

World War II

*A Half-Century of Crisis and
Achievement (1900–1945)*



War in Europe

Total war

War in the Pacific

The legacy of war

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



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 have learned about “total war” and be able to answer the following key questions:

- What was the impact of the German use of blitz warfare?
- What impact did men and women on the home front have on the progress of the war?
- What were the major events which led to the Allied victory in Europe?



When it became clear that the German **Luftwaffe** were unable to defeat the RAF in the Battle of Britain, Hitler changed tactics and focused on bringing the civilian population to its knees. Bombing raids now concentrated on civilian targets, such as the city of London. This phase of the war is known as the **Blitz**.

“Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves, that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, this was their finest hour.”



– Winston Churchill, in a speech inspiring the British people to withstand the German attacks.



The commencement of German bombing raids on civilian targets ushered in a new phase of total war. Press on the pictures to find out about some of the changes that took place on the home front, as civilians as well as military personnel became involved in the war effort.

Press **start** to begin.

start





World War II was a global conflict and fighting was not limited to the Western Front.

Press on each tab to find out about campaigns in the Balkans, North Africa, and the Soviet Union.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Read this passage about the Battle of the Atlantic and the Enigma machine and select the correct words to fill the gaps.

Press **start** to begin.

start





On March 11, 1941, Congress passed the **Lend-Lease Act**, allowing the U.S. to "sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of," items of defense to the Allies.

An extension of the earlier Cash and Carry policy, the Lend-Lease Act provided the Allies with the crucial supplies needed to wage war. In July, President Roosevelt agreed to escort and protect British freighters carrying American goods from German U-Boats.



Many European leaders believed that this promise would bring about America's entrance into the war.

Why might European leaders have thought this?



Changes on the home front



In December 1941, the U.S. entered World War II following a surprise Japanese attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. The conflict had a huge impact on the way people lived. Women took on new roles, goods were rationed, millions of men enlisted, and economies changed. Press on the propaganda posters to learn more about each of these changes.
Press **start** to begin.

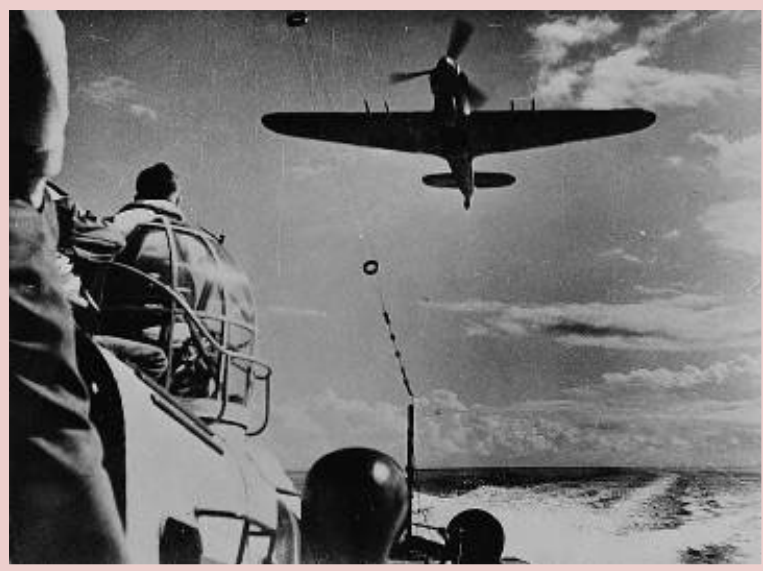
start



Why do you think posters like these were so important?



In November of 1942, American, British and colonial troops staged a joint invasion of Axis-controlled Morocco and Algeria.



Pushing back the weakened **Afrika Corps**, the Allies gained control of North Africa in the following May and launched an attack on the island of Sicily. Continuing north into mainland Italy, the Allies hoped to force Germany's ally out of the war.

The full liberation of Italy, however, would not come until May of 1945. Meanwhile, the German defeat at Stalingrad marked a turning point in the war in the east.





On June 6, 1944, the Allies launched the largest amphibious landing in history on the beaches of Normandy, France. The invasion, code named Operation Overlord, was directed by the Allied Commander-in-Chief, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Click on the code name of each beach to find out more about the D-Day landings.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Allied push to Berlin



Beginning with the Soviet victory at **Stalingrad** in February of 1943, the Allied forces began the slow liberation of Europe from Nazi control.

After the invasion at Normandy, the Allies advanced on three fronts: the Soviets in the east, and the western powers in the west and south. Each nation desperately pushed their forces forward in a race to Berlin.



The **Red Army** was the first to enter the capital and on May 2, 1945, the Soviets raised their flag over the defeated city.

Why do you think it was so important to each of the Allied Powers to be the first to Berlin?



On April 12, 1945, as Allied troops stormed across Europe, President Roosevelt passed away after struggling with his health for several years.

On May 7, 1945, a week after the suicide of Hitler, the German forces surrendered unconditionally. The official surrender was signed in the presence of representatives from Britain, France, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. on May 8th.



On **VE Day** (Victory in Europe Day) the western world celebrated. However, war still raged on in the Pacific.

