

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 the war in the Pacific and be able to answer the following key questions:

- How did developments in the war lead to the United States' entry into the conflict?
- What were the strategies employed by the Allied Powers and the Axis Powers in the Pacific Theater?
- What was the motivation for the use of atomic bombs in Japan?



In July of 1941, Japan began a series of invasions. It needed land and resources to supply its empire and military, so Japan first invaded the French-held Indochina before targeting the Pacific colonies of Great Britain and the Netherlands.

In response to Japanese aggression in the Pacific, the U.S. cut off all oil supplies and provided aid to Japan's enemy, China. The U.S. also began to reinforce American bases in Asia.

Concerned over the growing American presence in the Far East, General Tojo demanded Roosevelt cease these actions. The president refused.





The attack on Pearl Harbor



In response to U.S. actions, General Tojo ordered an attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941.



Caught by surprise, sailors at the base scrambled to fight back against nearly 200 Japanese bombers. 2,403 American servicemen and civilians were killed in the attack and another 1,104 were wounded.

Announcing the event to the nation as a “date that will live in infamy,” Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war on Japan the following day.

Do you think Japan was justified in its actions?



After the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the Japanese advancement across the Pacific, the Allied powers sprang into action. Consisting of a series of naval battles and amphibious landings, the Allies' advance in the Pacific theater is known as "island hopping."

Press **start** to learn more.

start





Kamikazes



During World War II, a specialized unit of pilots, known as Kamikazes, volunteered to go on suicide missions for Japan. Answer the following questions to learn more about these suicide missions and the men that carried them out.

Press **start** to begin.

start





During the Pacific Campaign, over 100,000 Australian, American, British and Dutch soldiers became Prisoners of War, or **POWs**.

These men were sent to Japanese POW camps, where they were looked down on and treated harshly by their captors. Many of the Allied POWs were subjected to hard labor and forced to repair bridges, rail lines, roads and other infrastructure destroyed in the war.



Fed almost nothing, approximately 25,000 of these POWs died during their imprisonment.

Why do you think Allied POWs were treated particularly harshly by the Japanese?



As the war raged on and casualties mounted, U.S. scientists were developing a new weapon that would have a huge influence in bringing the war to an end. Press on the tabs to find out more information.

Press **start** to begin.

start





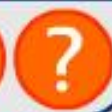
The dropping of the bomb



The U.S.'s decision to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki is still greatly debated. The bombs had a devastating effect on local populations, and this decision by the U.S. marked the beginning of a new phase in world conflict. To further explore this choice, read the following information and then drag it to the correct box.

Press **start** to begin.

start



Do you think dropping the atomic bombs was justified?



The Japanese surrender

On August 15, 1945, the Japanese announced their surrender to the Allied forces.

The U.S. hope for a quick end to the war had been realized, with the Japanese surrender coming only five days after the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki.



The official, unconditional surrender took place aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945, known as **VJ Day** (Victory in Japan Day) .

