World War II

The Build-up

- Allied Denial & Appeasement
  - British guilt over Versailles Treaty
  - American Isolationism
  - French Fears & Maginot Line
- Hitler – Series of Bold Diplomatic Moves
  - Withdrawal from League of Nations; Rearmament
  - Rome-Berlin Axis, Oct. 1936
  - Anti-Comintern Pact, Nov. 1937
- Hitler Begins to claim “German” Territory (Lebensraum) outside German borders
  - Rhineland, March 1936
  - Anschluss, March 1938
  - Sudentenland, Czechoslovakia, Sept. 1938
    - September 1938: Munich Conference -- But Czechoslovakia not present
    - Hitler agrees he “only” wants the Sudentenland and nothing else
    - Neville Chamberlain & “Peace in Our Time”
- 1939 – The Year War Came
  - Hitler’s Demands continued
  - Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, Aug. 1939
  - Britain & France Guarantee Polish borders
  - Hitler invades Poland, Sept. 1, 1939
  - War declared Sept. 3, 1939

Progress of the War

- Phase I: Phony War Sept. 1939 – Apr. 1940
- Phase II: Initial German victories
  - Germany attacks France, April 1940
  - Belgium, Luxembourg, France (June 1940)
  - Miracle at Dunkirk, May 1940
- Phase III: Britain Alone, June 1940- June 1941
  - Britain fights Germany alone for a year with no Allies
- Phase IV: The Big Three at War = Russia (USSR), U.S.A. join Britain
  - Churchill, Stalin & FDR – The Big Three
o Operation Barbarossa, June 1941 -- Invasion of Russia
o Undeclared Atlantic Naval War – Sept. 1941 Between Germany & U.S.
o Pearl Harbor, Dec. 1941 – Japanese attack on U.S.

- Phase IV: Stages of Fighting
  o Stage 1: First half of 1942 – Holding the Axis
  o Stage 2: June 1942- Early 1943-- Turning the Tide
  o Stage 3: 1943 – Allied Offensives
  o Stage 4: June 6, 1944 – D-Day in Europe

**Phase II: Initial German Victories**
- Germany attacks France, April 1940
  o Not the Maginot Line … Ardennes Forest
  o Belgium, Luxembourg Fall
  o Miracle at Dunkirk, May 1940
    - 338, 226 men rescued
  o France surrenders June 1940
    - Vichy Government – collaboration
    - Resistance– small
    - Free French Army – Charles de Gaulle
- Operation Sea Lion – Next Offensive

**Phase III Britain Alone**
- Battle of Britain, June 1940- June 1941 – Britain fights alone, with no allies
  o Germans bomb Britain for a year hoping to soften them up for invasion
  o Bombing of Military & Civilian Targets – London & the South of England
- How did they survive?
  o Leadership of Winston Churchill
  o Resources
    - Island Status
    - Technology – RADAR
    - Empire -- mobilized South Africa, India, Canada, Australia
    - The English Language – The Speeches of Winston Churchill
      - “Never Surrender”
      - “Blood, Toil, Tears &Sweat”
      - “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed to so few by so many” – speaking of the RAF (Royal Air Force)
- Britain begins to find Allies
- Lend-Lease Act, passed March, 1941 – material loaned from the U.S. for Britain to fight the Germans
  - June 1941 – Operation Barbarossa -- Germany attacks the Soviet Union
  - Submarine Warfare in Atlantic
  - Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941 -- Japanese attack on the U.S./U.S. Declares war on Japan Dec. 8th after the Japanese surprise attack
  - Germany declares war on the U.S. Dec. 11th

**Phase III: Big Three at War**
- Major Theaters of War
  - European
  - North Africa (& Middle East)
  - Pacific – Australia & Pacific Islands
  - Asiatic – India, & China

- **Stage 1: Defensive Position of the Allies – Holding Action – Make sure the Axis gain no more ground**
  - Early 1942 – Axis Powers winning; Germans and Japanese advancing.
  - Holocaust begins in earnest in Germany
    - The extermination of European Jews & any “undesirables”
    - 6 million Jews rounded up and killed – shot, gas chambers, starved & worked to death
    - Continued throughout the war – even when Germany started losing

- **Stage 2: Jun- Dec. 1942: Allied Victories begin – The Turning point Battles**
  - June 1942 – Midway (Pacific) – U.S. defeats the Japanese by surprising them after breaking the Japanese code
  - El Alamein – Oct. 23 – Nov.4, 1942 (N. Africa) -- the British defeat the Germans & keep them away from the Suez Canal & Middle East oil fields
  - Stalingrad – Dec. 1942 to Feb. 1943 (Eastern Europe) German siege of Stalingrad fails. Russians hold out and then bring in elite troops from Siberia to begin driving the Germans back

- **Stage 3: Allied Offensives**
  - Soviets move West and begin pushing the Germans back – 1943, early 1944
  - American Invasion of Italy, 1943
  - Island Hopping in Pacific -- taking only the most important islands
- Series of Victories against the Japanese by Americans & Australian forces
- **Stage 4: Operation Overlord – Invasion of Europe**
  - American General Dwight D. Eisenhower – Overall Commander
  - D-day & of Allied forces
  - D-Day June 6, 1944 – Invasion of Europe by the Allies
    - Largest Amphibious assault force ever assembled
    - Creates a Second Front in Europe
    - Germans now being attacked successfully from 2 sides
  - Battle of the Bulge, Dec. 16, 1944 – Jan. 25, 1945
    - Last great push of the Germans
    - Over one million men in the Battle
    - 81,000 American casualties – worst of the War
    - Fuels American anger after the War
  - Germans pushed back & so only a matter of time till the end.
    - Continued to fight
    - Race to see whether the Americans or Russians would reach Berlin first
    - Hitler commits suicide April 1945
    - Germans surrender unconditionally
- **V-E Day (victory in Europe) – May 7, 1945**
  - Germany divided into 4 occupation zones by the Allies
  - These will become a divided Germany during the Cold War
- **Japan remained**
  - American victory at Iwo Jima, Feb. 1945
  - Began launching bombing raids on Tokyo
  - Estimates to take home islands of Japan = over 1 million American lives
  - First Atomic bomb exploded in New Mexico in July 1945
  - First Atomic bomb dropped on Japan at Hiroshima -- Aug. 6, 1945
    - Japanese make surrender overtures through the Russians, but they don’t deliver the message
    - Russians declare war on Japan: Aug. 8, 1945 & take Kurile Islands and part of Manchuria.
  - Japanese do not surrender – Second bomb -- Nagasaki, Aug. 9, 1945
    - The Emperor (Hirohito) of Japan intervenes with his military and insists on surrendering
    - Overtures sent through the Swiss not the Russians
Creating the Post-War World

Series of Wartime conferences

1. First Conference: Atlantic Charter, 1941:
   a. Churchill & FDR set war goals (First)
   b. Democracy, lasting peace
   c. Unconditional surrender from Axis Powers – nothing less

2. Strategy for the War decided
   a. Casablanca (Jan. 1943);
   b. Tehran – Nov. –Dec. 1943
   c. All of the Big Three there – FDR, Stalin & Churchill

They also determined the Post-War World

- Political & Economic Conferences

- July 1944, Bretton Woods (in New Hampshire) Conference – Economic
  - Creation of IMF – International Monetary Fund sets international values of currencies
  - World Bank established for rebuilding after the War

- September 1944, Dumbarton Oaks (A mansion in Georgetown, outside Washington, D.C.) -- International Politics
  - Formation of the United Nations to replace the defunct League of Nations
  - Different structure with more ability for enforcement & commitment of the major world powers

- Yalta, Feb. 1945 -- Political & the Cold War
  - Occupation of Germany – 4 Zones --
    - Britain, U.S., France & U.S.S.R.
  - Seeds of the Cold War Divisions (Eastern Europe)
    - Russian liberation of these areas meant Communist take over
  - Korea to be liberated by both the U.S. & the U.S.S.R.
    - Stop at the 38th Parallel – still the division of North & South Korea

- Potsdam Conference in Germany, July 1945
  - Players: Stalin, Clement Atlee (elections in Britain meant new party in power) & Truman (FDR died in April)
- Breakdown of war-time alliance begins
- Cannot agree over time-line for occupation of Germany
- Eventually 1949 – Germany will be divided into East and West
  - Eastern section was Soviet zone of occupation & Communist
  - BR, FR & US sections rejoined to make West Germany
  - Reunited in 1993