

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE: WORLD WAR II: FIGHTING THE GOOD WAR, 1939–1945

READING AND STUDY GUIDE

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In early December, 1941, a Japanese naval convoy secretly traveled toward Hawaii, stopping within 250 miles of the Hawaiian island of Oahu. At 6:00 a.m. on December 7, Admiral Chuichiji Nagumo launched two consecutive attacking waves of bombers, torpedo planes, and dive-bombers. As Japanese pilots approached Pearl Harbor, a naval station on Oahu, they saw a line of American battleships parked in a neat row. Moments later these battleships were on fire.

Before Pearl Harbor, debate raged over how to respond to the growing threat of war in the Pacific and Germany's conquest of Europe. Non-interventionists and interventionists offered competing visions of how to protect America's vital interests in a world torn apart by war. Now Americans needed no other explanation to understand why they were at war. Questions instead arose over why the United States had given the Japanese such an inviting target. Hoping to pressure Japan into withdrawing from China, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had sent the U.S. Pacific Fleet to Hawaii. There, he believed, the battleships were far enough away from Japan to escape attack but close enough to convince Japan to end its expansionist drive into East Asia. Roosevelt erred on both counts. Instead, Japan resolved to drive the Western powers out of East Asia.

In their attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese sank or damaged eighteen American ships and killed 2,405 Americans. Congress declared war on Japan the day after the attack. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and Romania, Bulgaria, and

Hungary quickly followed suit. The United States now faced the challenge of fighting in Europe and the Pacific against resolute and capable enemies against whom victory was not certain.

The attack on Pearl Harbor silenced all political debate about whether America needed to fight, but were all the war-generated changes in American society positive ones? World War II thrust the United States into a new position of global leadership. Mobilizing the nation's resources to fight also created vast economic and social changes at home. The United States eventually prevailed against its enemies, but the cost of victory was high on the battlefield and on the home front.

Learning Objectives

After a careful examination of Chapter 23, 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. Identify Enrico Fermi and his reaction to Italian fascist aggression.
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 Operation Overlord 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 the 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.

Key Terms & Definitions:

non-interventionists Those urging the nation to stay out of overseas conflicts. (686)

interventionists Those advocating direct engagement in overseas conflicts. (686)

fascist state A type of dictatorial regime that arose in Germany, Italy, and Spain that glorified the state over the individual. (686)

Neutrality Acts A series of laws from 1935 to 1939 that restricted arms sales, loans, and transport of goods with nations at war. (687)

“cash and carry” A policy that required belligerent nations to pay cash for goods and transport them on their own ships. (687)

Munich Conference (1938) Hoping to avoid war, Britain and France agreed to let Germany occupy the Sudetenland, a German-speaking part of Czechoslovakia. (687)

Axis Name for nations fighting the Allies, including Germany, Italy and Japan. (688)

Allies (World War II) Name for powers fighting Germany, eventually including the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. (688)

Lend-Lease A 1941 policy that circumvented “cash and carry” by loaning rather than selling arms to the Allies. (689)

Pearl Harbor A U.S. naval base in Hawaii that the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941. (690)

internment camps Camps in the United States that held people of Japanese descent under armed guard in isolated areas. (694)

double-victory campaign Civil rights call for victory against both fascism overseas and racial prejudice at home. (699)

zoot-suiters Name given to Mexican American youths who wore oversize suits. (700)

Holocaust German-engineered wartime extermination of Jews and other peoples that Germans considered inferior (708)

Manhattan Project Secret U.S. wartime project to develop an atomic bomb. (711)

Study Questions:

How did the attack on Pearl Harbor compare to the sinking of the *Maine* in 1898? (684)

What does this map convey about the scope of World War II? (686)

What different lessons did America and other world powers draw from World War I? (687)

How did Hitler accomplish his rapid conquest of Eastern and Western Europe? (688)

Did the competing visions of non-interventionists influence FDR’s rhetoric and actions? (689)

Were there significant differences between FDR’s version of neutrality and Wilson’s in World War I? (690)

How did the United States respond to increasing Japanese aggression? (691)

How significant was the attack on Pearl Harbor in the short and long run? (692)

What distinctions did Americans now make between the Japanese and Chinese? (693)

What do these photos reveal about American fears of a Japanese attack? (694)

What competing responses did Japanese Americans have to internment? (695)

Did a legitimate military reason exist to place Japanese Americans in internment camps? (696)

What competing visions of working women emerged over the course of the war? (697)

Why was World War II unique in comparison to other American wars? (698)

Why did big business prosper during the war? (699)

How did African Americans challenge racial discrimination during the war? (700)

How did the wartime experiences of African Americans compare to those of Latino Americans? (701)

What does this map reveal about the military challenges facing the United States in the Pacific? (702)

Why did the United States attack the Axis powers first in Italy, rather than France? (703)

How did the tide gradually turn in favor of the Allies in Europe and the Pacific? (704)

What do media images of the Japanese suggest about American wartime culture? (705)

How did the political and military situation influence the way Americans viewed these photographs? (706)

Why did the Allies prevail on D-Day? (707)

What significant decisions were reached at the 1945 Yalta Conference? (708)

What insights does this data offer on the scope of the Holocaust and the American response? (709)

How did images instruct Americans about the meanings of the Holocaust and their role as liberators? (710)

What new tactics raised the death toll in the Pacific war? (711)

How did the war against Japan finally end? (712)

Why does so much controversy surround the dropping of the atomic bomb and not conventional weapons? (713)

How might this distribution of wartime casualties shape the postwar world? (714)