

Causes, Practices, and Consequences of World War II

CAUSES

Date	Event	Keywords
August 1933	Hitler is granted the powers of the President and Chancellor of Germany after Hindenburg's death	
March 1935	Hitler announces rearming, conscription reintroduced	Conscription: n. compulsory enlistment for state service, typically into the armed forces.
October 1935	Italy invades Abyssinia	
March 1936	Hitler sends troops back into the Rhineland	
July 1936	Spanish Civil war begins, Germany, Italy and USSR ignore non-intervention agreement	
September 1936	Four Year Plan is introduced to build Germany's war economy	
July 1937	Japan invades China	
March 1938	Germany annexes Austria	
September 1938	Munich Conference grants Hitler the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia	
November 1938	Night of the Broken Glass – wave of German attacks on Jews throughout Germany	Kristallnacht: German for "Crystal Night"
August 1939	Nazi-Soviet Pact signed	

Countless explanations of the causes of WWII have been presented over the years; this study guide tries to narrow some of them down. We'd like to let you decide for yourself which cause was more important in the outbreak of WWII.

Hitler's Foreign Policy

“Germany will either be a world power or will not be at all.”

— Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

“The outbreak of war was the result of Nazi aggression and Hitler's fault; and to a lesser extent Mussolini. Germany was resentful of the Paris Peace Settlement of 1919, and the Weimar Republic was seen as traitors for signing it causing their decline from the beginning. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, he soon began to consolidate his power through the Decree of People the Protection of People and State, and also the Enabling Act. After consolidating his power and dissolving the Reichstag, Hitler had successfully taken control of the Germany Government. Hitler now personally controlled foreign policy, and formulation of strategies.”

1. Uniting all ethnic Germans in a “Greater Germany”. This would be done by breaking up the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Conquering land for a German Lebensraum*. Hitler wanted space all the way to the Ural Mountains in the east, so to secure the Ukrainian resources and to open more territories for German Colonization. This is how Hitler justified his conquests:
 - a. He felt Aryan Germans were racially superior to the Slavic Peoples that lived in the lands he invaded.
 - b. He saw the Bolsheviks as the leaders of the Jewish conspiracy.
2. German military dominance of Europe
 - a. Controlling the East for military dominance and for Germany's economy
3. Rearmament of Germany
 - a. Began in secret in 1933
 - b. Made public in 1935

- c. Created an Air force
- d. Reintroduced conscription (36 new divisions were made in the army)
- e. He spent 10.2 Billion marks in 1936 on rearmament.
4. Anglo-German Naval Agreement was concluded in 1933 June, this was where the British allowed a German naval build-up to 35% of Britain's naval strength and 45% of its tonnage in submarine. Basically Germany could build up its Naval strength as long as it was lower than Britain's.
 - a. This agreement renegotiated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles without talking with France; this caused France to be much more cautious in confronting Germany because it didn't feel it could rely on Britain's support.
5. Germany defaulted on all its foreign debts.
6. Hitler withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in October 1933.
7. March 7th, 1936 Hitler moved his German forces into the demilitarized Rhineland.
 - a. Neither the French or the British defended the Treaty of Versailles
8. Hitler placed Göring in charge of a Four-Year Plan to prepare the German economy for war. November 5th, 1937 Hitler admonished to his general staff that war in the east would be no later than 1942/1943. (Recorded in the *Hossbach Memorandum*)
9. Hitler encouraged his Nazi party in Austria to attempt an overthrow of the Austrian government in 1934, July.
 - a. Austrian Crisis occurred
 - b. Mussolini rushed Italian troops to the Austrian border
 - c. Hitler abandoned Austrian Nazis
10. 1936, Hitler made the Anti-Comintern act, it portrayed Nazi Germany as the West's last defense against Bolshevik expansion
11. March 1938, Anschluss occurred.
12. 1938, Sudetenland Crisis occurred
13. May 1939, Hitler signed the Pact of Steel with Mussolini.
14. August 24 1939, Hitler signed the German-Soviet Nonaggression pact. But it had secret clauses that detailed the division of East Europe between USSR and Germany.
15. September 1st 1939 Hitler invaded Poland.
16. September 3rd Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Austrian Crisis

- 1) 1934 July 25th, Nazis seized the chancellery in an attempted coup.
 - a) Killing Dollfuss (Chancellor of Austria from 1932-1934)
 - b) Mussolini rushed in with 4 divisions of Italian troops
 - i) Hitler disowned Austrian followers
 - ii) Plotters surrendered and leaders executed
- 2) Kurt von Schuschnigg became chancellor after death of Dollfuss
 - a) Negotiated with Hitler July 11th, 1936
 - b) Germany promised to respect Austrian sovereignty
 - c) In return Austria acknowledged itself to be "a German state"
- 3) January 1938, a Nazi conspiracy was discovered
 - a) Schuschnigg met Hitler Feb. 12th
 - b) Confronted with military intervention threats and forced to agree with:
 - i) General amnesty for accused Nazis
 - ii) Inclusion of leading Nazis in Schuschnigg's cabinet

iii)

pointment of a leading Nazi as Minister of the Interior

- 4) Schuschnigg announced a plebiscite to decide on Austrian independence
- 5) March 11th 1938, Hitler demanded
 - a) Postponement of plebiscite
 - b) Resignation of Schuschnigg
- 6) Schuschnigg resigned
- 7) A Nazi government was set up and the Anschluss was proclaimed
 - a) Hitler entered Vienna in triumph March 14th
 - b) Austria was effectively absorbed into the Reich
- 8) France and Britain protested but accepted the fait accompli (something that has already happened leaving them no option but to accept)
- 9) Nazis arrested Austrian political parties, and put wealthy Jews with other Austrians into exile.

The Sudetenland Crises

- 1) After the achievement of Anschluss, Hitler denounced the Czechs for persecution of the 3 million people of German origin
 - a) Many of these were lead by Nazis
 - b) Demanding that they be incorporated into the Reich
- 2) If the Sudeten mountains were incorporated into the Reich, the rest of Czechoslovakia would be defenseless against German attack
- 3) Chamberlain urged Czech president to compromise with the Nazis and at the same time warned Germany against a military intervention.
 - a) Hitler was urging Nazi leaders in Czechoslovakia to avoid agreements
 - b) Hitler made provocative speeches demanding that the Germans of the Sudetenland be reunited with their homeland
- 4) Czechoslovakia was relying on France and USSR as allies.
 - a) USSR was committed if France was
 - b) Stalin showed willingness to cooperate with France and Britain
 - c) His offer of conference was ignored
- 5) September 2nd, Chamberlain met with Hitler and agreed:
 - a) Hitler would take no military action without conferences
 - b) Chamberlain would persuade the French to accept the results of a plebiscite in the Sudetenland
- 6) In London it was agreed between France (no USSR)
 - a) All Sudetenland with more than 50% Germans would be handed over to Germany
 - b) Czech government was not consulted
 - c) They rejected the proposal at first but were pressured until they accepted it
- 7) September 22nd Hitler had increased his demands; he now wanted:
 - a) German army occupation of the Sudetenland
 - b) Slovaks and Czechs evacuated from the area by September 28th
- 8) Britain, France and the Czechs rejected these demands
- 9) The Czechs and French ordered a general mobilization
 - a) Chamberlain proposed a 4-power conference (Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Mussolini met in Munich)
 - b) Mussolini introduced a written plan (Munich Agreement)
 - i) German army would occupy the Sudetenland by October 10th

- ii) An international commission would decide outcomes for future disputed areas
 - c) Accepted by all parties
 - d) Czechoslovakia accepted the Munich Agreement instead of resisting Germany alone
- 10) March 13th 1939, Slovak leader was kidnapped and demanded of to break up the country
- a) The leader (Tiso) returned and said that the only alternative to being taken over by Germany was to do as they were ordered
 - b) They submitted to Hitler's will
- 11) The Skoda armaments works was at the disposal of the Germans and the boundaries of the Reich were had been consolidated.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Hitler's Foreign Policy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mein Kampf laid out his foreign policy aims <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Over throwing the TOV b. Rearming and regaining lost territory <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. 1935 introduced compulsory conscription, German army had 550,000 men ii. Took advantage of Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and the Spanish Civil war, and western powers appeasement to remilitarize the Rhineland iii. Took advantage of Britain and USSR tensions and appeasement to annex Austria and the Sudetenland c. Gaining <i>lebensraum</i> for Germany in Eastern Europe d. Uniting all German speaking people: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Anschluss ii. The Sudetenland Crises e. Creating a racially pure German State 	<p><i>Lebensraum</i>: German for "living space"</p>
	<p>Historiography:</p> <p>William Shirer: "The war was due entirely to Hitler's plans to dominate Europe and expand Germany, and his aggressive policies." (In <i>The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich</i> suggested that Hitler had a detailed timetable for war)</p> <p>Alan Bullock: "Hitler had clear long-term aims, but was a flexible opportunist concerning how to achieve them."</p> <p>A.J.P Taylor suggests:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Hitler's ideology was nationalist sentiments "which echo the conversation of any Austrian café or German beer-house" b) Hitler's ends and means resembled those of any "traditional German statesmen" c) Hitler's responsibility for the war was an error of judgment rather than a willful crime. 	
	<p>Summary Question:</p> <p>What were the key causes of World War II and to what extent can we lay blame upon the aggression of Adolf Hitler?</p>	

Failure of Collective Security

“Where the great force lies, there must be sanction of peace.”

— Woodrow Wilson

“The idea of collective security was that member nations would rally behind a victim of aggression and force the aggressor to back down. Success of collective security relied on the principle of internationalism – the idea that nations will sacrifice national self-interest for the common good. However the inter-war period showed this to be impossible.”

After the Great War the Great powers had attempted to achieve security through:

- a) Peace settlements drawn up at Paris
- b) The League of Nations (LON)
- c) Various Treaties (later called “pieces of paper” due to their uselessness.)

Achievements of the League of Nations

- 1) Resolved a quarrel between Sweden and Finland regarding the Aaland Islands in 1920
 - a) LON ruled in favor of Finland
 - b) Sweden accepted the Verdict
- 2) Successfully partitioned Upper Silesia (1921) between Poland and Germany
- 3) Ordered Greece to withdraw from Bulgaria (1925) and fined Greece
- 4) Settled quarrels between Bolivia and Paraguay; Peru and Colombia
- 5) Successful work done by the commissions and councils:
 - a) International Labor Office persuaded states to
 - i) Enforce a maximum working day and week
 - ii) Implement minimum wages for workers
 - iii) Introduce worker welfare regarding sickness, unemployment and old age pensions
 - b) The Health Organization combatted a typhus epidemic in Russia (could have spread to the rest of Europe)
 - c) The Refugee Organization helped half a million Central European prisoners return home from being marooned in Russia

Failures of the League of Nations

- 1) Mussolini bombarded and invaded Corfu (Greece) in response to a shooting on the Albanian-Greek border.
 - a) He threatened to leave the LON if they ruled against him
 - b) Conference of Ambassadors intervened
 - c) Greece was ordered to pay a fine
- 2) LON condemned Japan for invading Manchuria in 1931
 - a) Japan just left the LON
 - b) Nothing was done to force her to comply
 - c) The Japanese ignored LON when they attacked China as well
- 3) World Disarmament Conference failed (1932-33) when Hitler walked out
- 4) LON condemned Italian invasion of Abyssinia but applied ineffective economic sanctions
 - a) Did not sanction products needed for war: coal, oil, iron and steel
 - b) This made the LON seem ineffective

5)

er 1935 LON was seen as a mean to solve internal disputes

- a) It became irrelevant

Reasons for the failure of the League of Nations

- 1) They gave off the impression of an organization of victorious powers
 - a) Due to defeated powers not allowed to become members until later
- 2) America didn't join
 - a) Republican-dominated US Congress refused to ratify membership of the LON
 - b) LON lost American financial and psychological benefits
 - c) Looked like an Anglo-French enterprise
- 3) The Conference of Ambassadors could overrule the LON (and they did)
 - a) Over the Polish and Lithuanian claims to Vilna
 - b) Over Mussolini's invasion of Corfu (Greece)
- 4) Issues within the LON
 - a) It was difficult to achieve an unanimous decision that was required
 - b) No military force to back up the LON
 - i) Relied on individual nations to supply troops to enforce sanctions
- 5) States started to seek security without the LON
 - a) Signing mutual non-aggression pacts
 - b) Undermining the effectiveness of the LON
- 6) Economic problems after 1929 causes growth of aggressive nationalist regimes
 - a) Countries sought autarchy (one person in absolute power → Hitler)
- 7) Main members of the LON chose to appease powerful aggressor states
 - a) Mussolini and Corfu
 - b) Aggressor states were able to ignore the LON because the leaders were not prepared to enforce its decisions

Inadequacies of Paris Peace Settlements

- 1) Washington Conference (1921-2)
 - a) Limited Japanese navy to three-fifths of Britain and USA
 - b) Allies agreed to build no new naval bases near Japan
 - c) Major navies remained suspicious of each other
 - d) Allowed Japan to keep all German islands in North Pacific
- 2) Treaty of Rapallo (1922)
 - a) Between Germany and Russia
 - b) Russia agreed to let Germany secretly evade Treaty of Versailles (TOV)
 - c) They let Germany maintain an air force on Russian soil
- 3) Kellogg-Briand Pact (1938)
 - a) Franco-American pact renouncing war
 - b) Signed by 65 states
- 4) The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939)
 - a) Between Germany and USSR
 - b) To the rest of the world it was a 10 year non-aggression pact
 - c) Had a secret protocol to divide up Eastern Europe

The problem was that no one was prepared to back these peace pacts, or keep their word if it meant war. A horribly consequence caused by WWI

Main Idea	Detail	Key Words
Failure of Collective Security	<p>1. Failure of League of Nations & Collective Security</p> <p>After WW I the Great powers sought security from aggression and to avoid war through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paris Peace Settlements • LON • Various Treaties ("Pieces of Paper") <p>a. <u>LON had some successes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Managed to calm a quarrel between Sweden and France over the Aaland Islands in 1920 (both sides accepting the verdict of the court) ii. Divided over Upper Silesia in 1921 to Germany and Poland iii. Ordered a withdrawal of Greece from Bulgaria, also fining Greece iv. Settled quarrels of Bolivia and Paraguay & Peru and Colombia v. Commissions and Councils did good work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Example: International Labor Office made many states enforce max. Work-day + work week, and minimum wage was introduced - Refugee Organization helped half a million Central European prisoners return home from Russia <p>b. <u>Failures of LON:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Ordered Greece to pay a fine, when Mussolini bombarded and invaded Corfu. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This was in response of a shooting on the Albanian-Greek border <p>Mussolini had threatened to leave the LON if it ruled against him</p> ii. Did nothing to make Japan comply when it left the league, after condemning it for invading Manchuria iii. World Disarmament Conference (1932-33) failed when Hitler left the LON iv. Condemned Italy for invading Abyssinia and applied sanctions (economic); but not important ones for waging war → coal, oil, iron and steel <p><u>After 1935 the LON was not taking seriously for settling International disputes, had become irrelevant</u></p> <p>c. <u>LON Reasons for Failure:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Gave the impression of being an organization of the victorious powers ii. US refused to become a member <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wilson had worked to set it up and was 	<p>Corfu: A Greek island, off the west coast of mainland Greece</p> <p>Abyssinia: Former name for Ethiopia, Africa</p>

- unable to join
 - LON lost financial and psychological benefits of US membership
- iii. LON looked like an Anglo-French enterprise
- iv. Conference of Ambassadors could over rule the league
 - Example: Over Mussolini's invasion of Corfu (Greece)
- v. There were problems within the LON:
 - Difficult to achieve unanimous decisions
 - LON had no military force
 - Relied on individual nations to supply troops (countries were no longer on the same level of power)
- vi. Countries sought security through signing mutual non-aggression pacts, undermining the LON.
 - Example: Anglo-German Pact.
 - Britain a member of the league making pacts for security
 - Pact allowing Germany to rearm naval wise as long as they were less than Britain
- vii. Economic problems after 1929 caused growth of bellicose nationalist mindsets
 - Members of league would appease powerful aggressor states
 - Example: Mussolini and Corfu (Greece) 1923
 - Japan and Manchuria 1931
 - Italy and Abyssinia 1935
 - LON was ignored because it did not impose serious economic sanctions or use of force
 - (PLAYS IN WITH PACIFISM MINDSET + Personal security)
 - LON was named the 'Paper Tiger' for its uselessness.

2. Inadequacies of Paris Peace Settlements

- a. The Washington Conference (1921-2)
 - i. Limited the Japanese navy to 3/5s those of Britain and USA
 - ii. Allowed Japan to keep all German islands in North Pacific
 - iii. Allies agreed to build no new naval bases near Japan
 - iv. However major navies remained suspicious of each other
- b. Treaty of Rapallo (1922)
 - i. Germany signed a treaty with Russia allowing them to evade TOV
 - ii. Example: maintaining an air force on Russian soil
- c. Kellogg Briand Pact (1928)
 - i. Franco-American pact renouncing war
 - ii. Signed by 65 countries
 - iii. Including Japan, Italy, Germany and the USSR
- d. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939)
 - i. (Outwardly) 10 year pact between USSR and Germany

- ii. Secret protocol to divide up Eastern Europe between them
- iii. Failed to keep peace because no one was prepared to back them up
- iv. Consequence of WWI no longer was their trust

Summary Question:

What were the key causes of the World War II and to what extent can we lay blame upon the aggression of Adolf Hitler?

Failure of Appeasement

“An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.”

— Winston Churchill

“The outbreak of war was because of the weakness of the great powers who chose not to stop him. They allowed him to get away with aggressive acts, one after another. They gave into the pressure of the pacifist public opinion, and their fears of another war and took the line of least resistance.”

Appeasement: meeting threats of force and aggression with compromise or concessions; instead of meeting force with force

Factors motivating Appeasement:

- 1) WWI almost wiped out an entire generation of men. A repeat of such a disaster needed to be avoided at all costs
- 2) Hitler always proceeded step by step, while disclaiming future aggressive moves, disarming his opponents
- 3) Pacifism was prevalent due to WWI.
- 4) There was sympathy among western politicians with the view that the treaties at the end of WWI had been too harsh on the defeated power
 - a) TOV had been unjust to Germany
- 5) Lack of unity among powers
 - a) France distrusted Britain due to the Anglo-German Naval agreement
- 6) Fear of Communism
 - a) Led to the belief that a strong Germany under an anti-communist Hitler was desirable
 - b) He could be a strong buffer against the spread of communism
 - c) A possible reason why cooperation with Stalin failed
- 7) Economic cooperation was in most countries priorities
 - a) This wouldn't happen if hostile relations grew between main trading nations
- 8) The Great Depression had put governments under pressure to improve living standards
 - a) Not rearming
 - b) Countries were not prepared for war

- c) They needed to rearm first
- 9) War was unpopular, so democratic leaders had to think about their electoral standings
 - a) Standing up to dictators would be seen as reckless

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Failure and Reasons of Appeasement:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Main examples of Great Powers appeasing aggression since the end of WW I: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Mussolini and Corfu (Greece) (1923) b) Japanese invasion of Manchuria (1931) c) Reintroduction of conscription and rearmament in Germany (1933) d) Italian invasion of Abyssinia (1935) e) German remilitarization of the Rhineland (1936) f) Ignoring German/Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War (1936-9) g) Anschluss (1938) h) Demand for the Sudetenland (1938) i) Significance of Munich Pact <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) An attempt to right some of the wrongs of TOV (creating a more stable and peaceful Europe) ii) Buying time to rearm for war against Axis powers iii) It gave Germany more than it secured Britain and France; iv) Czechoslovakia gave Germany the best equipped army (Czech Army) v) A strong defensive border, the Sudeten mountains vi) Soviet air base between Berlin, Vienna and Munich <p style="text-align: center;">However, we cannot let hindsight distort the fact that at the time Western Allies didn't know the future, because we don't either.</p> 2) Factors of Appeasement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Due to WWI being so disastrous the next was believed to be much worse due to weaponry development b) Pacifism- as a reaction to WWI, the belief that violence is always morally wrong was prevalent c) Sympathy towards defeated powers, especially Germany due to harsh TOV <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Example: By remilitarizing the Rhineland Hitler was removing causes of German discontent, and making Europe a safer place and war less likely 	

- ii) However that discontent was only enhanced by Hitler's propaganda and speeches
- d) Lack of unity among the powers
 - i) France distrusted Britain due to the Anglo-German Naval agreement
- e) Fear of Communism
 - i) A strong Germany under an anti-Communist leader was better to form a buffer against spread of Communism.
 - ii) Lead to the failure of cooperation with Stalin during the Munich Crisis
- f) Economic co-operation was desired, so hostile relations were unwanted
- g) Great Depression put western Gov. under pressure to keep up the standard of living instead of rearmament
 - i) Making them unprepared for war and needed to rearm before going to war
- h) It would affect democratic leaders electorally if they made a stand to dictators if a war would be the result
 - i) It would seem rash to the populous

2. [Reasons Peculiar to Britain](#)

- a. Chamberlain thought he could trust Hitler (LOL)
- b. Britain didn't feel confident in French ability to sustain war
- c. Didn't want to give French the impression that they would back them up because they didn't want France taking precipitate action
- d. Lacked confidence in USA support

3. [Reasons peculiar to France](#)

- a. France was disintegrating
 - i. Faced political polarization (extremist left and right)
 - ii. Strikes and industrial unrest were occurring
 - iii. Weak and changing governments
 - iv. Reluctant to spend money on rearmament (unprepared military forces)
 - v. Another war would be costly due to her location just like WWI
 - vi. France did not trust Britain due to Anglo-German Pact

4. [Reasons Peculiar to USA:](#)

- a. Isolationist due to involvement in WWI
- b. Great depression lead to America concentrating on rebuilding its economy
- c. US army was small
- d. Preoccupied with intervening in Carribbean, Central and South American states and Western Pacific to build up its sphere of influence
- e. Europe could wait

Historiography:

Goebbels: “ They could have arrested a couple of us in 1925, and that would have been that, the end. No, they let us through the danger zone.”

Chamberlain: “ The Power that had the greatest strength was the US, but he would be a rash man who based his calculations on hope from that quarter”

Paul Kennedy: “ Appeasement had abeen a traditional policy of British Government since 1860s due to

- Application to morality regarding foreign policy
- Disapproval to resorting to force
- Didn’t want to disrupt trade
- Britain was over stretched (Colonies)
- British electorate disliked wars, especially expensive ones
- Peace was National interest

Summary Question:

What were the key causes of the World War II and to what extent can we lay blame upon the aggression of Adolf Hitler?

The Great Depression

“ The country is not in good condition”

—— Calvin Coolidge

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
The Great Depression and its Effects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Great Depression <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. An economic and social cause b. Governments became focused on improving living conditions c. Strong feelings of pacifism d. There was a rise of extremists and totalitarianism because people were searching for a solution <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Sought out a stead job 	

- ii. A meal to eat
- iii. And shelter
- e. Contributed to the rise of Hitler, who promised in propaganda to fix the economy, which led to his aggressive foreign policies
- f. Psychologically with the rise of unemployment, there was an increase of poverty leading to civil unrest
 - i. USA unemployment 25%
 - ii. Germany 33%
- g. Abandoning of the *Gold Standard*, where the value of a state's national currency is based upon the amt. of gold held by the state
 - i. By 1931, only France, Italy and Poland continued to base their currencies upon gold

Historiography:

Richard Overy: " No single factor was more important in explaining the breakdown of the diplomatic system in the 1930 than the world economic crisis"

Perkins: " But with the slow menace of a glacier, depression came on. No one had any measure of its progress: no one had any plan of stopping it. Everyone tried to get out of the way."

Summary Question:

What were the key causes of the World War II and to what extent can we lay blame upon the aggression of Adolf Hitler?

PRACTICES

Date	Event	Keywords
September 1939	Germany invades Poland Britain and France declare war on Germany	
May 1940	Germany invades France, Belgium, and the Netherlands Evacuation of Dunkirk	
June 1940	Fall of France	
July 1940	Battle of Britain begins	
June 1941	Germany invades the Soviet Union	Operation Barbarossa
December 1941	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor USA and Germany declare war on each other	
June 1942	Battle of Midway	
August 1942	Battle of Stalingrad begins	
November 1942	Allies invade North Africa	Operation Torch
February 1943	Germans surrender at Stalingrad	
July 1943	Battle of Kursk	
September 1943	Italy surrenders	
January 1944	Siege of Leningrad finally lifted after 3 years	
June 1944	D-Day	Operation Overlord
August 1944	Allies liberate Paris	
December 1944	Battle of the Bulge	
February 1945	Battle of Iwo Jima	
April 1945	Battle of Berlin begins Mussolini executed Hitler commits suicide	
May 1945	Germany surrenders	
August 1945	US bombs Hiroshima and Nagasaki	
September 1945	Japan surrenders	

“Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar.”

— Winston Churchill

Beginnings: 1939-1942

WWII did not begin as a global war, nor was Hitler planning for one in the beginning. The reason behind the Nazis early success in the war was by not getting involved in protracted conflicts, as the USSR had in Finland (see below). Instead, they focused on small, quick invasions on a single enemy. This won them awe-inspiring and swift victories in Poland, Norway, and Western Europe. Their initial tactic was referred to as *Blitzkrieg* – “lightning war” in German. Blitzkrieg involved a series of quick, decisive battles to completely knockout the enemy’s military before it can fully mobilize by coordinating tanks, infantry, artillery, and aircraft to overwhelm the enemy in one spot and break through their lines, then flanking the surrounding enemies. This tactic had a significant “fear factor” (the Germans attached whistles to their bombs during the Battle of France), as well as being difficult to respond to because of its speed.

Fall of Poland

- 1) Germany began its invasion of Poland on September 1st, 1939.
- 2) The Polish army was completely outmatched against Germany’s.

- a) Poland's army consisted of 370,000 soldiers, 313 tanks (1/3 of which were obsolete), and air force of less than 400 planes.
- b) Germany's forces consisted of 1.25 million soldiers, 2400 tanks, 1400 planes, and 10,000 artillery guns.
- 3) The Poles fought bravely against the German army, but any chance of more resistance was crushed when Russia invaded on September 17th from the east.
 - a) Russia only lost 737 troops; most Poles thought the Russians were going to help them.
- 4) On September 28th, Warsaw fell. By October 5th, all Polish resistance ended.
 - a) Germans lost 10,500 soldiers, 30,000 were wounded and 3,400 were missing in action.
 - b) Poland lost 66,000, over 200,000 wounded.
 - c) Close to 700,000 Poles were taken prisoner by Germany, 217,000 by the USSR
- 5) Following the Nazi-Soviet Pact created on August 23rd, Russia took control of Lithuania while Germany took western Poland. During the two years Nazis controlled Poland one fifth of the population, comprised of Jews and minorities, was killed. The Soviets arrested one fifth of the population of their part of Poland during the same time.
- 6) On November 30th, the Soviet Union attacked Finland in order to consolidate their power over the Baltic Sea. The Finns fought back valiantly, and were not defeated quickly, as Stalin expected. The Winter War ended in March 1940.
 - a) Soviets lost 200,000. The Finns lost 25,000.
 - b) Finland wasn't captured but lost 10% of its territory.
- 7) The Red Army's poor performance in Finland was noted by Nazi Germany.

Fall of Denmark and Norway

- 1) On April 9th, Hitler ordered Operation Weserbung, a direct attack on Denmark and Norway.
 - a) Denmark surrendered the next day.
 - b) Britain decided to try to cut off Germany's supply of iron ore from Sweden that was sent via Norway's port of Narvik. However, their forces withdrew after France was defeated (see below).
 - c) Norway surrendered on June 10th. Germany would keep control of it for the rest of the war.

Fall of Belgium, Netherlands, and France

- 1) Operation Fall Gelb began on May 10th, attacking Belgium and the Netherlands. Both nations surrendered within the month.
- 2) The Allies believed the attack on France would be similar to the Schlieffen Plan in WWI, a massive sweeping attack. They believed that no mechanized advance could cross the heavy forest of the Ardennes region in southern Belgium and Luxembourg, and that France's defenses, the Maginot Line, was too strong to breach.
- 3) All these assumptions proved wrong, and German tactics completely outmaneuvered the Allies.
 - a) General von Brock advanced through Belgium, which was seen as the beginnings of the same plan used in 1914. The Allies ordered half their forces to counter.
 - b) On May 11th, General von Leeb started attacking along the Maginot Line, preoccupying the Allied forces.
 - c) In between von Brock and von Leeb's forces, General von Rundstedt pushed into France. His strike was so dramatic it earned the name *sichelschnitt* (sickle cut). This attack split the Allied forces in Belgium and in the south of the Maginot Line.
 - d) The Germans quickly pushed further into France, approaching the British Channel. On May 24th Hitler ordered his forces to stop and secure their positions.
- 4) British forces were routed to Dunkirk. Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered Operation Dynamo, the massive evacuation of all troops back to England. Almost 340,000 Allied troops were evacuated, including 139,067 French and Belgian soldiers and civilians. The evacuation of Dunkirk was arguably the greatest

naval rescue of all time and saved hundreds of thousands. However, in the end it still marked a colossal failure for the Allies – Belgium, the Netherlands, and France were lost.

- 5) Despite its magnitude, the evacuation of Dunkirk was only possible because of Hitler deciding not to destroy the Allied soldiers he had cornered. He believed he might be able to negotiate peace with Britain.
- 6) Germany resumed its attack on June 5th, targeting Paris and the areas east of the capital.
 - a) Von Brock and Rundstedt's forces surrounded Paris. The French army retreated by June 9th.
 - b) Mussolini declared war on France on June 10th, but Italy failed to make any advances of its own despite its advantage in numbers.
 - c) Germans entered Paris on June 14th.
- 7) France signed an armistice with Germany on June 22nd, its provisions included:
 - a) France divided into two parts; the Germans would occupy the northern half.
 - b) The rest would be commanded by a new regime based in Vichy.
 - c) The French hated and resisted the Nazis and Vichy government through the underground Free French Resistance.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Initial Nazi success from 1939 -1942	<p>1. 1939-1942</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Blitzkrieg tactics were incredibly effective <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Well-suited to the terrain – Poland's open spaces and France's extensive roads ii. Avoided being bogged down in a prolonged war like the Winter War iii. Used up little resources iv. Hard to respond to v. Allowed quick, successive victories vi. Far superior to outdated Allied tactics <p>Historiography: AJP Taylor: " Here was a clear indication, unknown of course in the west, that Hitler, far from preparing for a great war, operated on a narrow margin and counted on quick victories achieved at little cost." Liddell Hart: "...demonstration and proof, in war of the theory of mobile warfare by armoured and air forces in combination...Poland was all too well suited for a demonstration of Blitzkrieg...The Polish plain offered a flat and easy going for a mobile invader..."</p>	<p>Blitzkrieg: (lighting war) Sichelschnitt: (sickle cut) General von Rundstedt's dramatic push through the Maginot Line which split Allied forces Maginot Line: French defensive line along their common border with Germany, extending from Switzerland to Luxembourg Vichy France: Provisional government of unoccupied France The Winter War: War between the USSR and Finland from November 1939 to March 1940</p>
<p>Summary Question: Why were the Axis Powers initially successful from 1939 to 1942?</p>		

Battle of Britain

“...the Battle of France is over. I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin.”

— Winston Churchill

“Advance, Britannia.”

— Will Robinson

Despite Churchill’s warning, the motives for Hitler’s decision to attack Britain are still debated. Hitler was always more focused on conquest in the east, and very much wanted to avoid a two-front war. However, Churchill was completely opposed to making peace with Hitler. Thus, Hitler ordered the invasion of Britain – Operation Sea Lion. Any invasion of Britain would require air and sea superiority. The summer of 1940 would consist of the German Luftwaffe battling the British Royal Air Force (RAF) for control over the Channel.

- 1) The RAF had lost nearly 1000 aircraft in France, leaving Air Marshal Dowding with just 650 fighters in 52 squadrons. Goering had 900 fighters and 300 bombers.
- 2) In early July, German fighters raided coastal targets and shipping along the Channel. The first major raid on southern England happened on July 10th.
- 3) From August 8-18th, the attacks were focused on the RAF airfields themselves.
- 4) On August 25th, RAF bombers launched a minor attack on Berlin, enraging Hitler. He ordered the Luftwaffe to shift attacks from the RAF airfields and control centers to London itself.
- 5) On September 15th, Germany began its massive daylight bombing on London which would last until the 30th, after which, the bombers began attacking at night.
- 6) By May 1940, Hitler was focused on attacking the Soviet Union and needed the air force in Russia. Britain would still be bombed occasionally throughout the war, however.
- 7) Over the nine months of the blitz, the Germans dropped around 55,000 tons of bombs on Britain. Over 40,000 civilians died. Over 2 million houses were damaged or destroyed – 60% of London
- 8) Despite the attack, British industry and ports were still functional and able to recover. The bombing also hardened the resolve of the British to keep fighting. Londoners boasted: “We can take it.” More importantly, the Blitz increased the USA’s sympathy for Britain.
- 9) Night bombing by the British on Germany was ineffective. In 1941 alone, 1034 bombers were lost – only a third of which was due to German anti-aircraft guns, most were due to poor navigation equipment for night flying.
- 10) Things began to change in 1942. British aircraft production maximized along with improvements in navigation equipment. In August, the American Air Force joined the RAF. The American B17 Flying Fortresses flew by day while the British flew by night.
- 11) In early 1944, German losses of fighter planes were too numerous and too difficult to replace. Front-line aircraft were withdrawn from the fronts in order to protect Germany itself. This weakened Germany’s position on the Eastern front and also in France in the future Allied invasion. The Allies invaded France in June 1944 with 12,000 aircraft against only 300 German aircraft.
- 12) By mid-1944, the German air force was defeated. Allied bombers had free reign over Germany.
 - a) In the last year of the war alone, the Allies dropped 1.18 million tons of bombs on Germany
 - b) The morality of the bombings has been questioned by many.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
The Western Front	<p>1) The Battle of Britain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Technologic advances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Radar technology could detect German attacks before they reached Britain b) RAF vs Luftwaffe <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) German air force lacked specific aims and operated totally independent to the rest of the military ii) RAF had a home field advantage, they could land anywhere to make repairs and refuel, and stay in the air longer iii) British aircraft production increased under the direction of Lord Beaverbrook iv) Germans switching attack from airfields and radar stations to cities in the Blitz saved Fighter Command when it was near collapse <p>Historiography:</p> <p>Denis Richards: "...By earning Britain a great breathing space in which the further progress of events was to bring her the mighty alliance of Russia and the United States, they made possible the final victory and the liberation for Europe from Nazi terror."</p> <p>Richard Overy: "...German forces lost half of the weapons needed at the front, millions of workers absented themselves from work, and the economy gradually creaked almost to a halt."</p>	<p>RAF: British Royal Air Force</p> <p>Luftwaffe: German Air Force</p> <p>Operation Sea Lion: German invasion plan of Britain</p>
<p>Summary Question: To what extent was the Battle of Britain the turning point in the war?</p>		

North African Campaign

"Gentlemen, you have fought like lions and been led by donkeys."

— General Erwin Rommel
To captured British soldiers during the Siege of Tobruk

Italy entered the war on June 10th, 1940, eager to take advantage of Germany's victories over France. However, the Italians were never able to reproduce the same kind of victories on their own and often had to be saved from utter destruction by German intervention. Italy attacked Greece in October 1940 but was forced back into Albania by December.

- 1) In September 1940, Italy sent a strong Italian force to invade Egypt and set up fortified camps. The British responded with their own attacks. Within two months, the numerically superior Italian force had been completely defeated. The British had advanced 500 miles, taken over 130,000 prisoners, 400 tanks, and 1290 guns. The British losses comprised only 500 dead and 1300 wounded.
- 2) In February 1941, Hitler sent General Erwin Rommel and his Afrika Korps to Libya to reinforce the Italians.
- 3) In March 1941, Rommel drove the British out of El Agheila and back to Tobruk. In April, a joint German-Italian force launched a three-pronged attack – the Italians retook Benghazi, Rommel captured the town of

Dema, and the two British Generals Neame and O'Connor. The British position had been weakened since many troops were occupied with a failed attempt to protect Greece.

- 4) The siege of Tobruk began in mid-April. Tobruk was an essential position; it was the only Allied-controlled base between Alexandria, Egypt and Sfax, Tunisia – a distance of 1600 km.
- 5) In June General Wavell launched Operation Battleaxe in order to relief Tobruk, but failed.
- 6) In mid-November General Cunningham launched Operation Crusader, another attempt to relieve Tobruk, but suffered heavy losses. Rommel counterattacked Cunningham's forces but also suffered heavy losses. Rommel finally withdrew on December 7th. Tobruk was saved, but both sides paid a heavy price.
- 7) In January 1942, Rommel launched a second attack, moving from El Agheila to Agedabia and drove the British back, capturing Genghazi again on January 29th. For the next four months both sides consolidated their positions.
- 8) Tobruk fell in June, the Germans took 30,000 prisoners.
- 9) In July 1942, Rommel pushed deeper into Egypt and now threatened Cairo, beginning the First Battle of El Alamein.
- 10) By August, it seemed both a stalemate had developed.
- 11) Rommel had fortified his position west of El Alamein thick with anti-personnel and anti-tanks mines, commonly referred to as "the devil's garden" by German troops. However, Rommel knew he had to take the offensive, the longer the battle dragged on the worse his position would deteriorate and the British position would improve.
 - a) In late August, both forces were equal, but the power would gradually shift towards the British.
 - b) Rommel's long communication lines were vulnerable to British air attacks
 - c) Montgomery's position was being reinforced. By October, he had 195,000 men, 1000 tanks, 900 guns, and 1500 anti-tank guns.
 - d) Tank battles required massive amounts of fuel, and Rommel's forces were dangerously short of it, they could only hope to win a short battle.
- 12) Montgomery's tactics were outdated and ineffective. Throughout October, he tried to mislead his enemy by establishing forward positions and then abandoning them. His plan of attack was also reminiscent of WWI: a massive artillery barrage would be followed by an infantry advance directly at Rommel's central, best-defended position with the armored units defending the flanks.
- 13) When Montgomery began his attack with artillery bombardment, Rommel was in Germany for medical treatment. He returned on October 25th to find his commander, General Stumme, had died of heart attack.
- 14) The battle raged for ten days. By November 2nd, Rommel had lost 350 tanks and over 15,000 men. The British lost 500 tanks and 24,000 dead or wounded.
- 15) Rommel's tank strength was dangerously low, but Hitler refused to allow Rommel to withdraw. Despite this, Rommel disobeyed and withdrew.
- 16) On November 8th, an Anglo-American force of 120,000 men lead by Generals Eisenhower and Patton landed in Morocco and Algeria pursuant to Operation Torch.
- 17) In danger of being trapped between Allied forces moving east and west across North Africa, Rommel retreated to Tunisia. Poor planning and torrential rain slowed the Allied movement while the Axis received reinforcements daily. By January 1943, another stalemate had developed in Tunisia.
- 18) In late January, Rommel disobeyed Hitler's orders again and retreated from Tripoli to Mareth in southern Tunisia.
- 19) Rommel was forced to leave North Africa again due to illness in March.
- 20) Lacking fuel, food, and other supplies, the Axis forces surrendered on May 13th. 130,000 soldiers were taken prisoner.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
North African Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Significance of North Africa <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Allies kept control of the Suez Canal b. Valuable Middle Eastern oil supplies weren't taken by the Axis c. Germany would be unable to attack upwards through southern Russia (see Battle of Stalingrad) d. Allies gained control of the Mediterranean Sea, allowing the invasion of Italy e. British morale boost 2. Rommel's Victories <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Preferred quick, surprise attacks to dramatic frontal assaults. Far superior to outdated British tactics b. Rommel was a respected leader, earning admiration from the Italian troops and even his opponents 3. Rommel's downfall <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Italian High Command refused to supply him, favoring their own Italian forces b. Hitler refused to give reinforcements or allow him to retreat <p>Historiography:</p> <p>David Thompson: "...It made possible the next steps – an attack upon the Balkans and upon Italy, and immediately it exposed these areas to bombing attack. Above all, it was a complete testing and vindication in action of the Atlantic Alliance."</p> <p>William S. Shirer: "...The initiative had passed from Hitler's hands, never to return. It was his enemies who seized it now and held it... in the snows of Stalingrad and in the burning sands of the North African desert, a great and terrible Nazi dream was destroyed."</p>	<p>Operation Battleaxe: a failed attempt to lift the Siege of Tobruk</p> <p>Operation Crusader: successful attack that lifted the Siege of Tobruk</p> <p>Operation Torch: Anglo-American invasion of French North Africa</p> <p>Afrika Korps: German expeditionary force in Libya and Tunisia led by Erwin Rommel</p> <p>Rats of Tobruk: a mark of honor for Allied North African veterans (the Germans referred to Allied troops defending Tobruk as 'rats')</p>
Summary Question:		
To what extent was the North African Campaign the turning point in the war?		

Eastern Campaign

“When Operation Barbarossa begins, the world will hold its breath.”

— Adolf Hitler

An invasion of Russia was inevitable. By May 1941, Hitler had almost complete control of Europe. Germany's only other enemy by then was Britain, which Hitler expected to bring down soon as well. Russia had many resources Hitler wanted, land, grain, and oil, and Hitler made no secret that he believed if his country needed resources it was their right to invade and take it. In addition, Stalin had been warned by British intelligence and his own of an impending German invasion but he ignored them.

Operation Barbarossa

- 1) On June 22nd, 1941, German invaded the USSR.
- 2) Advancing on a 2,900 km front, “Operation Barbarossa” was the largest invasion in the history of warfare.
 - a) 3.2 million men, 600,000 trucks, 3350 tanks, and 2000 aircraft
- 3) Germany's invasion was divided into three armies:
 - a) General von Leeb commanded Army Group North pushed through the Baltic states targeting Leningrad. Finnish forces joined his attack on June 26th.
 - b) General von Brock commanded Army Group Centre drove through the center of Russia toward Moscow.
 - c) General von Rundstedt commanded Army Group South aimed at the rich grain lands of Ukraine with Kiev as the target.
 - d) General Falkenhorst attacked Norway to cut the Murmansk-Leningrad railway.
- 4) A quick victory was essential for Germany; the German army would be relying on blitzkrieg tactics again. The longer the war with Russia lasted, the less likely Germany was to win.
- 5) The Soviet Union was completely unprepared for invasion. Just a week before it began, Russia was still sending supplies to Germany. Germany made impressive advances:
 - a) By noon on the first day of the attack, 1200 Soviet aircraft had been destroyed.
 - b) By mid-July, Army Group North was only 100 km away from Leningrad. Hitler ordered it to wait and mop up the Baltic states.
 - c) Within a month, the armies had captured an area twice the size of Germany. By the end of September, the Soviets had lost over 3 million men, most of their aircraft and thousands of tanks.
- 6) Despite their progress, the German attack had lost momentum. Leningrad wasn't captured and instead was entrenched in a 3-year siege.
- 7) In October, Hitler ordered Operation Typhoon, the attack on Moscow.
- 8) Despite some victories at the start of Operation Typhoon, the odds began to turn against the Germans.
 - a) The weather hindered the armies:
 - i) Rain turned Russia's roads into quagmires
 - ii) The winter halted their progress outright by November. The Germans were completely unprepared, their clothes were inadequate, their tanks broke down, and the air force failed to supply the army sufficiently.
- 9) Stalin placed General Zhukov in charge of the defense of Moscow.
 - a) Unlike Hitler, Stalin allowed his general to command for himself
 - b) Zhukov created anti-tank defenses around Moscow to slow the German attack, and used Russian weapons more appropriate for the weather, which won an advantage over the Germans.

10) Soviet intelligence had learned Japan was preparing an attack on the USA. With this knowledge, Stalin moved his Siberian Army Corps of 750,000 men specially trained for winter warfare west to fight the Germans.

11) With the Siberian Corps, and brand-new KV1, KV2, and T-34 tanks, Zhukov launched his counterattack on the Germans. Blitzkrieg had failed, and now the Germans faced a drawn-out campaign against the revived Red Army.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Eastern Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operation Barbarossa <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Big differences in the leaders' actions during the war <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hitler constantly interfered with this generals' plans, preventing them from capturing Leningrad and Moscow and ordering a mostly pointless attack on Stalingrad 2. Stalin allowed his generals to lead their military themselves 3. Stalin chose to stay in Moscow during the battle, greatly raising morale (2) Russian home field advantage <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Soviet Union used a scorched-earth policy. Everything that could be used by the Germans was destroyed 2. The huge distance strained German supply lines, which were targeted by the Soviets 3. Even on a psychological level, the vastness of Russia was deeply depressing to German soldiers 4. Autumn rains turned roads into quagmires 5. Germans were totally unprepared for Russian winter (3) Ineffectiveness of Blitzkrieg <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Across the vastness of Russia, blitzkrieg tactics weren't as effective as in Poland and France <p>Historiography: David Christian: "... A longer, more savage war enabled Russia to exploit to the full its huge reserves of raw materials and labor. In this sense, the battle of Moscow was a turning point." Alan Bullock: "...already driven to the limit of endurance, wavered; for a few days there was great confusion and the threat of a Russian break-through... the great gamble had failed and 1941 would end without the long-heralded victory in the east."</p>	Operation Barbarossa: German invasion of Russia Operation Typhoon: Attack on Moscow Scorched earth policy: military strategy which involves destroying anything that might be useful to the enemy while advancing through or withdrawing from an area
Summary Question:		
To what extent can the failure of Operation Barbarossa be attributed to Hitler's interference?		

Battle of Stalingrad

“Surrender is forbidden. 6 Army will hold their positions to the last man and the last round and by their heroic endurance will make an unforgettable contribution towards the establishment of a defensive front and the salvation of the Western world.”

— Adolf Hitler

Operation Barbarossa had failed to swiftly defeat the USSR as Hitler intended. The Soviet Union would never surrender Leningrad and Moscow. However, Army Group South seemed more promising since it would feel spring first once it came in 1942, which would allow another push into southern Russia.

- 1) In April, Hitler ordered Operation Blue, which further divided Army Group South into two parts:
 - a) Army Group A, commanded by General von Kleist, would go into the Caucasus to capture the Soviet oil wells
 - b) Army Group B, commanded by General Paulus, would cut off the Volga River by capturing Stalingrad
- 2) In reality, Stalingrad was an unwise target. It would have been easier to cut off the Volga farther south towards Astrakhan. It's possible Hitler became too focused on the idea of capturing the city that bore Stalin's name.
- 3) Soviet forces in Stalingrad were outnumbered 4 to 1 when Paulus began his attack with a two-day aerial bombardment, which destroyed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the city. The Germans controlled 90% of the city at one point. But the battle was not a swift victory, and instead Paulus's army became entrenched in bitter fighting street-by-street, room-by-room.
- 4) General Zhukov countered on November 19th by launching Operation Uranus, to encircle the Germans in a giant pincer movement, trapping them by November 23rd.
- 5) General Manstein tried to free Paulus on December 12th (called Operation Winter Tempest), but his force was too small and never made it to the city.
- 6) Hitler refused to allow Paulus to surrender. Instead, he promoted Paulus to Field Marshal, and no German Field Marshal had ever surrendered.
- 7) The Germans finally surrendered in late January 1943. Over 200,000 Axis soldiers were lost and 91,000 taken prisoner.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Eastern Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Battle of Stalingrad <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stalingrad was insignificant <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. There were better points of attack to cut off the Volga river ii. Stalin's policy prevented a quick victory for Germany b. Different leadership <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Hitler's interference lead to defeat c. Army Group South at a disadvantage <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Divided into two forces prevented either one from succeeding 	Operation Blue: offensive by Army Group South in the summer of 1942 Operation Uranus: Soviet maneuver which encircled the German 6 th Army Operation Winter Tempest: failed attempt to break the Soviet encirclement of German 6 th Army Pincer Movement: a military maneuver where the flanks of the opponent are attacked simultaneously

- ii. Were not allowed to surrender

Historiography:

Martin McCauley: "...Germany's greatest defeat was a turning-point. From now on it was not a matter of how the war would end, but when."

Richard Overy: "...reduced, though it did not completely eliminate, the damaging effects of Stalin's naïve grasp of operational planning... (whereas Hitler) took it upon himself to order the deployment of even the smallest military units... (and) refused to accept his limitations..."

Summary Question:

To what extent was the Battle of Stalingrad the turning point of WWII?

Kursk and Russian Counterattack

“If they want a war of extermination, they will have one.”

— Joseph Stalin

“Russians don’t f*** around.”

— J.C. Hernandez

Despite victory at Stalingrad, the Eastern Front was far from finished. Only until July 1943 would the Soviets finally gain the initiative in the war.

- 1) Throughout 1943, the Soviet equipment began to improve in quality and quantity
 - a) The new KV1, KV2, and T-34 tanks mentioned earlier
 - b) Aircraft production was focused on only a few different types produced on a mass scale
 - c) American supplies through the Lend-Lease scheme
- 2) By mid-1943, Hitler launched Operation Citadel, a massive attack on Kursk, which would last from July 5th to the 12th. Kursk was the site of a bulge in the Soviet line that Stalin had chosen not to push any further, but that Hitler wanted to cut off. It would be the greatest tank battle in history
 - a) The Soviets now had superior numbers and equipment, and their commanders had learned to counter German tactics well
 - b) Impenetrable defense lines made up of mines, anti-tank defenses, and masses of heavy guns stretched for fifty miles
- 3) On July 5th, Germans attacked Kursk from the north and south, using a technique called *Panzerkeil*, attacking by using an armored wedge. The battle involved 1500 tanks on both sides.
- 4) The Germans came very close to winning at one point, but Hitler ended the battle on July 12th to deal with the Anglo-American attack on Sicily. Both sides suffered heavy losses, but the Soviet Union could recover, Germany could not.
- 5) Germany would never have the initiative again on the Eastern Front after the Battle of Kursk.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Eastern Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Battle of Kursk <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Superior Soviet preparation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. New tanks were specially designed to counter the Germans’ ii. Soviet Union had near-limitless supplies iii. Soviet commanders had learned well from previous engagements <p>Historiography: Richard Overy: “...The struggle for Kursk tore the heart out of the German army... Soviet success Kursk, with so much at stake, was the most important single victory of the war... It was the</p>	Operation Citadel: German armored offensive on the Soviet position at Kursk <i>Panzerkeil</i> : Armored wedge formation

point at which the initiative passed to the Soviet side.”

Overy: “...was mobilized so extensively, or shared such sacrifice... The drive to succeed in the battles in 1943 stemmed from violent emotions, direct hatred... The Soviet people were the instrument of their own redemption from the depths of war.”

Liddell Hart: “...indicated how the war might have spun out, and the Russians’ strength exhausted, if the defensive strategy had matched the tactics.”

Summary Question:

To what extent was the Battle of Kursk the turning point of WWII?

After the Battle of Kursk, Germany was only able to slow the inevitable advance of the Red Army through Europe. The Soviets exerted their influence as they liberated Eastern Europe, as Stalin was already planning for post-war Europe.

- 1) On January 5th, 1944, Soviet forces began their offensive to retake western Ukraine and the Crimea. The Germans gave strong resistance to the Russian advance.
- 2) The Siege of Leningrad was finally lifted on January 27th.
- 3) Army Group North was routed by the end of February.
- 4) Army Group South was split in mid-March, and the Soviets advanced on Romania.
- 5) The Crimean port of Sebastopol was taken on May 9th. Germans lost over 100,000.
- 6) In early June the Soviets attacked the Finnish forces. They made peace on September 2nd. The settlement allowed Finland to remain independent and capitalist throughout the Cold War.
- 7) On June 22nd, 1944, General Zhukov launched Operation Bagration, a massive assault on the last real German force in the east: Army Group Center. The attack comprised over 1 million men, 6000 tanks, and 2000 aircraft. The Soviet advance was devastating – the Germans lost another 300,000 men, a defeat on the same scale as Stalingrad.
- 8) On July 11th, the Soviets captured Minsk and thus drove the Germans out of the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) while also losing 100,000 men.
- 9) Soviet forces entered Poland for the first time since 1941 on July 17th.
- 10) On August 12th, a coup overthrew the pro-German government of Romania. On September 12th, Romania surrendered to the USSR and was ‘rewarded’ with the area of Transylvania, previously lost to Hungary in 1940.
- 11) In September, the Soviet Union invaded Bulgaria. On September 8th, the new regime in Bulgaria declared war on Germany.
- 12) Soviets attacked the Carpathian Mountains to reach Slovakia, eventually crossing in November.
- 13) British forces occupied Athens in October. A brief civil war began between communist and royalist forces, which ended in December.
- 14) It is important to note that Yugoslavia is the only eastern European country that liberated itself without the help of the Red Army. Their leader, Marshal Tito, would later go on to separate his country from the Soviet bloc during the Cold War.

- 15) In early August, the Polish resistance rebelled against the Germans in Warsaw. Both forces were approximately equal in strength (38,000 men) but the Germans had the advantage from tanks and air support. Early signs of the Cold War developing can already be seen: the Polish government-in-exile based in London supported the Warsaw Uprising, hoping to have a better hand to negotiate with the USSR.
- 16) By the end of August, the resistance was beginning to break down. Stalin ordered the Red Army to stop and allow the battle to finish. It's clear he intended to allow the Germans to quell the resistance only to let his own forces move in and conquer Poland with less resistance. (However, AJP Taylor suggests the reason may have been because the Soviet supply lines were stretched too far and the Red Army couldn't have supported the Poles.)
- 17) The Soviets began their attack on Warsaw in mid-September, the uprising ended in early October. The Germans evacuated the city, Polish fatalities numbered over 55,000.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Eastern Campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Russian Counterattack <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hitler's interference <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Hitler's policy of no retreats hastened German defeats, as it lead to pointless engagements and wasting already-scarce resources b. USSR's superiority <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Soviets had more numbers and resources (with aid from the USA) ii. Generals had learned to counter German tactics well iii. Germany's air force was even less effective after Stalingrad <p>Historiography: ML Altgovzen: "...Polish reactionary circles irresponsibly encouraged the inhabitants of (Warsaw) to launch an ill-prepared uprising without prior agreements with the Soviet military command. The result was the killing by the Germans of many thousands of people and the complete destruction of Warsaw." Jonathan J Jordan "...Many German and Soviet accounts agree that Operation Bagration was Hitler's worst military setback of the war. But the offensive lacked a single, dramatic focal point, such as at Stalingrad... Nevertheless, Bagration... dramatically turned the tide of war against the Third Reich."</p>	Operation Bagration: Massive Soviet assault on Germany's Army Group Center. (German military history often records this battle as "The Defeat of Army Group Center.")
<p>Summary Question: To what extent was the USSR the "true victors" of WWII?</p>		

D-Day and the Liberation of France

“You will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.”

— General Eisenhower

It was clear by mid-1943 that the tide had turned in the war:

- Rommel was beaten in North Africa
- The Allies had taken Sicily and begun their invasion of Italy
- The Soviets had gained the initiative on the Eastern front after the Battle of Kursk
- The Allies were winning the Battle of the Atlantic
- Allied bombing would have a devastating effect on German industry

The Allies agreed to invade France at the Washington Conference of May 1943. By the end of the year, Dwight D. Eisenhower was appointed Supreme Allied Commander of Operation Overlord, a.k.a. D-Day. At this point, the Cold War situation in Europe can already be seen developing. Roosevelt wanted Stalin’s help in against Japan in the war in the Pacific, but Churchill, deeply mistrustful of Stalin, wanted the Allies to attack the Balkans in order to prevent total Soviet takeover of Eastern Europe. In addition, Stalin was impatient for an Allied invasion, since Russia had lost millions of lives already and he suspected the Allies were content to delay and let the Nazis and Soviets destroy each other.

Preparations for D-Day

“In wartime, truth is so precious that she should always be attended by a bodyguard of lies.”

— Winston Churchill

Germany’s western position was protected by what was later known as the Atlantic Wall, spanning 2700 km from Norway to Spain. It comprised of a series of concrete bunkers, tank traps, and artillery. The defenses varied in depth from a few hundred meters to several kilometers. The bocage vegetation of France also made invasion difficult. The Germans suspected an attack on France, though they didn’t know where exactly. Hitler sent more troops to France along with General Rommel as General Rundstedt’s deputy. Rommel had millions of mines laid down.

The Allies took steps to keep the target of the invasion a secret, and also tried to misdirect the Germans. The most obvious choice was the port of Calais, which was only 35 km away from the British coast. However, Hitler and Rommel both suspected the Allies would attack Normandy. Despite this, Hitler chose not to fortify Normandy further at the expense of Calais. In addition to this, the Allies began a series of ruses, codenamed Operation Bodyguard, to lead the suspicion away from the true invasion preparations:

- False intelligence, intended to be deciphered by the Germans, would point to other points of attack, such as Calais, the Balkans, southern France, and Soviet attacks on Bulgaria and Norway. All the fake battle plans claimed the invasion would be at a much later date than the real attack would be.
- Allied commanders had look-alikes make public appearances to hide their true locations
- Phony airfields and armies (complete with inflatable tanks and planes) were set up to hide the real embarkation points

- The true preparations to invade Normandy were disguised to look like a diversion

By mid-1944, there were over 1.5 million US and Canadian troops in Britain, tens of thousands of trucks and tanks, and 12,000 aircraft. Amphibious landing craft and giant floating harbors (called “mulberries”) constructed would be used to disembark troops, tanks, and supplies. The original date of the invasion was set to be June 5th, but bad weather delayed it until the 6th.

D-Day

“We shot at everything that moved. The beach was soon covered with the bodies of American soldiers.”

— German soldier writing to his family
about the landings on Omaha Beach four days earlier.

50,000 men assaulted Normandy on June 6th, 1944. Over 2 million would be sent to France over the entire operation. 12,000 aircraft, 139 warships, 221 smaller combat vessels, 4000 landing craft, 805 merchant ships and dozens of other smaller naval craft were also used. 100,000 members of the French Resistance assisted through guerilla attacks within France. The target was approximately 110 km along the beaches of Normandy. The landing areas were divided into five sections from east to west: Sword (British), Juno (Canadian & British), Gold (British), Omaha (US), and Utah (US). The order attack listed below:

- British 6th Airborne division seized bridges on the River Ome and took a German artillery battery at Merville.
- US 82nd and 101st airborne divisions landed in the southeast corner of Cotentin Peninsula.
- The German defenses were bombarded first by aircraft, then by warship.
- The landings at Sword, Juno, Gold, and Utah were achieved with relatively low casualties. The attack on Omaha however was pinned down. They lost 3000 men on the first day.

By the end of the day 156,000 Allied troops had landed in Normandy. By July 12th there were 326,000 and a bridgehead 50 miles wide was gained. By July 2nd one million men had landed in France. At this point the Allies had lost 9000 men, 61,000 wounded.

- On June 18th, US forces reached the west coast of the Cotentin Peninsula and trapped the German garrison in the port of Cherbourg. By the end of the month the port was captured and the US took over 30,000 German prisoners.
- On July 26th, British forces attacked west of Caen in Operation Epsom, heavy losses forced them to halt. General Montgomery was severely criticized for this and some US generals even called for his dismissal.
- In mid-July, US forces took St. Lo. The British finally managed to clear the area around Caen after losing over 100 tanks.

Liberation of France

“We sure liberated the hell out of this place.”

— Anonymous US Soldier in a destroyed French village
Max Miller, *The Far Shore* [1945]

- 1) On July 25th, the breakout from Normandy – Operation Cobra – began. US troops moved south from St. Lo and captured Avranches on August 1st.
- 2) French Resistance gained control of Brittany, almost making General Patton’s arrival there redundant.
- 3) American forces moved east and cornered German troops in what was later known as the Falaise pocket. 50,000 Germans were captured, 10,000 killed but about 30,000 escaped with their armor, fleeing back across the River Seine.
- 4) US and French troops invaded southern France and advanced north through the Rhone Valley as part of Operation Anvil in mid-August.
- 5) The workers and police of Paris went on strike on August 15th. Hitler ordered the city be razed, but the German governor of Paris, von Choltitz refused and surrendered to the Allies instead. The Free French leader, de Gaulle arrived on the 26th.
- 6) Following the liberation of Paris, the 10,000 French who had collaborated with Hitler were executed. De Gaulle replaced the Vichy appointees with Resistance leaders. Resistance fighters were either disarmed or merged into the revived French Army. By October, de Gaulle had restored order.
- 7) The liberation of France had taken about seven weeks. Casualties on both sides were considerable: 400,000 Germans dead, 200,000 Allied soldiers dead.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
D-Day	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparations <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Operation Bodyguard successfully hid the true invasion b. Allies successfully blocked German radar stations c. Allies had air superiority 	Operation Overlord: Allied attack on Normandy, aka D-Day Operation Bodyguard: Allied deception campaign to disguise D-Day Operation Cobra: Allied move out of Normandy Operation Anvil: US-French invasion of Southern France
Summary Question:		
To what extent were the Allies the “true victors” of WWII?		

End Game (1944-45)

“The losses were heavy, but all ranks would willingly undertake another operation under similar conditions... We have no regrets.”

— British Major General Robert Urquhart

By the autumn of 1944, the Allies leaders were confident that the end of the war was close. The Germans were almost completely removed from France. Rome was captured. The Red Army had pushed the Germans back to their homeland. However, the war would still last another 8 months.

- 1) On September 17th, General Montgomery launched Operation Market Garden, intending to outflank the German defenses in the Netherlands. It was a naïve plan from the start:
 - a) Allied intelligence about the region was poor and their maps were outdated
 - b) The British couldn’t decipher German communications because they were operating on a different radio frequency
 - c) Montgomery was so sure he would succeed that he made no provisions for reinforcements or retreat in case things went wrong

- 2) The operation went well at first, but turned into a disaster. British forces at Arnhem were faced with strong German resistance and gradually squeezed into a small perimeter. The US 101st and 82nd paratroopers had linked up but were unable to fight their way to the British at Arnhem. Poor weather, German resistance, and lack of supplies or reinforcements forced Montgomery to give up. 2,200 men were evacuated, almost 18,000 killed, captured or wounded.
- 3) General Model, under Rundstedt, commanded German forces in the west. They created a strong defensive line along the West Wall; making Allied progress was slow and costly.
- 4) German defeat seemed inevitable. Fighting a three-front war and running low on resources, it seemed hopeless. Hitler himself was deteriorating physically. Germany only had hope: driving a wedge between the Allies.
 - a) Stalin was always mistrustful of the Western powers, especially Churchill. Relations with the Soviet Union had been strained ever since Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939.
 - b) Relations between the Allied commanders themselves were strained – Generals Patton, Bradley, and Eisenhower frequently disagreed with Montgomery. (Montgomery would later go on to write in his memoirs that Eisenhower’s poor judgment extended the war by a year.)
- 5) Knowing this, Hitler took the offensive one last time when launching Operation “Watch on the Rhine” (later renamed Autumn Mist), the Ardennes offensive. The West usually refers to this as the Battle of the Bulge. Hitler wanted to split the Allied forces in half, drive into Antwerp, which would cripple the Allied supply base. If he could trap the Allied force on the coast, it might be possible to negotiate peace.
- 6) The offensive began on December 16th. A German force of 24 divisions, 10 of which armed with the latest Tiger II tanks, attacked the Allies.
 - a) The Allies were taken completely by surprise
 - b) The Germans pushed through the lightly defended Ardennes region, but failed to make it to the Meuse River. All they achieved was creating a ‘bulge’ in the American line.
- 7) Allied reinforcements were diverted to deal with the attack. Allied air force was especially decisive. By mid-January the attack was completely overcome.
- 8) The offensive was costly for both sides:
 - a) The US casualties were 81,000
 - b) British casualties were 14,000
 - c) German casualties were over 100,000
- 9) The Battle of the Bulge delayed Allied plans for attack Germany, but also significantly weakened Germany’s fighting capacity. In addition, the Germans had lost over 600 tanks, 1000 aircraft and 6000 vehicles. The US had also lost equipment, but theirs could be replaced.
- 10) After this, the Allies suffered no more setbacks. By early March the Allied forces were along the Rhine River from Holland to the Swiss border. Over 60,000 Germans had been killed fighting in the Rhineland, 250,000 taken prisoner, while the Allies lost fewer than 20,000.
- 11) The final Russian offensive began on January 12th, 1945, in order to relieve the pressure the German Ardennes offensive had created. Advancing along a 1200 km front, the Germans were completely overwhelmed and forced to retreat save for the occasional resistance that held out as long as it could.
- 12) The Soviet advance was unstoppable but slow. Zhukov’s army was only 65 km from Berlin but their communication lines were stretched and they didn’t know the strength of the German garrison. Stalin ordered him to wait and regroup. The southern front was also slow –it took a month to capture Budapest.
- 13) The Soviet attack on Berlin was tremendous: 2.5 million men, 6,000 tanks, 7,500 aircraft and 42,000 artillery guns. On May 1st a Red Flag was planted on the Reichstag building, as Stalin had demanded.
- 14) Germany finally surrendered unconditionally on May 7th.

Main Idea	Detail	Keywords
Endgame (1944-1945)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why did the Germans fight to the end? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Only Hitler's death would allow the German government to surrender b. The garrison of Berlin was made up of old men and teenagers, neither of which capable of refusing to fight <p>Historiography: <u>AJP Taylor: "This was Hitler's last gamble – brilliant in conception, impossible to execute."</u></p>	Operation Market Garden: Failed attempt to outflank the German position in the Netherlands Operation Watch on the Rhine/Autumn Mist: a.k.a. Battle of the Bulge
Summary Question: To what extent was the USSR the "true victors" of WWII?		

... See attached Mindmap for **"Why did the Allies Win the Axis Lose?"**

CONSEQUENCES

Date	Event	Keywords
December 1944	Counter-Offensive in Ardennes (German last attempt at success)	Reichstag: The main legislature of the German state under the second and Third Reich.
January 1945	Soviets attack Poland	
February 1945	Yalta Conference was held with US, British and Soviet Leaders	
April 1945	Reichstag captured, defeat of the Third Reich	

“War does not determine who is right — only who is left.”

— Bertrand Russell

Immediate Effects

World War II was the deadliest conflict in history. It is estimated that 50-70 million people were killed. Some nations suffered worst than others by far, due to high civilian deaths. The death toll was immense.

Effect	Country
Massive human cost	Soviet Union:
	- Total population prior to the war was <u>168,524,000</u>
	- Military deaths were <u>9,000,000 to 11,000,000</u>
	- Civilian deaths due to the war and crimes against humanity <u>13,000,000 to 15,000,000</u>
	- Total deaths <u>23,000,000 to 24,000,000</u>
	Germany:
	- Total population prior to the war was <u>69,850,000</u>
	- Military deaths were <u>5,500,00</u>
	- Civilian deaths due to the war and crimes against humanity <u>1,500,000 to 3,500,000</u>
	- Total deaths <u>7,000,000 to 9,000,000</u>
	Britain:
	- Total population prior to the war was <u>47,760,000</u>
- Military deaths were <u>383,800</u> (including colonies)	

- Civilian deaths due to the war and crimes against humanity 67,100
- Total deaths 450,900

United States:

- Total population prior to the war was 131,028,000
- Military deaths were 416,800 (including Merchant marine + Coast Guard)
- Civilian deaths due to the war and crimes against humanity 1,700
- Total deaths 418,500

France:

- Total population prior to the war was 41,700,000
- Military deaths were 217,600 (including colonies)
- Civilian deaths due to the war and crimes against humanity 350,000
- Total deaths 567,600

Japan:

- 90,000-166,000 killed in Hiroshima
- 60,000-80,000 killed in Nagasaki
- Total of 150,000–246,000+ killed

There was immense destruction to infrastructure, homes etc.

Effect	Country
Destruction to infrastructure	<p>Britain:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devastated by 1940 German Blitz <p>USSR:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Devastated by land warfare on Russian territory <p>Germany:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After allied bombing of Germany: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) 24 hospitals b) 58 churches c) 227 schools d) 50% city Was destroyed. <p>Japan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Factories crippled from bombing 2. Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Social Effects:

1. Over 20 million people had been displaced from their homes in 1945.
 - a. Examples:
 - i. Slave-workers from occupied Europe taken to Germany and Austria
 - ii. Prisoners from concentration camps
 - iii. Refugees
2. Fascism seemed to have failed
3. Racism and anti-Semitism became unacceptable
 - a. Except some southern states in the USA
4. People were radicalized and ready for reform
 - a. Many Western European countries were ready for social revolution
 - b. Governments had to compromise
 - i. Implementing social security systems
 - ii. Nationalism of means of production and distribution
 - iii. Progressive income tax
 - iv. Measures to create full employment
 - v. Gov. examples: the Attlee Government in Britain. De Gaulle's government in France
 - c. Population ready for the reforms brought by Communism.
5. War had stimulated technological and scientific development
 - a. E.g. nuclear weapons

Immediate Political Effects:

1. Internal stresses in formerly occupied countries
 - b. Spontaneous acts of rebellions
 - c. Lynching of betrayers
 - d. Public humiliation of collaborators
 - i. Leading to a civil war in Greece
3. European domination of the world had ended
 - a) USA emerged as world superpower
 - b) Germany destroyed as a great power
 - c) Britain and France were effectively destroyed as great imperial powers
 - d) USSR had
 - i) Recovered and extended its empire
 - ii) Became the dominant military power on the continent of Europe
 - iii) Acquired prestige as victor over Nazism
 - iv) Leading Communist power consolidated its borders
 - v) Much weaker than USA economically, without nuclear weapons and damaged by the war
4. End of White superiority myth
 - a) Defeat of western powers by Japan
 - b) Countries eager to win their own independence
 - c) Catalyst to the breaking up of 19th century empires
5. Caused the Cold War, which would last for 46 years.

**“Never think of war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime.”
—— Ernest Hemingway**