

Summary: World War II

Start of the War

In the 1930s, the Great Depression ruined the economies of many nations. People wanted strong leaders to solve their problems. Dictators rose to power. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Germany's dictator. Hitler belonged to a political party called the Nazis. They believed in fascism. Hitler also encouraged racism. He blamed the Jewish people for Germany's problems.

The leaders of Germany, Italy, and Japan encouraged nationalism. They attacked other countries. Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, and Hitler agreed not to attack each other. This allowed Hitler to attack other countries. Germany formed an alliance with Italy and Japan. These nations were called the Axis Powers.

Britain and France formed an alliance called the Allied Powers. They tried to stop Germany by signing an agreement with Hitler. The Allies would allow Hitler to keep the land his armies had already taken if Hitler stopped attacking other countries.

On September 1, 1939, Hitler broke his promise. Germany attacked Poland. The Allies declared war on Germany. Then Italy and Japan declared war on the Allies. By the end of 1941, Germany controlled all of Europe except Britain. The Germans bombed Britain many times. United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt helped the British by sending them equipment and supplies. Because most Americans remembered how terrible World War I had been, they did not want the United States to fight in Europe again.

America Enters the War

Japan wanted to control other Asian countries. Japan invaded China and planned to invade other Asian nations too. But, the Japanese knew that the U.S. Navy could stop this plan. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor. Thousands of Americans died. The next day, Congress declared war on Japan. The United States joined the Allies and entered World War II.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

fascism *noun*, when a government controls its country's economy, culture, and people's lives

dictator *noun*, a ruler who has total control of a country and its people

racism *noun*, the idea that one race, or group of people, is better than other races



After You Read

REVIEW How did the Allies try to stop Germany before September 1, 1939? Underline the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW Why did Congress declare war on Japan? What happened at Pearl Harbor in 1941? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.