

# 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 legacy of World War II and be able to answer the following key questions:

- What were the origins of the Holocaust?
- How did the Allied powers approach post-war reconstruction?
- What political changes did the Axis powers undergo following their defeat?
- How did the Allied powers handle those who had engaged in war time atrocities?



# The persecution of the Jews

Following Hitler's rise to power in Germany in 1933, a wave of **anti-Semitism** swept through Germany which resulted in the systematic killing of over 6 million Jews. Drag these steps in the Nazi's anti-Semitic campaign into chronological order.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**







Hitler was adamant in his belief that inferior races needed to be eliminated in order to preserve the purity of the Aryan race. This activity outlines the steps leading up to the "Final Solution" and the treatment of Jews in the extermination camps.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





In addition to the removal of Jews from the Third Reich, the Holocaust also targeted many other people in society deemed “undesirables” by the Nazis, including:

- Gypsies
- Slavic peoples
- homosexuals
- dissenting clergymen
- Jehovah’s witnesses
- the physically and mentally disabled



These people were subjected to forced sterilization, used for scientific experimentation or sent to concentration camps.

Why do you think these groups were targeted?

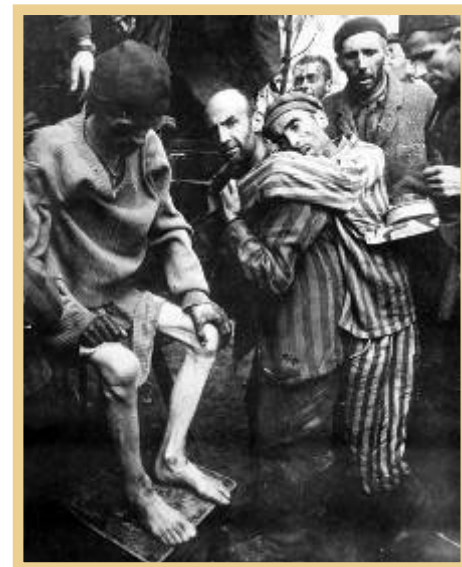


# The liberation of the camps



Allied troops liberated hundreds of concentration camps as they advanced across Europe, and the true horrors of the Holocaust began to be revealed.

Soldiers found mass graves, thousands of unburied bodies, and starving prisoners. Millions had died in the death camps, and only around 700,000 people were found still alive in 1945, many of whom were too weak to survive long after their liberation.



Appalled at what they saw, many Allied soldiers forced the guards to dig mass graves and the local population to visit the camps and view the atrocities for themselves.

Why do you think the Allied troops did this?



# The aftermath of the war



Over 60 million people lost their lives in World War II, making it the deadliest conflict in the history of the world. Two thirds of these casualties were civilians, resulting directly from the conflict as well as war time diseases and famine.



The Soviet Union suffered over 13 million of the Allies 50 million deaths, while the Axis lost nearly 10 million. Additionally, the Holocaust resulted in the deaths of approximately 6 million Jews and over 5 million other undesirables.

In what other ways do you think the war affected nations and people around the world?

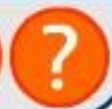




With the end of the conflict in sight, the Allied leaders met to make plans for the post-war world. Press on the tabs to learn more about the conferences attended by the "Big Three" in 1945.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





Following the Japanese surrender, the Allies moved to occupy mainland Japan. This was a relatively peaceful process, and Allied loans allowed for the recovery of Japan's economy. Led by General Douglas MacArthur, the Allies pursued their aims of **demilitarization** and **democratization**.

In other areas, keeping the peace proved more difficult. The withdraw of Japanese troops from China, Korea and Vietnam created a power vacuum, for which political groups competed, often violently, for control.

Though the occupying Allies strove to instill democratic systems in these countries, the popularity and strength of **Communism** grew dramatically and these nations were plunged into civil war.





# The adoption of democracy



After their defeat, the Axis Powers underwent great political shifts. Germany, Italy and Japan all established multi-party democracies, forged strong relationships with the Allied Powers and eventually joined the newly-formed United Nations. Click on the flags to learn more about these post-war governments.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**







# Postwar reconstruction



After the war, nations around the world began to return to their peacetime activities. However, a great deal had to be done before a normal way of life could be resumed. Read these examples and drag them to the correct type of post-war recovery.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**







Though the League of Nations had failed, the ideals of the organization endured, and world leaders once again aimed to create a group that could preserve peace after the war.

As early as 1942, the Allied nations of the U.S., Britain, China and the U.S.S.R. promised only to make peace as a united front. This meeting became the basis for the **United Nations**, which was established in October of 1945 with 50 members.



The UN is still a powerful force in the world today, and now has almost 200 members.





# The Nuremberg Trials



After the war, several trials were held for German and Japanese officials accused of war crimes. The most famous of these were the **Nuremberg Trials**, where 22 leading Nazis were tried for their roles in the war and the Holocaust.

Many officials on trial claimed they were simply following orders. The International Military Tribunal refused to accept this defense: 14 were sentenced to hang and the rest received prison sentences. In Japan, 25 prominent officials were found guilty, seven of whom were executed, including the Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo.



Do you feel that men acting on orders during war should be held responsible for their actions?





Test your knowledge of World War II with this quiz. Choose the correct answer to each question to see how much you can remember.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of World War II by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary.

Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**

