

World War II

*The Great Depression and
World War II (1929–1945)*



Origins and causes

The European theater

The Pacific theater

Aftermath

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will know the following about the European theater of World War II:

- Early battles and maneuvers
- American foreign policy before the war
- America's reasons for entering the war
- Major battles and events in the European theater
- V-E Day.



The German invasion of Poland began a war that soon spread to every continent.
Watch this animation to learn more about the early battles in World War II.

Press **start** to begin.

start





After the devastation of World War I, Americans were eager to avoid involvement in foreign conflicts.

Although the U.S. relied heavily on the global economy, its foreign policy was generally **isolationist**.

In response to events in Europe, Congress passed the **Neutrality Acts** in 1935, which banned the sale of arms to warring nations.





Although Roosevelt wanted to avoid war, he also believed that nations must protect each others' freedom.

When Japan launched new attacks against China in 1937, Roosevelt continued to send arms to China.

As the situation in Europe worsened, Americans found it difficult to remain neutral. By June of 1941, 76% of Americans supported sending aid to Britain.



Why was sending arms to China problematic?



Many Americans believed that the U.S. should not get involved in foreign wars. They felt their freedoms were best served by creating and protecting a strong democracy at home.



Others, like Roosevelt, believed the wellbeing of the U.S. was linked to that of other nations. They argued that the only way to protect American freedom was to ensure the freedom of others.

What do you think? Does the U.S. have the right, or the responsibility, to get involved in foreign conflicts?





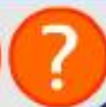
Hoping to keep the U.S. out of the war, Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact on Sept. 27, 1940, creating the Axis Powers.

If the U.S. went to war against one Axis nation, it would be at war with all of them.

Can you sort these events in America's path to war into the correct order?

Press **start** to begin.

start





America joins the war

On December 7, 1941, 180 Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor for almost two hours.

The attack resulted in over 3,000 American casualties and the destruction of nearly the entire Pacific Fleet. Roosevelt called it “a date which will live in infamy.”

The United States declared war on Japan the next day. Italy and Germany then declared war on the United States.



With conflicts on every continent, the war had become global.



Although the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had brought the U.S. into the War, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed that the European theater was their first priority. Meanwhile, changes in Europe were redrawing the lines of the War.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Battle of the Bulge

In desperation, Hitler ordered his army to take the offensive, hoping to divide and conquer the Allies as they pushed east.

On December 16, 1944, eight German tanks broke through the American line. This created a bulge in the line across Belgium, France and Luxembourg, giving the month-long battle its name: the **Battle of the Bulge**.



When the Germans were pushed back, they had lost 120,000 men, 600 tanks and 1,600 planes, none of which could be replaced.





By April 25, 1945, Soviet troops had reached Berlin.

In an underground bunker, Hitler wrote his final address, blaming the Jews for the war. He then married his mistress, Eva Braun. The couple committed suicide on April 30.

On May 8, 1945, Germany offered its unconditional surrender. Allies around the world celebrated **V-E Day**: Victory in Europe.





President Truman

Sadly, Roosevelt did not live to see the victory. He died of a stroke on April 12, 1945 during his fourth term in office.

Roosevelt was succeeded by his vice president, **Harry S. Truman**.

War in Europe had ended. Truman was left to finish the war still raging in the Pacific.

