Chapter 26
World War II, 1939—1945

Chapter Summary
Chapter 26 offers a survey of World War II. Topics covered in this chapter include the complexities of the American struggle with neutrality; the American military role in World War II; the economic, political, and social consequences of war on the home front; victory in Europe and Japan; and the struggle for peace.

I. The Dilemmas of Neutrality
A. The Roots of War
B. Hitler’s War in Europe
C. Trying to Keep Out
D. Edging Toward Intervention
   1. The collapse of France and U.S. rearmament
   2. The election of 1940
E. The Brink of War
   1. The Atlantic Charter
   2. Events in the Pacific
F. December 7, 1941

II. Holding the Line
A. Stopping Germany
   1. The Eastern Front and the Battle of Stalingrad
B. The Survival of Britain
   1. The Battle of the Atlantic
C. Retreat and Stabilization in the Pacific
   1. The Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway

III. Mobilizing for Victory
A. Organizing the Economy
B. The Enlistment of Science
C. Men and Women in the Military
C. The Home Front
   1. Families in wartime
   2. War propaganda and censorship
D. New Workers
F. Clashing Cultures
G. Internment of Japanese Americans
H. The End of the New Deal

IV. War and Peace
A. Turning the Tide in Europe
   1. The campaign in North Africa
   2. The invasion of Italy
   3. Soviet advances and the Battle of Kursk
B. Operation OVERLORD
C. Victory and Tragedy in Europe
   1. The Battle of the Bulge and the collapse of Germany
   2. The Holocaust

D. The Pacific War

E. Searching for Peace
   1. Truman and Potsdam
   2. The atomic bomb

F. How the Allies Won

V. Conclusion

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 26, students should be able to do the following:

1. Explain how the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere reflected Japanese ambitions in Asia.
2. Briefly explain Adolf Hitler’s agenda on the European continent. List his early successes in realizing an expansionist foreign policy in Europe.
3. Briefly explain Benito Mussolini’s political agenda and point out the potential danger of the Tripartite Pact.
4. Define the term concentration camp and explain its significance to Hitler’s political agenda.
5. Define the term Blitzkrieg and explain its relevance to German military tactics.
6. List the major factors that defined American neutrality between 1939 and 1941.
7. List the issues that motivated the initial steps toward American intervention in the war.
8. Identify and explain the historical significance of the Lend-Lease program. Briefly comment on the national debate regarding Lend-Lease.
9. Outline the provisions of the Atlantic Charter and explain its relevance to future American decisions regarding involvement in the war.
10. Briefly describe political, economic, and military relations between Japan and the United States in 1941. Explain the historical significance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.
11. Explain the importance of the Eastern Front to Allied military strategy in 1942.
12. Explain the historical significance of the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway.
13. Identify means used by the federal government to maintain American loyalty to the war cause.
14. Explain the purpose and the accomplishments of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Identify the specific task of the Manhattan Project.
15. Identify the new opportunities created for women by the wartime economy.
16. Explain the justification for and the circumstances surrounding the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Describe the impact of the war on African Americans and Native Americans.

17. Identify the candidates and indicate the outcome of the presidential election of 1944.

18. Identify and explain the historical significance of D-Day.

19. Identify and explain the historical significance of the Holocaust.

20. Define the term island hopping and explain its significance to Allied military tactics in the Pacific in 1944.

21. Outline the major provisions of the decisions made by Allies at the Yalta Conference.

22. Explain the historical significance of the Potsdam Declaration.

23. Outline the factors that influenced the American decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan.

Topics for Classroom Lecture

1. Prepare a lecture on the impact of World War II on American women. In considering the issue of women and the war, focus on the significant movement of females into the workplace during World War II and the impact that experience had on American women in terms of their own sense of independence and competence. Look at the impact of the end of the war in terms of forcing women out of these jobs. An interesting approach to use in examining this issue is to draw on material published in women's magazines during the late 1940s and 1950s and compare it to material published in women's magazines during the war. Examine how articles as well as advertising directed at women encouraged them in the early forties to support the war by joining the workforce and then after the war to support home and hearth by leaving the workplace. How did the experience of American women during the early forties set the stage for the status of women during the 1950s?

2. Examine the impact of World War II on African Americans by focusing on the response of African Americans to the Holocaust. An excellent source for this issue is a videotape entitled The Liberators: Fighting on Two Fronts (1992), a PBS documentary that was broadcast as part of The American Experience series. The film centers on the story of the 761st Tank Battalion, an African-American regiment that was involved in liberating the German concentration at Dachau. The film provides a wonderful examination of the treatment of African Americans in the United States Army as well as the conflictive feelings of these men who, while having lived with racism in their own lives, then witnessed the most horrific demonstration of racial hatred in modern history.

Topics for Class Discussion and Essays

1. Have students compare and contrast the American commitment to neutrality before World War I and before World II. In doing so, consider the following issues:
b. Have students consider the gap between the presidents and the public regarding United States entry into both wars. What roles did Wilson and Roosevelt play in the decision to enter the world wars? Were their positions reflective of public opinion?

2. Compare and contrast the American internment of Japanese Americans with the Holocaust. To what extent are the two incidents similar? To what extent are they different? Consider some of the following issues in the comparison and contrast:
   a. The ideological background of each incident. Have students consider the history of Social Darwinism, racism, nativism, and eugenics dating back to the late nineteenth century.
   b. The national justification for each incident. Have students consider how each government rationalized the propriety of targeting these populations for unique treatment.
   c. Living conditions within the camps. Have students look at the provisions made for food, shelter, and medical care.
   d. The final resolution of the incident. Have students examine the extent to which each nation went to control the targeted population as well as the ways in which Japanese American internment and the Holocaust ended.
   e. Finally, have students consider the lasting impact of these incidents on the populations targeted. How did the Japanese American internment impact the lives of those who were victimized and what impact has the Holocaust had on western Judaism?

3. Have students debate the American decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan in August 1945. Have them consider the military, strategic, political, and moral issues that promoted use of the bomb as well as the military, strategic, political, and moral issues used to oppose the use of the bomb. Use this opportunity to point out the significance of the American attack on Japan as both the end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War.

**Topics for Class Projects and Term Papers**

1. Research the issues surrounding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. A research project could focus on the ongoing historical debate regarding the nature of the attack and the extent to which the American federal government might have anticipated or even invited the attack as a means of gaining American support for United States entry into the war.

2. Examine the early responses of the Allied powers to the Holocaust. How early did the Allies learn of the Nazi policy against the Jews? How did the Allies formulate policy on the issue?

**Resources for Lectures and Research Projects**

Audio-Visual Resources

This video examines remaining questions about when Americans learned about the Holocaust and their response to it.

*America Goes to War: The Home Front*, 1989, 300 minutes.
This ten-part PBS series, narrated by Eric Sevareid, examines American domestic trends during the 1940s and 1950s.

An examination of the day in June 1944 that turned the tide of World War II.

*Free a Man to Fight*, The History Channel, 50 minutes.
This film examines the impact of World War II on working women in the United States.