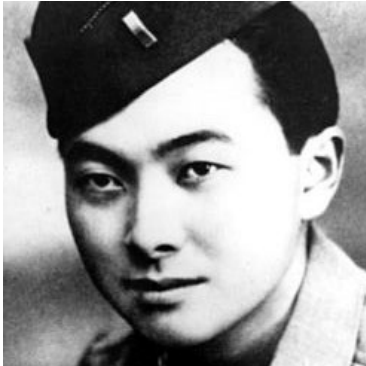
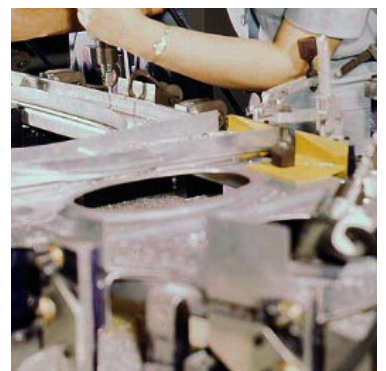




What made the GREATEST GENERATION great?



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QUESTION FOURTEEN

What made the GREATEST GENERATION great?

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

- 1 WAS AMERICA RIGHT TO TRY TO STAY OUT OF WWII?
- 2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?
- 3 DID WWII MAKE LIFE IN AMERICA BETTER?

DEVELOPED AND COMPILED BY
JONATHAN LOOMIS

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Q U E S T I O N F O U R T E E N

What made the GREATEST GENERATION great?

In 1998, journalist Tom Brokaw published a collection of stories of young men and women who lived through World War II. He titled his book, “The Greatest Generation” and the nickname for this group of Americans stuck.

The Greatest Generation were born in the first decades of the 20th Century. They were children during the exciting and vibrant years of the 1920s. They were teenagers and young adults during the hard times of the Great Depression. They learned sacrifice and through the New Deal they learned to trust the federal government as a power for good. Those lessons were then reinforced by their experience in World War II. This generation sacrificed themselves in the farms, factories and battlefields of that conflict. They collectively fought and defeated Hitler and Imperial Japan. They put their young lives on hold, while they gave of themselves for the collective survival of freedom.

This was the defining experience of their generation. Going forward, it was the Greatest Generation that developed computers, built America’s highways, raised the suburbs and the eventually the Hippies. They included such seminal individuals as John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan.

What about their experience made them great? What was it about those few years in their lives during the 1940s that forged this group of Americans into a generation we can rightly remember as “great?” What made the Greatest Generation great?

1

F I R S T Q U E S T I O N WAS AMERICA RIGHT TO TRY TO STAY OUT OF WWII?

What made the
GREATEST
GENERATION
great?

INTRODUCTION

Like the First World War, Americans tried to stay on the sidelines during World War II. Fighting had broken out in both China and Europe in the 1930s as the United States was still recovering from the Great Depression and people and politicians did not feel that it was in the nation's best interest to join in another war.

Was this a good idea? World War II was significantly different from the war 20 years before. Most notably, by the time fighting had begun in the 1930s it was clear that the primary driver of the conflict in Europe, Adolf Hitler, was not interested in merely territorial gain. He was deeply anti-Semitic and had already implemented the Holocaust – the systematic destruction of the Jewish people in Europe. In World War I, there was no equivalent. Hatred and atrocities against the Chinese and Koreans by invading Japanese armies were equally appalling. If the United States were to join this new war, it would not be just to protect the borders of friends, but to prevent the destruction of entire groups of people.

Yet, the United States stayed on the sidelines. It is true that before the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 that drew the nation into the fighting, Americans were providing the material of war – ships, aircraft, bombs – to our allies, making a gun and taking it up yourself in a foreign land are very different things.

Should the United States have joined the war sooner? Was it foolish to try to stay out of a war against nations bent on expansion and wholesale annihilation of people? Like a student who sits down to study early instead of cramming before a test, shouldn't the United States have joined the fighting early in order to prevent the spread of the conflict?

Or, did American neutrality make it possible to rebuild our strength and prepare for the fight? Were we right to wait until we were attacked before rolling up our sleeves and making war?

What do you think? Was America right to try to stay out of World War II?

1 WAS AMERICA RIGHT TO TRY TO STAY OUT OF WWII?

ISOLATIONISM

At the dawn of the 1930s, foreign policy was not a burning issue for the average American. The stock market had crashed and each passing month brought greater and greater hardships. American involvement with Europe had brought war in 1917 and unpaid debt throughout the 1920s. Having grown weary with the course of world events, citizens were convinced the most important issues to be tackled were domestic.

While there were some who favored active engagement in Europe during the 1920s and 1930s, most Americans, including many prominent politicians, were leery of getting too involved in European affairs or accepting commitments to other nations that might restrict America's ability to act independently, keeping with the **isolationist** tradition. Although the United States continued to intervene in the affairs of countries in the Western Hemisphere during this period, the general mood in America was to avoid becoming involved in any crises that might lead the nation into another global conflict.

American leaders had opportunities to engage with the world more actively during the two decades between the world wars, but usually chose not to. One possibility for international economic cooperation failed at the London Conference of 1933. Leaders of European nations hoped to increase trade and stabilize international currencies by tying all currencies to a gold standard. Roosevelt sent a message to the conference refusing any attempt to tie the American dollar to a gold standard while he needed flexibility to bring the nation out of the Depression. The conference dissolved with European delegates miffed at the lack of cooperation by the United States.

Roosevelt did realize that the Hawley-Smoot Tariff that had led to a global rise in tariffs was hurting both the United States and the world as a whole and ended it.

While isolationists feared European and Asian problems, they developed a strong sense of Pan-Americanism. In the face of overseas adversity, strong hemispheric solidarity was attractive. To foster better relations with the nations of Latin America, Roosevelt declared a bold new **Good Neighbor Policy**. Marines stationed in Central America and the Caribbean were withdrawn. The Roosevelt Corollary, which former president Theodore Roosevelt had proclaimed in 1904 asserting the right of the United States to intervene in Latin American affairs, was renounced.

Despite its largely noninterventionist foreign policy, the United States did nevertheless take steps to try to lessen the chances of war and cut its defense spending at the same time. President Warren G. Harding's administration participated in the **Washington Naval Conference** of 1921 and 1922, which reduced the size of the navies of the nine signatory nations. In addition, the



Isolationism: A policy of not being involved in international affairs or joining in treaties with other nations.



Good Neighbor Policy: President Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy during the 1930s with regards to Latin America. He withdrew the military and renounced intervention, reversing Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.



Washington Naval Conference: Meeting of nine world powers in 1921 and 1922 in which they agreed to limit the size of their navies.

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Four Power Treaty, signed by the United States, Great Britain, France, and Japan in 1921, committed the signatories to abstaining from making any territorial expansion in Asia. In 1928, the United States and fourteen other nations signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, declaring war an international crime. Despite hopes that such agreements would lead to a more peaceful world they failed because none of them committed any of the nations to take action in the event of treaty violations.



Primary Source: Photograph

Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler, the fascist dictators of Italy and Germany led Europe into the carnage of World War II.

FASCISM

While the United States focused on domestic issues, economic depression and political instability were growing in Europe. During the 1920s, the international financial system was propped up largely by American loans to foreign countries. The crash of 1929, when the stock market plummeted, set in motion a series of financial chain reactions that contributed significantly to a global downward economic spiral. Around the world, industrialized

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economies faced significant problems of economic depression and worker unemployment.

Many European countries had been suffering even before the Great Depression began. A postwar recession and the continuation of wartime inflation had hurt many economies, as did a decrease in agricultural prices, which made it harder for farmers to buy manufactured goods or pay off loans to banks. While the United States was fortunate to have Franklin Roosevelt, in other nations less democratic-minded leaders emerged.

Benito Mussolini capitalized on the frustrations of the Italian people who felt betrayed by the Versailles Treaty. In 1919, Mussolini created the Fasci Italiani di Combattimento (Italian Combat Squadron). The organization's main tenets of **Fascism** called for a totalitarian form of government and a heightened focus on national unity, militarism, social Darwinism, and loyalty to the state. With the support of major Italian industrialists and the king, who saw Fascism as a bulwark against growing Socialist and Communist movements, Mussolini became prime minister in 1922. Between 1925 and 1927, Mussolini transformed the nation into a single party state and removed all restrictions on his power.

In Germany, a similar pattern led to the rise of the totalitarian National Socialist Party. Political fragmentation through the 1920s accentuated the severe economic problems facing the country. As a result, the German Communist Party began to grow in strength, frightening many wealthy and middle-class Germans. In addition, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles had given rise to a deep-seated resentment. It was in such an environment that **Adolf Hitler's** Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (National Socialist German Workers' Party), or **Nazi Party** for short, was born.

The Nazis gained numerous followers during the Great Depression, which had hurt Germany tremendously. By 1932, nearly 30% of the German labor force was unemployed. Not surprisingly, the political mood was angry and sullen. Hitler, a World War I veteran, promised to return Germany to greatness. By the beginning of 1933, the Nazis had become the largest party in the German legislature. Germany's president, Paul von Hindenburg, at the urging of large industrialists who feared a Communist uprising, appointed Hitler to the position of chancellor in January 1933. In the elections that took place in early March 1933, the Nazis gained the political power to pass a law that gave Hitler the power to make all laws for the next four years. Hitler thus effectively became the dictator of Germany. Hitler's popularity sometimes is perplexing for Americans, but it is important to remember that in a time when Germans were suffering, he offered a solution. Unlike President Roosevelt who famously said the "only thing we have to fear, is fear itself," Hitler led his people to believe that the source of their problems were outsiders – the Allies that had imposed the harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles and Jews who he claimed were manipulating the world's economy.



Benito Mussolini: Fascist leader of Italy during the 1930s and World War II.



Fascism: Government system in which one person maintains total control and that leader and the country are synonymous. Thus, citizens declare loyalty to the leader, rather than the nation.



Adolf Hitler: Fascist Nazi leader of Germany during the 1930s and World War II.



Nazi Party: Hitler's political party. Their full name was the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

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After gaining power, Hitler and his followers worked to make their party and its leader synonymous with Germany itself. This characteristic of Fascism meant that citizens pledged allegiance to Hitler, rather than their nation. Even Germany's boy scouts became the Hitler Youth.

Hitler began to rebuild German military might. In 1936, in accordance with his promise to restore German greatness, Hitler dispatched military units into the Rhineland, on the border with France. In March 1938, claiming that he sought only to reunite ethnic Germans within the borders of one country, Hitler invaded Austria. These actions were clear violations of the Treaty of Versailles and should have brought about military action against Germany. Hitler, however, shrewdly understood that there were many things he could do in violation of the treaty that his enemies would tolerate. After all, France, Britain and the United States were all dealing with economic depressions. No one wanted another war.



Primary Source: Photograph

British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain holding up a copy of the Munich Agreement in his famous speech proclaiming that he had achieved "peace in our time."

At a conference in Munich later that year, Great Britain's prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, and France's prime minister, Édouard Daladier, agreed to the partial dismemberment of Czechoslovakia and the occupation of the Sudetenland, a region with a sizable German population. This **Munich Pact** offered a policy of **appeasement**, in the hope that Hitler's expansionist desires could be bought off without war. Chamberlain famously returned home to claim that the Munich Pact meant "peace in our time." He was wrong. Not long after the agreement, Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia as well. Today, Chamberlain and the idea of appeasement are remembered as



Munich Pact: Agreement between Hitler and the United Kingdom in 1938. Hitler promised not to invade his neighbors in exchange for British Prime Minister Chamberlain's agreement to let Hitler control the Sudetenland. Chamberlain believed the agreement would preserve peace. It actually convinced Hitler that the British would not stop his expansionist plans.



Appeasement: Attempting to avoid a conflict by giving someone what they want.

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examples of the failure of hoping for the best when dealing with dictators bent on expansion.

In the Soviet Union, Premier **Joseph Stalin**, observing Hitler's actions and listening to his public pronouncements, realized that Poland, part of which had once belonged to Germany and was home to people of German ancestry, was most likely next. Although fiercely opposed to Hitler, Stalin, sobered by the French and British betrayal of Czechoslovakia and unprepared for a major war, decided the best way to protect the Soviet Union, and gain additional territory, was to come to some accommodation with the German dictator. In August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a secret treaty and agreed to divide Poland between them and not make war upon one another.



Joseph Stalin: Second leader of the Soviet Union from 1922-1953.

JAPAN AND WAR IN ASIA

Militaristic politicians also took control of Japan in the 1930s. The Japanese had worked assiduously for decades to modernize, build their strength, and become a prosperous, respected nation. The sentiment in Japan was decidedly pro-capitalist, and the Japanese militarists were fiercely supportive of a capitalist economy. They viewed with great concern the rise of Communism in the Soviet Union and in particular China, where the issue was fueling a civil war, and feared that the Soviet Union would make inroads in Asia by assisting China's Communists. In 1936, Japan and Germany signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, pledging mutual assistance in defending themselves against the Comintern, the international agency created by the Soviet Union to promote worldwide Communist revolution. In 1937, Italy joined the pact, essentially creating the foundation of what became the military alliance of the **Axis Powers**.



Axis Powers: The alliance of Nazi Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and Japan during World War II.

Like its European allies, Japan was intent upon creating an empire for itself. In 1931, it created a new nation in the northern area of China called **Manchuria**. The Japanese called it Manchukuo. Although the League of Nations formally protested Japan's seizure of Chinese territory, it did nothing else. As was the case with Hitler's expansion in Europe, the British, French and other League members had no desire to go to war with Japan to protect a corner of China. The official American response was the **Stimson Doctrine**, which refused to recognize any territory illegally occupied by Japan. It was the first step in a series of moves the Americans made to show their displeasure with Japanese expansion and which eventually pushed the Japanese government to attack the United States.



Manchuria: The northeastern corner of China. It was administered by Japan in the 1930s as a puppet state.



Stimson Doctrine: American policy toward Japanese expansion in China in the 1930s. The United States refused to recognize the legality of the Japanese occupation.

In 1937, a clash between Japanese and Chinese troops, known as the **Marco Polo Bridge Incident**, led to a full-scale invasion of China by the Japanese. Although the conflict led to a temporary halt to the civil war between China's nationalists and communists, the better equipped and organized Japanese armies swept southward capturing most of China's coastal cities. The advance of the Japanese was accompanied by some of the worst atrocities in human



Marco Polo Bridge Incident: Fight between Japanese and Chinese troops in 1937 that led to open war in China.

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history, including in the city of **Nanjing** where Japanese soldiers systematically raped Chinese women and massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians. Public sentiment in the United States turned against Japan. Members of Protestant churches that were involved in missionary work in China were particularly outraged, as were Chinese Americans.

Japan was not only interested in territorial expansion in China. They had taken Taiwan in 1895, Korea in 1918, and by due to a resolution of the League of Nations, controlled the islands of Micronesia as well.



Rape of Nanjin: War crime in which Japanese troops raped, tortured and murdered thousands of civilians after capturing the city of Nanjin, China in 1937-38.

Secondary Source: Map

This map shows the extent of Japan's territorial expansion before and during World War II. Japan also took control of the islands of Micronesia.



AMERICAN NEUTRALITY

President Franklin Roosevelt was aware of the challenges facing the targets of Nazi aggression in Europe and Japanese aggression in Asia. Although he hoped to offer American support, isolationist sentiment was difficult to overcome. One leader of the **America First Committee** that promoted



America First Committee: Group that included many prominent Americans in the 1930s which advocated for isolationism.

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isolationism was the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh. Another was Senator Gerald Nye of North Dakota. Nye claimed that the United States had been tricked into participating in World War I by a group of industrialists and bankers who sought to gain from the country's participation in the war. The United States, Nye urged, should not be drawn again into an international dispute over matters that did not concern it. Whether because they feared for the lives of American young men, or because they shared some of Hitler's anti-Semitic ideas, the America First Committee was an important political force in the United States and many in congress shared their views.

Roosevelt's willingness to accede to the demands of the noninterventionists led him even to refuse assistance to those fleeing Nazi Germany. Although Roosevelt was aware of Nazi persecution of the Jews, he did little to aid them. In a symbolic act of support, he withdrew the American ambassador to Germany in 1938. He did not press for a relaxation of immigration quotas that would have allowed more refugees to enter the country, however. In 1939, he refused to support a bill that would have admitted 20,000 Jewish refugee children to the United States. Again in 1939, when German refugees aboard the ship SS St. Louis, most of them Jews, were refused permission to land in Cuba and turned to the United States for help, the State Department informed them that immigration quotas for Germany had already been filled. Once again, Roosevelt did not intervene, because he feared the power of anti-Semitic nativists in Congress. His failure to stand up to them is one of the dark marks on Roosevelt's legacy.

To ensure that the United States did not get drawn into another war, Congress passed a series of **Neutrality Acts** in the second half of the 1930s. The Neutrality Act of 1935 banned the sale of armaments to warring nations. The following year, another Neutrality Act prohibited loaning money to belligerent countries. The last piece of legislation, the Neutrality Act of 1937, forbade the transportation of weapons or passengers to belligerent nations on board American ships and also prohibited American citizens from traveling on board the ships of nations at war.

Roosevelt, however, found ways to help America's future allies without violating the Neutrality Acts. Since Japan had not formally declared war on China, a state of belligerency did not technically exist. Therefore, under the terms of the Neutrality Acts, America was not prevented from transporting goods to China. In 1940, the president of China, **Chiang Kai-shek**, was able to prevail upon Roosevelt to ship 100 fighter planes to China and to allow American volunteers, who technically became members of the Chinese Air Force, to fly them.

Roosevelt would be even more creative in finding ways to help the British.



Neutrality Acts: Set of laws passed by Congress in the second half of the 1930s that prohibited President Roosevelt from actively supporting any side during World War II.



Chiang Kai-shek: Leader of the Chinese during World War II. He led the nationalists against the communists in China's civil war.

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WAR BEGINS IN EUROPE

In 1938, the agreement reached at the Munich Conference failed to satisfy Hitler. In May of the next year, Germany and Italy formalized their military alliance with the Pact of Steel. On September 1, 1939, Hitler unleashed his newly rebuilt and modernized army against neighboring Poland. Using a new strategy called **Blitzkrieg**, or “lightning war,” the Germans combined swift, surprise attacks combining infantry, tanks, and aircraft to quickly overwhelm the enemy.

Britain and France now knew that the agreement at Munich had been a failure, that Hitler could not be trusted and that his territorial demands were insatiable. On September 3, 1939, they declared war on Germany, and the European phase of World War II had begun. Responding to the German invasion of Poland, Roosevelt worked with Congress to alter the Neutrality Laws to permit a policy of **Cash and Carry** in munitions for Britain and France. The legislation, passed and signed by Roosevelt in November 1939, permitted belligerents to purchase war materiel if they could pay cash for it and arrange for its transportation on board their own ships.

In the spring of 1940, the German armies and air force overwhelmed France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. In just six weeks, Paris had fallen. The French, who had spent the preceding 20 years preparing to fight the trench warfare of World War I all over again, were entirely unprepared for Hitler’s nimble, mobile, rapidly moving war machine.

In the Far East, Japan took advantage of France’s surrender to Germany to occupy **French Indochina**, including the areas that would later become Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. In response, beginning with the Export Control Act in July 1940, the United States began to embargo the shipment of various materials to Japan, starting first with aviation gasoline and machine tools, and proceeding to scrap iron and steel.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Following the surrender of France, the **Battle of Britain** began. Great Britain had the advantage of being an island nation. To conquer his last enemy in Europe, Hitler would have to mount an amphibious invasion, which would prove costly and difficult. Instead, or at least in preparation for such an invasion, the German air force commenced the Blitz, a continuous bombing campaign against British cities, factories, and military installations. Hitler believed he could force the British to sign a peace agreement and end the war, leaving him in charge of mainland Europe.

The British, under the leadership of Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** had other ideas. For more than three months, a small collection of British fighter pilots guided their planes into the sky each day to meet the incoming German bombers and bravely defended their homeland. Below, the citizens of Great



Blitzkrieg: German for “lightning war.” It described the German battlefield tactics which included the combined use of infantry, tanks, and aircraft.



Cash and Carry: American policy in which the United Kingdom could purchase war materials so long as they paid in full and transported the materials on British ships. It was a first step toward joining the war.



French Indochina: French colony in Southeast Asia that included the modern nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.



Battle of Britain: Air war between Germany and Great Britain in 1940. Hitler tried to force the British to sue for peace by bombing cities.



Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II.

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Britain operated anti-aircraft guns, hid in subway stations, covered their windows to make it harder for the German bombers to find their targets in the dark, and waited for help from America. What saved the British, in addition to their own air force, was that they had discovered the power of radar, and knew where and when the Germans were attacking.



Primary Source: Photograph

British children sit next to the ruins of their home that had been destroyed during the Blitz.

As the battle raged in the skies over Great Britain throughout the summer and autumn of 1940, Roosevelt became increasingly concerned over England's ability to hold out against the German juggernaut.

In March 1941, concerns over Britain's ability to defend itself also influenced Congress to authorize a policy of **Lend Lease**, a practice by which the United States could sell, lease, or transfer armaments to any nation deemed important to the defense of the United States. Roosevelt publicly mused that if a neighbor's house is on fire, nobody sells him a hose to put it out. Common sense dictated that the hose is lent to the neighbor and returned when the fire is extinguished. The United States could simply lend Great Britain the materials it would need to fight the war. When the war was over, they would be returned. The Congress hotly argued over the proposal. Senator Robert Taft retorted, "Lending war equipment is a good deal like lending chewing gum. You don't want it back." In the end, Congress approved the proposal, effectively ended the policy of nonintervention and dissolved America's pretense of being a neutral nation. The program ran from 1941 to 1945, and distributed some \$45 billion worth of weaponry and supplies to Britain, the Soviet Union, China, and other allies.



Lend Lease: American policy starting in early 1941 to provide war material to the United Kingdom. Under the policy, the British did not have to pay for what they needed up front, thus ending the Cash and Carry policy.

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THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

In August 1941, Roosevelt met with the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. At this meeting, the two leaders drafted the **Atlantic Charter**, the blueprint of Anglo-American cooperation during World War II. The charter stated that the United States and Britain sought no territory from the conflict. It proclaimed that citizens of all countries should be given the right of self-determination, self-government should be restored in places where it had been eliminated, and trade barriers should be lowered. Further, the charter mandated freedom of the seas, renounced the use of force to settle international disputes, and called for postwar disarmament. The Atlantic Charter stood as an alternative to the Fascist, hate-filled, conquering ideals of the Axis. It told the world what the United States and the United Kingdom would be fighting for, not just whom they would be fighting against.

President Roosevelt went on to further define the meaning of the war in his Four Freedoms Speech, saying “The first is freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants — everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear, which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor — anywhere in the world.”

PEARL HARBOR

By the second half of 1941, Japan was feeling the pressure of the American embargo. As it could no longer buy strategic material from the United States, the Japanese were determined to obtain a sufficient supply of oil by taking control of the Dutch East Indies, another European colony which is now the nation of Indonesia. However, they realized that such an action might increase the possibility of American intervention, since the Philippines, still American territory, lay on the direct route that oil tankers would have to take to reach Japan from Indonesia. Japanese leaders thus attempted to secure a diplomatic solution by negotiating with the United States while also authorizing the navy to plan for war. The Japanese government also decided that if no peaceful resolution could be reached by the end of November 1941, then they would have to go to war with the United States.

The American final counterproposal to various offers by Japan was for the Japanese to completely withdraw, without any conditions, from China and enter into nonaggression pacts with all the Pacific powers. Japanese leaders understood that their smaller nations would probably lose a prolonged war



Atlantic Charter: Agreement between President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister

Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom in August 1941 before the United States joined World War II. It outlined the Anglo-American war goals of preserving democracy and self-determination.

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with the United States, but felt that the American proposal was unacceptable. For Japan, pulling out of China was equivalent to being blackmailed by the United States.

Japan's only hope, **Hideki Tojo**, the former army general turned Prime Minister believed, was to launch a surprise attack on the Americans that would demonstrate Japan's capabilities, destroy America's ability to fight back, and demoralize the American public. If such an attack could be made, Roosevelt would have no choice but to sign a neutrality agreement and let the Japanese have their way in Asia. It was a dangerous gamble.



Hideki Tojo: Army general and prime minister of Japan during World War II.

Primary Source: Photograph

The battleship USS West Virginia burning during the attack on Pearl Harbor.



At 7:48 in the morning on Sunday, December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the American Pacific fleet at anchor in **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii. They launched two waves of attacks from six aircraft carriers that had snuck into the Central Pacific without being detected. The attacks brought some 353 fighters, bombers, and torpedo bombers down on the unprepared fleet. The Japanese hit all eight battleships in the harbor and sank four of them. They also damaged several cruisers and destroyers. On the ground, nearly two hundred aircraft were destroyed, and 2,400 servicemen were killed. Another 1,100 were wounded. Japanese losses were minimal. In the end, however, the battle failed to achieve its primary objective. In time, the workers in Pearl Harbor repaired many of the damaged ships, and the United States did not sue for peace.



Attack on Pearl Harbor: December 7, 1941. The event that propelled the United States into World War II.

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The attack on Pearl Harbor was just the first in a string of offences against American and British strongholds. Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines all soon fell to the Japanese.

Whatever reluctance to engage in conflict the American people had had before December 7, 1941, evaporated. Americans' incredulity that Japan would take such a radical step quickly turned to a fiery anger, especially as the attack took place while Japanese diplomats in Washington were still negotiating a possible settlement. President Roosevelt, referring to the day of the attack as "**a date which will live in infamy**," asked Congress for a declaration of war, which it delivered to Japan on December 8. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States in accordance with their alliance with Japan. Against its wishes, the United States had become part of the European conflict.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps Americans should not have been surprised to be attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. We had certainly boxed them into an impossible diplomatic situation. There was no way for the military leaders in Tokyo to accept American demands and save face.

In addition, we were actively supplying China and Britain with the weapons of war. In some ways, it seems foolish not to think the Japanese would not already have considered us enemies.

In that way, the United States had already joined a war before the shooting began. However, throughout the turbulent 1930s, Americans had hoped to avoid getting directly involved in another global conflict. Congress had passed a series of neutrality acts, and only reluctantly agreed to Roosevelt's request for approval of the Lend Lease Act.

Was neutrality and cautious preparation the right course? Should the United States have decided to engage the Axis first instead of waiting to be attacked?

What do you think? Was the United States right to try to stay out of the war?



A date which will live in infamy:

Famous line from President Franklin Roosevelt's war message to Congress the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

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SUMMARY

During the two decades that followed World War I, the United States maintained an attitude of isolationism. The nation had refused to join the League of Nations. As Europe was collapsing into turmoil with communism arising in the Soviet Union and Fascism in Spain, Italy and Germany, most Americans were happy to be far away and uninvolved.

The United States was not entirely isolationist. We cultivated better relationships with the nations of Latin American through Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and tried to limit the size of the world's navies by participating in the Washington Naval Conference. However, organizations like the America First Committee had widespread public support and isolationism was popular.

Fascism, a system of government in which the leader and the nation become synonymous, was established by Mussolini in Italy and then by Hitler in more populous and economically powerful Germany. Hitler used anti-Semitism as a tool to manipulate public opinion, gain support, win elections, and eventually take total control.

European leaders tried to appease Hitler by offering him control over some territories in exchange for promises of peace, but it did not work. After signing a secret peace deal with Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union, Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, and then France. By 1940, only the United Kingdom was still holding out against Hitler.

Most Americans did not like the Nazis but wanted to remain neutral. To support the United Kingdom, President Roosevelt implemented Cash and Carry and Lend Lease programs to supply war materials to the British without declaring war. During this time, Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom to conclude the Atlantic Charter, which described how their two nations promised to offer a democratic alternative to Fascism. Roosevelt expressed his goals as Four Freedoms.

In Asia, Japan had been expanding into China. The United States opposed this expansion, especially after Japanese troops committed war crimes against Chinese civilians. In response, the United States instituted an embargo on war material to Japan. Under pressure to find an alternative source for oil, rubber, and other raw materials, the Japanese military command decided to attack the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), British and French Indochina (now Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore), and the Philippines, which was an American territory.

In order to prevent the United States from entering the war, Japanese commanders decided to destroy the entire American fleet in one surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Although the strike on December 7, 1941 was a tactical success, it was a strategic failure. The United States entered the war rather than suing for peace.



KEY CONCEPTS

Isolationism: A policy of not being involved in international affairs or joining in treaties with other nations.

Fascism: Government system in which one person maintains total control and that leader and the country are synonymous. Thus, citizens declare loyalty to the leader, rather than the nation.

Appeasement: Attempting to avoid a conflict by giving someone what they want.

Blitzkrieg: German for “lightning war.” It described the German battlefield tactics which included the combined use of infantry, tanks, and aircraft.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Benito Mussolini: Fascist leader of Italy during the 1930s and World War II.

Adolf Hitler: Fascist Nazi leader of Germany during the 1930s and World War II.

Nazi Party: Hitler’s political party. Their full name was the National Socialist German Workers’ Party.

Joseph Stalin: Second leader of the Soviet Union from 1922-1953.

Axis Powers: The alliance of Nazi Germany, Mussolini’s Italy, and Japan during World War II.

America First Committee: Group that included many prominent Americans in the 1930s which advocated for isolationism.

Chiang Kai-shek: Leader of the Chinese during World War II. He led the nationalists against the communists in China’s civil war.

Winston Churchill: Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II.

Hideki Tojo: Army general and prime minister of Japan during World War II.



TREATIES, LAWS & POLICIES

Good Neighbor Policy: President Franklin Roosevelt’s foreign policy during the 1930s with regards to Latin America. He withdrew the military and renounced intervention, reversing Theodore Roosevelt’s corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

Munich Pact: Agreement between Hitler and the United Kingdom in 1938. Hitler promised not to invade his neighbors in exchange for British Prime Minister Chamberlain’s agreement to let Hitler control the Sudetenland. Chamberlain believed the agreement would preserve peace. It actually convinced Hitler that the British would not stop his expansionist plans.

Stimson Doctrine: American policy toward Japanese expansion in China in the 1930s. The United States refused to recognize the legality of the Japanese occupation.

Neutrality Acts: Set of laws passed by Congress in the second half of the 1930s that prohibited President Roosevelt from actively supporting any side during World War II.

Cash and Carry: American policy in which the United Kingdom could purchase war materials so long as they paid in full and transported the materials on British ships. It was a first step toward joining the war.

Lend Lease: American policy starting in early 1941 to provide war material to the United Kingdom. Under the policy, the British did not have to pay for what they needed up front, thus ending the Cash and Carry policy.

Atlantic Charter: Agreement between President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom in August 1941 before the United States joined World War II. It outlined the Anglo-American war goals of preserving democracy and self-determination.



EVENTS

Washington Naval Conference: Meeting of nine world powers in 1921 and 1922 in which they agreed to limit the size of their navies.

Marco Polo Bridge Incident: Fight between Japanese and Chinese troops in 1937 that led to open war in China.

Rape of Nanjin: War crime in which Japanese troops raped, tortured and murdered thousands of civilians after capturing the city of Nanjin, China in 1937-38.

Battle of Britain: Air war between Germany and Great Britain in 1940. Hitler tried to force the British to sue for peace by bombing cities.

Attack on Pearl Harbor: December 7, 1941. The event that propelled the United States into World War II.



LOCATIONS

Manchuria: The northeastern corner of China. It was administered by Japan in the 1930s as a puppet state.

French Indochina: French colony in Southeast Asia that included the modern nations of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.



SPEECHES

A date which will live in infamy: Famous line from President Franklin Roosevelt’s war message to Congress the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

2

S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N

WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

What made the
GREATEST
GENERATION
great?

INTRODUCTION

The United States and our allies, the United Kingdom, Soviet Union, France and China defeated the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. It was an unusual war in history in that it ended with the unconditional surrender of the enemy and complete occupation of that enemy's territory.

Why did it turn out that way? Was it better strategy, or better equipment? Was it simply because the Allies had more people, or because there was almost no fighting on American territory? Perhaps it was because of leadership, or technological superiority.

What do you think? What factor or combination of factors led to the ultimate outcome? Why did the Allies win?

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

WARTIME STRATEGY

In June 1941, Hitler had broken his nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union and marched his armies deep into Soviet territory, where they would kill Red Army regulars and civilians by the millions. Hitler's surprise attack brought the Soviet Union into the war on the side of the Allies, an unlikely friend, but one that proved important. With Germany fighting the Soviets in the East, and the British and Americans in the West, its armies would always be divided.

America, too, was fighting on two fronts and had to make hard choices about how to divide its military might. Roosevelt believed that a Nazi-dominated Europe would be far more impregnable than any defenses Japan could build in the Pacific. American scientists worried that, with enough time, German scientists might develop a nuclear weapon. Once Hitler was defeated, the combined Allied forces would concentrate on smashing Japanese ambitions.

American military leaders favored a far more aggressive approach to attacking Germany than their British counterparts. A cross-channel invasion of France from Britain would strike at the heart of Nazi strength, but the British command was dubious. Winston Churchill feared that should such an operation fail, the loss of human life, military resources, and British morale could be fatal. Instead, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to implement an immediate blockade of supplies to Germany and to begin bombing German cities and munitions centers. The army would attack Hitler's troops at their weakest points first and slowly advance toward German soil. The plan was known as closing the ring. In December 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to attack German holdings in North Africa first.

That maneuver was finally executed in October 1942. Nazi troops were occupying much of the African Mediterranean coast, which had been controlled by France prior to the war. Led by British General **Bernard Montgomery**, British forces struck at German and Italian troops commanded by the "Desert Fox," German Field Marshal **Erwin Rommel**, at El Alamein in Egypt. As the British forced a German retreat, Anglo-American forces landed on the west coast of Africa on November 8 to stage a simultaneous assault. Rommel fought gamely, but numbers and positioning soon forced a German surrender. The Allies had achieved their first important joint victory in the **North Africa Campaign**.

Simultaneously, the Soviets turned the tide against Nazi advances into the Soviet Union by defeating the German forces at **Stalingrad**. When springtime came in 1943, the Allies had begun to close the ring.

With Northern Africa secured, the Allies took the next step toward Germany by launching invasions of the island of Sicily and **Italy**. American and British leaders believed that when the Italian people faced occupation of their homeland, they would rise up and overthrow Mussolini. Fearing that the



Bernard Montgomery: Top British commander during World War II.



Erwin Rommel: German commander in North Africa during World War II. He was nicknamed the "Desert Fox."



North Africa Campaign: Fight between American and British troops led by Eisenhower, and Germans led by Rommel on in North Africa during World War II. The series of battles was notable for its use of tanks.



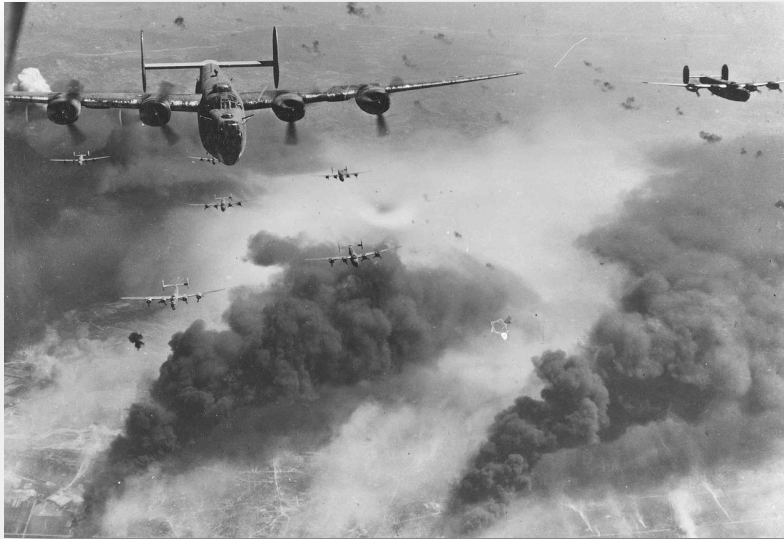
Battle of Stalingrad: One of the turning point battles of World War II. German forces had attacked deep into the Soviet Union before they were turned back here during the winter of 1942.



Invasion of Italy: Attack by the Allies from North Africa to the island of Sicily and then the Italian Peninsula in 1943.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

Allies would have a free road up to the border of Austria, German forces began to entrench themselves in Italy. Despite German presence in Italy, Mussolini was arrested and the Italians surrendered to the Allies on September 3. Despite the collapse of Mussolini's armies, German forces defended the Italian peninsula ferociously, and even when the European war ended in May 1945, the Allies had failed to capture much of Italy.



Primary Source: Photograph

American bombers over burning German cities. Massive raids by fleets of British and American bombers helped end Germany's ability to wage war.

D-DAY AND V-E DAY

The time had finally come for a full invasion of Europe. British and American troops had liberated North Africa and pressed into Italy. Soviet troops had turned the tide at Stalingrad and were slowly reclaiming their territory.

By 1944, American and British planes from bases in England had begun around-the-clock bombing missions aimed at the industrial heart of Germany. After initially targeting only factories, railroad lines, ports and other sites that were clearly critical to Germany's ability to fight, Allied planners widened their attacks and aimed to destroy the entire German will and ability to make war. **Firebombing** of cities was intended to burn entire neighborhoods. Similar attacks took place on Japanese cities. Before the war ended, 40% of all the housing in major Japanese cities had been destroyed intentionally by Allied air raids and hundreds of thousands of civilians died.

Since the outbreak of war, Stalin had been the only allied leader fighting Hitler on the mainland. Hitler's armies maintained control of all of France, the Low Countries of Belgium and the Netherlands, and most of Eastern Europe. His Atlantic Wall of defenses along the coastlines of France made any invasion of his territory treacherous. Stalin was demanding an all-out effort to liberate



Firebombing: Bombing raids using incendiary bombs designed to start fires and burn down large urban areas. The tactic was used extensively by the allies against both German and Japanese cities in World War II.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

France from German occupation to help relieve the pressure his forces were facing in the East. Now, an invasion force greater than any in the history of the world was amassing in southern Britain toward that end.



Primary Source: Photograph

The ruins of Dresden, Germany after the Americans firebombed the city. Intentional targeting of civilians by Allied commanders has been criticized after the war.

A great game of espionage unfolded. If the Germans could discover when and where the attack would occur, they could concentrate all their efforts in one area, and the invasion would be doomed. The Allies staged phony exercises meant to confuse German intelligence. Two-dimensional dummy tanks were arranged to distract air surveillance. German commanders had good reason to believe the attack would come at Calais, where the English Channel is narrowest. In actuality, General **Dwight Eisenhower** planned **Operation Overlord** aiming for the Normandy Peninsula on the morning of June 4, 1944.

Foul weather postponed the attack for two days. Just after midnight on June 6, 1944, three airborne divisions parachuted behind enemy lines to disrupt paths of communications. As the German lookout sentries scanned the English Channel at daybreak, they saw the largest armada ever assembled in history heading toward the French shore. There were five points of attack. Gold and Sword Beaches were taken by the British, and Juno Beach was captured by Canadian forces. The American task was to capture Utah and



Dwight Eisenhower: Supreme allied commander in Europe during World War II. He later became president during the 1950s.



Operation Overlord: Nickname for the amphibious invasion of France that became D-Day.



D-Day: June 6, 1944. The landing of allied forces at Normandy, France. It was a turning point in the war in Europe.

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What made the
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great?

Omaha Beaches. The troops at Omaha Beach met fierce resistance and suffered heavy casualties. Still, by nightfall a beachhead had been established as German troops retreated. The successful invasion of France on June 6, or **D-Day**, along with the Battle of Stalingrad in the East, are the turning point battles in the war against Hitler's Germany.



Primary Source: Photograph

Within days of the successful landing on D-Day, thousands of men, tanks, trucks, and supplies were being offloaded in support of the soldiers pushing forward through France.

After D-DAY, the days of the German resistance were numbered. Paris was liberated in August 1944 as the Allies pushed slowly eastward. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was moving into German territory as well. Desperate to put off what was clearly going to be a final defeat, Hitler launched a final unsuccessful counteroffensive in December 1944. The attack caught the Allies by surprise and the **Battle of the Bulge**, so named because of the shape of the battle lines on a map, slowed the course of the Allied advance, rather than stopping it, and the Americans, British, and Free French found themselves racing the Soviets to Berlin by the spring of 1945.

Along the way, they encountered the depths of Nazi horrors when they discovered Hitler's concentration camps. American soldiers saw humans that looked more like skeletons, gas chambers, crematoriums, and countless victims. Although American government officials were aware of atrocities against Jews, the full extent of the horror of the **Holocaust** of 12 million Jews, homosexuals, and anyone else Hitler had deemed deviant had been unknown to the Allies.



Battle of the Bulge: Last counterattack by the Germans against the allies along the Western Front in World War II before the total collapse of German defenses.



Holocaust: Hitler's attempt to murder all Jews in Europe. The genocide resulted in 12 million deaths.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

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The Soviets entered Berlin first and discovered that the mastermind of all the destruction, Adolf Hitler, had committed suicide the day before. With little left to sustain any sort of resistance, the Germans surrendered on May 8, 1945, hereafter known as **V-E Day**, short for Victory in Europe.

THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Defeating Germany was only part of America's mission.

Pearl Harbor was only the beginning of Japanese assaults on American holdings in the Pacific. Two days after attacking Pearl Harbor, they seized Guam, and two weeks after that they captured Wake Island. Before 1941 came to a close, the Philippines came under attack.

Led by General **Douglas MacArthur**, the Americans were hopeful they could hold the islands. A fierce Japanese strike proved otherwise. After retreating to the fortress at **Corregidor**, the United States had no choice but to surrender the Philippines. Before being summoned away by President Roosevelt, General MacArthur promised, "I shall return."

After MacArthur escaped, the Japanese military forced Filipino and American prisoners of war to walk to a prison in Bataan. This 85-mile trip, remembered as the **Bataan Death March**, is emblematic of the cruelty unleashed by the Japanese military against prisoners. 16,000 souls perished along the way, and many more in the prisons where they languished in the years to come.



V-E Day: May 8, 1945. The end of World War II in Europe when Germany surrendered.



Douglas MacArthur: Allied commander in the South Pacific during World War II. He was forced to surrender the Philippines at the start of the war, but led the successful island hopping campaign and eventually accepted the Japanese surrender and was the military governor of occupied Japan.



Corregidor: Fortress in the Philippines that was the last holdout for American and Filipino troops against the Japanese invasion in 1942.



Bataan Death March: Forced walk of American and Filipino troops from Corregidor to prison camps. 16,000 men died along the way due to Japanese cruelty.

Primary Source: Photograph

The American aircraft carrier USS Yorktown listing to port at the moment a torpedo hit during the Battle of Midway. Anti-aircraft shells were exploding overhead.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

In June 1942, Japan hoped to capture **Midway Island**, an American held base about 1,000 miles from Hawaii. The Japanese operation, like the earlier attack on Pearl Harbor, sought to eliminate the United States as a strategic power in the Pacific, thereby giving Japan a free hand in Asia. The Japanese hoped another demoralizing defeat would force the United States to capitulate by luring the American aircraft carriers into a trap. Their plan was handicapped by faulty Japanese assumptions about American airpower, and most significantly, by the fact that American cryptographers had broken the Japanese navy's codes and knew the date and location of the planned attack, enabling the forewarned American commanders to prepare their own ambush.

Four Japanese and three American aircraft carriers participated in the battle. All four of Japan's large fleet carriers, part of the six-carrier force that had attacked Pearl Harbor six months earlier, and a heavy cruiser were sunk, while the Americans lost only one carrier and a destroyer. After Midway, Japan's capacity to replace its losses, particularly aircraft carriers and well-trained pilots, rapidly became insufficient to cope with mounting casualties, while the United States' massive industrial and training capabilities made losses far easier to replace. The Battle of Midway is widely considered the turning point in the Pacific War.



Battle of Midway: Turning point battle in the Pacific in 1942. The Americans sunk four Japanese aircraft carriers. After the battle, the Japanese were unable to rebuild their fleet or train replacement pilots.



Primary Source: Photograph

Joe Rosenthal's infamous photograph of Marines raising the flag at the top of Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima.

After the Battle of Midway, the Americans slowly moved westward across the Pacific, retaking Japanese-held islands in a slow march toward Japan. Rather than taking every Japanese fortification spread across the islands of Micronesia and Melanesia, the United States selectively chose a path that



Island Hopping: MacArthur's strategy of capturing the less-fortified Japanese islands in the South Pacific and cutting off better defended islands from resupply.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

would move American naval forces closer and closer to the Japanese mainland by targeting the least-fortified islands and bypassing those that would be harder to attack, leaving them cut off from communication and resupply. Using this **Island Hopping** strategy, General MacArthur led the advance toward Japan.

In October 1944, MacArthur fulfilled his promise and returned to the Philippines accompanied by a hundred ships. In the first half of 1945, Americans captured the island of **Iwo Jima**, which was then used to mount air raids on Japan.

The final island stronghold was the large island of **Okinawa**. The battle has been referred to as *tetsu no ame*, the “rain of steel” in Japanese because of the ferocity of the fighting, the intensity of Japanese **kamikaze** suicide airplane attacks, and the sheer numbers of Allied ships and armored vehicles that assaulted the island. The battle was one of the bloodiest in the Pacific, with approximately 160,000 casualties on both sides. Approximately 150,000 Okinawan civilians perished as well, roughly half of the pre-war population.

During the battle, Americans received word that President Roosevelt had died of a brain hemorrhage. For many young soldiers, Roosevelt was the only president they could remember. He had been elected four times, and served a total of 12 years in office. Vice-President **Harry Truman** took his place and it fell to the new president to decide the outcome of the war in the Pacific. After watching the carnage that was the Battle of Okinawa, Truman’s first major decision would be how to resolve the war without having to invade the Japanese mainland.

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT

Early in 1939, the world’s scientific community discovered that German physicists had learned the secrets of splitting a uranium atom. Fears spread over the possibility of Nazi scientists utilizing that energy to produce a bomb capable of unspeakable destruction.

Scientists **Albert Einstein**, who fled Nazi persecution, and **Enrico Fermi**, who escaped Fascist Italy, were now living in the United States. They agreed that the President must be informed of the dangers of atomic technology in the hands of the Axis powers. Fermi traveled to Washington in March to express his concerns to government officials. But few shared his uneasiness.

Einstein penned a letter to President Roosevelt urging the development of an atomic research program later that year. Roosevelt saw neither the necessity nor the utility for such a project, but agreed to proceed slowly. In late 1941, the American effort to design and build an atomic bomb received its code name: the **Manhattan Project**.



Battle of Iwo Jima: 1945 attack by American marines that resulted in one of the most well-known photographs of World War II. The island was used for air raids on Japan.



Battle of Okinawa: Last battle of the Pacific before the planned invasion of the Japanese mainland. The Americans used enormous firepower and Japan began using kamikaze suicide attacks. It was the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War.



Kamikaze: Suicide attacks by Japanese pilots against American ships.



Harry Truman: American president at the end of World War II. He became president in 1945 when Roosevelt died and made the decision to use the atomic bomb.



Albert Einstein: World famous scientist. His letter to President Roosevelt about the danger of a German nuclear bomb convinced Roosevelt to start the Manhattan Project.



Enrico Fermi: Italian scientist who convinced Einstein to write a letter to President Roosevelt warning him of the danger of nuclear weapons.



Einstein’s Letter to Roosevelt: Letter that convinced President Roosevelt to initiate the Manhattan Project and develop a nuclear weapon.



Manhattan Project: Secret project during World War II to develop a nuclear bomb.

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At first the research was based at only a few universities: Columbia University, the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley. A breakthrough occurred in December 1942 when Fermi led a group of physicists to produce the first controlled nuclear chain reaction under the grandstands of Stagg Field at the University of Chicago.

After this milestone, government funds were allocated more freely, and the project advanced at breakneck speed. Nuclear facilities were built at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Hanford, Washington. The main assembly plant was built at **Los Alamos, New Mexico**. **Robert Oppenheimer** was put in charge of putting the pieces together at Los Alamos. After the final bill was tallied, nearly \$2 billion had been spent on research and development of the atomic bomb, and the Manhattan Project employed over 120,000 Americans.

Secrecy was paramount. Neither the Germans nor the Japanese could learn of the project. Roosevelt and Churchill also agreed that Stalin would be kept in the dark. Consequently, there was no public awareness or debate. Keeping 120,000 people quiet would be impossible. Therefore, only a small privileged cadre of inner scientists and officials knew about the final objective of the work. In fact, Vice-President Truman had never heard of the Manhattan Project until he became president.

By the summer of 1945, Oppenheimer was ready to test the first bomb. On July 16, 1945, at **Trinity Site** near Alamogordo, New Mexico, scientists of the Manhattan Project readied themselves to watch the detonation of the world's first atomic bomb. The device was affixed to a 100-foot tower and discharged just before dawn.

A blinding flash visible for 200 miles lit up the morning sky. A mushroom cloud reached 40,000 feet, blowing out windows of homes 100 miles away. When the cloud returned to earth it created a half-mile wide crater metamorphosing sand into glass. A bogus cover-up story was released, explaining that a huge ammunition dump had just exploded in the desert. Soon word reached President Truman in Potsdam, Germany that the project was successful. The world had entered the nuclear age.

THE END OF THE WAR

When Harry Truman learned of the success of the Manhattan Project, he knew he was faced with a decision of unprecedented gravity. The capacity to end the war with Japan was in his hands, but it would involve unleashing the most terrible weapon ever known.

American soldiers and civilians were weary from four years of war, yet the Japanese military was refusing to give up their fight. American forces occupied Okinawa and Iwo Jima and were intensely fire bombing Japanese cities. But Japan still had an army of 2 million men stationed in the home islands guarding against invasion.



Los Alamos, NM: Site of a nuclear research center beginning in World War II.

Robert Oppenheimer: Scientist who led the Manhattan Project. He is remembered as the Father of the Nuclear Bomb.



Trinity Site: Location in a New Mexico desert of the first nuclear explosion in 1945.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

First, an Allied demand for an immediate unconditional surrender was made to the leadership in Japan. Although the demand stated that refusal would result in total destruction, no mention of any new weapons of mass destruction was made. The Japanese military command rejected the request for unconditional surrender.



Primary Source: Photograph

A photograph of downtown Hiroshima after the bombing. Everything that was not built of stone or concrete had been obliterated and burnt.

On August 6, 1945, a plane called the **Enola Gay** dropped an atomic bomb on the city of **Hiroshima**. Instantly, 70,000 Japanese citizens were vaporized. In the months and years that followed, an additional 100,000 perished from burns and radiation sickness.

The Japanese high command still refused to surrender and two days later, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. On August 9, a second atomic bomb was dropped on **Nagasaki**, where 80,000 Japanese people perished.

On August 14, 1945, the Japanese surrendered. **V-J Day**, or Victory in Japan Day is marked on either August 14 or 15, depending on which day it was in the world when the news was announced, or sometimes on September 2, the day the official instrument of surrender was signed aboard the USS Missouri battleship in Tokyo Bay.

CRITICISM OF TRUMAN'S DECISION

The decision to use the atomic bomb, and more specifically to use it on a city in which thousands of civilians would die has proved to be a lasting controversy.

Some military analysts insist that Japan was on its knees and the bombings were simply unnecessary.



Enola Gay: Bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb in 1945.



Hiroshima: Japanese city that was destroyed in 1945 in the first atomic bomb attack.



Nagasaki: Second Japanese city destroyed by a nuclear bomb in 1945.



V-J Day: The end of World War II when Japan surrendered.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

Others have argued that the decision to use the bomb in Japan and not Germany was inherently racist. These critics question whether Truman would have been willing to use the bomb against White civilians.

Some charged that Truman's decision was a barbaric act that brought negative long-term consequences to the United States. Looking into the future, Truman should have seen that unleashing nuclear weapons would lead to a dangerous arms race.

Other critics argued that American diplomats had ulterior motives in using the bomb. The Soviet Union had entered the war against Japan, and the atomic bomb could be read as a strong message for the Soviets to tread lightly. In this respect, Hiroshima and Nagasaki may have been the first shots of the Cold War against the Soviets as well as the final shots of World War II. Regardless, the United States remains the only nation in the world to have used a nuclear weapon on another nation.

Related to the looming conflict with the Soviet Union, some felt that the atomic bomb was used to end the war quickly, before the Soviets would have a chance to invade Japan from the North. In this view, Truman wanted the United States to be the only nation to occupy Japan, unlike the way Germany had been divided up between the four Allied powers.

Truman himself stated that his decision to drop the bomb was purely military. A Normandy-type amphibious landing would have cost an estimated million casualties. Truman believed that the bombs saved Japanese lives as well as American. Prolonging the war was not an option for the President.

Some of his critics asked why Truman had not made some sort of demonstration of the bomb's power by dropping it in the countryside, but the President rejected this idea. He knew there was no guarantee the Japanese would surrender if the test succeeded, and he felt that a failed demonstration would be worse than none at all. Even the scientific community failed to foresee the awful effects of radiation sickness. Truman saw little difference between atomic bombing Hiroshima and firebombing Dresden or Tokyo.

For Truman, war was terrible, winning was the goal, and he saw no reason why he should not use every weapon at his disposal. He could not imagine trying to justify the deaths of thousands of Americans when people found out he had a weapon that could have ended the war, but chose not to use it.

The ethical debate over the decision to drop the atomic bomb will probably never be resolved. The bombs did, however, bring an end to the most destructive war in history and the Manhattan Project that produced it demonstrated the possibility of how the nation's resources could be mobilized in times of crisis.

However, the use of atomic weapons did unleash a dangerous arms race, and at nuclear standoff with the Soviet Union that lasted for 50 years.

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?



Secondary Source: Statue

Sadako Sakai, a high school student who died from radiation poisoning in Hiroshima attempted to fold 1,000 paper cranes in an effort to bring good luck and recover from the cancer that she eventually succumbed to. She and the paper crane have now become symbols of peace and especially of the effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons. This statue stands in Seattle, Washington. Other statues of Sadako have been erected all around the world.

CONCLUSION

The war ended in Europe when Allied armies turned back Hitler's aggressive attacks in Africa and the Soviet Union and eventually overran Berlin. In Asia, the war came to a close before the Americans invaded Japan itself.

Why was this the way the war ended? What brought about this conclusion, and not some other? Leadership? Technology? Numerical superiority? Ideals? Strategy?

What do you think? Why did the Allies win World War II?

2 WHY DID THE ALLIES WIN WWII?

SUMMARY

As the war began, Hitler broke his nonaggression pact with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. This resulted in an unusual alliance between the communist Soviets and the democracies of the United States, United Kingdom, as well as the Chinese, who had briefly ended their civil war to fight the Japanese.

The Allies concentrated their efforts first in Northern Africa, and after winning there, invaded Italy. The turning points of the war in Europe came on June 4, 1944 (when the British, Americans, free French, and Canadians landed at Normandy on D-Day) and at the Battle of Stalingrad when the Soviets turned back Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union.

Intensive bombing campaigns over Germany slowly weakened the enemy as Allied forces pushed inward from both East and West. Eventually Germany collapsed, Hitler committed suicide, and the war in Europe ended.

In the Pacific, the United States suffered humiliating defeats in the early months of the war. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Americans were forced to surrender the Philippines to the invading Japanese. The turning point came at the Battle of Midway when the United States was able to sink critical aircraft carriers from the Japanese fleet. Without the resources to rebuild or resupply, the war in the Pacific was a long, slow struggle to recapture tiny islands held by the Japanese. This process resulted in some of the most deadly, but celebrated battles of the Marine Corps' history.

After retaking the Philippines, the Americans launched an invasion of Okinawa, the last island stronghold before a full invasion of the Japanese mainland would begin. It was one of the most deadly of the entire war. The Japanese used suicide airplane attacks and the Americans devastating the islands with an enormous bombardment.

Meanwhile, Albert Einstein had warned President Roosevelt that Hitler's scientists might be trying to develop a nuclear bomb and encourage the Americans to create such a weapon first. This top-secret Manhattan Project was a success and the first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico.

President Truman took office when Roosevelt died in 1944 and decided to use the atomic bomb to force Japan to surrender. The Americans bombed the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There is still debate about the morality of using atomic weapons on cities with large civilian populations. Japan's surrender in 1945 brought the war to an end. It was the most deadly conflict in human history.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Bernard Montgomery: Top British commander during World War II.

Erwin Rommel: German commander in North Africa during World War II. He was nicknamed the “Desert Fox.”

Dwight Eisenhower: Supreme allied commander in Europe during World War II. He later became president during the 1950s.

Douglas MacArthur: Allied commander in the South Pacific during World War II. He was forced to surrender the Philippines at the start of the war, but led the successful island hopping campaign and eventually accepted the Japanese surrender and was the military governor of occupied Japan.

Harry Truman: American president at the end of World War II. He became president in 1945 when Roosevelt died and made the decision to use the atomic bomb.

Albert Einstein: World famous scientist. His letter to President Roosevelt about the danger of a German nuclear bomb convinced Roosevelt to start the Manhattan Project.

Enrico Fermi: Italian scientist who convinced Einstein to write a letter to President Roosevelt warning him of the danger of nuclear weapons.

Robert Oppenheimer: Scientist who led the Manhattan Project. He is remembered as the Father of the Nuclear Bomb.



KEY CONCEPTS

Firebombing: Bombing raids using incendiary bombs designed to start fires and burn down large urban areas. The tactic was used extensively by the allies against both German and Japanese cities in World War II.

Island Hopping: MacArthur’s strategy of capturing the less-fortified Japanese islands in the South Pacific and cutting off better defended islands from resupply.

Kamikaze: Suicide attacks by Japanese pilots against American ships.



LETTERS

Einstein’s Letter to Roosevelt: Letter that convinced President Roosevelt to initiate the Manhattan Project and develop a nuclear weapon.



EVENTS

North Africa Campaign: Fight between American and British troops led by Eisenhower, and Germans led by Rommel on in North Africa during World War II. The series of battles was notable for its use of tanks.

Battle of Stalingrad: One of the turning point battles of World War II. German forces had attacked deep into the Soviet Union before they were turned back here during the winter of 1942.

Invasion of Italy: Attack by the Allies from North Africa to the island of Sicily and then the Italian Peninsula in 1943.

Operation Overlord: Nickname for the amphibious invasion of France that became D-Day.

D-Day: June 6, 1944. The landing of allied forces at Normandy, France. It was a turning point in the war in Europe.

Battle of the Bulge: Last counterattack by the Germans against the allies along the Western Front in World War II before the total collapse of German defenses.

Holocaust: Hitler’s attempt to murder all Jews in Europe. The genocide resulted in 12 million deaths.

V-E Day: May 8, 1945. The end of World War II in Europe when Germany surrendered.

Bataan Death March: Forced walk of American and Filipino troops from Corregidor to prison camps. 16,000 men died along the way due to Japanese cruelty.

Battle of Midway: Turning point battle in the Pacific in 1942. The Americans sunk four Japanese aircraft carriers. After the battle, the Japanese were unable to rebuild their fleet or train replacement pilots.

Battle of Iwo Jima: 1945 attack by American marines that resulted in one of the most well-known photographs of World War II. The island was used for air raids on Japan.

Battle of Okinawa: Last battle of the Pacific before the planned invasion of the Japanese mainland. The Americans used enormous firepower and Japan began using kamikaze suicide attacks. It was the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War.

V-J Day: The end of World War II when Japan surrendered.



LOCATIONS

Corregidor: Fortress in the Philippines that was the last holdout for American and Filipino troops against the Japanese invasion in 1942.

Los Alamos, NM: Site of a nuclear research center beginning in World War II.

Trinity Site: Location in a New Mexico desert of the first nuclear explosion in 1945.

Hiroshima: Japanese city that was destroyed in 1945 in the first atomic bomb attack.

Nagasaki: Second Japanese city destroyed by a nuclear bomb in 1945.



TECHNOLOGY

Manhattan Project: Secret project during World War II to develop a nuclear bomb.

Enola Gay: Bomber that dropped the first atomic bomb in 1945.

3

T H I R D Q U E S T I O N DID WWII MAKE LIFE IN AMERICA BETTER?

What made the
GREATEST
GENERATION
great?

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the war on the United States was nowhere near as devastating as it was in Europe and the Pacific, where the battles were waged, but it still profoundly changed everyday life for all Americans. On the positive side, the war effort finally and definitively ended the Great Depression that had been plaguing the country since 1929. It also called upon Americans to unite behind the war effort and give of their money, their time, and their effort, as they sacrificed at home to assure success abroad. The upheaval caused by White men leaving for war meant that for many disenfranchised groups, such as women and African Americans, there were new opportunities in employment and wage earning.

The need for Americans to come together, whether in Hollywood, the defense industries, or the military, to support the war effort encouraged feelings of unity among the American population. However, the desire for unity did not always mean that Americans of color were treated as equals or even tolerated, despite their proclamations of patriotism and their willingness to join in the effort to defeat America's enemies in Europe and Asia. For African Americans, Mexican Americans, and especially for Japanese Americans, feelings of patriotism and willingness to serve one's country both at home and abroad was not enough to guarantee equal treatment by white Americans or to prevent the government from regarding them as the enemy.

And the war changed the nature of the government itself. For Americans who lived through the conflict and made victory possible both at home and on the battlefield came to regard their government as the means to achieving greatness. Roosevelt had guided the nation out of the Depression and through the greatest conflict ever fought. For these Americans, the idea that government was good, and that government should be a part of everyday life became a matter of accepted fact. Never again would the government shrink back to the laissez-faire days of the 1920s.

All these changes, in industry, population, civil rights, gender roles, and the nature of government were brought about by the enormity of World War II. What do you think? Did that war change America for the better?

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MOBILIZATION

Although the United States had sought to avoid armed conflict, the country was not entirely unprepared for war. Production of armaments had increased since 1939, when, as a result of Congress's authorization of the Cash and Carry policy, contracts for weapons had begun to trickle into American factories. War production increased further following the passage of Lend Lease in 1941. However, when the United States entered the war, the majority of American factories were still engaged in civilian production, and many doubted that American businesses would be sufficiently motivated to convert their factories to wartime production.



Primary Source: Poster

This is one of many propaganda posters encouraging Americans to support the war and participate.

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Just a few years earlier, Roosevelt had been frustrated and impatient with business leaders when they failed to fully support the New Deal, but enlisting industrialists in the nation's crusade was necessary if the United States was to produce enough armaments to win the war. To encourage cooperation, the government agreed to assume all costs of development and production, and also guarantee a profit on the sale of what was produced. This arrangement resulted in the growth of two or three times what companies had been able to achieve from 1937 to 1940. In terms of dollars earned, corporate profits rose from \$6.4 billion in 1940 to nearly \$11 billion in 1944. As the country switched to wartime production, the top one hundred American corporations received approximately 70% of government contracts. Big businesses prospered.

In addition to gearing up industry to fight the war, the country also needed to build an army. A peacetime draft, the first in American history, had been established in September 1940, but the initial draftees were to serve for only one year, a length of time that was later extended. In December 1941, the United States had only one division completely ready to be deployed. A massive draft program was implemented to expand the nation's military forces. Over the course of the war, approximately 50 million men registered for the draft and 10 million ultimately served in uniform.

While millions of Americans heeded the rallying cry for patriotism and service, there were those who, for various reasons, did not accept the call. Some 72,000 men registered as **conscientious objectors** (COs), and 52,000 were granted that status. Of that 52,000, some accepted noncombat roles in the military, whereas others accepted unpaid work in civilian work camps. Many belonged to pacifist religious sects such as the Quakers or Mennonites. They were willing to serve their country, but they refused to kill. COs suffered public condemnation for disloyalty, and family members often turned against them. Strangers assaulted them. A portion of the town of Plymouth, NH, was destroyed by fire because the residents did not want to call upon the services of the COs trained as firemen at a nearby camp. Only a very small number of men evaded the draft completely.



Conscientious Objectors: People who refuse to join the military for personal, moral reasons, such as because of religious beliefs.

POPULATION CHANGES

Even before the official beginning of the war, the country started to prepare. In August 1940, Congress created the Defense Plant Corporation, which had built 344 plants in the West by 1945, and had funneled over \$1.8 billion into the economies of western states. After Pearl Harbor, as American military strategists began to plan counterattacks and campaigns against the Axis powers, California became a training ground. Troops trained there for tank warfare and amphibious assaults as well as desert campaigns.

As thousands of Americans swarmed to the West Coast to take jobs in defense plants and shipyards, cities like Richmond, California, and nearby Oakland,

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expanded quickly. Richmond grew from a city of 20,000 people to 100,000 in just three years. Almost overnight, the population of California skyrocketed. African Americans moved out of the rural South into northern or West Coast cities to provide the muscle and skill to build the machines of war. Building on earlier waves of African American migration after the Civil War and during World War I, the demographics of the nation changed with the growing urbanization of the African American population. Women also relocated to either follow their husbands to military bases or take jobs in the defense industry, as the total mobilization of the national economy began to tap into previously underemployed populations.

BIG GOVERNMENT

President Roosevelt and his administration already had experience in establishing government controls and taking the initiative in economic matters during the Depression. In April 1941, Roosevelt created the **Office of Price Administration (OPA)**, and, once the United States entered the war, the OPA regulated prices and attempted to combat inflation. The OPA ultimately had the power to set ceiling prices for all goods, except agricultural commodities, and to ration a long list of items. During the war, major labor unions pledged not to strike in order to prevent disruptions in production; in return, the government encouraged businesses to recognize unions and promised to help workers bargain for better wages.

The federal government instituted **rationing** to ensure that America's fighting men were well fed. Civilians were issued ration booklets, books of coupons that enabled them to buy limited amounts of meat, coffee, butter, sugar, and other foods. Wartime cookbooks were produced, such as the Betty Crocker cookbook *Your Share*, telling housewives how to prepare tasty meals without scarce food items. Other items were rationed as well, including shoes, liquor, cigarettes, and gasoline. With a few exceptions, such as doctors, Americans were allowed to drive their automobiles only on certain days of the week. Most Americans complied with these regulations, but some illegally bought and sold rationed goods on the black market.

Civilians on the home front also recycled, conserved, and participated in **scrap drives** to collect items needed for the production of war materiel. Housewives saved cooking fats, needed to produce explosives. Children collected scrap metal, paper, rubber, silk, nylon, and old rags. Some children sacrificed beloved metal toys in order to "win the war." Civilian volunteers, trained to recognize enemy aircraft, watched the skies along the coasts and on the borders.

As in previous wars, the government turned to bond drives to finance the war. Millions of Americans purchased more than \$185 billion worth of **war bonds**. Children purchased Victory Stamps and exchanged full stamp booklets for bonds. Schools held fundraising drives to buy war bonds, sometimes setting a



Office of Price Administration: Government agency that set prices on anything except agricultural products during World War II. It also had the power to ration products.



Rationing: Limiting the amount of a certain product that can be purchased to make people reduce use and therefore limit demand. For example, during World War II, people could only purchase gasoline on certain days of the week.



Scrap Drives: Campaigns during World War II to collect metal that could be melted down and reused for the war effort.



War Bonds: Government savings bonds sold during World War II in order to raise money for the war effort. Everyone, including children and

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target equal to the cost of an airplane which would subsequently be adopted by the school.

The federal government also instituted the current tax-withholding system to ensure collection of taxes.

Once again, Americans were urged to plant **victory gardens**, using marketing campaigns and celebrities to promote the idea. Americans responded eagerly, planting gardens in their backyards and vacant lots. Many schools planted gardens as well.

students were encouraged to save their money to purchase these.



Victory Garden: Personal gardens people grew during World War II to support the war effort. By growing their own food, people reduced demand on commercially produced food.

Primary Source: Poster

One of many posters encouraging Americans to grow victory gardens that would supplement commercial food production.



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All of these efforts, from rationing, to victory gardens, to shaping public opinion were promoted and explained with government propaganda organized by the **Office of War Information (OWI)**.

In every war, the government grows in both size and scope as it seeks to mobilize the collective wealth and efforts of the nation to achieve victory. World War II was no different and the nation's government was indeed larger after the war ended. One marked aspect of this growth in government is the effect it had on the generation of young men and women who lived through the war. This Greatest Generation made tremendous sacrifices on the battlefield and at home, but has always held a positive view of government. After all, Roosevelt's New Deal helped save them as teenagers in the 1930s, and the overwhelming power of their government guided them and their nation to victory in the 1940s. For this generation of Americans, government is good.



Office of War Information:

Government agency that produced propaganda during World War II. They made posters, radio advertisements and movies.

Primary Source: Photograph

The Ford Motor Company's Willow Run production factory was one of the largest in the world. During the war, Ford's workers stopped building cars and began producing aircraft. Images like this demonstrate the power of America as the so-called Arsenal of Democracy.

THE ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY

By the time the war ended in 1945, the United States had produced 40% of all the materiel used. Of all the ships, airplanes, guns, bullets and bombs, American factories and workers had turned out the means of victory. This incredible level of production gave the United States the nickname the **Arsenal of Democracy**. In fact, the term came originally from one of President Roosevelt's fireside chats from before the attack on Pearl Harbor, from a time when the United States was gearing up production during the passage of the Lend Lease Act.

After America officially declared war, the **War Production Board (WPB)** and the nation's factories affected a great change. Military aircraft production, which totaled 6,000 in 1940, jumped to 85,000 in 1943. Factories that made



Arsenal of Democracy:

Idea promoted by President Franklin Roosevelt that the United States would produce the material the allies needed to win the war, including ships, tanks, aircraft, bullets, bombs, etc.



War Production Board:

Government agency during World War II that worked with industry to

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silk ribbons now produced parachutes, automobile factories built tanks, typewriter companies made machine guns, undergarment manufacturers sewed mosquito netting, and a roller coaster manufacturer converted to the production of bomber repair platforms. The WPB ensured that each factory received materials it needed to operate, in order to produce the most war goods in the shortest time. In 1942-1945, WPB supervised the production of \$183 billion worth of weapons and supplies. One fourth of the output was warplanes; one fourth was warships.

realign the nation's factories and produce the material needed for the war.

Some companies simply increased production. Goodyear made more tires, US Steel made more steel, and Boeing turned out more aircraft. Other companies converted their factories in order to churn out war material. Ford and Chrysler, for example stopped building consumer automobiles and started building aircraft and tanks.

ENTERTAINERS AND THE WAR EFFORT

During the Great Depression, movies had served as a welcome diversion from the difficulties of everyday life, and during the war, this held still truer. By 1941, there were more movie theaters than banks in the United States. In a world before television or streaming video in the 1930s, **newsreels**, which were shown in movie theaters before feature films, informed the American public of what was happening elsewhere in the world. This interest grew once American armies began to engage the enemy. Informational documentaries about the war were also shown in movie theaters. The most famous were those in the Why We Fight series, filmed by Hollywood director Frank Capra.



Newsreel: Short movies produced by the government and shown before regular movies during the 1930s, 40s, 50s and 60s. They were an important way people received information and saw video of events before television news was universal.

Many feature films were patriotic stories that showed the day's biggest stars as soldiers fighting the nefarious German and Japanese enemy. John Wayne, who had become a star in the 1930s, appeared in numerous war-themed movies, including The Fighting Seabees and Back to Bataan.

Besides appearing in patriotic movies, many male entertainers temporarily gave up their careers to serve in the armed forces. Jimmy Stewart served in the Army Air Force and appeared in a short film entitled Winning Your Wings that encouraged young men to enlist. Tyrone Power joined the Marines. Female entertainers did their part as well. Rita Hayworth and Marlene Dietrich travelled and entertained the troops. African American singer and dancer Josephine Baker entertained Allied troops in North Africa and carried secret messages for the French Resistance. Some famous performers even died because of their efforts to support the war. Actress Carole Lombard was killed in a plane crash while returning home from a rally where she had sold war bonds and Glenn Miller, the great big band leader and swing musician disappeared on a flight to France in 1944 where he was organizing a visit by his orchestra.

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WOMEN

As in the previous war, the gap in the labor force created by departing soldiers meant opportunities for women. In particular, World War II led many to take jobs in factories around the country. For many women, these jobs provided unprecedented opportunities to move into occupations previously thought of as exclusive to men, especially the aircraft industry, where a majority of workers were women by 1943. Most women in the labor force did not work in the defense industry, however. The majority took over other factory jobs that had been held by men. Many took positions in offices as well. As White women, many of whom had been in the workforce before the war, moved into these more highly paid positions, African American women, most of whom had previously been limited to domestic service, took over White women's lower-paying positions in factories and some were also hired by defense plants. Although women were earning more money than ever before, it was still far less than men received for doing the same work. Nevertheless, many achieved a degree of financial self-reliance that was enticing. By 1944, as many as 33% of the women working in the defense industries were mothers and worked "double-day" shifts—one at the plant and one at home.

There was some resistance to women going to work in such a male-dominated environment. In order to recruit women for factory jobs, the government created a propaganda campaign centered on a now-iconic figure known as **Rosie the Riveter**. Rosie, who was a composite based on several real women, was most famously depicted by American illustrator Norman Rockwell. Rosie was tough yet feminine. To reassure men that the demands of war would not make women too masculine, some factories gave female employees lessons in how to apply makeup, and cosmetics were never rationed during the war. Elizabeth Arden even created a special red lipstick for use by women reservists in the Marine Corps.

Although many Americans saw the entry of women into the workforce as positive, they also acknowledged that working women, especially mothers, faced great challenges. To try to address the dual role of women as workers and mothers, Eleanor Roosevelt urged her husband to approve the first government childcare facilities. The First Lady also urged industry leaders like Henry Kaiser to build model childcare facilities for their workers. Still, these efforts did not meet the full need for childcare for working mothers.

The lack of childcare facilities meant that many children had to fend for themselves after school, and some had to assume responsibility for housework and the care of younger siblings. Some mothers took younger children to work with them and left them locked in their cars during the workday. Police and social workers also reported an increase in juvenile delinquency during the war. New York City saw its average number of juvenile cases balloon from 9,500 in the prewar years to 11,200 during the war. In San Diego, delinquency rates for girls, including sexual misbehavior, shot up by 355%. It is unclear



Rosie the Riveter: Character who represented all the working women during World War II. In the most famous image of her, she declares "We Can Do It!"

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whether more juveniles were actually engaging in delinquent behavior or the police were simply becoming more vigilant during wartime and arrested youngsters for activities that would have gone overlooked before the war. In either case, law enforcement and juvenile courts attributed the perceived increase to a lack of supervision by working mothers.



Primary Source: Photograph

The most famous image of Rosie the Riveter. There was no single woman who was Rosie, but many variations of her image helped encourage participation in the war effort.

Tens of thousands of women served in the war effort more directly. Approximately 350,000 joined the military. They worked as nurses, drove trucks, repaired airplanes, and performed clerical work to free up men for combat. Those who joined the **Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs)** flew planes from the factories to military bases. Some of these women were killed in combat or captured as prisoners of war. Women also joined the United States Naval Reserve, better known as the **WAVES**, for Women Accepted for



WASPs: Female pilots who delivered finished aircraft from factories to the front lines during World War II.



WAVES: Women who served in the navy during World War II. They took the place of men in positions away from the front lines, thus freeing up more men for combat.

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Volunteer Emergency Service, where they took the place of men in positions away from combat. Over 1,600 of the women nurses received various decorations for courage under fire and many thousands more served behind the lines of battle. Many women also flocked to work in a variety of civil service jobs. Others worked as chemists and engineers, developing weapons for the war. This included thousands of women who were recruited to work on the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bomb.



Primary Source: Photograph

Women of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots. Women like these performed important duty ferrying aircraft between factories and the front lines.

In the end, the war had a significant impact on the role women played in American life, not so much for the women who held them, but more so for their daughters. After the war ended and the men came home, most of the Rosies, WAVES, nurses and the other women who had left home to work, when back home to raise children. But they told their daughter stories of their wartime jobs, their sense of independence, and by their example, they showed that women did not have to live in a world constrained by the old Cult of Domesticity, the walls of the home. These girls of the 1950s and 1960s would grow up to break down many gender barriers.

AFRICAN AMERICANS

The African American community had, at the outset of the war, forged some promising relationships with the Roosevelt Administration through civil rights activist Mary McLeod Bethune and Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet" of African American advisors. Through the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt, Bethune was appointed to the advisory council set up by the War Department Women's

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Interest Section. In this position, Bethune was able to organize the first officer candidate school for women and enable African American women to become officers in the Women's Auxiliary Corps.

As the economy revived as a result of government defense contracts, African Americans wanted to ensure that their service to the country earned them better opportunities and more equal treatment. African American labor leader **A. Philip Randolph** was critical in this area. The leader of the railroad car porter's union, Randolph pressured President Roosevelt by threatening to lead a massive rally in Washington, DC and the president created, by **Executive Order 8802**, the Fair Employment Practices Committee. The purpose of this committee was to see that there was no discrimination in the defense industries. They were effective in forcing defense contractors, such as the DuPont Corporation, Boeing, and the nation's shipyards, to hire African American workers.

During the war, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), founded by James Farmer in 1942, used peaceful civil disobedience in the form of sit-ins to desegregate certain public spaces in Washington, DC, and elsewhere, as its contribution to the war effort. Members of CORE sought support for their movement by stating that one of their goals was to deprive the enemy of the ability to generate anti-American propaganda by accusing the United States of racism. After all, they argued, if the United States was going to denounce Germany and Japan for abusing human rights, the country should itself be as exemplary as possible. Indeed, CORE's actions were in keeping with the goals of the **Double V Campaign** that was begun in 1942 by the Pittsburgh Courier, the largest African American newspaper at the time. The campaign called upon African Americans to accomplish the two V: victory over America's foreign enemies and victory over racism in the United States.

Approximately 2.5 million African Americans registered for the draft, and 1 million of them subsequently served. Initially, African American soldiers served in segregated units and had been used as support troops and not been sent into combat. By the end of the war, however, manpower needs resulted in African American recruits serving in the infantry and flying planes. The Tuskegee Institute in Alabama had instituted a civilian pilot training program for aspiring African American pilots. When the war began, the Department of War absorbed the program and adapted it to train combat pilots. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt demonstrated both her commitment to African Americans and the war effort by visiting Tuskegee in 1941, shortly after the unit had been organized. To encourage the military to give the airmen a chance to serve in actual combat, she insisted on taking a ride in a plane flown by an African American pilot to demonstrate the **Tuskegee Airmen's** skill. When the Tuskegee Airmen did get their opportunity to serve in combat, they did so with distinction.



A. Philip Randolph: African American leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union. He convinced President Franklin Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 to end discrimination in industries that fulfilled government contracts.



Executive Order 8802: An executive order issued by Franklin Roosevelt during World War II that forbid discrimination in industries that fulfilled government contracts.



Double V Campaign: The idea during World War II that African American soldiers were fighting to defeat both fascism abroad and discrimination at home.



Tuskegee Airmen: Unit of African American fighter pilots during World War II.

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Despite the willingness of African Americans to fight for the United States, racial tensions often erupted in violence, as the geographic relocation necessitated by the war brought African Americans into closer contact with Whites. There were race riots in Detroit, Harlem, and Beaumont, Texas, in which White residents responded with sometimes deadly violence to their new Black coworkers or neighbors. There were also racial incidents at or near several military bases in the South. African American leaders such as James Farmer and Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP since 1931, were asked by General Eisenhower to investigate complaints of the mistreatment of African American servicemen while on active duty.

The work of leaders like Bethune, Randolph, Farmer and White helped lay the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement that would take place over the next 20 years and featured better-known leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Malcolm X.



Primary Source: Photograph

Pilots of the Tuskegee Airmen resting next to one of their planes in Italy.

NATIVE AMERICANS

Although they made up a tiny fraction of America's overall fighting force, Native Americans made a unique contribution to the war. In all, 44,000 Native Americans served in uniform. While American cryptographers had broken both German and Japanese codes, American messages remained secure throughout the war. Navajo marines served in communications units, exchanging information over radios using codes based on their native language, which the Japanese were unable to comprehend or to crack. They



Code Talkers: Native Americans who used their native languages to share messages during World War II instead of using a secret code based on English. Because the Japanese had no knowledge of these languages, they could not intercept the American messages.

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became known as **code talkers** and participated in the battles of Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Peleliu, and Tarawa. A smaller number of Comanche code talkers performed a similar function in the European theater. By making use of the native language rather than inventing a code based on English, which was well-known in both Germany and Japan, Native Americans demonstrated that sometimes great contributions can come from unexpected places.

THE ZOOT SUIT RIOTS

Mexican Americans also encountered racial prejudice during the war years. The Mexican American population in Southern California grew during World War II due to the increased use of Mexican agricultural workers in the fields to replace the White workers who had left for better paying jobs in the defense industries. The United States and Mexican governments instituted the **Bracero Program** in 1942, which sought to address the needs of California growers for manual labor to increase food production during wartime. The result was the immigration of thousands of impoverished Mexicans into the United States to work as braceros, or manual laborers.



Bracero Program: Government program during World War II to allow immigration from Mexico in order to provide agricultural workers.



Primary Source: Photograph

A group of zoot suiters in Los Angeles. You men like these were the targets of White sailors on leave during the riots of 1943.

Forced to live in the segregated barrios of East Los Angeles, many Mexican American youths sought to create their own identity and began to adopt a distinctive style of dress known as **zoot suits**, which were also popular among many young African American and Filipino men. The zoot suits, which required



Zoot Suit: A style popular among young Hispanic, African American and Filipino men during World War II based on oversized pants and jackets.

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large amounts of cloth to produce, violated wartime regulations that restricted the amount of cloth that could be used in civilian garments. Among the charges leveled at young Mexican Americans was that they were un-American and unpatriotic. Some White Americans also denounced Mexican American men for being unwilling to serve in the military, even though some 350,000 Mexican Americans either volunteered to serve or were drafted into the armed services.

In the summer of 1943, **Zoot Suit Riots** broke out in Los Angeles when carloads of White sailors on leave in the city, encouraged by other White civilians, stripped and beat a group of young men wearing the distinctive form of dress. In retaliation, young Mexican American men attacked and beat up sailors. The response was swift and severe, as sailors and civilians went on a spree attacking young Mexican Americans on the streets, in bars, and in movie theaters. More than one hundred people were injured.

A witness to the attacks, journalist Carey McWilliams wrote, “Marching through the streets of downtown Los Angeles, a mob of several thousand soldiers, sailors, and civilians, proceeded to beat up every zoot suiter they could find. Pushing its way into the important motion picture theaters, the mob ordered the management to turn on the house lights and then ran up and down the aisles dragging Mexicans out of their seats. Streetcars were halted while Mexicans, and some Filipinos and Negroes, were jerked from their seats, pushed into the streets and beaten with a sadistic frenzy.”

The local press lauded the racist attacks, describing them as having a “cleansing effect” to rid Los Angeles of “miscreants” and “hoodlums.” The Los Angeles City Council approved a resolution criminalizing the wearing of zoot suits. Councilman Norris Nelson had stated, “The zoot suit has become a badge of hoodlumism.” The proposal was never signed into law by the mayor.

The Navy and Marine Corps commanders eventually intervened to end the rioting, confining sailors and Marines to barracks and ordering that Los Angeles was off-limits to all military personnel. But perhaps unsurprisingly, their official position was that their men were acting in self-defense.

JAPANESE AMERICANS

Japanese Americans suffered the worst discrimination. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor unleashed a cascade of racist assumptions about Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in the United States that culminated in the relocation and internment of 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry, 66% of whom were American citizens born in the United States. **Executive Order 9066**, signed by Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, gave the army power to remove people from “military areas” to prevent sabotage or espionage. The army then used this authority to relocate people of Japanese ancestry living in an exclusion area that ran along the Pacific Coast of Washington, Oregon, and



Zoot Suit Riots: Violent conflict between White sailors on leave in Los Angeles and young Hispanic men. The media and local leaders blamed the unrest on the Hispanics.



Executive Order 9066: Executive order signed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1942 that authorized the internment of Japanese Americans living on the West Coast.

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California, as well as in parts of Arizona. Everyone of Japanese ancestry in that area, both citizens and non-citizens was forced to move to internment camps in the American interior. Although a study commissioned earlier by Roosevelt indicated that there was little danger of disloyalty on the part of West Coast Japanese population, fears of sabotage, and racist sentiments led Roosevelt to act. Although characterized afterwards as one of America's greatest injustices, the government's actions were in keeping with decades of anti-Asian sentiment on the West Coast and met little resistance at the time.

After the order went into effect, Lt. General John L. DeWitt, in charge of the Western Defense command, ordered approximately 127,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans, roughly 90% of those of Japanese ethnicity living in the United States, to assembly centers where they were transferred to hastily prepared camps in the interior of California, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Wyoming, and Arkansas. Those who were sent to the camps reported that the experience was deeply traumatic. Families were sometimes separated. People could only bring a few of their belongings and had to abandon the rest of their possessions. Many lost their homes, businesses and farms as they sold them in a rush before their appointed departure dates.



Primary Source: Photograph

Photographer Ansel Adams travelled to internment camps such as Manzanar to document the injustice. This photograph of a dust storm sweeping over the camp is a famous image from the era.

The camps themselves were dismal and overcrowded. Despite the hardships, the Japanese attempted to build communities in the camps and resume normal life. Adults participated in camp government and worked at a variety of jobs. Children attended school, played basketball against local teams, and organized Boy Scout units. Nevertheless, they were imprisoned, and minor

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infractions, such as wandering too near the camp gate or barbed wire fences while on an evening stroll, could meet with severe consequences.

Although most Japanese Americans chose to accept their imprisonment in an effort to demonstrate loyalty to the government, a few resisted. Fred Korematsu was a Japanese-American who decided to stay in San Leandro, California, knowingly violated the exclusion order. He sued the government, arguing that the Executive Order 9066 was unconstitutional in that it violated his Fifth Amendment right to due process. In other words, Korematsu said, if the government wanted to put him in a prison, it would have to put him on trial for a crime first. Clearly the only thing he had done wrong was to be born into a Japanese family, which was not a crime. His case, **Korematsu v. United States** was finally decided by the Supreme Court in 1944 and he lost despite the fact that no interned Japanese Americans were ever found guilty of sabotage or espionage.

The system of internment camps remained in place until the end of the war. Today, constitutional scholars put the Korematsu decision into the same category as the Dred Scott and Plessy v. Ferguson cases, pointing out that sometimes the Supreme Court has been so wrong that these few cases represent the exact opposite of justice.

Despite being singled out for special treatment, many Japanese Americans sought to enlist, but draft boards commonly classified them as 4-C: undesirable aliens. However, as the war ground on, the army began to change its mind. In total, nearly 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the military during the war. Of particular note was the **442nd Regimental Combat Team**, nicknamed the “Go For Broke,” which finished the war as the most decorated unit in American military history given its size and length of service.

In 1988, Japanese American leaders were able to achieve passage of the Civil Liberties Act, which provided \$20,000 in reparations for each surviving detainee. For many, the money was an important gesture on the part of the government they had always been loyal to, but which had suspected them nevertheless simply because of their skin.

In all, more than 81,000 people qualified for the payments.

Additionally, Congress authorized that the ten detention sites where Japanese Americans had been held be preserved as historical landmarks to be “reminders that this nation failed in its most sacred duty to protect its citizens against prejudice, greed, and political expediency.”

CONCLUSION

The war certainly demonstrated the awesome might of American industry. During the war, shipyards in the United States turned out 2,710 Liberty Ships,



Korematsu v. United States: 1944 Supreme Court case in which the Court ruled that the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II was constitutional. Most people believe it was a failure of the Court to uphold justice.



442nd Regimental Combat Team: Army unit made up of Japanese Americans during World War II.

They served with distinction despite the internment of their family members back home and are the most decorated military unit in American history.

3 DID WWII MAKE LIFE IN AMERICA BETTER?

the cargo ships that carried men and material to battlefields overseas. That's an average of two ships launched every day!

Additionally the war changed the pattern of population in the nation. The dominance of California as the most populous state in the nation is largely an effect of the conflict.

Certainly, there were tragedies brought about by the war. The internment of Japanese Americans is the most glaring. However, like discrimination against African Americans and Mexican Americans, prejudice predated the war. Perhaps the war served mainly to bring it to the forefront and highlighted evils that had been lurking in American life for decades. Perhaps, by showing how broken life in America was for some minorities, including women, the war was a catalyst for changes that were to come.

What do you think? Did World War II make life better in America?

3 DID WWII MAKE LIFE IN AMERICA BETTER?

SUMMARY

World War II had an enormous impact on the United States. The government spent previously unheard of amounts of money on the war and the size and scope of the federal government grew tremendously. Government offices produced propaganda to encourage support for rationing, scrap drives, war bond sales, and participation in efforts such as victory gardens.

Populations shifted, especially to California, which became a center for war production and troop deployments.

American industry transformed itself and produced supplies for the war in record numbers. Government officials and industrial tycoons collaborated and led the celebrated Arsenal of Democracy.

When men left to fight, women stepped up to fill in. The famous Rosie the Riveter symbolized all the women who worked in factories and on farms. For many American women, it was the first time they took jobs outside the home or earned a paycheck. Some women joined the fight as delivery pilots, nurses, or support personnel in government offices. Although most went back to being housewives after the war, it was an important psychological step toward gender equality.

Although African Americans still were relegated to segregated units, they served in an effort to both defeat discrimination and the Axis. A. Philip Randolph convinced President Roosevelt to order an end to discrimination in industries that contracted with the government, and groups like the Tuskegee Army won praise for their skill and bravery.

Native Americans served as code talkers, using their native language as an unbreakable code in the Pacific.

Mexican immigrants were welcomed into the country to work in fields left empty by Americans who had joined the military. In Los Angeles, the Zoot Suit Riots showed the level of racial animosity that existed between White servicemen on leave and the city's Hispanic community.

The minority who suffered the most were Japanese Americans. Roosevelt signed an executive order that led to the internment of the entire Japanese American population of the West Coast. The Supreme Court upheld this clear violation of their civil rights. In the face of such mistreatment, young Japanese American men formed the 442nd and fought with incredible bravery in Italy against the Nazis. Eventually in 1988, the government apologized for the internment and paid reparations to those who had suffered.



KEY CONCEPTS

Rationing: Limiting the amount of a certain product that can be purchased to make people reduce use and therefore limit demand. For example, during World War II, people could only purchase gasoline on certain days of the week.

Scrap Drives: Campaigns during World War II to collect metal that could be melted down and reused for the war effort.

War Bonds: Government savings bonds sold during World War II in order to raise money for the war effort. Everyone, including children and students were encouraged to save their money to purchase these.

Victory Garden: Personal gardens people grew during World War II to support the war effort. By growing their own food, people reduced demand on commercially produced food.

Arsenal of Democracy: Idea promoted by President Franklin Roosevelt that the United States would produce the material the allies needed to win the war, including ships, tanks, aircraft, bullets, bombs, etc.

Newsreel: Short movies produced by the government and shown before regular movies during the 1930s, 40s, 50s and 60s. They were an important way people received information and saw video of events before television news was universal.

Double V Campaign: The idea during World War II that African American soldiers were fighting to defeat both fascism abroad and discrimination at home.

Zoot Suit: A style popular among young Hispanic, African American and Filipino men during World War II based on oversized pants and jackets.



GOVERNMENT AGENCIES & PROGRAMS

Office of Price Administration: Government agency that set prices on anything except agricultural products during World War II. It also had the power to ration products.

Office of War Information: Government agency that produced propaganda during World War II. They made posters, radio advertisements and movies.

War Production Board: Government agency during World War II that worked with industry to realign the nation's factories and produce the material needed for the war.

Bracero Program: Government program during World War II to allow immigration from Mexico in order to provide agricultural workers.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Conscientious Objectors: People who refuse to join the military for personal, moral reasons, such as because of religious beliefs.

Rosie the Riveter: Character who represented all the working women during World War II. In the most famous image of her, she declares "We Can Do It!"

WASPs: Female pilots who delivered finished aircraft from factories to the front lines during World War II.

WAVES: Women who served in the navy during World War II. They took the place of men in positions away from the front lines, thus freeing up more men for combat.

A. Philip Randolph: African American leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union. He convinced President Franklin Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 to end discrimination in industries that fulfilled government contracts.

Code Talkers: Native Americans who used their native languages to share messages during World War II instead of using a secret code based on English. Because the Japanese had no knowledge of these languages, they could not intercept the American messages.

Tuskegee Airmen: Unit of African American fighter pilots during World War II.

442nd Regimental Combat Team: Army unit made up of Japanese Americans during World War II. They served with distinction despite the internment of their family members back home and are the most decorated military unit in American history.



EVENTS

Zoot Suit Riots: Violent conflict between White sailors on leave in Los Angeles and young Hispanic men. The media and local leaders blamed the unrest on the Hispanics.



EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Executive Order 8802: An executive order issued by Franklin Roosevelt during World War II that forbid discrimination in industries that fulfilled government contracts.

Executive Order 9066: Executive order signed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1942 that authorized the internment of Japanese Americans living on the West Coast.



COURT CASES

Korematsu v. United States: 1944 Supreme Court case in which the Court ruled that the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II was constitutional. Most people believe it was a failure of the Court to uphold justice.

Q U E S T I O N F O U R T E E N

What made the GREATEST GENERATION great?

So it was that the Greatest Generation came to be. Raised as children during the Roaring 20s, and chastened by the hardship of the Great Depression, these young men and women endured through those hard times only to emerge from their youth to find the world consumed by the fires of the Second World War.

They rose to the occasion. The young men of the Greatest Generation went to Africa, Europe and the Pacific to fight and die while their wives and girlfriends back home clocked in at the fields and factories they had left behind. Together, this group of Americans, under the careful leadership of a government they trusted and revered, prevailed in the bloodiest war in human history.

Out of the embers were forged a common bond. The Greatest Generation came home and set about rebuilding their lives and in the process built the greatness of modern America. They invented the computer. They built the interstate highway system. They founded fast food chains and built the suburbs that fueled enormous growth. And as they did, they remained deeply patriotic. Their trust in the goodness of America, its government, and the power of the ability of everyday people to move mountains when working together has remained strong even until the twilight of their lives.

What was it that made them so unique, and so admired? What made the Greatest Generation great?



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