

Study Tool: Chronological Events of the 1939-1945 Era

This war is more than a catastrophic war; its terms and people and its strategies became part of thinking of multiple generations. Click [here](#) for details. () with specific name – Name is for reference for you can find the information in the textbook index **if** needed. If you want more information, just ask.

Allies = Britain (Br), France (Fr), and others **Axis** = Germany (Ger), Italy, Japan Both = Russia (Ru)

Date	Presidential Election/Event	US Official - Unofficial Actions	Allies	Axis	US War Actions	Issue/Organization Development	Political Party Development
1920s-1930s				Reminders			
1940-05			How fast they went to war			Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies	
1940-06	National Research Committee (and the Einstein connection) ¹		Fr: Falls to Ger; Vichy (Term)		War Department: Surplus, old munitions, arms, planes to Br		
1940-08 to 10		Selective Service Act	Battle of Britain – Constant attack by Nazis but the British held (“their finest hours” in Churchill’s words.)	Japan: Bases in Indochina (from Vichy); 10-yr. pact with Ger, Italy	“Overage” destroyers to Br for 99-yr. leases (Destroyers for Bases Agreement) ²	America First Committee – example of isolationism	
		FDR: Embargo on steel, scrap iron to all but Br					
1940-11	Wendell Willkie vs. F. D. Roosevelt						
1940-12	Fireside chat on US as “the great arsenal of democracy” (Dec. 29)			Japan: Embargo – “unfriendly act”			
				Ger: US protest over US aid to Br (Dec. 21)			
1941-01	Four Freedoms ³ speech to Congress					Threatened black march on Washington ⁴	
1941-03		Lend-Lease Bill ⁵					

¹ Military research, including the atomic bomb (or Manhattan Project), with Albert Einstein alerting FDR of German research. Other new weapons: radar, sonar.

² The public was **isolationist**, but **FDR moved to help the Allies without actual involvement in the war**. US got the right to build bases in British island colonies in the Caribbean. Britain got 50 old destroyers from the U.S.

³ Of speech, of religion, from want, from fear

⁴ During 1941, A. Phillip Randolph – Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters – For the account of this threat, see FDR’s action in 1941-06.

⁵ Following the election of 1940, Congress passed the [Lend-Lease Bill](#). It allowed the president to *lend* or *lease* (**notice these words don’t mean sell**) “military equipment to ‘any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States.’”

Date	Presidential Election/Event	US Official - Unofficial Actions	Allies	Axis	US War Actions	Issue/Organization Development	Political Party Development
1941-04					Rationing starts (later Office of Price Administration)		
1941-06	Lend-Lease to Ru, not just Br FDR: move to block march ⁶			Ger invades Ru.			
1941-08	Atlantic Charter announced ⁷						
1941-09, 10	"Active defense" to Iceland			<i>Reuben James</i> sunk, Iceland convoy duty			
1941-11		Congress modifies Neutrality Acts					
1941-12				Japan: Takes multiple areas ⁸	War Production Board (WPB)		
1941-12-07				Japan: Pearl Harbor			
1941-12-11		US declares war on Japan		Ger, Italy: Declare war on US		Rosie the Riveter- (6 M women) Tuskegee Airmen	
1942						Detroit race riots; CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) forms	
1942-02	Exec. Order 9066 – Relocation ⁹						
1942-04					Draft starts		
1942-11			Allies N. Africa campaign – victory against Vichy				
1943-02			Ru: Victory at Stalingrad				
			US: Guadalcanal ¹⁰ secured – 6 months (New Guinea),				

⁶ Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) in return for no march

⁷ Not binding, but signed by 15 countries by Sept. 24

⁸ 1941-12 Japan takes Guam, Wake Island, Hong Kong, Singapore, Dutch East Indies, and others; Corregidor surrenders May; Bataan Death March follows

⁹ Had to sell all property in 48 hours; only what they could carry. Internment camps for **Japanese and American-born children**. 1988 – Congress – survivors \$20K reparations

¹⁰ The Japanese had held (see 1941-12) key territories without defeats—with **Guadalcanal Island being their first**.

Date	Presidential Election/Event	US Official - Unofficial Actions	Allies	Axis	US War Actions	Issue/Organization Development	Political Party Development
			"leapfrog" campaign starts ¹¹				
1943-06						Mobs against Mexican Americans (CA)	
1943-07-08			Sicily victory; enter into N. Italy; Mussolini flees				
1944-03						GI Bill – avoids the disaster of WWI	
1944-06			Allies: Normandy-D.D. Eisenhower ¹²				
1944-07						Port Chicago, CA – 250 black sailors killed	
1944-12			US/Br: Battle of Bulge – stop German counter 77K US casualties				
1945-02			US: Philippines victory – 7 months			Holocaust-“Final Solution”	
			Yalta ¹³ Accords – UN, free elections				
1945-03			US: Iwo Jima – victory – 2 months				
1945-04	FDR dead; Harry S Truman President			Ger: Suicide of Hitler		Foreign policy trends - Cold War begins - Presidential power up (Note that the Cold War makes foreign policy/treat of war a constant compared to the roles of Congress and the states.)	
1945-04-06			UN Conference – draft charter			Nation trends:	
1945-05			Allies: Berlin falls (May 2), Ger surrenders (May 7), V-E (May 8)			- American workers' pay increases (We have no completion in the world.)	
1945-06			German/Berlin occupation zones est.; Ru., US, Fr, Br			- Racism, as a foreign policy issue. (Hitler and later Stalin can criticize us for our racism.)	

¹¹ After Guadalcanal, the U.S. strategy —called leapfrogging (for the very old kid’s game) or “wither on the vine” (if you nip or cut a vine, the fruit on it withers)—becomes bombing Japanese airbases and leaving the Japanese troops in place on the islands but without a way to supply the soldier.

¹² The primaries for this chapter cover some of the challenges of D-Day.

¹³ FDR, Churchill, Stalin agree to the United Nations. Stalin promises aid in war against Japan, but our use of the atomic bomb ends that need. Stalin agrees to free and open elections in eastern Europe, areas the Russians hold, but does not.

Date	Presidential Election/Event	US Official - Unofficial Actions	Allies	Axis	US War Actions	Issue/Organization Development	Political Party Development
1945-07			Potsdam Conference – agree to trials (Nuremberg with equivalent trials in Japan)	Japan: Rejects unconditional surrender	US: Successful atomic bomb test (Jul. 17)		
1945-08			US: Hiroshima, atomic bomb (Aug. 6); Nagasaki (Aug. 9); V-J Day (Aug. 15)				
			US: occupies Japan				

Issues that make this war worth learning for your future

Major Assets of the Allies Once the US and Russia Join Britain

4

World War II—People and Terms That Became Symbols

4

Reminders About the Rise of the Axis

5

How Fast Did They Go to War?

5

Major Assets of the Allies Once the US and Russia Join Britain

- Br – sea power – Attacked by Hitler in Battle of Britain - August to October, 1940. It was alone.
- Ru – manpower - They faced tremendous losses and continued to fight. Stalin's policy was people fought or they were killed. – Attacked by Hitler, June 1941; FDR extends Lend-Lease to Russia
- US – “arsenal of democracy” – Attacked by Japanese, December 1941.

World War II—People and Terms That Became Symbols

Chamberlain, Neville – British Prime Minister at Munich

Churchill, Winston – British Prime Minister during World War II

DeGaulle, Charles – in exile, leader of the free French

Hitler, Adolph – leader of the Nazis

Mussolini, Benito – leader of Italy

Quisling, Vidkun – the puppet leader of Norway set up by Germany

Stalin, Joseph – leader of the Soviet Union

Wallenberg, Raoul – Individual who rescued Jews. Also see Auschwitz, Dachau, Holocaust

Aryan – racial term

Auschwitz – concentration camp

Axis – the term for the alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan

Bataan Death March

Blitzkrieg – German method of rapid attack

Dachau – concentration camp

Dunkirk – rescue of stranded British soldiers by civilians who crossed the Channel in small vessels and at great personal risk

Gestapo – German secret police

Holocaust – from *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*: (usually *cap.*) “the systematic mass slaughter of European Jews in Nazi concentration camps during World War II” [from words meaning *burnt whole*]

Nazi - from *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*: “a member of the National Socialist Workers’ party in Germany....”

Nuremberg Trials – trials of the Nazis for war crime

Vichy – the French puppet government set up by Germany

Reminders About the Rise of the Axis

Date	Rise of Axis Powers
1931-09	Japan: Manchurian invasion
1933-01	Germany: Hitler, Chancellor
1935-05	Italy: Invades Ethiopia
1936	Germany: Reoccupies the Rhineland Germany, Italy: Mutual defense pact Spanish Civil War
1937-12	Japan: Bombs US <i>Panay</i> in Yangtze River in China Japan: As part of attacks on China (with high Chinese dead counts), fall of the city of Nanking (Nanjing), Rape of Nanking – torture, rape, mass murder
1938	Germany takes Sudetenland; Munich – Chamberlain
1938-11	<i>Kristallnacht</i>

How Fast Did They Go to War?

Date	US	Allies	Axis
1939-03			Ger: Makes demands on Poles (Mar. 23)
		Br, Fr: Promise aid to Poles (Mar. 31)	
1939-04			Italy: Invades Albania (Apr. 7)
	US/FDR: to Hitler and Mussolini asking assurances (Apr. 15)		
1939-05			Ger/Italy: Military alliance (May 22)
1939-08			Ger/Ru: Non-aggression pact (Aug. 23)
	US/FDR: to Poles, Hitler, Italy's King Victor Emmanuel for negotiation (Aug. 24)		
		Poles: Accept conciliation. No response so mobilize (Aug. 31)	
1939-09			Ger: Invades Poland (Sept. 1)
		Br/Fr: declare war on Ger (Sept. 1)	
	US: Declares neutrality (Sept. 3)		
			Ru: Invades Poland (Sept. 17)
			Ger/Ru: Partition Poland (Sept. 18)
1939-11			Ru: Invades Finland. Complete (Mar. 1940)
1940-04			Ger: Invades Denmark, Norway
1940-05			Ger: Invades The Netherlands, Belgium (May 10). Fall by June.

Copyright C. J. Bibus, Ed.D. 2003-2017

WCJC Department:
Contact Information:

History – Dr. Bibus
281.239.1577 or bibusc@wcjc.edu

Last Updated:
WCJC Home:

2017
<http://www.wcjc.edu/>