

AIM: How did World War II begin?

DO NOW: Please watch the video and answer the question in your notes sheet.

Q: Write down one cause of World War II that is described in the video.

Q1: How did Hitler violate the Munich Agreement? What deal did Hitler with make with Stalin?

In March 1939, less than six months after the Munich meeting, Hitler took Czechoslovakia. Then he demanded that Poland return the former German port of Danzig. The Poles refused and turned to Britain and France for aid. Britain and France asked the Soviet Union to join them in stopping Hitler. As Stalin talked with them, he also bargained with Hitler. The two dictators reached an agreement. On **August 23, 1939**, they signed a nonaggression pact. In a secret part of the pact, Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to divide Poland between them.

Q2: What action by Hitler directly led to the start of World War II? What was the blitzkrieg strategy?

After the nonaggression pact, Hitler moved ahead with plans to conquer Poland. On **September 1, 1939**, German tanks and troop trucks crossed the Polish border while aircraft and artillery mercilessly bombed the capital, Warsaw. France and Great Britain declared war on Germany two days later, but Poland fell. After his victory, Hitler annexed the western half of Poland, which had a large German population. The invasion of Poland was the first test of Germany's newest military strategy—**blitzkrieg** or "lightning war." It involved using fast-moving airplanes and tanks, followed by massive infantry forces, to take enemies by surprise and quickly overwhelm them.

Q3: Why was the start of World War II called 'phony'? How did the 'phony war' end?

After they declared war on Germany, the French and British mobilized their armies. They stationed their troops along the Maginot Line, a system of fortifications along France's border with Germany. There they waited for the Germans to attack—but nothing happened. Equally bored, German soldiers stared back from their Siegfried Line a few miles away. Some newspapers referred to this as "the **phony war**." Suddenly, on **April 9, 1940**, Hitler launched a surprise invasion of Denmark and Norway. In just four hours after the attack, Denmark fell. Two months later, Norway surrendered. The Germans then began to build bases in Norway and Denmark from so they could launch strikes on Great Britain.

Q4: Which countries fell to Hitler in May of 1940? What happened in France?

In **May of 1940**, Hitler swept through the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. Meanwhile, he sent a larger force across France. After reaching the coast, German forces swung north to Belgium and trapped the Allied forces. The Allies retreated to Dunkirk, a French port city, where British ships heroically rescued 338,000 soldiers. Soon, resistance in France began to crumble. By June, the Germans had taken Paris. France surrendered on **June 22, 1940**. The Germans took control of the north and left the southern part to a puppet government. Charles de Gaulle, a French general, set up a government-in-exile in London and organized Free French forces that continued to battle the Nazis.

Q5: What battle began in July 1940? Which side was victorious?

In **July 1940**, the Luftwaffe, Germany's air force, began bombing Great Britain. At first, the Germans targeted airfields and factories, then focused cities to break British morale. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) began to hit back hard. Two technological devices helped -- an electronic tracking system known as radar and a machine named Enigma that decoded German messages. To avoid the RAF's attacks, the Germans began night bombing. Sirens filled the air as Londoners flocked to the subways, which served as air-raid shelters. Stunned by British resistance, Hitler called off his attacks and focused on the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. The **Battle of Britain** taught the Allies that Hitler's attacks could be blocked.

Q6: Which side was winning in North Africa and the Balkans?

In **September 1940**, Mussolini ordered his army to attack British-controlled Egypt. Within a week, Italian troops pushed 60 miles inside. In December, the British struck back and by February 1941, they swept 500 miles across North Africa. To reinforce the Italians, Hitler sent a German tank force under the command of General Erwin Rommel. By June 1942, Rommel had pushed the British back across the desert, and achieved a shattering loss for the Allies. Meanwhile, Hitler wanted to build bases in the Balkans for an attack on the Soviet Union. By early 1941, he had persuaded Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to join the Axis powers. Yugoslavia and Greece resisted. In early **April 1941**, Hitler invaded both countries. Yugoslavia fell in 11 days. Greece surrendered in 17.

Q7: In what way did the United States break from their previous neutrality in March 1941?

Most Americans felt that the United States should not get involved in the war. Between 1935 and 1937, Congress passed a series of Neutrality Acts. The laws made it illegal to sell arms or lend money to nations at war. But President Roosevelt knew that if the Allies fell, the United States would be drawn into the war. In September 1939, he asked Congress to allow the Allies to buy American arms. The Allies would pay cash and then carry the goods on their own ships. Under the **Lend-Lease Act**, passed in **March 1941**, the president could lend or lease arms and other supplies to any country vital to the U.S. By the summer of 1941, the U.S. Navy was escorting British ships carrying U.S. arms.

Q8: How did the USSR respond to the German invasion? What happened in Leningrad & Moscow?

On **June 22, 1941**, Hitler moved ahead with **Operation Barbarossa** and soon pushed 500 miles inside the Soviet Union. As the Soviets retreated, they burned and destroyed everything in the enemy's path. On September 8, German forces put Leningrad under siege. Hitler was ready to starve the city's more than 2.5 million inhabitants. Nearly one million people died, yet the city refused to fall. Impatient, Hitler began an advance to Moscow in October, 1941. As temperatures fell, Hitler sent his generals a stunning order: "No retreat!" German troops held the line against the Soviets until March 1943. Hitler's advance against the Soviet Union gained nothing but cost the Germans 500,000 lives.

Q9: What prompted the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor? What were the results of this attack?

By October 1940, Americans had cracked one of Japan's codes and were aware of their plans for Southeast Asia, which would threaten American-controlled Philippine Islands and Guam. When the Japanese overran French Indochina—Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos—in **July 1941**, Roosevelt cut off oil shipments to Japan. Japan soon planned massive attacks on British and Dutch colonies and on American outposts in the Pacific—at the same time. Admiral Yamamoto also called for an attack on the U.S. fleet in Hawaii. Early in the morning of **December 7, 1941**, American sailors at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii awoke to the roar of explosives. Within two hours, the Japanese had sunk or damaged 19 ships, including 8 battleships, moored in Pearl Harbor. More than 2,300 Americans were killed—with over 1,100 wounded. The next day, Congress quickly accepted President Roosevelt's request for a declaration of war on Japan and its allies.

Q10: What other lands came under Japanese control? What was the Bataan Death March?

Almost at the same time of the Pearl Harbor attack, U.S. possessions Guam and Wake Island quickly fell to Japan. In **May 1942**, Japan also took the Philippines after months of tough fighting. On the **Bataan Death March**—a forced march of more than 50 miles—the Japanese subjected their Filipino and American prisoners of war to terrible cruelties. Of the 70,000 prisoners who started the march, only 54,000 survived. The Japanese also continued strikes against British possessions. After seizing Hong Kong, they invaded Malaya. By February 1942, the Japanese reached Singapore, and the colony of Malaya surrendered. Within a month, they conquered the resource-rich Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and also moved westward, taking Burma. By the time Burma fell, Japan had taken control of more than 1 million square miles of Asian land.