

## Section 3

# World War II

### Key Ideas

- Aggression by Japan and Germany led to the outbreak of World War II.
- During the war, the world learned of Hitler's campaign to murder millions of Jews and others.
- The United States and the Soviet Union played key roles in the defeat of the Axis powers.

### Key Terms

- World War II
- Axis powers
- appeasement
- nonaggression pact
- blitzkrieg
- Holocaust
- genocide

### Visual Glossary

**Reading Skill Sequence** Take notes using the graphic organizer in your journal.

In the 1930s, aggressive actions in Europe and Asia led to **World War II** (1939–1945), the most destructive war the world had ever seen. The **Axis powers**, including Germany, Italy, and Japan, quickly gained territory in the early fighting. But the Allied powers, including the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, eventually triumphed.

### Aggression Leads to War

By the early 1930s, Japan, Italy, and Germany were expanding their territories. War was near.

**Japanese Expansionism** Military leaders and extreme nationalists controlled Japan's government in the 1930s. They wanted to build a powerful empire. Japan invaded large areas of China. It planned to expand into Southeast Asia, an area rich in rubber, oil, and other resources.

**Aggression in Europe** Europe's totalitarian leaders also acted aggressively. Benito Mussolini led Italy to invade the African nation of Ethiopia in 1935. In Spain, fascist Francisco Franco led a civil war against the Spanish government. With military aid from Germany, Italy, and Portugal, Franco took control of Spain in 1939.

German troops march through Prague, Czechoslovakia, in March 1939. ▼



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### Axis Aggression, 1942



### Map Skills

- 1 **Movement** Summarize the Axis advances shown on this map.
- 2 **Place** Describe the territory controlled by the Axis powers in 1942.

Germany's Adolf Hitler wanted to unite German-speaking people in a new German empire. Hitler took control of Austria in 1938. He then turned to Czechoslovakia, which had a large German population. European leaders feared German aggression, but they chose a policy of **appeasement**, or giving in to the demands of an aggressor in the hope of preventing war. Leaders of Britain and France used this argument to convince Czechoslovakia to surrender some of its territory to Hitler. Nevertheless, Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

**War Erupts** In August 1939, Hitler and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin secretly signed a **nonaggression pact**, or an agreement in

which each side promises not to attack the other. Hitler and Stalin agreed not to fight each other if one went to war. They also agreed to divide Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe between them.

Then, on September 1, 1939, Hitler sent German forces into Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II, the bloodiest war in history, had begun.

**The German Attack** The invasion of Poland demonstrated the German military's strategy of **blitzkrieg**, a German term for "lightning war." A blitzkrieg would begin with an air assault, with airplanes bombing cities, factories, and other targets. Then, tanks and artillery would sweep quickly into the countryside.

▲ A weeping Czech woman reluctantly salutes the invading Germans.



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## my World CONNECTIONS

More than **11%** of all U.S. residents served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II.



German foot soldiers would follow. The blitzkrieg on Poland moved so swiftly that neither Britain nor France could give Poland any meaningful help. Within a few weeks, Poland was controlled by Germany and the Soviet Union.

In the spring of 1940, German armies swept through Western Europe, capturing the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. For months, German bombers attacked British cities as Hitler planned his invasion of Britain. But Germany could not defeat the British air forces, and Hitler had to set aside his invasion plans.

**War in the East** After his failure in Britain, Hitler turned to the east. In June 1941, he broke his agreement with Stalin and sent 3 million troops into the Soviet Union. Stalin's armies were unprepared for the German invasion, and the Germans pushed deep into Soviet territory.

Axis armies also attacked other regions. The Japanese military swept across Asia and the Pacific. Italian and German forces invaded North Africa. They conquered Greece and Yugoslavia. By 1941, the Axis powers and their allies controlled most of Europe.

**Reading Check** How did World War II begin?

## The Tide Turns

The United States was neutral in the early years of the war. With memories of World War I still fresh, many Americans did not want to become involved in another foreign conflict. Still, the United States did send military aid to the Allies. It also banned the sale of war materials to Japan.

**U.S. Entry into the War** Japanese leaders were furious at the U.S. actions, believing that they threatened Japan's expansion and independence. On December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes bombed an American military base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack killed more than 2,400 people and destroyed ships and aircraft. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan. Within a week, Japan's allies Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

**The Home Front** To defeat the mighty Axis powers, the United States and the other Allies devoted all their resources to the war effort. Millions of men fought for their countries. Although women were not allowed to serve in combat, hundreds of thousands of women worked as pilots, as clerks, and in other noncombat positions.

Women also took jobs in the factories that produced war supplies. Many factories stopped making civilian goods such as cars, radios, and tires, and switched to making military goods such as ships, airplanes, and weapons. To produce enough supplies for the war effort, governments rationed, or limited, the amount of food and other goods people could buy. They regulated prices and wages.

Even democratic governments limited the rights of citizens and censored the press. As they had done in World War I, government leaders used propaganda to win support for the war. The United States government also placed restrictions on those Americans of Japanese, German, and Italian descent. Some, including more than 100,000 Japanese Americans, were held in internment camps during the war.

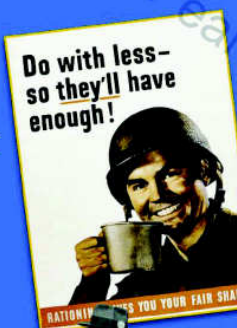
censor, v., to keep objectionable material from being revealed



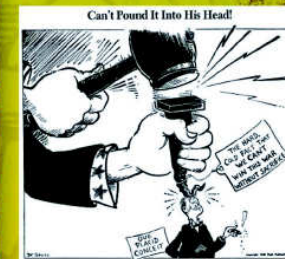
▲ Millions of women worked in factories.

## The U.S. Home Front

While millions of Americans fought overseas, the efforts of those on the home front were equally important in the struggle for victory. Ships, airplanes, ammunition, and other war supplies had to be produced in enormous numbers. All efforts were focused on producing the materials needed for war.



Propaganda posters urged Americans to make sacrifices for the benefit of the armed forces. ▶



▲ Cartoonist Dr. Seuss did his part to convince Americans to sacrifice for the war effort.



▲ American factories began to produce military goods, such as the tanks shown here.



▲ People planted "victory gardens" as a way to provide their own fruits and vegetables.



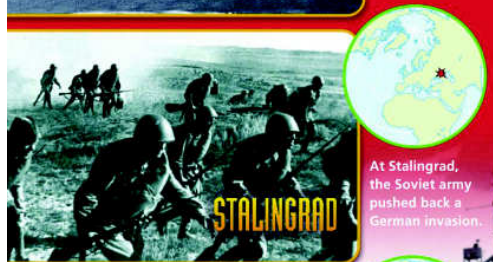
## Turning Points of WORLD WAR II

As 1942 began, the Allies were in trouble. German armies controlled much of Europe, and Japan seemed unstoppable in the Pacific. But with the help of a series of Allied victories, the tide was about to turn.



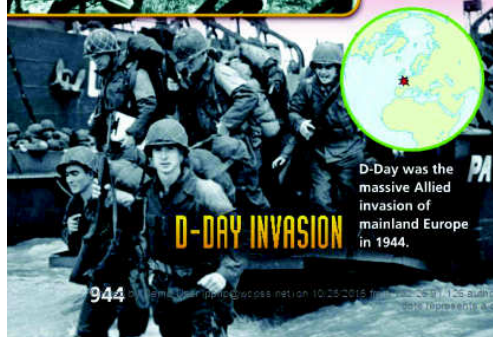
MIDWAY

American aircraft gave Japan its first major defeat at the Battle of Midway.



STALINGRAD

At Stalingrad, the Soviet army pushed back a German invasion.



D-DAY INVASION

D-Day was the massive Allied invasion of mainland Europe in 1944.

**Turning Points** The years 1942 and 1943 marked the turning point of the war. In June 1942, Japan suffered its first serious defeat at the Battle of Midway. Americans destroyed four Japanese aircraft carriers and some 250 Japanese airplanes.

In Eastern Europe, German and Soviet troops engaged in months of bloody fighting in the Soviet city of Stalingrad. Finally, in January 1943, the Soviet army surrounded the Germans, cutting off their supplies and forcing their surrender. Then Soviet troops went on the attack, pushing the Germans back toward central Europe.

In fact, by mid-1943 the Allies were on the offensive on all fronts. They attacked German forces in North Africa and invaded Italy. As they moved north, the Italian government overthrew Mussolini and soon surrendered.

In Western Europe, hundreds of thousands of Allied forces invaded German-occupied France on June 6, 1944, known as D-Day. Within three months, more than 2 million Allied troops had landed in France. German armies were on the run.

**Reading Check** How did American women support the war effort?

## The Holocaust

As Allied armies pushed into territory once controlled by Germany, they found horrifying evidence of Nazi crimes. During the war, Hitler had pursued a vicious program to kill people he judged to be inferior, particularly European Jews. The Nazis' mass murder of 6 million Jews is known as the **Holocaust**. The Nazis also murdered some 5 million

## The Holocaust



### Nazi Concentration Camps



A Nazi soldier arrests a Jewish boy.

Child prisoners at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in Poland

others, including Slavs, Romas (Gypsies), homosexual people, and disabled people.

**Hitler's "Final Solution"** As German armies took control of large areas of Europe, millions of Jews came under Nazi control. At first, the Nazis forced Jews to live in ghettos and labor camps. But by 1941, Nazi leaders had developed a plan known as the Final Solution: the murder of every Jew in Europe. This deliberate extermination of an ethnic, racial, or religious group is known as **genocide**.

**Death Camps** At first, Nazi soldiers would enter a captured town and kill its Jewish citizens. Then, to speed up the killing process, Hitler had six "death camps" built in Poland.

The Nazis used railroads to ship Jews and other people to the death camps.

There, some were forced to work as slave laborers, and many died of starvation or disease. Most captives were killed by poison gas in rooms known as gas chambers.

Although the Allies had known that the Nazi camps existed, it was only near the end of the war that they realized the true scale and brutality of the Holocaust. As Allied troops moved into Europe, they found camps with thousands of bodies, as well as some survivors who were near death. In all, the Nazis murdered some 11 million civilians. British prime minister Winston Churchill called the Holocaust

"the greatest and most horrible crime ever committed in the whole history of the world."

—Winston Churchill

**Reading Check** What is genocide?



## The End of World War II

In the final months of World War II, Allied forces moved swiftly toward Germany and Japan. The war finally ended in 1945 with an Allied victory.



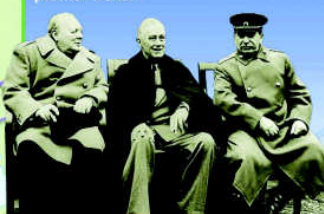
▲ Soviet soldiers raise their flag above the German capital of Berlin, which they captured in early May 1945.

### World War II Ends in Europe

KEY  
→ Allied advance



Allied leaders Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin plan the postwar world. ▼



### An Allied Victory

By the fall of 1944, Allied troops were racing toward Germany from both east and west. In the Pacific, Allied troops moved ever closer to Japan.

**Victory in Europe** After freeing France, Allied forces fought on toward Germany. Germany launched a massive counterattack in Belgium at what became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Both sides took terrible losses, but the Germans only slowed the Allied advance for six weeks. Meanwhile, the Soviet army advanced from the east. In May 1945, Soviet troops captured Berlin, the German capital, and Germany surrendered. The war in Europe ended officially on May 8, 1945.

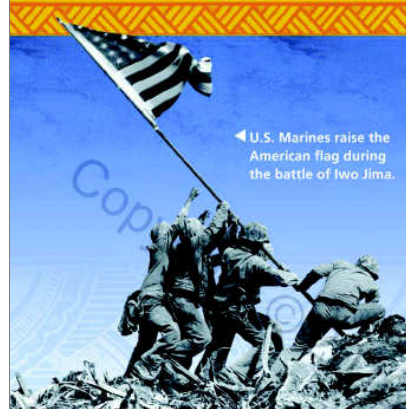
**Victory in the Pacific** Japan controlled much of the Pacific in the early years of the war. But the Allies took the offensive after the Battle of Midway. U.S. forces used an “island-hopping” strategy,

capturing some Japanese-held islands while skipping over others. The captured islands then acted as steppingstones to the next island. In this way, the Allies gradually moved north toward Japan.

This strategy was costly. Fighting was fierce, and casualties were high. When Japan did not surrender, the United States used a deadly new weapon: the atomic bomb. In August 1945, American planes dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. More than 100,000 people were killed. Japan soon surrendered. World War II was over.

**After the War** As many as 50 million people died during World War II, including tens of millions of civilians. Large areas of Europe and Asia lay in ruins, with cities, factories, railroads, and farms destroyed. The world faced the difficult task of rebuilding.

In the late stages of the war, Allied leaders Franklin Roosevelt (the United States), Winston Churchill (Great Britain),



▲ U.S. Marines raise the American flag during the battle of Iwo Jima.

### World War II Ends in the Pacific



KEY  
→ Allied advance



▲ A sailor and a nurse celebrate the end of the war.

and Joseph Stalin (the Soviet Union) met to discuss the postwar world. Needing Stalin's help to win the war, Roosevelt and Churchill said that the Soviet Union could control Eastern Europe. In return, Stalin promised to hold free elections in Eastern Europe. The Allies planned to temporarily divide Germany into four zones of occupation after the war, to be governed by

Allied forces. They also decided that Axis leaders should be tried for war crimes.

The Allies further agreed on the formation of a new world organization, the United Nations (UN). The UN's goals are to encourage international cooperation and achieve world peace.

**Reading Check** How did the Allies win the war in the Pacific?

## Section 3 Assessment

### Key Terms

1. Use the following terms in a short paragraph that describes Germany's actions during World War II: *Axis powers, blitzkrieg, Holocaust, genocide.*

### Key Ideas

2. Why did France and the United Kingdom end their policy of appeasement toward Hitler?
3. What was the Holocaust?
4. How did the Allied powers win the war in Europe?

### Think Critically

5. **Make Decisions** What do you think was the most important turning point of World War II? How did this event lead to the end of the war?
6. **Summarize** How did Axis aggression lead to the beginning of World War II?



### Essential Question

- How should we handle conflict?**
7. What were the major events of World War II, including the events that led to the war? Go to your Student Journal to record your answer.