

WWII

Introduction to World War II

After World War I, Germany was defeated. The peace agreement that ended the war left the country humiliated but not crippled. In their **humiliation**,¹ Germans looked for a powerful leader. Many Germans were dissatisfied with their government and wanted change. In the 1930's, a political group called the Nazi Party came to power.

A man named Adolf Hitler was the Fuhrer, or supreme leader of the Nazi Party. In 1933, Hitler was appointed chancellor of Germany. He became head of the German **parliament**.² Hitler wanted power. He broke the World War I peace **treaty**³ and began to build an army. Hitler threatened the balance of peace all over Europe.

Meanwhile, two other countries were following Germany's lead. Powerful **dictators**⁴ in Italy and Japan were building up their own armies. Italy, Japan, and Germany would become the Axis Powers of World War II. Their hunger for military might was quite different from the U.S.'s desire for peace. The United States watched the other countries from a distance. People in the U.S. were worried, but they were **isolationists**.⁵ Americans did not want to get involved in another European war.

¹ **humiliation**: loss of pride or self-respect

² **parliament**: the law-making body of government in some countries

³ **treaty**: an agreement negotiated between two or more countries

⁴ **dictator**: a person who rules with total authority, often in a cruel or brutal manner

⁵ **isolationist**: a person who supports a national policy of avoiding international political and economic relations

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. World War II began. Britain and France were allies with Poland and declared war on Germany. Hitler's strategy was called *blitzkrieg*. This German word translates to "lightning war." The German army **toppled**⁶ countries before the countries knew what hit them. By June, Hitler had captured Paris, France.

For two years the United States tried to ignore the war. At the end of 1941, the U.S. was pulled into the war. The country was attacked by Japan. On December 8, 1941, the U.S. declared war on Japan. In return, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. For the second time in 25 years, the world was fighting a global war.

The main Axis powers in World War II were Germany, Italy, and Japan. The biggest Allies were the U.S., Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R.

⁶ **topple**: to push over; defeat

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. According to the text, what did Germans look for after World War I?
- a powerful leader
 - trade opportunities with the United States
 - peaceful ways to build relationships with other European countries
 - a different form of government

2. The text describes the series of events that led to the outbreak of World War II and the involvement of the United States in World War II. What happened after the United States was attacked by Japan?

- World War II began.
- The U.S. declared war on Japan.
- Italy and Japan built up their armies.
- Hitler became chancellor of Germany.

3. Read the following sentences from the text:

“On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. World War II began. Britain and France were allies with Poland and declared war on Germany. Hitler’s strategy was called *blitzkrieg*. This German word translates to ‘lightning war.’ The German army toppled countries before the countries knew what hit them.”

Based on this information, what can be concluded about the European countries Germany attacked?

- They were prepared to defend themselves against Germany.
- They wanted to make peace with Germany and support Hitler.
- They were not prepared to defend themselves against Germany.
- They were able to easily fight off Germany.

4. How did Hitler seek power?

- by making peace treaties with other countries
- by creating a larger parliament for Germany
- by taking over Japan and Italy
- by building an army and defeating other countries

5. The passage is mostly about

- Hitler’s leadership
- the relations among the Axis powers.
- what led up to World War II
- the United States’ role in World War II

6. According to the text, what did Hitler threaten?

7. Based on the information in the text, was Hitler the type of leader Germany was looking for? Use evidence in the text to support your answer.

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

People in the United States did not want to get involved in another European war. _____, when the country was attacked by Japan, it decided to enter World War II.

- a. In summary
- b. However
- c. For example
- d. For instance

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Britain and France declared war on Germany when it invaded Poland because they were allies with Poland.

What is the subject of this sentence? Britain and France

What did Britain and France do? _____

When? _____

Why? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** humiliation: feeling of embarrassment or shame.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____
