the Germans needed to conquer Europe to get room for themselves. He said that Germany had been betrayed by the Treaty of Versailles and that all of the problems of the nation had been caused by Jews and the

Treaty. He was a great public speaker, and people followed him. He promised to make Germany great again.

Hitler and his Nazi Party took control of the government of Germany in 1933. He ordered people who spoke against him imprisoned and killed. His government attacked Jews in Germany, taking away their homes and businesses. Eventually, Hitler would order the Jews arrested and killed in huge camps called *concentration camps*. The symbol of Nazi Germany was the *swastika*, which is still considered a symbol of hatred throughout the world.

Hitler also began to build up the German army and air force. This was not lawful under the Treaty of Versailles, but no one was willing to stop him. In fact, the nations of Europe were so desperate to avoid war that they **appeased** him.

Britain and France appeased Hitler by giving him what he wanted, more land. They hoped he would be satisfied with a little, when he really wanted all of Europe. All they did was give him more power which he would use later to attack them. Appeasement of the dictator was not a very smart thing to do.

Hitler began his aggression in 1936 by sending his new army into the Rhineland, the land near France. This was a **violation** of the Treaty of Versailles. It threatened France, but France did not take any action. They did not want another war. In 1938 Hitler took Austria, which was a German-speaking land. That same year he demanded a part of Czechoslovakia in

which many German people lived. France and Great Britain agreed to give it to him at the Munich Conference in 1938. Early in 1939 he conquered the rest of Czechoslovakia.

By this time, France and Great Britain began to realize that Hitler was not going to stop. They stopped appeasing him. They told Germany that they would go to war if Hitler invaded Poland, which he wanted next.

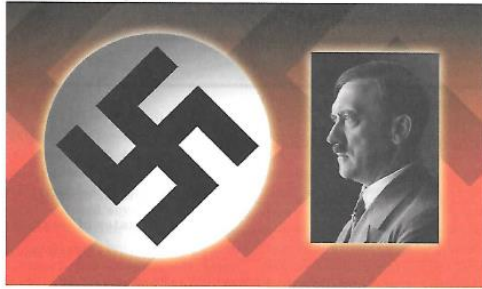
Hitler hated communists, but he loved power more. In 1939 the Nazi dictator signed a secret treaty with Joseph Stalin, the communist dictator of Russia (called the Soviet Union then). Stalin and Hitler promised not to attack each other. They also agreed to divide Poland. Germany invaded Poland in September of 1939; that was the beginning of World War II because France and Britain declared war.

Europe Falls. The German army used a new way of fighting in World War II—it was called *blitzkrieg*, lightning war. They used speed and surprise. Soldiers with cars, motorcycles, tanks, and mobile guns moved quickly across the country. They wanted to prevent their enemies from setting up trenches like they had in World War I. It worked. Poland was conquered in a few weeks. The Soviet Union took the eastern part of Poland, and Germany the western part.

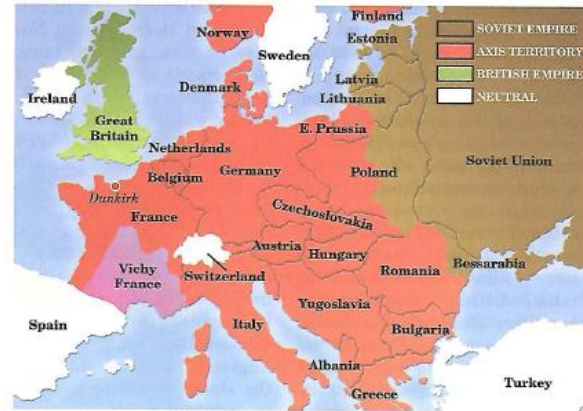
Hitler moved again in 1940. The Nazi army conquered Denmark and Norway in April. In May he took Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands in just a few days. The British army that was trying to defend Belgium and France was trapped at Dunkirk on the English Channel. It would have been captured except for what is called the “Miracle of Dunkirk.”

When the people of Great Britain heard that their army was trapped across the channel at Dunkirk, they acted quickly. Every ship that could be found was sent across the channel to get them. Sailing ships, tugboats, fishing boats, and navy ships swarmed to the beaches at Dunkirk. They loaded all the soldiers they could carry and took them to England. The German air force tried to sink the ships, but there were too many of them. Over 300,000 soldiers were rescued in just over a week. Belgium and France were lost, but the British army survived and would return to fight another day.

Hitler attacked France in May of 1940. The French army quickly collapsed under the *blitzkrieg*. The German army took the French capital of Paris in June. That same month, France surrendered. Germany occupied the northern two-thirds of the country. The French kept control of a small piece of the country in the south, called Vichy France (after its new



ADOLPH HITLER AND THE NAZI "SWASTIKA"



EUROPE IN MAY OF 1941

capital). Great Britain was the only enemy still fighting Germany in Europe. By this time, Germany, Italy, and Japan had formed an alliance called the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis. They were called the Axis Powers for short.

Hitler expected Great Britain to surrender; but under the leadership of Winston Churchill, their prime minister, the proud British refused. They continued to fight even as the German army dropped thousands of bombs on their cities, reducing them to rubble. Eventually, Hitler realized Britain was not giving up, and he turned his attention to the rest of Europe.

Nazi Germany conquered Yugoslavia in April of 1941. That same month another German army conquered Greece which the Italians had been unsuccessfully trying to take. The island of Crete was taken by the Nazis in May. In June of 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, in spite of his treaty with Stalin. They advanced rapidly, killing thousands of Soviet soldiers. It looked like Hitler might take all of Europe, and the United States still had not entered the war.

Isolation Ended

Neutrality. The United States had returned to isolationism after World War I. The nation was determined not to get into any more foreign wars, especially as it continued to fight the Great Depression at home. In fact, in the 1930s Congress passed several Neutrality Laws that forbade America to trade with nations at war. Congress hoped that would keep the U.S. out of war because its ships would not be sunk as in World War I.

However, Roosevelt and most of the American people realized that Hitler and the Axis Powers were dangerous. When Japan invaded China in 1937, the U.S. continued to send weapons to China in spite of the law.

When Germany invaded Poland, Roosevelt was determined to help Great Britain. Congress agreed, allowing the Allies (Britain and France) to buy war goods for cash in America; but they had to be carried to Europe on Allied ships.

After the fall of France, America began to prepare itself and to help Britain even more. A draft law was passed, and money was spent to improve the navy. President Roosevelt gave Britain some old navy ships they really needed in exchange for navy bases in the Atlantic. But the U.S. still refused to consider getting into the war.

In the middle of the crisis in 1940, America held an election for president. FDR broke a tradition that went back to George Washington when he ran for a third term that year. He was re-elected and would win again in 1944. He was the only U.S. president ever elected to serve four terms in office. (The Constitution was changed in 1951 to forbid more than two terms.)

After his election in 1940, Roosevelt announced his biggest plan yet to aid the Allies. It was called *Lend-Lease*. Basically, the plan allowed America to lend war supplies like guns and tanks to Britain. They would be returned or paid for after the war. This meant that Britain could have all the supplies America could produce until the war was won. America was willing to give all that was needed except her own soldiers. The Soviet Union was allowed to join Lend-Lease in 1941, after Germany invaded and the Soviets joined the Allies.

Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt worked closely together and became friends during World War II. In August of 1941 they met off the coast of Canada to discuss the war. Together they wrote a list of goals for peace. It was called the Atlantic Charter.

Two main points of the charter were:

1. All people should have the right to choose their own form of government, and
2. A new "League of Nations" should be created in order to maintain world-wide peace.

Japan. Japan, in the meantime, had attacked the rest of China. In September of 1940, Japan invaded French Indochina (Vietnam). However, the nation of Japan had no oil. It had to buy all its oil to fuel its army and navy from the United States. The U.S. had foolishly continued to sell Japan both oil and



PEARL HARBOR: DECEMBER 7, 1941
TOP : THE U.S.S. SHAW EXPLODING.
BOTTOM LEFT: U.S.S. ARIZONA SINKING.
BOTTOM RIGHT: U.S.S. WEST VIRGINIA
ON FIRE.

metals into 1940. However, as Japanese aggression continued, the U.S. finally cut off all sales of these goods to Japan in 1941.

Japan had to have oil to continue its conquests in Asia. There were supplies of oil in southeast Asia. So, rather than withdraw from China, Japan decided to get those supplies for itself. First, however, the Japanese military government believed it had to destroy the U.S. fleet in the Pacific to prevent it from stopping them.

Pearl Harbor. December 7, 1941 was a quiet Sunday at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The harbor was a large U.S. navy base. It was the home base of the Pacific fleet. On that day most of the Pacific fleet of modern battleships, eight of them, were tied up in the harbor. By God's grace, the three aircraft carriers were out at sea.

Unknown to the relaxed crews and visitors, a Japanese fleet was nearby. Early in the morning, the Japanese fleet launched

airplanes for a surprise attack on the harbor. The completely unexpected attack came just

before 8:00 in the morning. No one knew anything about it until the bomb explosions began killing people and destroying things.

The attack on Pearl was a huge Japanese victory. All eight of the U.S. battleships were sunk or heavily damaged. The *Oklahoma* and the *Utah* tipped upside down, trapping some of their crew. The *California* and the *West Virginia* sank, still tied to their docks. The *Nevada* tried to escape to sea, but was hit on the way out and had to be driven on to a beach to avoid sinking. A dozen other navy ships were also damaged or sunk.

About half of the American sailors killed that day were on board the battleship *Arizona*. A 1,760-pound bomb designed to go through metal plates hit the ship early in the attack. The bomb caused an explosion in the room where the ammunition was stored. The ship sunk in less than nine minutes, killing 1,177 of the men on board.

About 300 American planes were destroyed, most of them still on the ground. Over 2,000 Americans were killed. No one was ready at the anti-aircraft guns when the attack began. Much of the ammunition for the guns was locked up so the men could not get to it quickly.

The Japanese ships escaped without a scratch, and less than 30 Japanese planes were shot down. The attack lasted almost two hours.

The victory was tremendous, but incomplete. The three massive aircraft carriers, the *Lexington*, the *Enterprise* and the *Saratoga*, were safe. They would be incredibly important for America during the first year and a half of the war. Most of the fuel for the navy that was stored in the harbor was not hit. Damage to the harbor was repaired quickly. Several of the battleships were also raised from the water, repaired, and sent back into battle.

The victory at Pearl Harbor probably cost Japan the war. Due to delays in Washington, the Japanese ambassador did not deliver his message declaring war until *after the attack had begun*. The sly, sneaky attack on American soil without a declaration of war angered the nation. Isolationism ended on December 7, 1941. The next day, FDR called it "a date that will live in infamy" when he asked Congress to declare war. The nation went to bed on December 6th wanting to stay out of the war. It arose on December 7th united, determined to fight and win at any cost.

Name: _____

World War 2 Reading

Match these people. Some will be used more than once.

1. _____ dictator of Italy
 2. _____ prime minister of Great Britain
 3. _____ Communist dictator of the Soviet Union
 4. _____ dictator of Germany
 5. _____ invaded Ethiopia in 1935
 6. _____ hated Jews, believed his people were a master race
 7. _____ head of the Nazi Party
 8. _____ elected president of the U.S. four times
 9. _____ president at the start of World War II
- a. Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - b. Benito Mussolini
 - c. Adolf Hitler
 - d. Winston Churchill
 - e. Joseph Stalin

Choose the correct item from the box (each answer, 2 points)

Swastika Aryan Dunkirk Czechoslovakia Jewish Axis Powers Blitzkrieg

10. The symbol of Nazi German was the _____
11. The Nazi's new way of fighting was called _____
12. The rescue of the British army across the English Channel by many British ships in May 1940 was called the "Miracle of _____"
13. Hitler believed the Germans were a _____ race and he particularly hated the _____ people.
14. Name for the alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan: _____
15. Britain and France appeased Hitler by giving him land in this country at the Munich Conference in 1938: _____

Write True or False next to each statement

16. _____ Japan conquered Manchuria before World War 2
17. _____ Britain and France opposed German expansion by force from the time it began in the 1930's.
18. _____ Vichy France was the name France used for the part of Germany they occupied before World War 2
19. _____ Germany used trench warfare again in World War 2
20. _____ The Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, and Greece were all conquered by Germany in World War 2
21. _____ Most American realized that Germany and her allies were a threat to the United States and wanted to help the Allies.
22. _____ The U.S.S. Arizona was sunk by a German U-boat near Canada, killing most of the crew.

Find the answer to each question

23. World Organization that could not stop aggression before World War II: _____

24. European nation that refused to surrender to Germany in 1940-1941: _____

25. Germany made a treaty with this nation to divide Poland in 1939, then invaded it anyway in 1941:

26. Event that ended American isolationism and got the nation into World War II:

27. The peace goals of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt: _____

28. Ship sunk at Pearl Harbor with the loss of 1,177 men: _____

29. "A date that will live in infamy...." _____

30. Supplies that the Japanese need from America that ended in 1940: _____

31. Number of Americans killed at Pearl Harbor: _____

32. Number of planes destroyed at Pearl Harbor: _____