

# WORLD WAR II

## Major Events and Turning Points of World War II

- On September 1, 1939, **Germany invaded Poland**. France fell to Germany in June of 1940.
- As the fighting in Europe continued, President Roosevelt began to prepare for the possibility that the U.S. would be drawn into the conflict.
- On December 7, 1941, the Japanese naval and naval air forces launched a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at **Pearl Harbor, Hawaii**.
- The next day, President Roosevelt addressed Congress to ask for a declaration of war against Japan. Within a few days, Germany declared war on the United States. Congress then responded by declaring war on Germany.
- On Europe's Eastern Front, Germany and its Axis allies invaded the Soviet Union in an attempt to gain control of the land and its oil reserves. The capture of the Soviet industrial city of Stalingrad was of particular interest to Hitler. The battle that followed has been called the largest single battle in human history. It raged for 199 days and resulted in approximately 2 million civilian and military casualties. The Axis powers lost about a quarter of their total manpower and never fully recovered from the defeat. The **Battle of Stalingrad** halted the German advance in World War II and **marked the turning point of the war in Eastern Europe**.
- As the fighting in Europe raged on, the Allies planned a decisive invasion of the European continent. Six hundred warships, 4,000 landing craft, and 176,000 American and Allied soldiers crossed the English Channel and landed on the beaches of **Normandy, France** on June 6, 1944 (**D-Day**)
- In May of 1945 Berlin fell to Allied Forces, and on May 8, 1945, **Germany surrendered**.
- Unfortunately, "V-E" or "Victory in Europe" Day did not mark the end of World War II. Japan was still a threat to the Allies. On July 26, 1945, the Allies presented a surrender ultimatum to Japan. It was rejected.
- As a result, on August 6, 1945, a U.S. bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped an atomic bomb on the city of **Hiroshima**. More than 75,000 people were killed and another 100,000 were injured.
- Three days later, the United States dropped another atomic bomb on the city of **Nagasaki**. **Japan surrendered** on August 10, 1945



**Ablaze, the Arizona slips beneath the water**

## Pearl Harbor Glossary

Here are some words that will help you understand what happened the day Pearl Harbor was bombed:

**Bomber** - a large airplane that drops bombs on targets.

**Depth charge** - an explosive device designed to explode underwater.

**Destroyer** - a small, very fast warship that uses guns, missiles, and torpedoes to protect other ships from submarines.

**Diplomat** - a person who represents his or her country's government in a foreign country.

**Dispatch** - a message or report.

**Embargo** - an official order forbidding something from happening, especially trade.

**Evacuate** - to move away from an area because it is dangerous there.

**Imperialists** - people who want a national policy of gaining foreign territories or establishing dominance over other nations.

**Negotiate** - to bargain or discuss something so that you can come to an agreement..

**Radar** - an instrument used by planes and ships to find solid objects by reflecting radio waves off them and by receiving the reflected waves.

**Raid** - a sudden, surprise attack on a place.

**Sabotage** - the deliberate damage or destruction of property.

**Torpedo** - an underwater missile that explodes when it hits a target, such as a ship.

**Treaty** - a formal agreement between two or more countries.



The following day, President Roosevelt addressed Congress, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy--the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan." Congress then declared war on Japan, marking the entrance of the US into World War II. In accordance with their alliance with Japan, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States four days later.



### **Allied Powers**

The Allied Powers were any countries who officially fought against the Axis Powers. The Major Allied Powers were the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain and its Empire, France, and China. Numerous smaller nations also fought with the Allied Powers



### **Axis Powers**

The principal countries constituting the Axis Powers were Germany, Italy and Japan. In 1940, the three nations signed the Tripartite Pact, promising to aid each other if any one of them was attacked by the United States, who was not yet at war with anyone. Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania also fought with the Axis Powers.

