Chapter 25: The Second World War

Overview
The post World War I years were tension-filled. The economic boom of the 1920s was not global but the economic chaos of the 1930s was global. Americans were particularly isolationist when war in Europe broke out. At most, some isolationists believed the United States should act to protect the Western Hemisphere. President Roosevelt and others believed the United States should actively aid England’s and France’s resistance of Germany. Both groups knew that participation in the war would change the United States. Until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the question of involvement was debated. Afterward there was no question. The American political economy was forced to adapt to war. It was a transformation that Americans made willingly. During the war, the nation borrowed heavily, and wartime spending stimulated the economy. War contracts created 17 million jobs. Industrial production doubled. People had jobs and they had money to spend and they spent it. As industry expanded into new cities and regions, workers relocated, too, and organized themselves into a powerful political and economic force. The idealism of earlier wars was lacking in World War II. They were battling totalitarianism, gestapos, and master races. Franklin Delano Roosevelt characterized the Americans’ cause in his Four Freedoms: freedom of speech and worship and freedom from want and fear. The Americans attacked the Axis Powers with speed and firepower. Following the Allied invasion of North Africa the United States carried the war to Japan and Europe with a destructiveness never before witnessed. Looking beyond the victory, Americans began to anticipate the difficulties of reconstructing the world and creating institutions necessary for a global economy at peace.

Key Topics The information in chapter 25 introduces your students to the following key topics:
- The strategic and domestic issues at stake in the debate over American entry into the war.
- The United States had to balance its own interests with those of its allies in setting wartime strategy.
- The war emergency increased the federal government’s power over individuals and created a “mixed economy” in which government intervention was as important as market forces.
- War generated new economic opportunities for women and minorities, and wartime rhetoric highlighted issues of civil rights, but war also bred fear that crushed individual rights and humanitarian impulses.

Chapter Outline
A. Philip Randolph
Island in a Totalitarian Sea
   - A World of Hostile Blocks
   - The Good Neighbor
   - America First?
   - Means Short of War

Turning the Tide
   - Midway and Coral Sea
   - Gone with the Draft
   - The Winning Weapons
   - The Second Front

Organization for Production
   - A Mixed Economy
   - Industry Moves South and West
   - New Jobs in New Places
   - Women in Industry

Between Idealism and Fear
   - Double V
   - Japanese Internment
   - No Shelter from the Holocaust

Feature: Manzanar

Closing with the Enemy
Annotated chapter outline with review questions

A. Philip Randolph: Randolph founded the labor union the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925. In 1941 President Roosevelt signed an executive order prohibiting discrimination based on race, creed, color, or national origin in the defense industry because of Randolph’s influence.

Island in a Totalitarian Sea: The post World War I years were tension-filled. The economic boom of the 1920s was not global but the economic chaos of the 1930s was global. Americans were particularly isolationist when war in Europe broke out. At most, some isolationists believed the United States should act to protect the Western Hemisphere. President Roosevelt and others believed the United States should actively aid England’s and France’s resistance of Germany. Both groups knew that participation in the war would change the United States. Until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor the question of involvement was debated. Afterward there was no question.

- The economic growth that Americans enjoyed during the 1920s was not matched by Europeans whose post World War I economy had stagnated under the heavy burdens imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Money that could have gone to build industries and jobs instead went to pay international war debts. Economic chaos in Europe and Asia contributed to the rise of massive unemployment, hunger, and despair. The voices of political moderates were silenced as conservative and liberal extremists argued their solutions. Free trade was abandoned in favor of national self-sufficiency -- a move called autarky. Americans used the term totalitarian to describe those fascist and communist governments that demanded total obedience. Economic disasters and resentment caused Europeans to look for causes: Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 was based in large part on his ability to exploit Germans’ fears and prejudices. He and Mussolini preached ethnic supremacy and Hitler built his Germany on racism and brutality. Jews were the primary target although other groups were included in the subhuman category. As Germany, Italy, and Japan sought to solve their economic problems through military conquest, President Roosevelt grew apprehensive. Their other concern was that the totalitarian nations might just out-compete democracy.

- Even though the President and Congress toyed with the notion of autarky, the course was reversed in 1934 due in part to the vision of Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who believed the Open Door was the antidote to dictatorship and depression. Closed economics bred repression and war. He and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were aided by the Export-Import Bank and the Reciprocal Trade Act of 1934. FDR expanded Theodore Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor policy. Hitler militarized the Rhineland, Mussolini’s troops moved into Ethiopia, and Japan invaded China’s port cities. The allies, Great Britain and France, were powerless to stop the aggression and instead accepted, or appeased, Hitler’s promise that he would not take any more land.

- Roosevelt pushed for economic quarantine and military buildup but the Congress and the American public had no enthusiasm for the plans. Americans, with fresh memories of World War I, were not keen on the idea of yet another European war. After all, the United States had plenty of problems of its own. The Congress tried to prevent the United States from making similar mistakes that got them into the Great War. It passed Neutrality Acts prohibiting loans or credit to warring nations and prevented the president from aiding the enemies of fascism. All about, the fascists were expanding their land base by invading one neighbor after another. As the nations of western Europe fell in rapid succession the United States had to realize that Great Britain was standing alone against the fascists. Roosevelt moved to circumvent the Neutrality Acts. The isolationists in Congress were becoming more isolated. The American First Committee urged American isolationism. With another election looming on the horizon, Roosevelt’s third, he feared it would become a referendum on what the United States should do. The Republicans chose Wendell Wilkie, an ardent internationalist who supported the military draft. Roosevelt won a third term by a 5 million vote margin.
Following the election, Prime Minister Winston Churchill disclosed that Great Britain was almost broke. Without funds it could not continue fighting. The “cash and carry” was implemented and soon replaced with “Lend-Lease.” In 1940, Roosevelt and Churchill met off the coast of Newfoundland. The result was the Atlantic Charter which articulated the nations’ war aims. Japan was also expanding its land base, taking more and more of China and Southeast Asia. Talks with the Japanese ambassadors continued through the fall of 1941. Despite warnings and troop movements, the United States was unprepared for the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 7, 1941. Following a deadly bombardment of military bases in Hawaii and the Philippines, the United State Congress declared war on Japan. On December 11, Germany, Japan’s ally, declared war on the United States.

How did Roosevelt’s strategy for coping with the global depression differ from Britain’s? From Japan’s?

Turning the Tide: The first half of 1942 was nothing more than bad news of Axis expansions and Allied defeats. The tide began to turn in late 1942 but there remained three years before victory was secure.

Japan’s goal in the Pacific was to eliminate American and British presence. Having partially broken the Japanese military code, the United States Navy prepared to defend its South Pacific possessions. The battle at Midway Island halted Japan’s winning streak and allowed the United States to concentrate its attention on building an army and winning the war in Europe.

The United States military was no more prepared to fight World War II than World War I. The Selective Service Act of 1940 saw some 16 million men registered. By December 1941, 2 million men and 80,000 women had enlisted. American service personnel made the difficult transition from civilian to military life. Their enthusiasm and boredom and troublesome behavior were a challenge to order and whether it was in barroom fights or racially-motivated violence life for soldiers and civilians demonstrated that American society was changing. Roosevelt ordered the services to admit African-Americans and Benjamin O. Davis was appointed brigadier general but these advances did not eradicate the injustices. The armed forces hesitantly enlisted women to perform service roles.

World War II weapons technology advanced with blinding speed. American factories retooled to produce the latest in weapons although it took until 1943 for many of these innovative weapons to get to the front. Until the advances could get to the front, servicemen had to become adaptable and inventive. Mass production, which had served American industry so well, worked to help American servicemen. Teams of university scientists were funded with government money to research and develop new kinds of bombs, most notably an atomic weapon. World War II brought about the marriage of technology and war.

While holding Japan in check in the Pacific, the British, Soviet, and American focus was on defeating Nazi Germany. Holding the alliance of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union together was one of Roosevelt’s priorities as well as challenges. The three had conflicting aims and strategies. Initial battles demonstrated that American troops had much to learn and basic training was expanded from 13 to 17 weeks.

Which was more important to victory at Midway, planning or luck?

Organizing for Production: American political economy was forced to adapt to war. It was a transformation that Americans made willingly. During the war, the nation borrowed heavily, and wartime spending stimulated the economy. War contracts created 17 million jobs. Industrial production doubled. People had jobs and they had money to spend and they spent it. As industry expanded into new cities and regions, workers relocated, too, and organized themselves into a powerful political and economic force.

Roosevelt’s administration created agencies to control prices, assign labor, and gear up industry. Tax breaks and other incentives encouraged cooperation between industry and government and when cooperation was not forthcoming the power of the federal government was used. Output soared, new industries, innovations, and inventions appeared overnight, and agricultural production also increased. World War II permanently divided the economy into separate “government” and “market” sectors, each with its own rules and ways of dealing with Washington.

Industry’s geographic focus shifted to the South, Southwest, and the Pacific. The Manhattan Project located laboratories in Tennessee, New Mexico, and Washington. The hydroelectric plants built during the New Deal provided ready sources of energy. Jobs meant people and people flocked west to the new jobs. Population in the west increased 40 percent.
• Labor was in short supply during the war. Wages increased and membership in organized labor unions swelled. Labor was a partner in the war effort. Militant local union offices were stifled as decision making was transferred to national union headquarters. Americans relocated to jobs. Braceros, Mexican farm workers, legally moved north to harvest crops. African-Americans left the south for government jobs that featured anti-discrimination clauses and had wages set by the federal government. The movement of Americans to the industrialized cities changed the political complexion of their adopted hometowns and regions.

• The war economy shifted women workers into new roles. Some women moved from service or agricultural jobs into industry and they enjoyed higher wages. What had once been seen as areas or jobs inappropriate for women, metal working for example, were now commonly filled by women. Despite the work, women still faced wage discrimination; unions refused them membership. Women’s labor was necessary for the war effort, but social attitudes questioned or opposed their permanent position in industry.

Why did the population of the West grow so rapidly during the war?

Between Idealism and Fear: The idealism of earlier wars was lacking in World War II. They were battling totalitarianism, gestapos, and master races. Franklin Delano Roosevelt characterized the Americans’ philosophy in his Four Freedoms: freedom of speech and worship and freedom from want and fear.

• The “Double V” campaign was launched by the Pittsburgh Courier in 1942. It linked two victories: the victory over fascism and the victory over racism at home. Despite a united effort to support the war effort abroad white American workers engaged in “hate strikes” at home to prevent the hiring of African-American workers; race riots erupted and rumors of riots were common. Membership in the NAACP grew tenfold during the war and other groups, like the Congress on Racial Equality, were organized. When African-American servicemen returned home from the service they were determined not to accept discrimination. They had fought and defeated the evil of Adolf Hitler. When they returned home they were able and willing to defeat the evil of Jim Crow.

• Journalists, politicians, and military authorities, acting out of fear and prejudice, perpetrated an injustice on American citizens of Japanese descent. “Japanese aliens and non-aliens” were ordered to report to relocation centers for removal from the Pacific Coast “war zone.” The order applied to all Japanese and Japanese citizens and alien residents living in the Pacific coast states. Despite the fact that the FBI could find no evidence of plots against the United States, the press continued to print stories of potential sabotage. Some 112,000 Japanese were relocated by armed soldiers to barbed-wire enclosed camps in the deserts of the west and to swamps in Arkansas.

• The United States knew about the plight of European Jews during the war but fear and anti-Semitism kept Americans from doing much at all. After all, many wondered, what would be done with the evacuated Jews? The State Department, worried about spies, erected a paper wall of bureaucratic restrictions that kept the flow of immigrants to a trickle. Despite the knowledge of how efficient a death camp Auschwitz had become, the assistant secretary of war refused to issue orders for the air force to bomb it and President Roosevelt remained indifferent to those, including his wife, who counseled action. When the camps were finally liberated in 1945, American servicemen, journalists, and the public came face to face with the extent of the fascist horror.

Thurgood Marshall and James Omura both refer to a “gestapo” in America. What are they talking about?

Closing with the Enemy: Americans attacked the Axis Powers with speed and firepower. Following the Allied invasion of North Africa the United States carried the war to Japan and Europe with a destructiveness never before witnessed. Looking beyond the victory, Americans began to anticipate the difficulties of reconstructing the world and creating institutions necessary for a global economy at peace.

• From North Africa, the American and English forces moved up the Italian peninsula. The defeat forced the Italian Parliament to depose Mussolini and order his arrest. June 6, 1944, the promised invasion of France was begun in an amphibious assault on the coast of Normandy. Germany had fortified the coast and only after tremendous losses the Americans had a foothold so they could begin the slow and deadly process of reclaiming France from the Germans.

• In the Pacific the Americans had to break through Japanese fortifications on islands stretching from Alaska to Australia. The process was simple: reclaim one island at a time. It came to be known as “island
hopping” and despite its simple strategy, the war in the Pacific was horrific and costly. Ground troops, air force, and naval forces were brought to bear on the enemy forces. As the battle lines moved closer to Tokyo, American bombers got close enough to attack Japanese cities. Eventually more than 60% of Japan’s urban areas were fire bombed.

- While servicemen fought, officials in Europe planned the postwar future. During the war President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met to discuss strategy, long term plans, and a future for when the war was over. American planners believed that American security would depend on having a functional international organization, global free trade, and a world-wide network of American military bases. The League of Nations had proved ineffectual without the membership of the United States and Soviet Union. Roosevelt envisioned a stronger organization led by the world’s principal powers which would act to disband empires. The United States was trying not to repeat the mistakes that had led to World War II. The planners also wanted to create an open door world. Participants at a conference designed to make arrangements for global economic cooperation created a system to manage and stabilize the international movement for money. Military planners, with the smoke of Pearl Harbor still hanging in the air, were unwilling to leave the nation’s security to economists. Instead they argued for a global system of military bases. With this foundation, the United States military could move against any aggressor. They were acting to attain post-war security.

- Roosevelt, who had been elected to an unprecedented third term, was elected for a fourth term in 1944. In April, the president was dead. Harry Truman, former vice president, was now president. He took office and aides briefed him of the Manhattan Project and the planned test on July 16, 1945. At the Potsdam Conference Truman disclosed the development to Churchill and Stalin. The war for Japan had become ferocious. Many Americans, including President Truman, believed the coming battles would be more bloody than anything to date and partly from this perspective the Americans dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6. Two days later the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. On August 9, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. Japanese Emperor Hirohito unconditionally surrendered August 14, 1945. The war was over. Thirty million people were killed.

Feature: Where They Lived, Where They Worked: Manzanar Despite the cruel and harsh experiences at Manzanar, a Japanese Relocation Camp in Southern California, the population organized itself as if it were free. Many young men and women left the very young and very old at the camp for college and military service.

Conclusion: With Japan’s surrender World War II was over. The world had changed and the future was both certain and uncertain. The United States was the richest and most powerful nation in the world but despite its power America and Americans looked to the future with many unanswerable questions.

Making links to other ideas Using the maps and websites, in addition to your prepared lectures and other assignments, can give you more resources to enable your students to see that history is much more than memorizing names and dates. You will find that the websites are even more comprehensive and adaptable than described and because they have been collected here in one volume you have a world of information no further away than the click of your mouse. If you are new to the web's opportunities, you will be pleasantly surprised at the breadth and depth of the information available in these sites.

Map 01. Using this map define “island hopping.” Trace the routes the Allied forces took to their destination which was what? The reclamation of the Pacific was accomplished using two routes. What were they?
Map 02. Trace the strategy the Allied forces used to reclaim western Europe. How was the Soviet Union reclaimed? What was the strategy the Russians took to regain eastern Europe?
Map 03. Manhattan Project sites were distributed across the nation. Why not congregate them together?
Map 04. Was World War II fought in the northern or southern hemisphere? Were there any major battles fought in the western hemisphere?
Place the following events in chronological order: Atlantic Charter, Battle of the Bulge, Battle of Coral Sea, cross-Channel invasion of Europe, Kristallnacht, Lend-Lease Act, Midway, Munich Conference, Nazi-Soviet Pact, Neutrality Acts, Ottawa Accords, Pearl Harbor, Potsdam Conference, Reciprocal Trade Act, Selective Service Act, Spanish Civil War.

**Web connections and resources**  Consider using these websites to supplement your students’ reading and analytical skills. The sites were chosen because of their relevance to the material in the chapter -- not just to mirror it but to provide additional materials and perspectives. Questions from the student study guide have been included so that you can use or amend them to your own needs. Your students may find it insightful for you to guide them through the site as you help them develop research strategies.


Attacks on women. Babies on bayonettes. Fearsome animal-like faces and bodies in enemy uniforms. These were recurring images, based on ignorance and fear, in the propaganda waged during World War II, on all sides. Propaganda has been described as a lie repeated often enough that it seems it must be true. During World War II in particular, racism permeated the propaganda crafted on every side, and effectively terrorized civilians and made postwar relations especially difficult. What was the purpose of propaganda, and how did it work?


See U.S. government-issued posters designed to encourage women to become defense workers. Some feature African American women and speak to one of the earliest possibilities for women of color to work on production jobs in factories.
1. Compared to the information in earlier chapters and their discussions of women’s roles in society, how did World War II change society’s perceptions of women’s abilities?
2. How did their wartime work change women’s perceptions of their own abilities?
3. Why did the government need to recruit women for these jobs?


This site tells the story of Seattle’s “Camp Harmony” Japanese-American community, including information on housing, daily life in the camp, photographs, maps, and excerpts from the camp newsletter.
1. Based on the rules and regulations and physical layout of the camp, how did the government and its employees view the Japanese-Americans living in the camp?
2. Why was the camp relocated?
3. What does the new location tell you?


This National Archives Administration site illustrates the quest to reinforce American support for the war.
1. What kinds of images are common in most of these posters? What messages are conveyed in the posters?
2. The two psychological approaches of the posters are intended to do what?


Read about the “Double V” campaign and the black newspaper that started the campaign for freedom abroad and freedom at home for the nation’s African American citizens.
1. Summarize the reasons the newspapers use to justify the campaign for African-American civil rights.
2. What sorts of war-related issues are used to justify African-American action?
3. Why were some black newspapers seen as a threat to the war effort?
**Analytical reading**  Your students may need more experience analyzing a short reading passage so that he or she can determine its component parts. They may need help identifying primary and supporting information as well as the author’s analysis. The analytical reading passages and the questions from the student study guide have been duplicated in the instructor’s manual for your use. Your students may need direction and encouragement in using them.

Autarky exacted heavy demands on citizens, requiring them to sacrifice prosperity, liberty, and lives for the nation. Efficiency was more important than democracy, and regimes around the world became more ruthless and less free. Colonized peoples suffered a new wave of repression. South Africa imposed restrictions on the residence and movement of blacks, a legal straitjacket known as *apartheid*. South American dictators strong-armed the press and labor unions. In Japan, secret groups within the army stalked and assassinated dissenting politicians. In Italy, Mussolini regimented the economy and outlawed opposition parties. Nazi ideology, in Hitler's words, placed “the good of the State before the good of the individual . . . with obedience going upward, authority going downward.” Dictators pushed aside rights and religion and demanded fanatical, unquestioning allegiance. Americans began to use a new word, *totalitarian*, to describe fascist and communist regimes that demanded complete loyalty and obedience.

1. From the passages which precede this, define the term “autarky” and provide examples of how Germany and Japan implemented this idea. Did their actions have anything to do with global economic collapse of the early 1930s?
2. In light of economic conditions in Germany, for example, why would the German people sacrifice their liberty, prosperity, and lives for the good of the nation?

**Writing**  The questions or writing prompts from the student study guide have been duplicated here for your use. These writing topics make good lecture topics especially if you help your students see the development of the idea in lecture format before they refine the idea in their writing assignments.

1. Why was the United States so hesitant to intervene in either German or Japanese aggressions in the 1930s? What preoccupied Americans?
2. Did World War II end the Great Depression? If so, how?
3. What were Americans fighting against in Europe and the Pacific? In what ways did those battles empower American minorities to demand respect and recognition for their civil rights?
4. What lessons had the United States learned from their World War II experiences?

**Lecture Strategies**  Ultimately the lecture is where you impart, or profess, your knowledge for the benefit of your students. These strategies were designed around the textbook and if your classroom strategy is to use the organization of the text to organize your course content, these lecture ideas may prove helpful. However, if you lecture around themes please see the section entitled “Thematic Lecture Topics.” You may find that you are more comfortable with and your students are more responsive to a combination of the two.

Few topics offer so many opportunities to lecture on material interesting to your students than World War II. If you have examined the problems that World War I created, then you can pick up that narrative to discuss the problems of the Treaty of Versailles, failure to help European nations rebuild after World War I and its contribution to economic collapse in the 1930s, and so on. You also have the opportunity to try and make the totalitarian dictators make sense to your students by examining the conditions in Europe that brought the dictators to power.

Adolf Hitler’s personality, leadership style, charisma, and philosophy help to make the war make sense. Included in this topic is the unfathomable horror of the extermination camps. This topic also means that your students have to confront American anti-semitism and the failure of the government to do anything to aid European Jews trying to leave or fight Hitler.

The war strategy, troop movements, technology, and American military leaders provide a good opportunity to discuss America’s past and present.

Renewed interest in things related to World War II and oral histories of the war generation should prove a big help in this regard. Have your students examine economic and technological charges in American manufacturing as well as demographic changes because of the war.
The lives of women and minorities are also changed because of the war and this is a good opportunity to look at these changes as well as those implemented during the New Deal to view profound social change.

The racial climate in the United States and the irony of minority Americans fighting abroad for freedom and democracy only to have it denied to them at home is a compelling topic.