

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 about the following aspects of the Pacific theater in World War II:

- Japanese culture and expansion
- The attack on Pearl Harbor
- Major battles and maneuvers in the Pacific theater
- America's use of the atomic bomb.



In the 1930s, Japan was a fully industrialized world power. However, its culture was still largely traditional.



Japanese society was semi-feudal. The emperor was seen as divine, and warriors were exalted.

Japan was highly nationalistic and suspicious of western influences.

By the 1930s, the military was essentially in control of Japanese foreign policy.





Eager to prove Japan's importance as a major military power, Japanese military leaders set about expanding the empire.

Can you put these events in Japanese expansion into the correct chronological order?

Press **start** to begin.

start

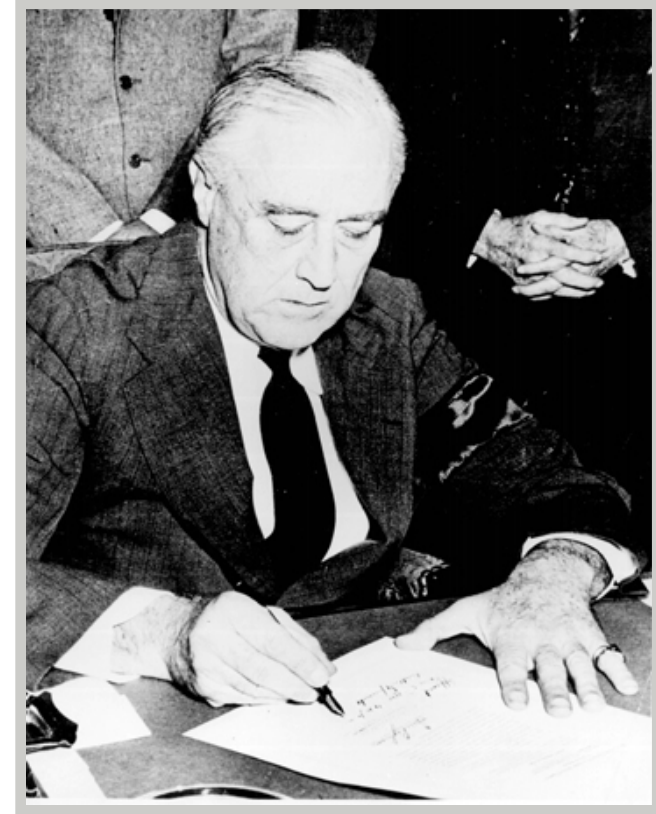




The U.S. oil embargo worried Japan. Without imported oil, Japan's industrial and military infrastructure would collapse.

Prime Minister Hideki Tojo promised Emperor **Hirohito** he would attempt to make peace with the U.S.

Instead, he ordered an attack on the U.S. military base at Pearl Harbor. The U.S. declared war on Japan the next day.



Why do you think Tojo attacked the United States?



On December 7, 1941, 180 Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor for nearly two hours. With 21 ships sunk or damaged and over 300 aircraft destroyed, the Pacific Fleet was nearly demolished. Several aircraft carriers were at sea when the raid began. These ships would prove instrumental to Allied victory in the Pacific.

Press **start** to learn more.

start





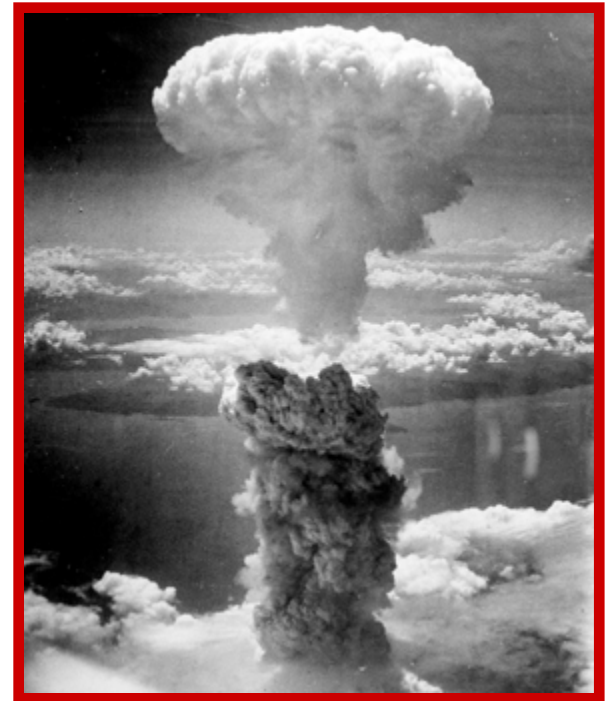
The atomic bomb



During the War, American scientists had been working in secret on the creation of an atomic bomb.

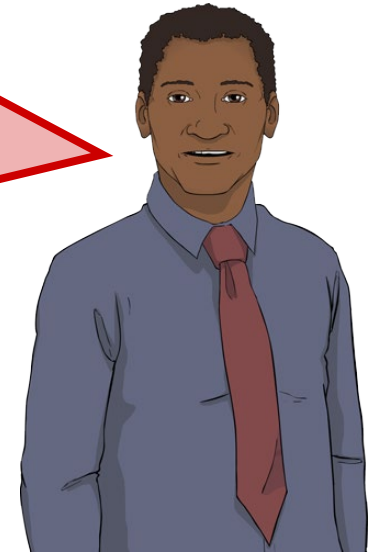
Led by **J. Robert Oppenheimer**, the **Manhattan Project** was so top secret that Truman only learned of its existence when he became president.

When the first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico in July, 1945, the flash was visible 180 miles away.





Many felt use of the bomb was necessary to end the war and save American lives. They also wanted to prove that the U.S. was the dominant power in the post-war world.



Others believed Japan was ready to surrender anyway. They argued that simply demonstrating the bomb's power would be as effective in ending the war and establishing U.S. supremacy.

Truman's decision is one of the most controversial in modern history. Do you think it was justified?