The Axis Advances

**Janina’s War Story**

64 It was 10:10 in the morning and I was helping my mother and a servant girl with bags and baskets as they set out for the market. . . . Suddenly the high-pitch scream of diving planes caused everyone to freeze. . . . Countless explosions shook our house followed by the rat-tat-tat of strafing machine guns. We could only stare at each other in horror. Later reports would confirm that several German Stukas had strung out a line of blue sky and . . . dropped several bombs along the main street— and then returned to strafe the market. The carnage was terrible.

—Janina Sulkowska, Krzemieniec, Poland, September 12, 1939

Focus Question: Which regions were attacked and occupied by the Axis powers, and what was life like under their occupation?

Diplomacy and compromise had not satisfied the Axis powers’ hunger for empire. Western democracies had hoped that appeasement would help establish a peaceful world order. But Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and imperial Japan plunged ahead with their plans for conquest.

**The Axis Attacks**

On September 1, 1939, Nazi forces stormed into Poland, revealing the enormous power of Hitler’s blitzkrieg, or “lightning war.” The blitzkrieg utilized improved tank and airpower technology to strike a devastating blow against the enemy. First, the Luftwaffe, or German air force, bombed airfields, factories, towns, and cities, and strafing dive bombers fired on troops and civilians. Then, fast-moving tanks and troop transports pushed their way into the defending Polish army, encircling whole divisions of troops and forcing them to surrender.

While Germany attacked from the west, Stalin’s forces invaded from the east, grabbing lands promised to them under the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Within a month, Poland ceased to exist. Because of Poland’s location and the speed of the attacks, Britain and France could do nothing to help beyond declaring war on Germany. Hitler passed the winter without much further action. Stalin’s armies, however, forced the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and

**Objectives**

- Describe how the Axis powers came to control much of Europe, but failed to conquer Britain.
- Summarize Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union.
- Understand the horror of the genocide the Nazis committed.
- Describe the role of the United States before and after joining World War II.

**Vocabulary Builder**

Use the information below and the following resources to teach the high-use words from this section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Use Words</th>
<th>Definitions and Sample Sentences</th>
<th>Available, p. 569</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nullified, p. 571</td>
<td>vt. made invalid; at hand</td>
<td>After Susan ran out of butter, she had to use whatever ingredients were available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nullified, p. 571</td>
<td>adj. made invalid</td>
<td>After the students were caught cheating, the instructor nullified their exam grades.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Miracle of Dunkirk During that first winter, the French hunkered down behind the Maginot Line. Britain sent troops to wait with them. Some reporters referred to this quiet time as the “phony war.” Then, in April 1940, Hitler launched a blitzkrieg against Norway and Denmark, both of which soon fell. Next, his forces stormed into the Netherlands and Belgium.

In May, German forces surprised the French and British by attacking through the Ardennes Forest in Belgium, an area that was considered invulnerable. Bypassing the Maginot Line, German troops poured into France. Retreating British forces were soon trapped between the Nazi army and the English Channel. In a desperate gamble, the British sent all available naval vessels, merchant ships, and even fishing and pleasure boats across the channel to pluck stranded troops off the beach of Dunkirk. Despite German air attacks, the improvised armada ferried more than 300,000 troops to safety in Britain. This heroic rescue raised British morale.

France Falls Meanwhile, German forces headed south toward Paris. Italy declared war on France and attacked from the south. Overrun and demoralized, France surrendered. On June 22, 1940, Hitler forced the French to sign the surrender documents in the same railroad car in which Germany had signed the armistice ending World War I. Following the surrender, Germany occupied northern France. In the south, the Germans set up a “puppet state,” with its capital at Vichy (VEE shay).

Some French officers escaped to England and set up a government-in-exile. Led by Charles de Gaulle, these “free French” worked to liberate their homeland. Within France, resistance fighters used guerrilla tactics against German forces.

Operation Sea Lion With the fall of France, Britain stood alone in Western Europe. Hitler was sure that the British would sue for peace. But Winston Churchill, who had replaced Neville Chamberlain as prime minister, had other plans. Faced with this defiance, Hitler made plans for Operation Sea Lion—the invasion of Britain. In preparation for this invasion, he launched massive air strikes against the island nation.

Beginning in August 1940, German bombers began a daily bombardment of England’s southern coast. For a month, Britain’s Royal Air Force valiantly battled the Luftwaffe. Then, the Germans changed their tactics. Instead of bombing military targets in the south, they began to bomb London and other cities.

Germany Launches the Blitz German bombers first appeared over London late on September 7, 1940. All through the night, raids of aircraft showered high explosives and firebombs on the sprawling capital. The bombing continued for 57 nights in a row and then sporadically until the next May. These bombing attacks are known as “the blitz.” Much of London was destroyed, and thousands of people lost their lives.

History Background

The Trick of the Hitler Two-Step After the surrender of France, the Western Allies saw news reels and photographs that seemingly showed a delighted Hitler doing a victory dance on the very spot where Germany had surrendered at the close of World War I. This humiliating image was continually shown in movie theaters and newspapers across Britain, the United States and Canada. It enraged viewers. However, the footage was really a clever editing trick by propagandist John Gielgud. In the beginning, he edited the frames and looped them to show Hitler doing a dance. The Allies then continuously aired the fake footage to rally the public to join the war effort.

The Axis Attacks

Teach

Instruct

■ Introduce: Vocabulary Builder Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask How did Germany use the technology available to it to strike at the Allies? (Germany used airplanes and high explosives in a “blitz” against its enemies.) Explain to students that blitz is short for blitzkrieg, which means “lightning war” in German.

■ Teach Trace the Axis advance at the beginning of the war. Ask How did the Axis powers achieve victories in 1939 and 1940? (by striking fast, using the awesome power of modern technology, and never giving the enemy time to prepare or defend itself) Which side do you think was winning at the end of 1942? (the Axis because they controlled most of Europe and had won important victories in Africa)

■ Quick Activity Have students look at the Battle of Britain. To begin, read aloud or play the audio selection from the Primary Source. Then direct students to look at the Infographic on Surviving the Blitz, on the next page, and play that audio selection. Discuss the many ways in which the war hurt ordinary people. Then remind students that Britain had a strong navy. Ask Why do you think the air strikes were important to Germany’s plan to invade Britain? (Because Britain had a strong navy. Germany would need to ensure that it had control of the air in order to successfully invade the country.)


Vocabulary Builder

available—(uh VAYL uh bul) adj. ready

Primary Source

Winston Churchill’s defiance gave voice to the determination of the British. How did Churchill give weight to his speech?

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

—Winston Churchill, June 4, 1940

Explain to students that blitzkrieg, which means “lightning war” in German, is short for blitz, which means “lightning.”

Teach

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Explain to students that blitzkrieg, which means “lightning war” in German, is short for blitz, which means “lightning.”
Independent Practice
Have students write a series of six to eight newspaper headlines that summarize the course of the war from the invasion of Poland to the German decision to break off the Battle of Britain. Encourage them to include not only battles but also important speeches by leaders involved in the war. Remind them that newspaper headlines should be short but informative.

Monitor Progress
- As students fill in their flowcharts, circulate to make sure they are sequencing the events in Europe and in Africa correctly. For a completed version of the flowchart, see Note Taking Transparencies, 185A
- To review each country’s status in 1941, ask students to create a three-column chart with the headings Free of German Control, Axis Power, and Conquered by Axis.

The Role of Radar
Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF) was greatly outnumbered during the Battle of Britain, but it managed to fend off German attacks with remarkable success. One reason for this success was a new technology: radar (short for radio detecting and ranging), in which high frequency radio waves were emitted from stations. When those waves hit an object—like a German plane—they bounced off it and were sent back to the transmitter. A signal then appeared on a screen showing the object’s distance, direction, and, over time, speed. Britain had 21 long-range radar stations that could detect an enemy plane at a distance of 140 miles (225 kilometers). Reports from radar stations were fed to an information clearing house near London. There, experts tracked the movements of enemy planes and telephoned information to RAF headquarters, which could order planes into the air to meet each attack.

London did not break under the blitz. Defiantly, Parliament continued to meet. Citizens carried on their daily lives, seeking protection in shelters and then emerging to resume their routines when the all-clear sounded. Even the British king and queen chose to support Londoners by joining them in bomb shelters rather than fleeing to the countryside.

Hitler Fails to Take Britain
German planes continued to bomb London and other cities off and on until May 1941. But contrary to Hitler’s hopes, the Luftwaffe could not gain air superiority over Britain, and British morale was not destroyed. In fact, the bombing only made the British more determined to turn back the enemy. Operation Sea Lion was a failure.

Africa and the Balkans
Axis armies also pushed into North Africa and the Balkans. In September 1940, Mussolini ordered forces from Italy’s North African colony of Libya into Egypt. When the British army repulsed these invaders, Hitler sent one of his most brilliant commanders, General Erwin Rommel, to North Africa. The “Desert Fox,” as he was called, chalked up a string of successes in 1941 and 1942. He pushed the British back across the desert toward Cairo, Egypt.

In October 1940, Italian forces invaded Greece. They encountered stiff resistance, and in 1941 German troops once again provided reinforcements. Both Greece and Yugoslavia were added to the growing Axis empire. Even after the Axis triumph, however, Greek and Yugoslav
Germany Invades the Soviet Union

Instruct

■ Introduce: Vocabulary Builder
Have students read the Vocabulary Builder term and definition. Ask How did Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union nullify the Nazi-Soviet Pact? (Hitler had promised that Germany would not fight the Soviet Union.)

■ Teach
Ask Why did Hitler want to conquer the Soviet Union? (He wanted its resources and he wanted to crush communism in Europe and break Stalin’s power.) How far did German troops advance in the first few months? (They reached deep into the Soviet Union and were about to capture Moscow and Stalingrad.) What prevented the Germans from gaining victory? (stout defenses of those cities and Leningrad; the winter weather)

How did Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union work against him? (It led to cooperation between the Soviet Union and Britain and tied up troops and supplies with a fierce new enemy.)

Thinking Critically
1. Draw Conclusions: What lessons might the British have learned from their experience of the blitz?
2. Make Inferences: Why do you think that the blitz failed to break the morale of the British people?

Vocabulary Builder
nullify—(NUL uh fyd) vt. made invalid

Answers

1. Sample: to be resourceful, to be defiant
2. Sample: The bombings angered the British people and rallied their support for their country.

Thinking Critically

■ Special Needs
Remind students that events in World War II were taking place in several areas at once. Since the text often focuses on one region at a time, students will need to piece together the information to sequence it properly for the Note Taking flowchart. Suggest that they record each date and event on a separate index card. Then they can easily shuffle the cards to put them in the proper order.

■ English Language Learners
Use the following resources to help students acquire basic skills.
   Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide
   Adapted Note Taking Study Guide, p. 181
   Adapted Section Summary, p. 182

Thinking Critically

■ Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, parts of the region of North Africa, Greece, and Yugoslavia. In addition, Bulgaria and Hungary joined the Axis.

Germany Invades the Soviet Union

After the failure in Britain, Hitler turned his military might to a new target—the Soviet Union. The decision to invade the Soviet Union helped relieve Britain. It also proved to be one of Hitler’s costliest mistakes.

An Unstoppable German Army Stalls

In June 1941, Hitler nullified the Nazi-Soviet Pact by invading the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa, a plan which took its name from the medieval Germanic leader, Frederick Barbarossa. Hitler made his motives clear: “If I had the Urals Mountains with their incalculable store of treasure in raw materials,” he declared, “Siberia with its vast forests, and the Ukraine with its tremendous wheat fields, Germany under National Socialist leadership would swim in plenty.” He also wanted to crush communism in Europe and defeat his powerful rival, Stalin.


Guerrillas plagued the occupying forces. Meanwhile, both Bulgaria and Hungary had joined the Axis alliance. By 1941, the Axis powers or their allies controlled most of Europe.

Checkpoint
Which regions fell under Axis rule between 1939 and 1941?

L1 Special Needs
L2 Less Proficient Readers
L2 English Language Learners

Remind students that events in World War II were taking place in several areas at once. Since the text often focuses on one region at a time, students will need to piece together the information to sequence it properly for the Note Taking flowchart. Suggest that they record each date and event on a separate index card. Then they can easily shuffle the cards to put them in the proper order.

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   Adapted Note Taking Study Guide, p. 181
   Adapted Section Summary, p. 182

Thinking Critically

1. Sample: to be resourceful, to be defiant
2. Sample: The bombings angered the British people and rallied their support for their country.

Chapter 17 Section 2 571
Independent Practice

Tell students to take the role of someone living in Leningrad in 1942, during the German siege. Have them write a journal entry describing what life was like within the city, including the shelling from German artillery, the physical destruction, and the difficulties of finding food and water. Encourage them to describe how they feel about the hardships they face. Invite volunteers to share their journal entries with the class.

Monitor Progress

To review this section, ask What role did the climate of the Soviet Union play in its battle to halt the German invasion? (The extreme winter weather stalled the German advance.)

Answer

It was stalled by Soviet resistance, the difficulty of the harsh winter and by Stalin’s tactics of destroying equipment and burning crops to keep resources and food out of German hands.

572 World War II and Its Aftermath
Life Under Nazi and Japanese Occupation

While Nazi forces rampaged across Europe, the Japanese military conquered an empire in Asia and the Pacific. Each set out to build a “new order” in the occupied lands.

Hitler’s “New Order” Hitler’s new order grew out of his racial obsessions. As his forces conquered most of Europe, Hitler set up puppet governments in Western European countries that were peopled by Aryans, or light-skinned Europeans, whom Hitler and his followers believed to be a “master race.” The Slavs of Eastern Europe were considered to be an inferior “race.” They were shoved aside to provide more “living space” for Germans, the strongest of the Aryans.

To the Nazis, occupied lands were an economic resource to be plundered and looted. The Nazis systematically stripped conquered nations of their works of art, factories, and other resources. To counter resistance movements that emerged in occupied countries, the Nazis took savage revenge, shooting hostages and torturing prisoners.

But the Nazis’ most sinister plans centered on the people of the occupied countries. During the 1930s, the Nazis had sent thousands of Jewish people and political opponents to concentration camps, detention centers for civilians considered enemies of the state. Over the course of the war, the Nazis forced these people, along with millions of Polish and Soviet Slavs and people from other parts of Europe, to work as slave laborers. Prisoners were poorly fed and often worked to death.

Thinking Critically
1. Map Skills: Where were the death camps located? How did this location reflect the goal of the “Final Solution”?
2. Graph Skills: How does the graph show the horror of the Holocaust?

Connect to Our World

Connections to Today Along with other valuables, the Nazis often took works of art as plunder. At the end of the war, the Soviet army also seized art as reparations, while it occupied Germany. The government returned some of the art to East Germany. Other artworks remained in Russia, hidden or forgotten.

In 1991, the director of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg stumbled across more than 70 works of art by various masters taken from German museums and private collectors. The Hermitage exhibited these works in March 1995. Although the museum agreed to return some of the art to the heirs of the original collectors, the Russian government blocked the move. It still regarded the art taken from Germany as reparations for the great damage done to the Soviet Union during World War II.

Life Under Nazi and Japanese Occupation

Instruct
- Introduce Direct students’ attention to the photograph of Jewish families being led off by Nazi soldiers in the Infographic on the Holocaust. Discuss the emotions shown on the people’s faces. Ask students to predict what this photograph reveals about how the Nazis treated the civilians they conquered.

Teach Ask: What ideology was the basis for the Nazis’ brutal treatment of conquered peoples? (belief that so-called Aryans, especially Germans, were a superior race and that all others were inferior, especially Jews, Slavs, and the Roma)

How did the Nazis put these beliefs into practice? (They forced conquered peoples from these groups into slave labor in work camps and in concentration camps; millions were systematically killed. They also targeted political opponents, the elderly, the disabled, and homosexuals.)

Quick Activity Discuss the issue of who bears the greatest responsibility for the murders committed in the German “death camps”—Hitler and the few other top officials who developed the plan to create the camps and execute people, or the many people who carried out that effort by running the camps under orders.

Answers
Thinking Critically
1. in Poland near the work camps; it shows that all detainees might eventually be moved from work camps to death camps and reveals the Nazis’ ruthless policies towards Slavs and Central European Jews
2. It depicts the dramatic drop in the Jewish population of Europe
History Background

Resisting Nazi Rule. Across Europe, ordinary citizens resisted Nazi rule by hiding Jewish people or helping them escape to find safety. In Denmark, where few German troops were stationed, the Danish people smuggled almost all of the country’s Jews to the safety of Sweden. Another pocket of resistance was Le Chambon, in Vichy France, where villagers provided a safe haven for 5,000 Jews.

Even in the death camps themselves, some Jews fought back. In October 1944, for example, a group of Jews in the Auschwitz death camp destroyed one of the gas chambers. The rebels were all killed. One woman, Rosa Robota, was tortured for days before she was hanged. “Be strong and have courage,” she called out to the camp inmates whom the Nazis forced to watch her execution.

The Nazis Commit Genocide. At the same time, Hitler pursued a vicious program to kill all people he judged “racially inferior,” particularly Europe’s Jews. The Nazis also targeted other groups who did not meet the Aryan racial ideal, including Slavs, Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, and the disabled. Political and religious leaders who spoke out against Nazism also suffered abuse. Starting in 1939, the Nazis forced Jews in Poland and other countries to live in ghettos, or sections of cities where Jewish people were confined. Many died from starvation, disease, overwork, and the harsh elements. By 1941, however, German leaders had devised plans for the “Final Solution of the Jewish problem”—the genocide of all European Jews.

To accomplish this goal, Hitler had six special “death camps” built in Poland. The Nazis shipped “undesirables” from all over occupied Europe to the camps. There, Nazi engineers designed the most efficient means of killing millions of men, women, and children.

As the prisoners reached the camps, they were stripped of their clothes and valuables. Their heads were shaved. Guards separated men from women and children from their parents. The young, elderly, and sick were targeted for immediate killing. Within a few days, they were herded into “shower rooms” and gassed. The Nazis worked others to death or used them for perverse “medical” experiments. By 1945, the Nazis had massacred some six million Jews in what became known as the Holocaust. Nearly six million other people were killed as well.

Jewish people resisted the Nazis even though they knew their efforts could not succeed. In July 1942, the Nazis began sending Polish Jews from the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka death camp at a rate of about 5,000 per day. In the spring of 1943, knowing that their situation was hopeless, the Jews took over the ghetto and used a small collection of guns and homemade bombs to damage the Nazi forces as much as possible. On May 16, the Nazis regained control of the ghetto and eliminated the remaining Warsaw Jews. Still, their courage has inspired many over the years.

In some cases, friends, neighbors, or strangers protected Jews. Italian peasants hid Jews in their villages. Danish and Bulgarian Jews saved almost...
all their Jewish populations. Many people, however, pretended not to notice what was happening. Some even became collaborators and cooperated with the Nazis. In France, the Vichy government helped ship thousands of Jewish people to their deaths. Strict immigration policies in many Western countries as well as concerted efforts to block Jewish immigration prevented many Jews from gaining refuge elsewhere.

The scale and savagery of the Holocaust are unequaled in history. The Nazis deliberately set out to destroy the Jews for no reason other than their religious and ethnic heritage. Today, the record of that slaughter is a vivid reminder of the monstrous results of racism and intolerance.

**Japan's Brutal Conquest**

Japanese forces took control across Asia and the Pacific. Their self-proclaimed mission was to help Asians escape Western colonial rule. In fact, this real goal was a Japanese empire in Asia. The Japanese invaders treated the Chinese, Filipinos, Malaysians, and other conquered people with great brutality, killing and torturing civilians throughout East and Southeast Asia. The occupiers seized food crops, destroyed cities and towns, and made local people into slave laborers. Whatever welcome the Japanese had first met as “liberators” was soon turned to hatred. In the Philippines, Indonesia, and elsewhere, nationalist groups waged guerrilla warfare against the Japanese invaders.

**Checkpoint** How did Hitler’s views about race lead to the murder of six million Jewish people and millions of Slavs, Gypsies, and others?

**Japan Attacks the United States**

When the war began in 1939, the United States declared its neutrality. Still, although isolationist feeling remained strong, many Americans sympathized with those who battled the Axis powers. As one of those sympathizers, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) looked for ways around the Neutrality Acts to provide warships and other aid to Britain as it stood alone against Hitler.

**American Involvement Grows**

In March 1941, FDR persuaded Congress to pass the Lend-Lease Act. It allowed him to sell or lend war materials to “any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States.” The United States, said Roosevelt, would not be drawn into the war, but it would become “the arsenal of democracy,” supplying arms to those who were fighting for freedom. To shore up further support, Roosevelt met secretly with Churchill on a warship in the Atlantic in August 1941. The two leaders issued the Atlantic Charter, which set goals for the war—the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny—and for the postwar world. They pledged to support “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live” and called for a “permanent system of general security.”

Japan and the United States Face Off. When war broke out in Europe in 1939, the Japanese saw a chance to grab European possessions in Southeast Asia. The rich resources of the region, including oil, rubber, and tin, would be of immense value in fighting its war against the Chinese.

In 1940, Japan advanced into French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. In response, the United States banned the sale of war materials, such as iron, steel, and oil, to Japan. Japanese leaders saw this move as a threat to Japan’s economy and its Asian sphere of influence.

**Independent Practice**

Explain that many Americans were reluctant to enter World War II until the attack on Pearl Harbor. That event spurred unanimous support for war, not only against Japan but also against Germany. Have students write a short essay explaining why the attack changed American attitudes so sharply.

**Monitor Progress**

Have students prepare a brief outline of the subsection that shows the steps that led to greater American involvement in the war and, eventually, to a declaration of war.

**Checkpoint** How was Japan’s attack on the United States more involved in the war? (Lend-Lease Act, Atlantic Charter, Pearl Harbor attack) Ask How was Japan’s attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor similar to the German invasion of Poland? (Both were surprise attacks, done before any declaration of war.) Do you think the United States could have stayed out of the war? (Sample: no, because Japan’s attack was a direct attack on the country.)

**Analyzing the Visuals** Display Color Transparency 175: Pearl Harbor. Use the lesson suggested in the transparency book to guide a discussion of the size and strategy of the Japanese attack and the damage that it caused to the U.S. base.
Assess Progress

- Have students complete the Section Assessment.
- Administer the Section Quiz.
- Extend the learning with Transparencies, 124.
- To further assess student understanding, use Progress Monitoring.

Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section summary.

- Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 182
- Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 182
- Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, p. 182

Extend

See this chapter’s Professional Development pages for the Extend Online activity on the Kindertransport.

Answers

Caption: The direct attack on the United States caused the United States to end its isolationist policies and enter the war.

The United States banned the sale of war materials to Japan. This hampered Japanese expansion efforts in Southeast Asia and threatened the Japanese economy.

Section 2 Assessment

1. Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section.
2. Germany and Italy controlled most of Europe and some of North Africa. Japan attacked China and Southeast Asia and many islands in the Pacific. Both Germany and Japan treated the civilians they encountered with brutality.
3. Blitzkrieg tactics used advanced technology to overwhelm enemy forces. First, airplanes bombed a region, then fast-moving ground troops moved in to surround the enemy forces.
4. The RAF, although relatively small, was able to protect Britain.
5. Sample: By perpetuating prejudice and cruelty, such hatreds cause conflict and may eventually lead to the loss of valuable members of society.

Japan and the United States held talks to ease the growing tension. But extreme militarists, such as General Tojo Hideki, hoped to expand Japan’s empire, and the United States was interfering with their plans.

Attack on Pearl Harbor

With talks at a standstill, General Tojo ordered a surprise attack. Early on December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes bombed the American fleet at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The attack took the lives of about 2,400 people and destroyed battleships and aircraft. The next day, a grim-faced President Roosevelt told the nation that December 7 was “a date which will live in infamy.” He asked Congress to declare war on Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy, as Japan’s allies, declared war on the United States.

Japanese Victories

In the long run, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would be no worse a mistake than Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union. But in the months after Pearl Harbor, possessions in the Pacific fell to the Japanese one by one. The Japanese captured the Philippines and other islands held by the United States. They overrun the British colonies of Hong Kong, Burma, and Malaya, and advanced deeper into the Dutch East Indies and French Indochina. By 1942, the Japanese empire stretched from Southeast Asia to the western Pacific Ocean.

Checkpoint: Why did Japanese leaders view the United States as an enemy?