



World War II:

Leaders of the Nations



Dear Mrs Avery, I came back from America on the Oceanic - We had a lovely time, but I do not think Percy has benefited much - He had a great year - I would have remained here only for Percy not being well, however I hope to go next year. With love
yours sincerely
Alice L.

BUILD UP YOUR KNOWLEDGE



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World War 2 Category



LEADERS OF NATIONS

Wartime leaders had to make hard decisions and take decisive action. This meant sharing plans with allies, but in practice they often kept secrets from one another. Decisions made by the great war leaders determined the fates of millions of people around the world.



ADOLF HITLER

Leading the Nazi Party, Hitler took power in Germany in 1933, crushing all opposition. He dreamed of a German "super race". He wanted to create a new empire (Third Reich), and destroy European Jews and Communism. His attack on Poland in 1939 started WWII.

“ ... people will more easily fall victims to a big lie than to a small one. ”

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Hitler made long, passionate speeches to rally supporters and mock enemies. Always sure that he was right, he told generals how to fight their battles. When Germany started losing, he became a recluse, commanding from a bunker under Berlin, but refused to surrender.

The leader

Hitler fought in WWI and felt Germany had been humiliated in defeat. He made it his mission to make Germany strong again and avenge their defeat. In 1934, he declared himself *Führer* (leader), ruling as a dictator.



KEY DATES



1889: Born 20 April, in Austria.



1918: Awarded Iron Cross (WWI).

1921: Head of Nazi Party (German Workers' Party).

1933: Takes power.

1944: Escaped assassination plot in July.



1945: Died 30 April; shot himself in Berlin bunker.

JOSEPH STALIN

Stalin ruthlessly removed all rivals to rule the Soviet Union. He took part in the Russian Revolution in 1917, and became a Communist dictator after Lenin died. In 1939, Stalin signed a "no-war" pact with Hitler. However, he joined the Allies in 1941, after Hitler invaded Russia.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Stalin killed opponents in the Communist Party and the army in a series of "purges". Millions died in prison camps or were executed by Stalin's secret police. In 1941, he made himself supreme commander of the Red Army, but seldom visited battlefields or war-hit cities.

“ A single death is a tragedy: a million deaths is a statistic. ”

KEY DATES



1878: Born 18 December.



1917: Joined Russian Revolution.

1924: Followed Lenin as Soviet leader.

1935: Began to purge enemies and rivals.

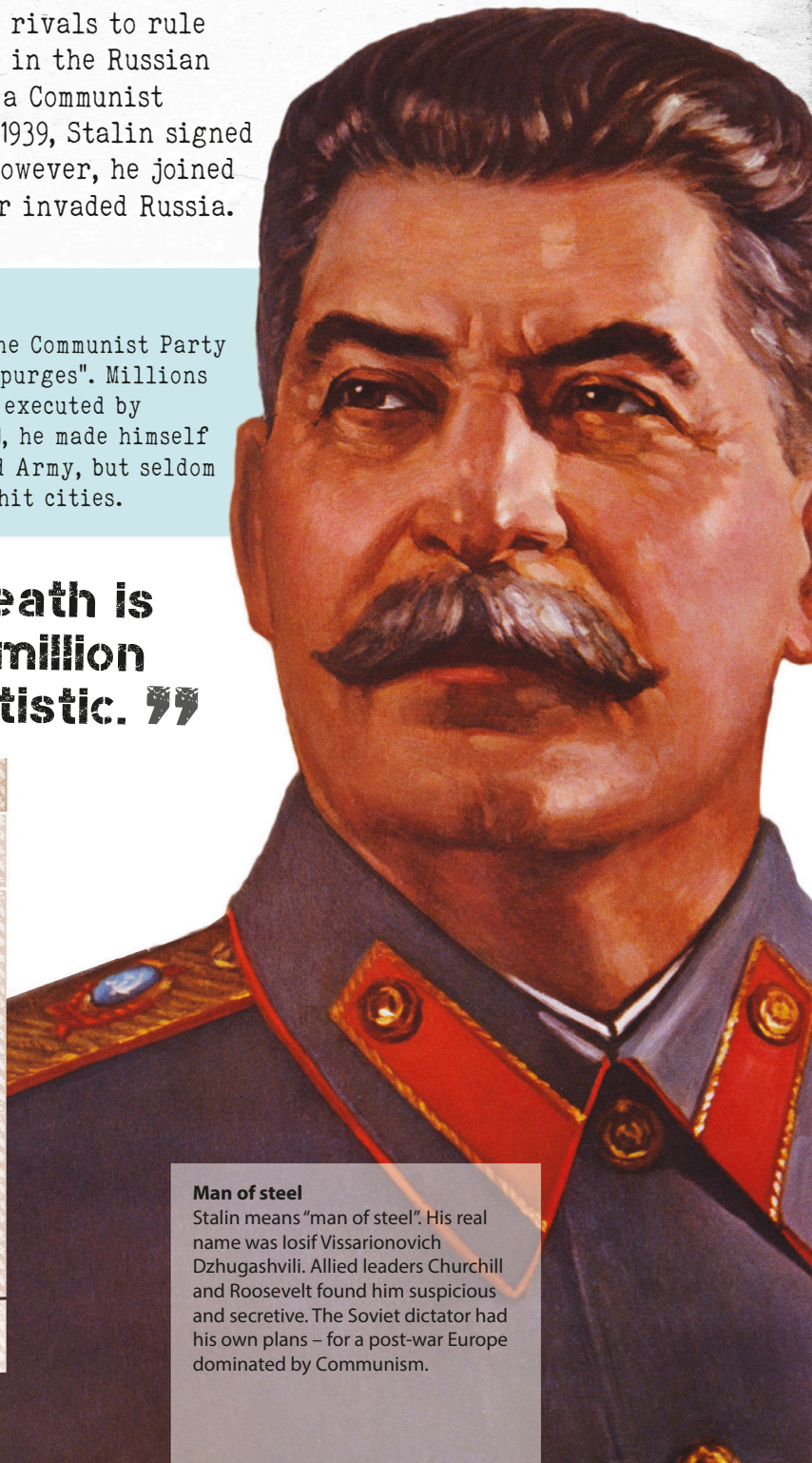
1939: Agreed a pact with Hitler to divide Poland.

1941: Joined Allies after Hitler attacked Russia.

1945: Ordered Communists to seize power in eastern Europe.



1953: Died 5 March.



Man of steel

Stalin means "man of steel". His real name was Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. Allied leaders Churchill and Roosevelt found him suspicious and secretive. The Soviet dictator had his own plans – for a post-war Europe dominated by Communism.

WINSTON CHURCHILL

Churchill was an inspirational leader as Britain's prime minister (1940–1945). After an adventurous life as a soldier, war reporter, and politician, many people thought Churchill was "past it" when he became war leader in 1940.

“ We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be... we shall never surrender. ”

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Churchill was famed for his stirring wartime speeches. He was known for his "V for Victory" hand sign, his energy and mood-swings, and his wish to run everything. He had to be prevented from joining the D-Day landings.

KEY DATES



1874: Born 30 November.



1900: Member of Parliament until 1964.

1911–1915: Navy minister.

1929–1939: Out of government.
Warns of Nazi danger.

1940: British prime minister,
led war effort.

1945: Lost general election.

1951: Prime minister until 1955.



1965: Died 24 January.

United leaders

Allied leaders Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin met at Yalta (Crimea) in 1945 to plan the final defeat of Germany. Soon afterwards, Churchill lost power in Britain's election. This amazed Stalin. There were no free elections in the Communist USSR.

BENITO MUSSOLINI

Benito Mussolini took Italy to war in 1940. Known as Il Duce ("The Leader"), he served in the army during WWI, and later founded Italy's Fascist Party. Mussolini was prime minister from 1922 before he began ruling as a dictator.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Mussolini wore military uniform and gave fiery speeches. He dreamed of an Italian empire, and called the Mediterranean "our sea". His black-shirt Fascists inspired the German Nazis, but Hitler thought Mussolini was weak.

“ For my part I prefer fifty thousand rifles to five million votes. ”

Italian ambition

Il Duce wanted to modernize Italy by improving roads and railways. He hoped joining Hitler would boost Italy's power in the Mediterranean, and gain colonies in Africa.

KEY DATES

- ★ 1883: Born 29 July.
- ★ 1926: Ruled Italy as dictator.
- ★ 1935: Invaded Ethiopia.
- ★ 1938: Became Hitler's ally.
- ★ 1940: Invaded Greece.
- ★ 1943: Arrested after Allies invaded Italy; rescued by German commandos.
- ★ 1945: Recaptured, shot by Italian partisans. Died 28 April.

EMPEROR HIROHITO

Hirohito was Japan's emperor from 1926. The country was moving to democracy, but instead the army took charge. Hirohito did not support Japan's march to war, but could do little to prevent it. In 1945, knowing his country faced destruction, he urged the government to surrender.

“ The fruits of victory are tumbling into our mouth too quickly. ”

LEADERSHIP STYLE

The emperor was rarely seen in public and many Japanese considered him to be a god. His leadership style was formal, and his behaviour was shaped by traditional codes of honour.

KEY DATES



1901: Born 29 April, son of Emperor Yoshihito.



1921: Visited England, which he liked for its more casual ways.

1926: Became Japanese emperor after his father died.

1941: Japan at war with the US and other Allies.

1945: Remained as emperor as post-war Japan modernized.



1989: Died 7 January.

A private man
Photographs of Hirohito with his family were seen only after the war, when Japanese society began to change. Quiet and studious, he was criticized for not stopping the war party who took over the Japanese government.



FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT

Franklin Roosevelt was US president for more than 12 years. At first, many Americans wanted to keep out of the war, but after Japan attacked the US in 1941, public opinion changed. Roosevelt ordered US forces into battle against Japan and Germany.

“A date which will live in infamy.”
7 December 1941, Japan attacks Pearl Harbor

LEADERSHIP STYLE

Roosevelt travelled overseas to plan war strategy with battlefield commanders and Allied leaders Churchill and Stalin. The radio talks that Roosevelt broadcast to Americans greatly increased his popularity.

Allies unite

Roosevelt suggested the name “United Nations” for the countries fighting against Germany, Italy, and Japan. The president died just a month after meeting Allied leaders at the Yalta conference in 1945.



KEY DATES



1882: Born 30 January.



1921: Contracted polio; learned to walk again.

1933: President of the US.

1941: Declared war on Japan after Pearl Harbor.

1944: Started unique fourth term as president.



1945: Died 12 April.

HARRY TRUMAN

Truman took over as president of the United States when Franklin Roosevelt died suddenly on 12 April 1945. Truman faced enormous decisions. The most difficult was ordering atomic bombs to be dropped on Japan to end the war.

LEADERSHIP STYLE

With little experience of world affairs, Truman relied on advisers as he met other Allied leaders to reshape the post-war world. He had a reputation for speaking his mind. Truman presided over the rebuilding of Japan and Europe, and the new "cold war" with the USSR.

⚡ The responsibility of great states is to serve and not to dominate the world. ⚡



KEY DATES



1884: Born 8 May.



1917: Served in US Army in WWI.

1934: US senator.

1944: Roosevelt's vice-president.

1945: President of the US.

1948–1952: Served full term as president.



1972: Died 26 December.

Peacekeeper

Truman oversaw the creation of the new United Nations (founded 24 October 1945) to maintain world peace, as well as the 1949 founding of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). His government helped to rebuild war-torn Europe.

WHY THE WORLD WENT TO WAR

World War II started in 1939, but the seeds of war were sown after World War I (1914–1918). In Germany, Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nazi party, built up a powerful armed force, and formed an alliance, known as the Axis, with Italy and Japan. All three nations had similar aims – to gain more power and territory.



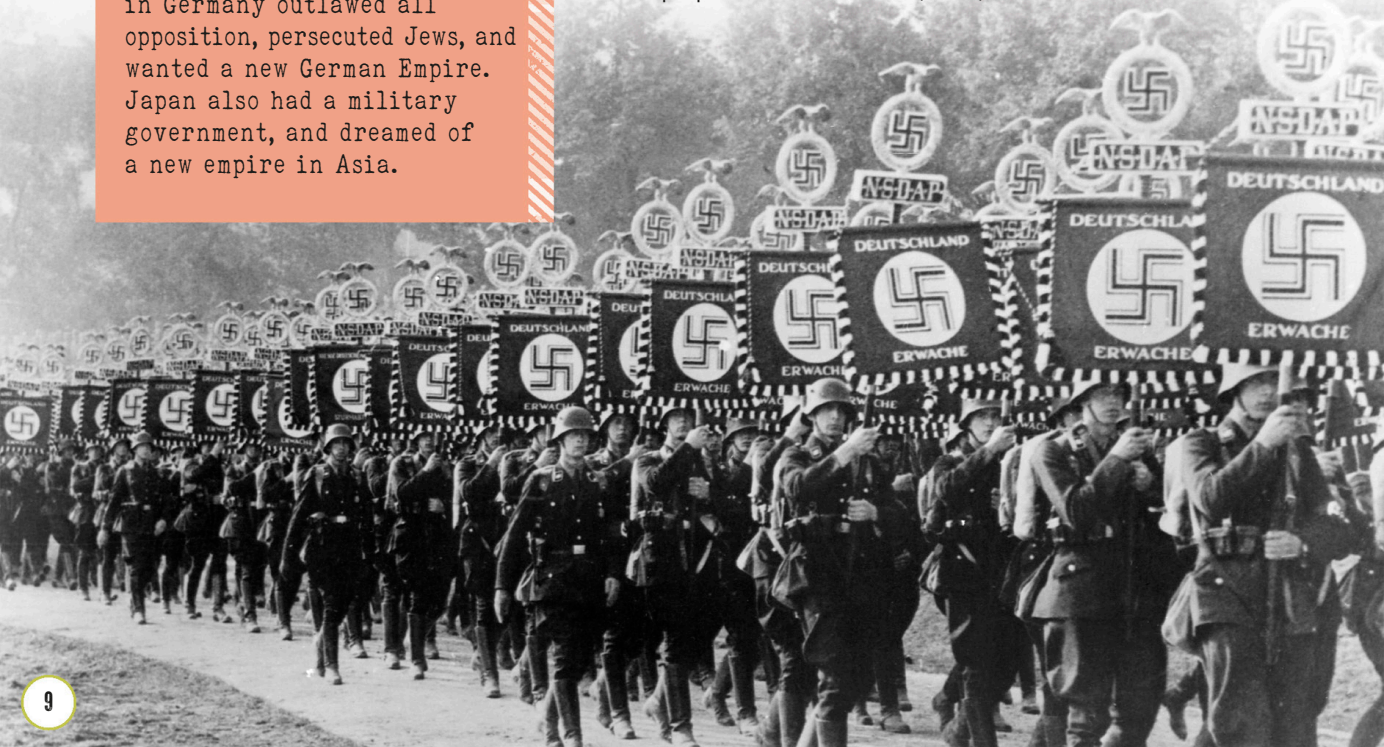
THE RISE OF FASCISM

Mussolini came to power in Italy in the 1920s. Hitler came to power in Germany in the 1930s. Both leaders believed in Fascism – a political system in which the government and the armed forces had supreme power, and opponents were jailed or killed. Stalin followed similar policies in the USSR in the name of Communism. The Nazis in Germany outlawed all opposition, persecuted Jews, and wanted a new German Empire. Japan also had a military government, and dreamed of a new empire in Asia.

THE ARMS RACE

As the Axis grew stronger, France, Britain, and the US slowly realised they must make new weapons ("re-arm"). By the late 1930s, all the leading nations had started to build up their armies, navies, and air forces. Japan went to war in China, and Italy attacked Abyssinia (Ethiopia). Confident he would not be stopped, Hitler demanded more territory, taking over Austria. The Nazis became more threatening, forcing many Jewish families to become refugees. Still Britain and France did not want war, and in the US, most people wanted no part in any new European conflict.

Huge Nazi parades were held across Germany, and propaganda was used to twist the truth, and rally the German people behind their "Führer" (leader).





KEEPING THE PEACE

In 1938, the memory of the horror of World War I was still strong. Britain and France did not want a second world war. Their governments tried to keep the peace (or at least delay war) by "appeasing" Hitler and giving him the territory he wanted. The League of Nations (an international organisation) was supposed to stop wars, but it had not prevented Japan attacking China or Italy attacking Abyssinia. The Nazis began to persecute Germany's Jews even more harshly. Most people felt that war was inevitable.

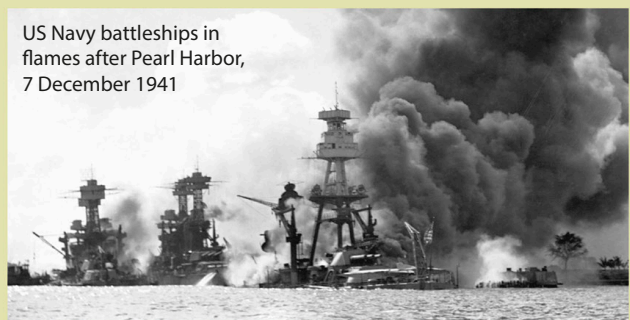
THE MUNICH AGREEMENT

On 30 September 1938, the British and French governments signed an agreement in Munich, allowing Hitler to take over part of Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain (left), the British prime minister, flew home with Hitler's signature on a peace deal. While many people felt relieved, others were not convinced. Their doubts were proved right. In 1939 Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia. Then he made a "no-war" treaty with Stalin, leader of the USSR, and they agreed to share Poland.

WAR BEGINS IN EUROPE, 1939

Hitler sent his armies into Poland on 1 September 1939. World War II had begun. The Poles asked for help from their allies, Britain and France. On 3 September, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Neither country did much to help Poland, which was occupied by German and Soviet armies. In 1940, Hitler invaded France, and by the end of the year, the Nazis occupied most of western Europe.

**“ I have nothing
to offer but
blood, toil, tears,
and sweat. ”**
Winston Churchill,
13 May 1940



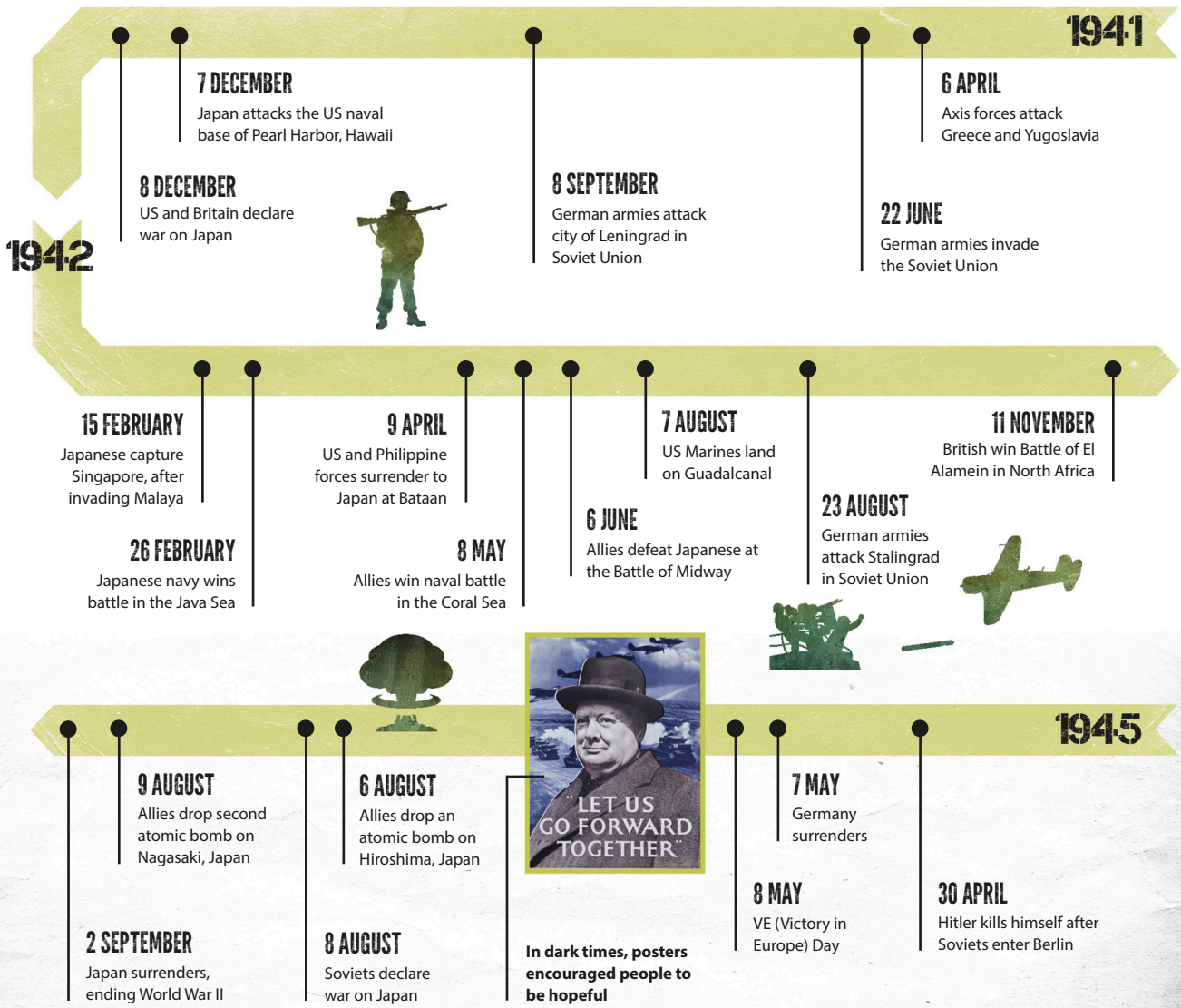
US Navy battleships in flames after Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941

THE WORLD AT WAR, 1941

For a time, only Britain and its Commonwealth allies, such as Australia and Canada, stood against the Nazis. The US government sent aid to Britain, but did not join the war. However, in 1941, Hitler attacked the USSR, and later that year Japan attacked the US at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Now the war was a global conflict, stretching from Europe to the Pacific. It would be the most destructive war in history, and shape the world as we know it today.

WORLD WAR II TIMELINE

World War II lasted six years, from September 1939 to August 1945. Every year of the war brought changes in fortunes for the warring nations: victories and defeats, setback and triumphs. For many people who lived, and fought, through the war years, these were the most important days of their lives, dates they never forgot.



1941

6 APRIL
Axis forces attack Greece and Yugoslavia

22 JUNE
German armies invade the Soviet Union

8 SEPTEMBER
German armies attack city of Leningrad in Soviet Union

7 DECEMBER
Japan attacks the US naval base of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

8 DECEMBER
US and Britain declare war on Japan



11 NOVEMBER
British win Battle of El Alamein in North Africa

23 AUGUST
German armies attack Stalingrad in Soviet Union

7 AUGUST
US Marines land on Guadalcanal

6 JUNE
Allies defeat Japanese at the Battle of Midway

8 MAY
Allies win naval battle in the Coral Sea

9 APRIL
US and Philippine forces surrender to Japan at Bataan

15 FEBRUARY
Japanese capture Singapore, after invading Malaya

26 FEBRUARY
Japanese navy wins battle in the Java Sea



1945

30 APRIL
Hitler kills himself after Soviets enter Berlin

7 MAY
Germany surrenders

8 MAY
VE (Victory in Europe) Day



In dark times, posters encouraged people to be hopeful



6 AUGUST
Allies drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan

8 AUGUST
Soviets declare war on Japan

9 AUGUST
Allies drop second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan

2 SEPTEMBER
Japan surrenders, ending World War II

1939

1 SEPTEMBER

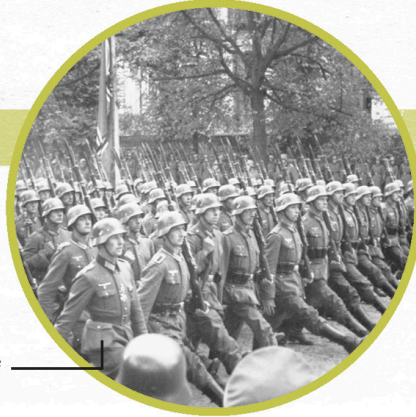
Germany invades Poland

3 SEPTEMBER

Britain and France at war with Germany



Hitler's armies advanced across Europe in a series of lightning military campaigns



1940

10 JULY – 31 OCTOBER: Battle of Britain

7 SEPTEMBER

Start of the Blitz – air raids on Britain

10 JUNE

Italy declares war on France and Britain

10 MAY

Germany invades Belgium, Netherlands, and France. Churchill is now British prime minister.

9 APRIL

Germany invades Denmark and Norway

22 JUNE

France signs a ceasefire with Germany



1943

JANUARY

US bombers raid Germany from Britain

13 MAY

Axis troops in North Africa surrender to Allies

9 SEPTEMBER

Allies land at Salerno in southern Italy

2 FEBRUARY

German troops surrender at Stalingrad

10 JULY

Allied forces land in Sicily

JULY

Battle of Kursk in Soviet Union

20 NOVEMBER

US forces land on Pacific island of Tarawa



1944

20 OCTOBER

Allies begin liberation of the Philippines

19 JUNE

US naval victory over Japan in Battle of the Philippine Sea

6 JUNE

D-Day: Allied armies land in Normandy (France)

26 OCTOBER

Allies win Battle of Leyte Gulf over Japanese navy

20 JUNE

German generals' plot to kill Hitler fails

13 JUNE

V-1 flying bombs hit southern England

The Allied landings in Normandy marked a turning point in the war



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