



## America and World War II

### Lesson 2 World War II Begins

**ESSENTIAL QUESTION**  
*Why does conflict develop?*

**GUIDING QUESTIONS**

1. *How did World War II begin?*
2. *Why did the United States gradually become involved on the side of the Allies?*
3. *What happened as the result of the attack on Pearl Harbor?*

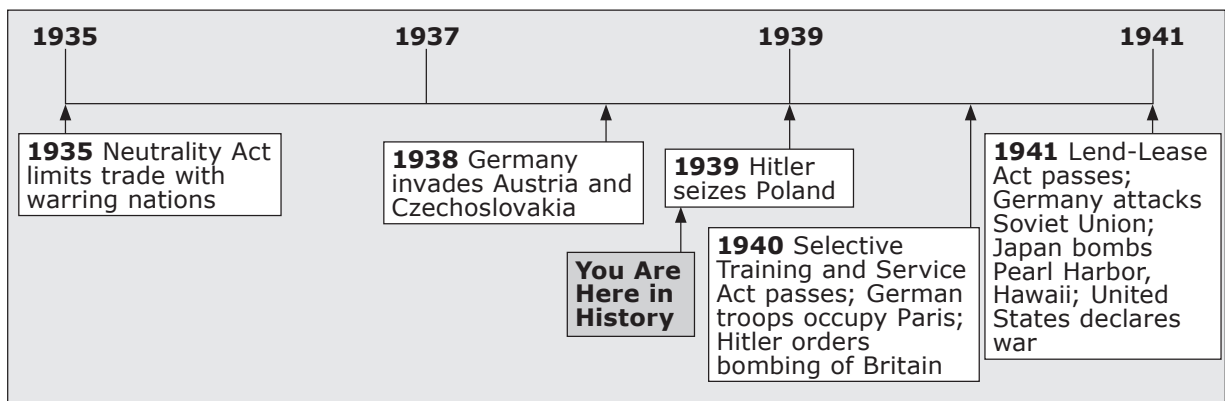
**Terms to Know**

- blitzkrieg** "lightning war"
- disarmament** giving up military weapons

### Where in the world?



### When did it happen?



## America and World War II

### Lesson 2 World War II Begins, *Continued*

#### War in Europe

On September 1, 1939, Hitler sent German soldiers into Poland. The attack was fast and fierce. The Germans called it a **blitzkrieg**, (BLIHTS-kreeg) or "lightning war." Poland was quickly defeated. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. There was little they could do to help Poland, however. The attack had happened too fast.

Hitler and Stalin divided Poland between them in late September 1939. Stalin also set up army bases in other countries. He set up bases in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. He also tried to set up an army base in Finland, but the Finns fought back. They fought until March 1940. Then they had to surrender.

France and Britain were known as the Allies. They believed Germany would attack France after it attacked Poland. Allied soldiers waited at the border between Germany and France. That part of the border is called the Maginot (mah-zuh-NOH) Line. The soldiers were there to defend France from a German attack.

Germany did not attack France then. Instead, Germany attacked Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium. After Belgium surrendered, the Allied soldiers pulled back. They went to a port in northern France, called Dunkirk. The soldiers were trapped between the Germans and the English Channel. The British sent 800 warships, ferries, and fishing boats back and forth across the English Channel. The ships rescued more than 300,000 French and British soldiers.

In June 1940, the Germans invaded France. Italy joined with Germany against France. On June 14, German soldiers marched into Paris, the capital city. France surrendered a week later.

By the summer of 1940, Hitler had captured almost all of Europe. England was the only country he did not have. England got ready to be attacked. First, Germany sent planes to bomb England. They bombed air bases, shipyards, factories, and cities. Many people were killed in the bombing raids. The attacks went on from August to October 1940. Britain never surrendered. The British Royal Air Force shot down many German planes. Finally, Hitler gave up his plan to invade Britain.

In 1941 Hitler broke his treaty with Stalin and attacked the Soviet Union. He wanted Soviet resources and land. At first, the Germans were successful. Then, Stalin ordered the Soviets to burn everything. They destroyed their own



#### Mark the Text

- Underline in the text the meaning of *blitzkrieg*.

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\_\_\_\_\_



#### Visualize It

- Describe how the Allied troops escaped from Dunkirk.

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#### Reading Check

- Why did Hitler end plans to invade Britain?

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### Lesson 2 World War II Begins, *Continued*

**ABC** **Mark the Text**

4. Underline the sentence that tells what the word *neutral* means.

**✓** **Reading Check**

5. Why did isolationists oppose the Lend-Lease Act?

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**?** **Critical Thinking**

6. Why do you think Roosevelt helped Great Britain?

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crops, cities, and dams. The Germans found it hard to supply their troops.

### The United States and the War

Most Americans wanted the Allies to win. However, they did not want America to fight. A small group wanted America to stay completely out of Europe's problems.

Roosevelt promised to remain neutral. Neutral means not taking either side in an argument. Roosevelt kept on getting ready for war, just in case. In 1939, Congress passed a new Neutrality Act. It said that nations at war could buy U.S. goods. Roosevelt made a deal with Britain. He gave them 50 warships in exchange for leases on eight British army bases. Roosevelt then signed a new draft law. The law said that American men, ages 21 to 35, could be called to serve in the military.

In 1940, Roosevelt ran for a third term as president and won. He was the first president to go beyond two terms. He promised Americans, "Your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars."

In March 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act. This law allowed America to provide weapons to countries that were important to America's safety. Isolationists did not like the Lend-Lease Act. They said it brought America closer to war.

Roosevelt took other steps to help the Allies without fighting. He told the American Navy to protect British ships that were near America's shores. After German soldiers fired on American ships, Roosevelt said Americans could shoot at German and Italian ships in certain areas.

In August 1941, President Roosevelt and Britain's Winston Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter. It set goals for the world after the Nazis were defeated. The two leaders urged **disarmament**—giving up weapons.

### The Japanese Threat

The Germans and Italians advanced in Europe. At the same time, Japan advanced in the Far East. After France fell to Germany, the Japanese captured French-ruled Indochina. They also planned to capture the Philippines, an American territory, the Dutch East Indies, and British Malaya.

Roosevelt responded to the threat. The Japanese could not get any of their money that they had in American

