History

Year 11

Major World Events of the 20th Century

World War 2 Part B

(continued)



The Battle of Britain

What was it?

The Battle of Britain was an important battle in World War II. After Germany and Hitler had conquered most of Europe, including France, the only major country left to fight them was Great Britain. Germany wanted to invade Great Britain, but first they needed to destroy Great Britain's Royal Air Force. The Battle of Britain was when Germany bombed Great Britain in order to try and destroy their air force and prepare for invasion.

When was it?

The Battle of Britain started on July 10th, 1940. It lasted many months as the Germans continued to bomb Britain.

How did it get its name?

The name comes from a speech by the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill. After Germany had overrun France, he said that "the Battle of France is over. The Battle of Britain is about to begin."

The Battle

Germany needed to prepare for the invasion of Britain, so they first attacked towns and army defences on the southern coast. However, they soon found that Britain's Royal Air Force was a formidable opponent. The Germans decided to focus their efforts on defeating the Royal Air Force. This meant they bombed airport runways and British radar.

Although the German bombings continued, the British did not stop fighting back. Hitler began to get frustrated at how long it was taking to defeat Great Britain. He soon switched tactics and started bombing large cities including London.

Battle of Britain Day

On September 15, 1940 Germany launched a large bombing attack on the city of London. They felt that they were closing in on victory. The British Royal Air force took to the sky and scattered the German bombers. They shot down a number of German planes. It was clear from this battle that Britain was not defeated and that Germany was not being successful. Although Germany would continue bombing London and other targets in Great Britain for a long time, the raids began to slow as they realized they could not defeat the Royal Air Force.

Who won the Battle of Britain?

Although the Germans had more planes and pilots, the British were able to fight them off and win the battle. This was because they had the advantage of fighting over their own territory, they were defending their homeland, and they had radar. Radar allowed the British

to know when and where German planes were coming to attack. This gave them time to get their own planes in the air to help defend.

Interesting Facts

- Great Britain's air force was called the RAF or the Royal Air Force. Germany's air force was called the Luftwaffe.
- The code name for Hitler's invasion plans was Operation Sea Lion.
- It is estimated that around 1,000 British planes were shot down during the battle, while over 1,800 German planes were destroyed.
- The main types of fighter planes used in the battle were the Messerschmitt Bf109 and the Bf110 by the German Luftwaffe and Hurricane Mk and Spitfire Mk by the Royal Air Force.
- The leader of the German Luftwaffe was Herman Goering. The leader of the Royal Air Force was Sir Hugh Dowding.
- Germany continued to bomb London at night until May of 1941. This series of bombings was called the Blitz. At one point London was bombed for 57 nights in a row.
- Hitler finally stopped bombing London because he needed his bombers to invade Russia.

Questions

1) What country attacked Britain in the Battle of Britain?

2) What was the main goal Hitler wanted to accomplish by bombing the British air force in the Battle of Britain?

3) What year did the Battle of Britain take place?

4) What new technology helped the British air force in defending against the Germans?

5) What was the air force of Great Britain called?

6) Why did Hitler finally stop bombing Great Britain?

7) True or False: The Battle of Britain lasted a couple of days and then was over.

8) What was the air force of Germany called?

9) What advantage helped the British to win the battle?

Correct answer: All of the above

10) What city was bombed for 57 nights in a row during the Battle of Britain?

Check your answers

1. Germany

2. To destroy the air force in preparation to invade Britain

3. 1940

4. Radar

5. The Royal Air Force

6. Because he needed his air force to help with the invasion of Russia

7. FALSE

8. The Luftwaffe

9. The British were fighting for their homeland; The British were defending and fighting over their own territory; The British had radar

10. London

D-Day: The Invasion of Normandy

On June 6, 1944 the Allied Forces of Britain, America, Canada, and France attacked German forces on the coast of Normandy, France. With a huge force of over 150,000 soldiers, the Allies attacked and gained a victory that became the turning point for World War II in Europe. This famous battle is sometimes called D-Day or the Invasion of Normandy.

Leading up to the Battle

Germany had invaded France and was trying to take over all of Europe including Britain. However, Britain and the United States had managed to slow down the expanding German forces. They were now able to turn on the offensive.

To prepare for the invasion, the Allies amassed troops and equipment in Britain. They also increased the number of air strikes and bombings in German territory. Right before the invasion, over 1000 bombers a day were hitting German targets. They bombed railroads, bridges, airfields, and other strategic places in order to slow down and hinder the German army.

Deception

The Germans knew that an invasion was coming. They could tell by all the forces that were gathering in Britain as well as by the additional air strikes. What they didn't know was where the Allies would strike. In order to confuse the Germans, the Allies tried to make it look like they were going to attack north of Normandy at Pas de Calais.

The Weather

Although the D-Day invasion had been planned for months, it was almost cancelled due to bad weather. General Eisenhower finally agreed to attack despite the overcast skies. Although the weather did have some affect and on the Allies ability to attack, it also caused the Germans to think that no attack was coming. They were less prepared as a result.

The Invasion

The first wave of the attack began with the paratroopers. These were men who jumped out of planes using parachutes. They jumped at night in the pitch dark and landed behind enemy lines. Their job was to destroy key targets and capture bridges in order for the main invasion force to land on the beach. Thousands of dummies were also dropped in order to draw fire and confuse the enemy.

In the next stage of the battle thousands of planes dropped bombs on German defences. Soon after, warships began to bomb the beaches from the water. While the bombing was going on, underground members of the French Resistance sabotaged the Germans by cutting telephone lines and destroying railroads.

Soon the main invasion force of over 6,000 ships carrying troops, weapons, tanks, and equipment approached the beaches of Normandy.

Omaha and Utah Beaches

American troops landed at Omaha and Utah beaches. The Utah landing was successful, but the fighting at Omaha beach was fierce. Many US soldiers lost their lives at Omaha, but they were finally able to take the beach.

After the Battle

By the end of D-Day over 150,000 troops had landed in Normandy. They pushed their way inland allowing more troops to land over the next several days. By June 17th over half a million Allied troops had arrived and they began to push the Germans out of France.

The Generals

The Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces was Dwight D. Eisenhower of the United States. Other Allied generals included Omar Bradley from the United States as well as Bernard Montgomery and Trafford Leigh-Mallory from Britain. The Germans were led by Erwin Rommel and Gerd von Rundstedt.

Interesting Facts about D-Day

- The troops needed the light of a full moon to see to attack. For this reason there were only a few days during a month when the Allies could attack. This led Eisenhower to go ahead with the invasion despite the bad weather.

- The Allies timed their attack along with the ocean tides as this helped them to destroy and avoid obstacles put in the water by the Germans.
- Although June 6 is often called D-Day, D-Day is also a generic military term that stands for the day, D, of any major attack.
- The overall military operation was called "Operation Overlord". The actual landings at Normandy were called "Operation Neptune".

Questions

1) What is another name for the Invasion of Normandy?

2) Who was the main commander of the Allied Forces for the invasion?

3) What group of soldiers led the first wave of invaders?

4) What country were the Allied Forces trying to free from the Germans with the Invasion of Normandy?

5) On what two beaches did the American troops land at?

6) Which beach was it where the fighting was fierce and the Americans lost many lives?

7) Who was the leader of the German forces during the Invasion of Normandy?

8) What was the military name for the overall plans for invasion?

9) True or False: The invasion was nearly cancelled due to bad weather.

10) How many Allied troops landed on the first day of the invasion?

Check your answers

1. D-Day

2. Dwight D. Eisenhower

3. The paratroopers

4. France

5. Omaha and Utah

6. Omaha

7. Erwin Rommel

8. Operation Overlord

9. TRUE

10. 150,000

The Strategic Importance of Fiji During World War II

Fiji's location in the South Pacific made it a significant strategic point during World War II. As the Japanese forces advanced through the Pacific, Fiji became crucial for the Allied forces in their efforts to halt further expansion. The archipelago served as an essential link in the supply chain and a base for operations, contributing to the broader context of the Pacific War. Understanding Fiji war history is key to comprehending the dynamics of military strategy in the region during this period.

Several sites across the Fijian islands witnessed significant wartime activity. Notable among them is the Nadi area, which hosted airstrips used by the Allies. Another critical site is the town of Lautoka, which played a role in logistics and supplies. Visitors interested in Fiji war history can explore these areas to gain insights into the military operations that took place. These battlefields are not only historical landmarks but also a testament to the strategic maneuvers of the Allied forces.

The Role of the Fijian Military Forces

The contribution of the Fijian military forces during World War II is a proud chapter in Fiji war history. Fijian soldiers were known for their bravery and played a pivotal role in several key battles, including campaigns in the Solomon Islands. Their efforts were instrumental in the success of the Allied forces, and their legacy continues to be celebrated both locally and internationally.

Historical Significance and Legacy

The impact of World War II on Fiji extended beyond the battlefield. The war brought about significant social and economic changes, influencing the development of the nation in the post-war era. The presence of foreign troops and the war economy led to infrastructural development and cultural exchanges that have shaped modern Fiji. Exploring Fiji war history offers a window into these transformative years and their enduring legacy.

Preservation of WWII Heritage Sites

Efforts to preserve Fiji's WWII heritage sites are crucial for maintaining the historical narrative of the region. Organizations and local communities work together to ensure these sites are protected and accessible to the public. By safeguarding these areas, Fiji honors the memory of those who served and educates future generations about the significance of its war history.

Questions

1. What are some key WWII battlefields in Fiji that are significant to its war history?

2. How did Fiji's geographical location impact its involvement in WWII?

3. Are there any museums in Fiji dedicated to its WWII history?

4. What role did Fijian soldiers play during WWII?

5. Why is it important to explore and understand Fiji's WWII heritage?

Answers

1. Fiji's war history includes significant sites like the Nadi and Nausori airfields, which were crucial during WWII for Allied forces. These locations played vital roles in the Pacific campaign, serving as bases for air operations and logistics.

2. Fiji's strategic location in the South Pacific made it a critical point for Allied operations, contributing to its war history. The islands served as a hub for military logistics and troop movements, impacting the course of the Pacific theatre.

3. Yes, the Fiji Museum in Suva offers exhibits that delve into Fiji's war history, including its role in WWII. The museum provides insights into the local impact of the war and showcases artifacts from that era.

4. Fijian soldiers were instrumental in various campaigns in the Pacific, demonstrating bravery and resilience. Their contributions are a significant part of Fiji's war history, highlighting the involvement of local forces in global conflicts.

5. Understanding Fiji's war history is crucial for appreciating the island nation's role in global events. It highlights the strategic importance of Fiji during the war and honours the contributions of those who served, providing a deeper connection to the past.

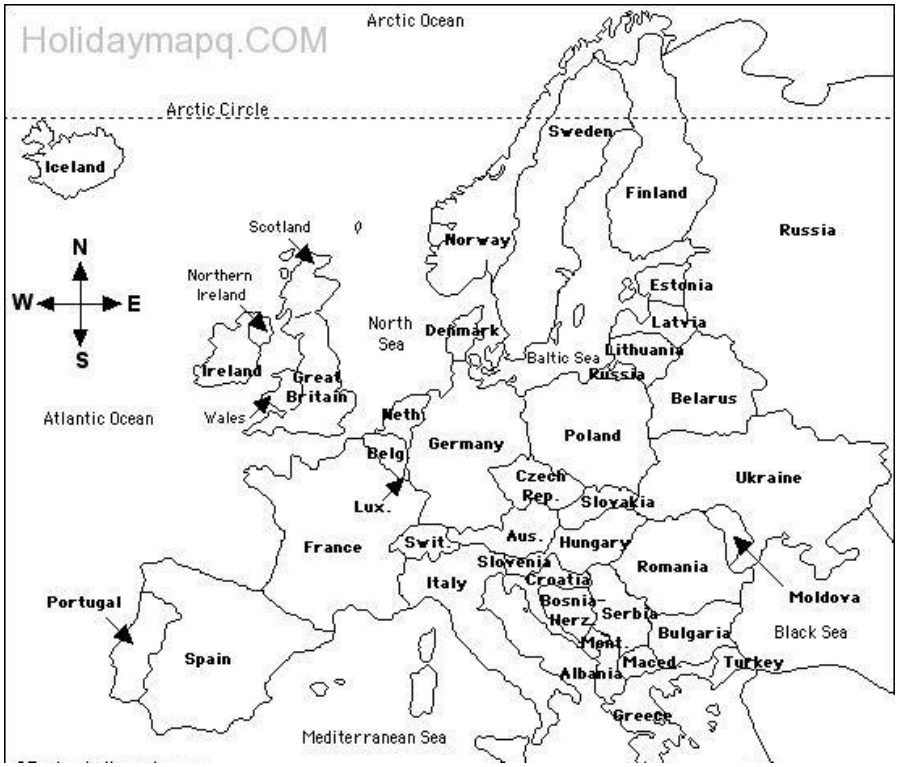


Fiji War Memorial in Levuka

Invasion of Norway

A true story from World War 2

During the Second World War, Norway was invaded and occupied by German forces. In defense, Britain and Norwegian resistance movements fought to free Norway from the control of Germany. On April 27, 1940, a British fighter plane shot down a German bomber over the Norwegian wilderness, but had to crash land itself. The crews of both the German and British aircrafts emerged alive. Here is the detailed story.



Captain Partridge and Lieutenant Bostock of the British Airforce were leading a fighter patrol consisting of three fighter planes, over the mountainous Ålesund area of Norway when they spotted a German bomber plane.

Partridge immediately engaged the German bomber and managed to damage its port engine enough to force it to crash land. However, any joy Partridge may have felt after downing the German plane was quickly dampened, as one of the engines on his plane failed shortly after this. With no option but to crash land in the snowy Norwegian wilderness, Partridge and Bostock managed to glide their aircraft down and perform a relatively smooth crash landing next to a frozen lake. Both British airmen survived without injury and after getting out of their fighter plane, – which was only lightly damaged – they set about destroying it, lest it fall into enemy hands.



British fighter plane - Skua



German fighter plane – Heinkel Bomber

While gliding down to Earth, the two airmen had noticed that there was a hunter's hut on a nearby hill, and they decided that this would be an ideal place to take shelter from the cold. Setting off on foot through the knee-deep snow, they eventually made it to the hut after a long, difficult hike.

It turned out, however, that Partridge and Bostock had not been the only airmen to have survived a crash landing that day. While the German bomber's tail gunner, Hans Hauck, had been killed, the rest of the crew had survived both the attack and the subsequent landing uninjured.

It was late in the afternoon when Partridge and Bostock heard footsteps approaching the hunter's hut. Arming themselves with their pistols, they waited in suspense for what could have been an attack. The attack, however, never came, even though the men outside were enemy troops, and were armed themselves with revolvers and knives.

The German airmen indicated to the British airmen that their intention was not to attack. Despite the tension in the air, Partridge holstered his pistol and invited the Germans into the hut. Grateful to have shelter from the harsh winter night, the German crew – named Strunk, Schopis and Auchtor – entered the hut. Using a mixture of broken English from the Germans and vice versa from the Brits, the airmen were able to communicate with each other.

As darkness was falling, and there wasn't enough space for everyone to sleep in the hut, the British airmen decided that they would make for a chalet, (wooden house), that was visible in the distance, and allow the Germans to take shelter in the hunter's hut. The Germans, grateful for the shelter, agreed to this.

The chalet was abandoned, but there was a wood stove, cooking utensils and a small bag of oats that had been left in one of the cupboards. The next morning the Germans arrived at the chalet, having decided that this was a better option for accommodation than the hunter's hut. To get the fire going they had to remove wooden boards from the chalet, and to cook the oats, they collected snow and melted if in a pot over the fire. So that morning, all five men sat down together and ate breakfast. But the food soon ran out. They collected moss and boiled it up as soup. But fire wood was in short supply as everything outside was wet with snow.

Realizing that they needed to get back to civilization, it was agreed that Partridge (British) and Strunk (German) would set out together on an expedition. It didn't take them too long to find other people – or, rather, to be found by other people. A Norwegian ski patrol saw the two airmen hiking through the snow, and a Norwegian sniper, believing them both to be Germans, fired a warning shot at them.

Partridge hit the ground, while Strunk raised his hands above his head and shouted, "English, English!". Strunk then made a movement which the sniper interpreted as reaching for his pistol, so he fired another shot – this one aimed at Strunk. The shot was fatal, and the German airman fell to the ground, dead.

The Norwegians initially refused to believe that Partridge was British and demanded that he take them back to the hut, which he did. They arrested all of the men, but Partridge and Bostock were eventually able to convince the Norwegians that they were British by showing them the labels in their uniforms and British coins they had on them.

Also, by a rather amazing coincidence, it turned out that one of Partridge's friends knew the leader of the Norwegian patrol. Once this fact was established, the British airmen were freed. The Germans, however, were not so fortunate.

The Germans, Schopis and Auchtor, were sent to a prison camp at Stryn in Norway. They were later transferred to a POW camp in Britain, and then again to another POW camp in Canada, from which they were released in 1947, after seven years of captivity.

As for the British airmen, they hiked 21 miles through the snow to Ålesund. However, when they arrived the town was under heavy attack from the Germans, and all British personnel were being evacuated.

The Royal British Navy destroyer that was supposed to evacuate them didn't arrive, so Partridge and Bostock commandeered a car and drove to the port of Åndalsnes, where HMS Manchester got them back to Britain.

While Bostock was killed in action later in the war, Partridge survived, and in the 1970s Partridge and Schopis met up in Britain, this time as friends instead of enemy soldiers. They remained in contact until the ends of their lives. A film about the incident, *Into the White*, was released in 2012.

Questions

1. Where is Norway in relation to the Arctic Circle?
2. Describe the conditions in the Norway wilderness.
3. Give the names of the fighter planes of each group.
4. How did the British airmen know that there was a hut nearby after they crash-landed?
5. What could have happened when the Germans walked into the hut?
6. Why didn't the British stay in the hut with the Germans?
7. What is a chalet?
8. Why did the chalet offer better accommodation than the hut?
9. Explain what the men had to do in order to survive while living in the chalet.
10. Why did Partridge and Strunk set out on an expedition?
11. What could you say about the relationship that the Germans and British had together by this time?
12. Why was Strunk killed?
13. How did the two British men get back to Britain?
14. What happened to the two Germans?
15. What happened to Bostock a few years after returning to Britain?
16. Make a comment on the event that happened in the 1970s.
17. What does this true story show you about the resilience and character of the men?

Bomb Blast – London 1943

LONDON, JULY 1943

The bombs had done their worst. Shattered houses, broken men and women, sobbing children. Homes had been ripped apart; bodies lay crushed. Only the whimpering of the survivors was more distressing than the sight of the dead.

All night long surgeons had worked to repair and revive. The walking wounded stood in line, the less fortunate were carried to the makeshift surgery on stretchers, some were slumped on boards and doors. Ambulance and motorcycle dispatch carried blood plasma from the depots through the fire and rubble. Firefighters sweated in the heat and choked on smoke. People searching for loved ones and friends sweated in fear and gulped back tears.

John Grady was eight years old. When the German fighter- bomber lunged toward London he was playing with a box of tin soldiers. He sat cross-legged on the bedroom floor lining up the toy men in single file before knocking them down like dominoes. His mother, Jane, stood in the front room of her terraced house, ironing. By the time the first siren howled it was already too late.

Spitfires shot down five of the German warplanes, two crashing outside the city. Another two were ripped apart by anti-aircraft guns. One of the raiders got through, twisting and turning, searching for an easy target. It came screaming out of the clouds, flying low before releasing its bombs. For many, death was instant.

One of the bombs exploded in the street outside John's house, another blew the roof of the house next door. The blast threw his mother across the room, tossing her in the air like a rag doll. Walls crumbled, windows and doors exploded. The living room ceiling caved in, burying jane under an avalanche of plaster, bricks and timber. The boy was curled into a ball in the comer of the bedroom. The gaping hole in the floor had swallowed the bed.

The fighter-bomber made another lunge, machine guns blazing. John screamed, clamping trembling hands over his ears to deaden the awful noise. The raider made one last attack, raking the debris with bullets before banking away from the carnage and climbing up through the smoke and clouds. John waited, eyes shut tight, hands still over his ears. He waited for more bombs and bullets, frozen by fear and whispering: ‘Jesus, save me. Jesus, save me. Keep us safe, save my mum, don’t let her die.’

All through the attack the boy had prayed. Even when the house shook and the floor trembled violently, he did not stop whispering to God. The bedroom ceiling twisted and cracked and finally caved in, showering the room with debris. John flinched in terror as plaster and timber rained down. He cried out loud when another bomb exploded outside, shattering the glass in the windows. But he kept praying. ‘Keep us safe, Lord, keep us safe.

God, keep us alive. Please make it stop, make it stop.’ And it did stop. When all the killing had been done and when the street lay in ruins, all was quiet again. Only then did John stop praying. And then he wept. He cried and cried, and his tiny body trembled. He remained curled up in the corner, not daring to move, not daring even to open his eyes.

When he took his hands from his ears the silence seemed more deafening than the exploding bombs. Soon the broken building creaked and groaned. Debris shifted, crumbled and fell. In the distance a siren whined. From somewhere outside came shouts, then screams.

Slowly John opened his eyes, squinting in the darkness, ready to snap them shut again as flames from a burning house across the street cast frightening shapes on his wall. Dust and smoke filled the room. He could smell and taste it, and struggled to breathe.

He got up on to his knees, reaching out his hand to feel the floor in front of him, the wall behind. Bravely, he stood, then slowly moved sideways, his back pressed against the wall. He thought of his mother but could not call out her name.

Another step, and another, but then there was no more floor and John was falling through the darkness, his young mind gripped with fear. Suddenly strong hands broke his fall. Then he was being carried through the nibble that had been his home and out into the cool night air. Gently, the hands lowered him, setting him back on his feet and steadying him, palms reassuringly flat on his back. At last John felt safe. But when he turned around, he was alone.

It was eight in the morning when the workmen started digging a long, common grave for the dead. Rescuers were picking through the nibble, searching for survivors. A soldier found John inside the bombed house. The boy was on his knees, clawing through the debris with his bare hands. ‘My mother’s in here,’ he told the soldier. ‘She’s not dead, she's in here,’ John screamed and kicked as the soldier dragged him away.

‘Where did you find him?’ a sergeant asked.

The soldier had to use all his strength no keep the boy from running back into what was left of his home. ‘In the end house,’ he said. ‘He hasn’t got a scratch on him. He was trying to find his mother . . .'

The sergeant shook his head. ‘That side of the street took the worst of it. It’s a wonder the child survived.’

The soldier nodded. ‘He says he was upstairs and fell through a hole in the floor. Says someone caught him and carried him outside.’

‘Who?’

The soldier shrugged. ‘He doesn’t know.’ He looked at John’s tear-streaked face. ‘He must have got out on his own.’

The sergeant thought for a moment. ‘Take him over to the church hall. There are women over there; they’ll look after him.’

Jane sat slumped on a pew, crying. Another woman held her, stroking her hair, comforting her. ‘They wouldn’t let me look for him,’ Jane muttered. ‘Said it was too dangerous. N0 survivors, they said. N0 survivors. I was the only one. Oh, John . . .’

‘It’s amazing anyone got out alive,’ said another woman.

Jane wiped her eyes. ‘I don‘t remember much, just someone lifting me up and carrying me out. I don’t know who it was. Took me out into the street and set me down. But when I looked there was no one there. No one at all.’

From Miracles Can Happen – True stories of Divine Encounters by Phil Shirley

Questions and Activities

1. Who was bombing London and why?
2. What year was this?
3. What kind of toys did children have at this time?
4. The English fighter planes were called spitfires. They were smaller and faster than the German fighter planes. How did they retaliate?
5. How many German planes were there?
6. How many manages to escape the spitfires and drop the bombs?
7. What damage did the bombs do to the London houses?
8. What was the miracle that took place when John prayed?
9. Who do you think rescued both John and his mother? (Who caught John and his mother as they fell?)
10. Read Psalm 91, and take note of verse 11. How does this make you feel?



The War in the Pacific

There were two major places where World War II took place. These places are sometimes called theatres of war. One theatre of World War II was in Europe, the other was in the Pacific. The Pacific theatre of war included Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines, and many more islands and countries in Southeast Asia.

Leading up to the War

Japan wanted to become a strong country and a world leader. However, because Japan was a small island country, they had to import many natural resources. Some Japanese leaders felt they needed to gain more land by conquering other countries.

In 1937 Japan invaded China. They wanted to dominate all of Southeast Asia. They joined the Axis alliance with Germany and Italy in 1940 by signing the Tripartite Pact. In 1941 a former General of the Army, Hideki Tojo, became Prime Minister of Japan. He had been a strong supporter of Japan joining the Axis Powers. Now that he was Prime Minister, Tojo wanted Japan to attack the United States.

Pearl Harbor

Although the US was trying to avoid getting involved in World War II, Japan was worried that the US would try and stop them from taking over some countries in Southeast Asia. They decided to attack the US Navy hoping they could sink enough ships to keep the US from ever attacking Japan.

On December 7, 1941 Japan attacked the US Navy at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. They surprised the US and sunk many ships. However, this attack did not have the effect the Japanese had hoped. The US joined the Allies in World War II the next day. The attack at Pearl Harbor united the Americans with the goal of defeating the Axis powers, and especially Japan.

The War

The Japanese quickly took over much of Southeast Asia and were well on their way to dominance by 1942. However, the US won a critical battle called the Battle of Midway on June 4, 1942. Badly outnumbered, the US Navy sunk four Japanese aircraft carriers and forced the Japanese to retreat. Winning this battle gave the Americans cause for hope and was a turning point in the war in the Pacific.

After the Battle of Midway the United States began to fight back against the Japanese. They fought to take over strategic islands in the Pacific. One of the first major battles was over the island of Guadalcanal. After fierce fighting the US was able to take the island, but they learned that fighting the Japanese was not going to be easy. There were many battles over islands in the South Pacific, these included Tarawa, Saipan, and Iwo Jima. Iwo Jima took 36

days of fighting to take the island. Today a statue of marines raising a flag on the island of Iwo Jima serves as the Marine Corps Memorial in Washington DC.

The Atomic Bomb

Finally in 1945 the Japanese army had been pushed back to Japan. However, the Japanese would not surrender. American leaders felt that the only way to get Japan to surrender would be to invade the main island of Japan. However, they feared this would cost the lives of up to 1 million US soldiers.

Instead of invading, President Harry S. Truman decided to use a new weapon called the atomic bomb. The first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. It completely destroyed the city and killed thousands and thousands of people. Japan did not surrender. Another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. This time the Japanese decided to surrender.

Japan Surrenders

On August 15, 1945 Japanese Emperor Hirohito announced that Japan would surrender. Later on September 2, 1945 the Japanese signed a surrender treaty with US General Douglas MacArthur aboard the battleship USS Missouri. This day was called V-J Day which means Victory in Japan.

Other Facts about World War II in the Pacific

- In order to attack Japan, Air Force Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle demonstrated that large B-25 bomber planes could take off from air craft carriers.
- Japanese fighter pilots would purposely crash their planes into US ships in what were called Kamikaze attacks.
- The Soviet Union had been at peace with Japan during much of World War II. They agreed to attack Japanese forces in Manchuria on August 8, 1945. This also helped in forcing Japan to surrender.
- The Japanese were guilty of many war crimes during World War II. This includes the killing of up to 20 million Chinese people. They had a policy called "Kill All, Burn All, and Loot All". They used biological weapons and tortured prisoners of war. As a result, many Japanese leaders were executed after the war including Prime Minister Hideki Tojo.

Questions

1) What country was the main Axis power in the Pacific theatre of World War II?

2) What Prime Minister of Japan pushed for Japan to attack the United States?

3) What day did Japan attack Pearl Harbor?

4) True or False: Japan achieved their main goal in attacking Pearl Harbor when the United States entered World War II on side of the Allied Powers.

5) What did the United States victory at the Battle of Midway do for the Americans in the war?

6) When the Japanese forces withdrew to mainland Japan, what did the United States decide to do?

7) What US general accepted the surrender of the Japanese forces?

8) What were Kamikaze attacks?

9) Why did the Japanese want to take over other countries?

Check your answer

1. Japan

2. Hideki Tojo

3. 7-Dec-41

4. FALSE

5. It weakened the Japanese by sinking four aircraft carriers; It gave the Americans cause for hope; It was a turning point in the war

6. Drop the atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima

7. Douglas MacArthur

8. When Japanese planes would purposely crash into US ships

9. Because they felt they needed the natural resources to become a major world power

Pearl Harbour

The Attack on Pearl Harbor happened on December 7th, 1941. Japanese airplanes made a surprise attack on the US Navy in Pearl Harbor. They destroyed many ships and killed many soldiers. It was this attack that forced the United States to enter World War II.

Where is Pearl Harbor?

Pearl Harbor is located in Hawaii on the island of O'ahu. Hawaii is located in the Pacific Ocean between California and Japan. During the time of World War II, Hawaii was not a state, but a US territory.

Before the Attack

World War II had been raging in Europe and Asia for two years, but the United States had not entered the war. The Empire of Japan was trying to take over much of Asia and was worried about the US Navy in Hawaii. They decided to strike in order to prevent the United States from attacking them.

The Japanese thought that if they took out the war ships in Pearl Harbor, then the United States Navy would be crippled and would never attack. However, they were mistaken and the attack on Pearl Harbor had just the opposite result. The US declared war the next day.

The Attack

The attack on Pearl Harbor came as a complete surprise. Hundreds of Japanese fighter planes and bombers flew to Pearl Harbor and attacked. The bombers dropped bombs and torpedoes on the war ships, while the fighter planes attacked the US fighter planes on the ground so they could not take off and fight back. There were two waves of attacks and by the end of the second wave a number of US ships were destroyed.

The Numbers

Here are the casualties from both sides during the attack. Although the Japanese inflicted considerable damage to the US Navy, they did not cripple it. They damaged many ships including warships, destroyers, and cruisers. They also destroyed a lot of the fighter planes and aircraft at the base. However, all of the US ships but three (the Arizona, the Utah, and the Oklahoma) were able to be recovered and were used later during the war.

The biggest US loss was the sinking of the USS Arizona. Over 1,100 US military personnel died when the Arizona sunk.

After the Attack

The citizens of the United States were in shock. They had tried to avoid the war, but they could not ignore this attack. The Japanese had hoped to break the Americans by attacking Pearl Harbor, instead they united them. The next day, December 8th, 1941, the US declared

war on Japan. Three days later Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the United States. The United States was now a major part of World War II.

The US Navy was able to recover from the attack on Pearl Harbor fairly quickly. The Japanese had not damaged a number of important facilities on the Hawaiian Islands, including oil storage depots and repair yards. Also, no aircraft carriers were in Pearl Harbor at the time of the attack. Aircraft carriers would soon become the most important type of navy vessels in the war.

Interesting Facts

- The Japanese reportedly had intended to declare war prior to the attack. However, the message never got to the President.
- President Roosevelt gave a famous speech after the attack in which he said December 7th would be a "date which will live in infamy".
- Every president since Franklin D. Roosevelt has visited the USS Arizona Memorial site.
- The Japanese also used submarines, including smaller ones called midget submarines, in the attack.
- The entire attack lasted around 110 minutes, just under two hours.
- The Japanese attacked on a Sunday morning because they thought the US soldiers would be less alert at that time.

Questions

1) What day was Pearl Harbor attacked by the Japanese?

2) Why did Japan attack Pearl Harbor?

3) What was the reaction of the United States to the attack?

4) What important type of naval vessel was not destroyed in the attack?

5) About how long did the attack on Pearl Harbor last?

6) When this ship was sunk at Pearl Harbor, over one thousand US soldiers lost their lives.

7) What day of the week did the Japanese attack?

8) True or False: The Japanese achieved their objective of crippling the US Navy and keeping the US from helping other countries in Southeast Asia.

9) What facilities in Hawaii did the Japanese not attack that allowed the US Navy to recover quickly?

Check your answers

1. 7-Dec-41

2. Because they wanted to prevent the US from attacking Japan; Because they wanted to continue to take over countries in Southeast Asia; Because they wanted to cripple the US Navy

3. They declared war on Japan the next day

4. Aircraft carriers

5. Two hours

6. USS Arizona

7. Sunday

8. FALSE

9. oil storage depots and repair yards, and aircraft carriers



The Atomic Bomb

At the start of World War II in 1939 the atomic bomb had not yet been invented. However, scientists discovered about that time that a powerful explosion might be possible by splitting an atom. This type of bomb could destroy large cities in a single blast and would change warfare forever.

Albert Einstein

Albert Einstein came up with many of the theories that helped scientists in making the atomic bomb. When he realized that such a bomb could be made, he was frightened about what might happen if Hitler and Germany learned how to make the bomb first. He wrote a letter to US President Franklin Roosevelt telling him about the atom bomb. As a result, Roosevelt set up the Manhattan Project.

Manhattan Project

The Manhattan Project was the name for the research and development program for the atomic bomb. It started small, but as the bomb became more real, the United States added scientists and funding to be sure they were the first to have the bomb. Ironically, many of the scientists involved in making the bomb had defected from Germany. By the end of the project, funding had reached $2 billion and there were around 200,000 people working on the project.

The First Atomic Bomb

On July 16, 1945 the first atomic bomb was exploded in the New Mexico desert. The explosion was massive and the equivalent to 18,000 tons of TNT. Scientists figured that the temperature at the centre of the explosion was three times hotter than at the centre of the sun.

Although the scientists were happy they had successfully made the bomb, they also were sad and fearful. This bomb would change the world and could cause mass destruction and death. When President Harry Truman heard of the bomb's success he wrote "We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world".

Deciding to Drop the Bomb

By the time the first atomic bomb had been made, Germany had already surrendered and World War II in Europe was over. Japan was defeated as well, but would not surrender. The US was contemplating an invasion of Japan. Army leaders figured that anywhere from 500,000 to 1 million US and Allied soldiers would die in an invasion. President Truman decided to drop the atomic bomb instead.

Hiroshima

On August 6, 1945 an atomic bomb named Little Boy was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. The explosion was huge, the city was destroyed, and tens of thousands of people were killed. The bomb was dropped by a plane named the Enola Gay which was piloted by Colonel Paul Tibbetts. The bomb itself was over 10 feet long and weighed around 10,000 pounds. A small parachute was on the bomb in order to slow its drop and allow the plane time to fly away from the blast zone.

Nagasaki

Despite witnessing the terrible destruction of the bomb on Hiroshima, Emperor Hirohito and Japan still refused to surrender. Three days later, on August 9, 1945, another atomic bomb, nicknamed Fat Man, was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan. Again, the devastation was horrible.

Surrender

Six days after the bombing of Nagasaki, Emperor Hirohito and Japan surrendered to US forces. The Emperor announced this on the radio. It was the first time most Japanese had heard his voice.

Interesting Facts

- The lead scientist on the Manhattan Project was J. Robert Oppenheimer. He is often called the "father of the atomic bomb".
- The first bomb dropped on Hiroshima was made from uranium. The bomb dropped on Nagasaki was made from plutonium, which was even more powerful than uranium.
- It is thought that at least 135,000 people died from the Hiroshima explosion and another 70,000 in Nagasaki. Many of these people were civilians including women and children.
- Hiroshima was chosen because it was a large port city with an army base. It also had not been damaged much by earlier bombings. This would show just how powerful the new weapon was.

Questions

1) What scientist wrote a letter to President Roosevelt telling him of the potential of an atomic bomb?

2) What was the name of the secret project in the United States to develop an atomic bomb?

3) Where was the first atomic bomb exploded?

4) How much money did the United States government invest into the making of the atomic bomb?

5) What president made the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan in World War II?

6) Why did the United States decide to drop the bomb rather than invade Japan with soldiers?

7) What Japanese city was the atomic bomb first dropped on?

8) What was the nickname of the bomb that was dropped on Nagasaki?

9) What scientist and leader of the atomic bomb research team is considered the father of the atomic bomb?

10) True or false: The American scientists were scared when they saw that their bombed worked as expected.

Check your answers

1. Albert Einstein

2. The Manhattan Project

3. The desert in New Mexico

4. $2 billion

5. Harry S. Truman

6. Because they estimated that 500,000 to 1 million Allied soldiers would die in an invasion

7. Hiroshima

8. Fat Man

9. J. Robert Oppenheimer

10. TRUE





WW2 Timeline

World War II lasted from 1939 to 1945. There were several major events leading up to the war and then during the war. Here is a timeline listing some of the major events:

Leading up to the War

1933 January 30 - Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany. His Nazi Party, or the Third Reich, takes power and Hitler is essentially the dictator of Germany.

1936 October 25 - Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy form the Rome-Berlin Axis treaty.

1936 November 25 - Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact. This was a pact against communism and Russia.

1937 July 7 - Japan invades China.

1938 March 12 - Hitler annexes the country of Austria into Germany. This is also called the Anschluss.

World War II

1939 September 1 - Germany invades Poland. World War II begins.

1939 September 3 - France and Great Britain declare war on Germany.

1940 April 9 to June 9 - Germany invades and takes control of Denmark and Norway.

1940 May 10 to June 22 - Germany uses quick strikes called blitzkrieg, meaning lightning war, to take over much of western Europe including the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France.

1940 May 30 - Winston Churchill becomes leader of the British government.

1940 June 10 - Italy enters the war as a member of the Axis powers.

1940 July 10 - Germany launches an air attack on Great Britain. These attacks last until the end of October and are known as the Battle of Britain.

1940 September 22 - Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact creating the Axis Alliance.

1941 June 22 - Germany and the Axis Powers attack Russia with a huge force of over four million troops.

1941 December 7 - The Japanese attack the US Navy in Pearl Harbor. The next day the US enters World War II on the side of the Allies.

1942 June 4 - The US Navy defeats the Japanese navy at the Battle of Midway.

1943 July 10 - The Allies invade and take the island of Sicily.

1943 September 3 - Italy surrenders to the Allies, however Germany helps Mussolini to escape and set up a government in Northern Italy.

1944 June 6 - D-day and the Normandy invasion. Allied forces invade France and push back the Germans.

1944 August 25 - Paris is liberated from German control.

1944 December 16 - The Germans launch a large attack in the Battle of the Bulge. They lose to the Allies sealing the fate of the German army.

1945 February 19 - US Marines invade the island of Iwo Jima. After a fierce battle they capture the island.

1945 April 12 - US President Franklin Roosevelt dies. He is succeeded by President Harry Truman.

1945 March 22 - The US Third Army under General Patton crosses the Rhine River.

1945 April 30 - Adolf Hitler commits suicide as he knows Germany has lost the war.

1945 May 7 - Germany surrenders to the Allies.

1945 August 6 - The United States drops the Atomic Bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. The city is devastated.

1945 August 9 - Another atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki, Japan.

1945 September 2 - Japan surrenders to US General Douglass MacArthur and the Allies.

Questions

1) What event triggered the start of World War II?

2) What year did World War II begin?

3) What was the name of the long running air attack of Germany on Great Britain that lasted from July 1940 until October 1940?

4) What was the battle where the Allies attacked Germany on the coast of France and pushed back the Germans?

5) What day was the invasion of Normandy or D-Day?

6) What caused the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies?

7) What date was the attack on Pearl Harbor?

8) What Japanese city did the United State drop the atomic bomb on first?

9) In what year did Hitler become leader of Germany?

10) Who became president when Franklin D. Roosevelt died in 1945?

Check your answers

1. Germany attacked Poland

2. 1939

3. Battle of Britain

4. D-Day

5. 6-Jun-44

6. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor

7. 7-Dec-41

8. Hiroshima

9. 1933

10. Harry S. Truman

After the War

Many things changed once World War II was over. Much of Europe and Eastern Asia had been destroyed by the fighting and bombings that had taken place over many years. Also, many country's borders needed to be set and governments re-established where Germany or Japan had taken over.

Europe

Germany had occupied much of Europe during World War II. Many of the countries in the west returned to the same governments and borders they had prior to the war. However, Germany was divided up into Eastern and Western Germany. The Eastern part was controlled by the USSR (Russia) and the Western part by the Allies.

The USSR also took control of many of the countries in Eastern Europe where they had fought the Germans. These included Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia.

Europe was in much need of financial aid due to all the roads, bridges, buildings and more that had been destroyed in the fighting. The United States offered Aid in the form of the Marshall Plan to help Europe recover.

Japan and Eastern Asia

The US and the Allies occupied Japan. They maintained control as Japan recovered from the war. Japan would become an independent nation again in 1952.

In Korea, the Allies and the USSR (Russia) divided up the country into North and South Korea. The plan was for Russia to control the North and the Allies the South until a free election could be held for the entire country. This never happened as Russia later refused and the country is still split to this day with North Korea controlled by communists.

In China, a civil war continued that had started prior to World War II. It was between the communists and the nationalists. The communists won and the nationalists fled to Taiwan.

War Crimes

After the war, many leaders from Japan and Germany were brought to trial. They had violated the rules of war according to the Geneva Convention and had also committed crimes against humanity. These crimes included the Holocaust, slave labour, and the terrible treatment and torture of prisoners of war. Many of these leaders were executed for their crimes.

United Nations

The Allies formed the United Nations in order to try and prevent World War III from happening. The United Nations was formed on October 24, 1945. There were 51 original member nations including 5 permanent Security Council members: China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The Cold War Begins

Europe became divided into the Eastern Bloc of nations and the West. The Eastern Bloc was led and controlled by the Soviet Union (Russia). These countries were run by communist governments and had their own alliance called the Warsaw Pact. The Western countries, including the United States, formed an alliance against communism called NATO.

These two alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, would take part in an arms race war called the Cold War. The Cold War never escalated into full war due to the fear of what would happen to the world if many countries started dropping atomic bombs. The Cold War would last for the next 45 years.

Questions

1) What happened to the country of Germany after World War II?

2) What happened to the country of Poland after World War II?

3) What did the United States do to help Europe recover?

4) What was the situation throughout much of Europe after the war?

5) What are the rules of war called that many leaders broke during World War II?

6) What was the war called between NATO and the Eastern bloc of communist nations?

7) Which of the following countries was not a permanent member of the United Nations security council?

8) What was the alliance of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc of communist nations called?

9) What Asian country was divided into North and South after the war and is still divided today?

10) What was the alliance of western countries against communism called?

Check your answers

1. It was divided into two

2. It became communist and under the control of the USSR

3. Provided aid through the Marshall Plan

4. The countries were devastated; Roads and bridges needed repair; Cities and buildings needed to be rebuilt

5. The Geneva Convention

6. The Cold War

7. Germany

8. The Warsaw Pact

9. Korea

10. NATO

War Crimes Trials

When World War 2 came to an end the Allied Powers decided to punish enemy leaders who committed terrible crimes during the war. They held war crimes trials to determine what crimes had been committed and who was responsible. Many German and Japanese leaders were executed for their actions during the war.

What is a war crime?

At first you may think that there are no laws where war is concerned. Each side is trying to kill each other so anything goes. However, the world has established that some things are not okay even during war. These rules are put forth in agreements such as the Geneva Convention.

Actions that are considered war crimes include actions such as killing or mistreating prisoners of war, killing civilians, bombing cities and towns with no military objective, and killing hostages. During World War II many countries violated these basic laws of war. There were also "crimes against humanity" like the Holocaust in Germany.

Nuremberg Trials

Perhaps the most famous war trials held after World War 2 were the Nuremberg Trials. These trials took place in the German city of Nuremberg and looked to punish 23 of the most powerful Nazi leaders for the crimes they committed during the war. The men on trial included Martin Bormann (Hitler's private secretary), Hermann Goering (Head of the Gestapo), and Rudolf Hess (Deputy Fuhrer). Twelve of these men were found guilty and sentenced to death.

Tokyo Trials

The Tokyo Trials were held in Tokyo, Japan and brought charges against many of the Japanese leaders during the war. The most famous leader brought to trial was Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo who was found guilty of several crimes and was executed. The Tokyo Trials lasted for three years. The Emperor of Japan, Hirohito, was not put on trial. He was allowed to continue as a figurehead by General MacArthur in order to maintain peace and stability in Japan.

Other Trials

Several other trials were held throughout the world. In Germany, trials were held at many of the German concentration camps punishing the leaders and doctors who ran the camps. In China there were multiple trials held including the Nanjing War Crimes Trail to punish those responsible for the Nanjing Massacre.

Interesting Facts about the War Crimes Trials of World War 2

- Several Nazi leaders including Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler were not put on trial because they committed suicide at the end of the war.
- The Nuremberg Trials were called "the greatest trial in history" by one of the British judges.
- Several Nazi doctors were put on trial for crimes against humanity including the mass killings of people based on race as well as the handicapped. They also conducted medical experiments on people.
- Some Nazi war criminals were able to escape to other countries or continetns such as South America, and remain hidden for years. People known as "Nazi Hunters" spent much of their lives tracking the criminals down in hopes of bringing them to justice.

Questions

1) Which of the following is considered a war crime?

2) What war crime trials punished Nazi leaders including Hermann Goering?

3) True or False: Trials were also held in China and at concentration camps in Germany.

4) What was the punishment for the 12 men found guilty at the Nuremburg Trials?

5) What was the main crime trial in Japan that punished Japanese leaders who committed war crimes?

6) In what country did the Nuremberg Trials take place?

7) Why wasn't Adolf Hitler placed on trial after World War II?

8) What famous leader of Japan was put on trial and executed?

9) What happened to the Emperor Hirohito of Japan?

10) Why were many Nazi German doctors put on trial for crimes against humanity?

Check your answers

1. Killing prisoners of war; Killing hostages; Mistreating prisoners of war; Bombing cities without a military objective

2. Nuremberg Trials

3. TRUE

4. Execution

5. Tokyo Trials

6. Germany

7. Because he committed suicide

8. Hideki Tojo

9. He was not put on trial and allowed to continue as a figurehead

10. Mass killings of people based on race; Mass killings of the disabled; They conducted medical experiments on people