CHAPTER 25

World War II

This World War II poster depicts the many nations united in the fight against the Axis powers. In reality there were often disagreements. Notice that to the right, the American sailor is marching next to Chinese and Soviet soldiers. Within a few years after victory, they would be enemies. (University of Georgia Libraries, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library)

American Stories

N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa Indian born in Lawton, Oklahoma, in 1934, grew up on Navajo, Apache, and Pueblo reservations. He was only 11 years old when World War II ended, yet the war had changed his life. Shortly after the United States entered the war, Momaday’s parents moved to New Mexico, where his father got a job with an oil company and his mother worked in the civilian personnel office at an army air force base.
base. Like many couples, they had struggled through the hard times of the Depression. The war meant jobs.

Momaday’s best friend was Billy Don Johnson, a “reddish, robust boy of great good humor and intense loyalty.” Together they played war, digging trenches and dragging themselves through imaginary minefields. They hurled grenades and fired endless rounds from their imaginary machine guns, pausing only to drink Kool-Aid from their canteens. At school, they were taught history and math and also how to hate the enemy and be proud of America. They recited the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and sang “God Bless America,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and “Remember Pearl Harbor.” Like most Americans, they believed that World War II was a good war fought against evil empires. The United States was always right, the enemy always wrong. It was an attitude that would influence Momaday and his generation for the rest of their lives.

Momaday’s only difficulty was that his Native American face was often mistaken for that of an Asian. Almost every day on the playground, someone would yell, “Hi ya, Jap,” and a fight was on. Billy Don always came to his friend’s defense, but it was disconcerting to be taken for the enemy. His father read old Kiowa tales to Momaday, who was proud to be an Indian but prouder still to be an American. On Saturday, he and his friends would go to the local theater to cheer as they watched a Japanese Zero or a German ME-109 go down in flames. They pretended that they were P-40 pilots. “The whole field of vision shuddered with our fire: the 50-caliber tracers curved out, fixing brilliant arcs upon the span, and struck; then there was a black burst of smoke, and the target went spinning down to death.”

Near the end of the war, his family moved again, as so many families did, so that his father might get a better job. This time they lived right next door to an air force base, and Momaday fell in love with the B-17 “Flying Fortress,” the bomber that military strategists thought would win the war in the Pacific and in Europe. He felt a real sense of resentment and loss when the B-17 was replaced by the larger but not nearly so glamorous B-29.

Looking back on his early years, Momaday reflected on the importance of the war in his growing up. “I see now that one experiences easily the ordinary things of life,” he decided, “the things which cast familiar shadows upon the sheer, transparent panels of time, and he perceives his experience in the only way he can, according to his age.” Though Momaday’s life during the war differed from the lives of boys old enough to join the armed forces, the war was no less real for him. He felt a real sense of resentment and loss when the B-17 was replaced by the larger but not nearly so glamorous B-29.

The Momadays fared better than most Native Americans, who found prejudice against them diminished and jobs, even in wartime, hard to find. Native American servicemen returning from the war discovered that they were still treated like “Indians.” They were prohibited from buying liquor in many states, and those who returned to the reservations learned that they were ineligible for veterans’ benefits. Still, Momaday thought of himself not so much as an Indian as an American, and that too was a product of his generation. But as he grew to maturity, he became a successful writer and spokesman for his people. In 1969, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his novel House Made of Dawn. He also recorded his experiences and memories in a book called The Names (1976). In his writing, he stresses the Native American’s close identification with the land. Writing about his grandmother, he says: “The immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood.”

**Momaday was** just a child during World War II, but it had a profound effect on his life as it did on all of those who remembered the conflict. His generation
would judge the global events of the rest of the twentieth century in terms of their sense of patriotism and valor acquired during the war. Although no American cities were bombed and the mainland was never invaded, World War II influenced almost every aspect of American life. The war ended the Depression. Industrial jobs were plentiful, and even though prejudice and discrimination did not disappear, blacks, Hispanics, women, and other minorities had new opportunities. Like World War I, the second war expanded cooperation between government and industry and increased the influence of government in all areas of American life. The war also ended the last remnants of American isolationism. The United States emerged from the war in 1945 as the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world.

This chapter traces the gradual involvement of the United States in the international events during the 1930s that finally led to participation in the most devastating war the world had seen. It recounts the diplomatic and military struggles of the war and the search for a secure peace. It also seeks to explain the impact of the war on ordinary people and on American attitudes about the world, as well as its effect on patriotism and the American way of life. Even those, like N. Scott Momaday, who grew up during the war and were too young to fight, were influenced by the war—and the sense of moral certainty that the war inspired—for the rest of their lives. The war brought prosperity to some as it brought death to others. It left the American people the most affluent in the world and the United States the most powerful nation.
Looking back on the events between 1933 and 1941 that eventually led to American involvement in World War II, it is easy either to be critical of decisions made or actions not taken or to see everything that happened during the period as inevitable. Historical events are never inevitable, and leaders who must make decisions never have the advantage of retrospective vision; they have to deal with situations as they find them, and they never have all the facts.

Foreign Policy in a Global Age

In March 1933, Roosevelt faced not only overwhelming domestic difficulties but also an international crisis. The worldwide depression had caused near financial disaster in Europe. Germany had defaulted on its reparations installments, and most European countries were unable to keep up the payments on their debts to the United States.

Roosevelt had no master plan in foreign policy, just as he had none in the domestic sphere. In the first days of his administration, he gave conflicting signals as he groped to respond to the international situation. At first, it seemed that the president would cooperate in some kind of international economic agreement on tariffs and currency. But then he undercut the American delegation in London by refusing to go along with any international agreement. Solving the American domestic economic crisis seemed more important to Roosevelt in 1933 than international economic cooperation. His actions signaled a decision to go it alone in foreign policy in the 1930s.

Roosevelt did, however, alter some of the foreign policy decisions of previous administrations. He recognized the Soviet government, hoping to gain a market for surplus American grain. Although the expected trade bonanza never materialized, the Soviet Union agreed to pay the old debts and to extend rights to American citizens living in the Soviet Union. Diplomatic recognition opened communications between the two emerging world powers.

The United States continued to support dictators, especially in Central America, because they promised to promote stability and preserve American economic interests. But Roosevelt completed the removal of American military forces from Haiti and Nicaragua in 1934, and in a series of pan-American conferences, he joined in pledging that no country in the hemisphere would intervene in the "internal or external affairs" of any other.

The first test case came in Cuba, where a revolution threatened American investments of more than $1 billion. But the United States did not send troops. Instead, Roosevelt dispatched special envoys to work out a conciliatory agreement with the revolutionary government. A short time later, when a coup led by Fulgencio Batista overthrew the revolutionary government, the United States not only recognized the Batista government but also offered a large loan and agreed to abrogate the Platt Amendment (which made Cuba a virtual protectorate of the United States) in return for the rights to the Guantanamo naval base on the island.
The Trade Agreements Act of 1934 gave the president power to lower tariff rates by as much as 50 percent. Using this act, the Roosevelt administration negotiated a series of agreements that improved trade. By 1935, half of American cotton exports and a large proportion of other products were going to Latin America. The Good Neighbor policy was good business for the United States, but increased trade did not solve the economic problems for either the United States or Latin America.

Another test of Latin American policy came in 1938 when Mexico nationalized the property of a number of American oil companies. Instead of intervening, as many businessmen urged, the State Department patiently worked out an agreement that included some compensation for the companies. The American government might have acted differently, however, if the threat of war in Europe in 1938 had not suggested that all the Western Hemisphere nations would have to cooperate to resist the growing power of Germany and Italy. At a pan-American conference held that year, the United States and most Latin American countries agreed to resist all foreign intervention in the hemisphere.

Europe on the Brink of War

Around the time that Roosevelt was first elected president, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. Born in Austria in 1889, Hitler had served as a corporal in the German army during World War I. Like many other Germans, he was angered by the Treaty of Versailles, and he blamed Germany’s defeat on the Communists and the Jews. World War II in Europe was caused by World War I and by Germany’s attempt to reverse the peace settlement.

Hitler became the leader of the National Socialist party of the German workers (Nazi is short for the German National Sozialist), and in 1923, after leading an unsuccessful coup, he was sentenced to prison. While in jail he wrote Mein Kampf (“My Struggle”), a long, rambling book spelling out his theories of racial purity, his hopes for Germany, and his venomous hatred of the Jews. After his release from prison, Hitler’s following grew. He had a charismatic style and a plan. On January 30, 1933, he became chancellor of Germany, and within months the Reichstag (parliament) suspended the constitution, making Hitler Fuehrer (leader) and dictator. His Fascist regime concentrated political and economic power in a centralized state. He intended to conquer Europe and to make the German Third Reich (empire) the center of a new civilization.

Under Hitler’s leadership, Germany prospered and recovered from the Depression faster than any other country except Japan. Economic recovery was caused in part by military spending, but Hitler also provided money for public works, autobahns (superhighways), and the development of the Volkswagen (“people’s car”). He raised the quality of workers’ lives and provided free recreational facilities and better health care. Many Germans were so grateful for restored prosperity and national pride that they failed to notice the dark side of his regime, which included concentration camps and virulent anti-Semitism.

In 1934, Hitler announced a program of German rearmament, violating the Versailles Treaty of 1919. Meanwhile, in Italy, the Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was building a powerful military force; in 1934, he threatened to invade the East African country of Ethiopia. These ominous rumblings in Europe frightened Americans at the very time they were re-examining American entry into the Great War and vowing that they would never again get involved in a European conflict.

Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, who had helped expose the Teapot Dome scandal in 1924, turned to an investigation of the connection between corporate profits and American participation in World War I. His committee’s public hearings revealed that many American businessmen had close relationships with the War Department. Businesses producing war materials had made huge profits. Though the committee failed to prove a conspiracy, it was easy to conclude that the United States had been tricked into going to war by the people who profited the most from it.

On many college campuses, students demonstrated against war. On April 13, 1934, a day of protest around the country, students at Smith College placed white crosses on the campus as a memorial to the people killed in the Great War and those who would die in the next one. The next year, even more students went on strike for a day. Students joined organizations such as Veterans of Future Wars and Future Gold Star Mothers and protested the presence of the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) on their campuses. One college president, who supported the peace movement, announced, “We will be called cowards . . . [but] I say that war must be banished from civilized society if democratic civilization and culture are to be perpetuated.” Not all students supported the peace movement, but in the mid-1930s, many young people as well as adults joined peace societies such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Women’s International League for Peace and
Freedom. They were determined never again to support a foreign war. But in Europe, Asia, and Africa, there were already rumblings of another great international conflict.

**Ethiopia and Spain**

In May 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia after rejecting the League of Nations’ offer to mediate the difficulties between the two countries. Italian dive bombers and machine guns made quick work of the small and poorly equipped Ethiopian army. The Ethiopian war, remote as it seemed, frightened Congress, which passed a Neutrality Act authorizing the president to prohibit all arms shipments to nations at war and to advise all U.S. citizens not to travel on belligerents’ ships except at their own risk. Remembering the process that had led the United States into World War I, Congress was determined that it would not happen again.

The League of Nations condemned Italy as the aggressor in the war, and Great Britain moved its fleet to the Mediterranean. Roosevelt used the authority of the Neutrality Act of 1935 to impose an arms embargo. But, in the midst of depression, neither Britain nor the United States wanted to stop shipments of oil to Italy or to commit its own soldiers to the fight. The embargo on arms had little impact on Italy, but it was disastrous for Ethiopia.

Many African Americans were disappointed and angry as they watched Europe and the United States fail to intervene to stop the invasion of Ethiopia, which for many symbolized black African freedom and independence.

"We shun political commitments which might entangle us in foreign war," Roosevelt announced in 1936. "We are not isolationist except in so far as we seek to isolate ourselves completely from war." But isolation became more difficult when a civil war broke out in Spain in 1936. General Francisco Franco, supported by the Catholic church and large landowners, revolted against the republican government. Mussolini had joined forces with Germany to form the Rome–Berlin Axis in 1936, and Germany and Italy aided Franco, sending planes and other weapons, while the Soviet Union came to the support of the anti-Franco Loyalists. On April 26, 1937, German airplanes bombed and machine-gunned the historic Basque capital city of Guernica, killing over 1,600 people. It was a preview of the massive destruction of cities and the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians during World War II.

The war in Spain polarized the United States. Most Catholics and many anti-Communists sided with Franco. But many American radicals, even those opposed to all war a few months before, found the Loyalist cause worth fighting and dying for. More than 3,000 Americans joined the Abraham

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**Picasso’s Guernica**  On April 26, 1937, German airplanes supporting Franco’s soldiers bombed and machine-gunned the historic Basque capital city of Guernica, killing more than 1,600 people and foreshadowing the massive destruction of civilians during World War II. Pablo Picasso, probably the most famous artist of the twentieth century, painted this black-and-white mural to denounce the attack. After the defeat of the Republican forces in Spain, Picasso refused to allow the painting to be displayed in the country. Only in 1975, after the end of the Franco regime, did the painting return to Madrid. What kind of symbols and images can you find in the painting? (Pablo Picasso, Guernica, 1937. Art Resource, NY/© 2007 The Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society [ARS], New York)
Lincoln Brigade, and hundreds were killed fighting fascism in Spain. "If this were a Spanish matter, I'd let it alone," Sam Levenson, a student at Ohio State, wrote. "But the rebellion would not last a week if it weren't for the Germans and the Italians. And if Hitler and Mussolini can send troops to Spain to attack the government elected by the people, why can't they do so in France? And after France?" Levenson was killed in Spain in 1937 at age 20.

Not everyone agreed that the moral issues in Spain were worth dying for. The U.S. government tried to stay neutral and to ship arms and equipment to neither side. While the United States, along with Britain and France, carefully protected its neutrality, Franco consolidated his dictatorship with the active aid of Germany and Italy. Meanwhile, Congress in 1937 passed another Neutrality Act, this time making it illegal for American citizens to travel on belligerents' ships. The act extended the embargo on arms and made even nonmilitary items available to belligerents only on a cash-and-carry basis.

In a variety of ways, the United States tried to avoid repeating the mistakes that had led it into World War I. Unfortunately, World War II, which moved closer each day, would be a different kind of war, and the lessons of the first war would be of little use.

### War in Europe

Roosevelt was by no means an isolationist, but he wanted to keep the United States out of the European conflagration. When he announced, "I hate war," he was expressing a deep personal belief that wars solve few problems. Unlike his distant cousin Theodore Roosevelt, he did not view war as a test of one's manhood. In foreign policy, just as in domestic affairs, FDR responded to events, but he moved reluctantly toward more and more American involvement in the war.

In March 1938, Hitler's Germany annexed Austria and then in September, as a result of the Munich Conference, occupied the Sudetenland, a part of Czechoslovakia. Within six months, Hitler's armies had overrun the rest of Czechoslovakia. Little protest came from the United States. Most Americans sympathized with the victims of Hitler's aggression, and at first, almost everyone hoped that compromises could be worked out and that Europe could settle its own problems. But that notion was destroyed on August 23, 1939, by the news of a Nazi–Soviet pact. Fascism and communism were political philosophies supposedly in deadly opposition. Many Americans had secretly hoped that Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia would fight it out, neutralizing each other. Now they had signed a nonaggression pact. A week later, Hitler's army attacked Poland, marking the official beginning of World War II. Britain and France honored their treaties and came to Poland's defense. "This nation will remain a neutral nation," Roosevelt announced, "but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well."

Roosevelt asked for a repeal of the embargo section of the Neutrality Act and for the approval of the sale of arms on a cash-and-carry basis to France and Britain. The United States would help the countries struggling against Hitler, but not at the risk of entering the war or even at the threat of disrupting the civilian economy. Yet Roosevelt did take some secret risks. In August 1939, Albert Einstein, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, and other distinguished scientists warned the president that German researchers were at work on an atomic bomb. Fearing the consequences of a powerful new weapon in Hitler's hands, Roosevelt authorized funds for a top-secret project to build an American bomb first. Only a few advisers and key members of Congress knew of the project, which was officially organized in 1941 and would ultimately change the course of human history.

The war in Poland ended quickly. With Germany attacking from the west and the Soviet Union from the east, the Poles were overwhelmed in a month. The fall of Poland in September 1939 brought a lull in the fighting. A number of Americans, who feared communist Russia more than fascist Germany, urged the United States to take the lead in negotiating a peace settlement that would recognize the German and Russian occupation of Poland. The British and French, however, were not interested in such a solution, and neither was Roosevelt.

Great Britain sent several divisions to aid the French against the expected German attack, but for months nothing happened. This interlude, sometimes called the "phony war," dramatically ended on April 9, 1940, when Germany attacked Norway and Denmark with a furious air and sea assault. A few weeks later, using armored vehicles supported by massive air strikes, the German Blitzkrieg ("lightning war") swept through Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. A week later, the Germans stormed into France.

The famed Maginot line, a series of fortifications designed to repulse a German invasion, was useless, as German mechanized forces swept around the
end of the line and attacked from the rear. The French guns, solidly fixed in concrete and pointing toward Germany, were never fired. France surrendered in June as the British army fled back across the English Channel from Dunkirk.

How should the United States respond to the new and desperate situation in Europe? William Allen White, journalist and editor, and other concerned Americans organized the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, but others, including Charles Lindbergh, the hero of the 1920s, supported a group called America First. They argued that the United States should forget about England and concentrate on defending America. Roosevelt steered a cautious course. He approved the shipment to Britain of 50 overage American destroyers. In return, the United States received the right to establish naval and air bases on British territory from Newfoundland to Bermuda and British Guiana.

Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain, asked for much more, but Roosevelt hesitated. In July 1940, the president did sign a measure authorizing $4 billion to increase the number of American naval warships. In September, Congress passed the Selective Service Act, which provided for the first peacetime draft in the history of the United States. More than a million men were to serve in the army for one year, but only in the Western Hemisphere. As the war in Europe reached a crisis in the fall of 1940, the American people were still undecided about the proper response.

The Election of 1940

Part of Roosevelt's reluctance to aid Great Britain more energetically came from his genuine desire to keep the United States out of the war, but it was also related to the presidential campaign waged during the crisis months of the summer and fall of 1940. Roosevelt broke a long tradition by seeking a third term. He marked the increasing support he was drawing from the liberal wing of the Democratic party by selecting liberal farm economist Henry Wallace of Iowa as his running mate.

The Republicans nominated Wendell Willkie of Indiana. Despite his big-business ties, Willkie approved of most New Deal legislation and supported aid to Great Britain. Energetic and attractive, Willkie was the most persuasive and exciting Republican candidate since Theodore Roosevelt, and he appealed to many people who distrusted or disliked Roosevelt. Yet in an atmosphere of international crisis, most voters chose to stay with Roosevelt. He won, 27 million to 22 million, and carried 38 of 48 states.

Lend-Lease

After the election, Roosevelt invented a scheme for sending aid to Britain without demanding payment. He called it "lend-lease." He compared the situation to lending a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire. Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, however, thought the idea of lending military equipment and expecting it back was absurd. He decided it was more like lending chewing gum to a friend: "Once it had been used you did not want it back." Senator Burton K. Wheeler, an extreme isolationist, branded lend-lease "Roosevelt's triple A foreign policy" (after the Agricultural Adjustment Act) because it was designed to "plow under every fourth American boy."

The Lend-Lease Act, which Congress passed in March 1941, destroyed the fiction of neutrality. By that time, German submarines were sinking half a
million tons of shipping each month in the Atlantic. In June, Roosevelt proclaimed a national emergency and ordered the closing of German and Italian consulates in the United States. On June 22, Germany suddenly attacked the Soviet Union. It was one of Hitler’s biggest blunders of the war, forcing his armies to fight on two fronts.

When Roosevelt extended lend-lease aid to Russia in November 1941, most Americans accepted the Soviet Union as a friend and ally. By the autumn of 1941, the United States was virtually at war with Germany in the Atlantic. On September 11, Roosevelt issued a “shoot on sight” order for all American ships operating in the Atlantic, and on October 30, a German submarine sank an American destroyer off the coast of Newfoundland. The war in the Atlantic, however, was undeclared. Eventually, the sinking of enough American ships or another crisis would probably have provided the excuse for a formal declaration of war against Germany. It was not Germany, however, but Japan that catapulted the United States into World War II.

The Path to Pearl Harbor

Japan, controlled by ambitious military leaders, was the aggressor in the Far East as Hitler’s Germany was in Europe. Intent on becoming a major world power yet desperately needing natural resources, especially oil, Japan was willing to risk war with China, the Soviet Union, and even the United States to get those resources. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931 and launched an all-out assault on China in 1937. This was the beginning of what the Japanese would call “the Pacific War.” The Japanese leaders assumed that at some point the United States would go to war if Japan tried to take the Philippines, but the Japanese attempted to delay that moment as long as possible by diplomatic means. The United States feared a two-front war and was willing to delay the confrontation with Japan until it had dealt with the German threat. Thus, between 1938 and 1941, the United States and Japan engaged in a kind of diplomatic shadow boxing.

The United States began to apply economic pressure in July 1939, giving Japan the required six months’ notice regarding cancellation of the 1911 commercial agreement between the two countries. In September 1940, the Roosevelt administration forbade the shipment of airplane fuel and scrap metal to Japan. Other items were added to the embargo until by the spring of 1941, the United States allowed only oil to be shipped to Japan, hoping that the threat of cutting off this important resource would lead to negotiations and avert a crisis. Japan did open negotiations with the United States, but there was little to discuss. Japan would not withdraw from China as the United States demanded. Indeed, Japan, taking advantage of the situation in Europe, occupied French Indochina in 1940 and 1941. In July 1941, Roosevelt froze all Japanese assets in the United States, effectively embargoing trade with Japan.
Roosevelt had an advantage in the negotiations with Japan, for the United States had broken the Japanese secret diplomatic code. But Japanese intentions were hard to decipher from the intercepted messages. The American leaders knew that Japan planned to attack, but they didn't know where. In September 1941, the Japanese decided to strike sometime after November unless the United States offered real concessions. The strike came not in the Philippines but at Pearl Harbor, the main American Pacific naval base, in Hawaii.

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes launched from aircraft carriers attacked the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack destroyed or disabled 19 ships (including 5 battleships) and 150 planes and killed 2,335 soldiers and sailors and 68 civilians. On the same day, the Japanese launched attacks on the Philippines, Guam, and the Midway Islands, as well as on the British colonies of Hong Kong and Malaya. The next day, with only one dissenting vote, Congress declared war on Japan.

Corporal John J. "Ted" Kohl, a 25-year-old from Springfield, Ohio, was standing guard that Sunday morning near an ammunition warehouse at Hickam Field, near Pearl Harbor. He had joined the army two years before when his marriage failed and he could not find work. A Japanese bomb hit nearby, and Ted Kohl blew up with the warehouse. It was not until Wednesday evening, December 10, that the telegram arrived in Springfield. "The Secretary of War desires to express his deep regrets that your son Cpl. John J. Kohl was killed in action in defense of his country." There would be hundreds of thousands of telegrams and even more tears before the war was over.

December 7, 1941, was a date that would "live in infamy," in the words of Franklin Roosevelt. It was also a day that would have far-reaching implications for American foreign policy and for American attitudes toward the world. The surprise attack united the country as nothing else could have. Even isolationists and America First advocates quickly rallied behind the war effort.

After the shock and anger subsided, Americans searched for a villain. Someone must have blundered, someone must have betrayed the country to have allowed the “inferior” Japanese to have carried out such a successful and devastating attack. A myth persists to this day that the villain was Roosevelt, who, the story goes, knew of the Japanese attack but failed to warn the military commanders so that the American people might unite behind the war effort against Germany. But Roosevelt did not know. There was no specific warning that the attack was coming against Pearl Harbor, and the American ability to read the Japanese coded messages was of no help because the fleet kept radio silence.

The irony was that the Americans, partly because of racial prejudice against the Japanese, underestimated their ability. They ignored many warning signals because they did not believe that the Japanese could launch an attack on a target as far away as Hawaii. Most of the experts, including Roosevelt, expected the Japanese to attack the Philippines or perhaps Thailand. Many people blundered, but there was no conspiracy.

Even more important in the long run than the way the attack on Pearl Harbor united the American people was its effect on a generation of military and political leaders. Pearl Harbor became the symbol of unpreparedness. For a generation that experienced the anger and frustration of the attack on Pearl Harbor by an unscrupulous enemy, the lesson was to be prepared and ready to stop an aggressor before it had a chance to strike. The smoldering remains of the sinking battleships at Pearl Harbor on the morning of December 7, 1941, and the history lesson learned there would influence American policy not only during World War II but also in Korea, Vietnam, and the international confrontations thereafter.
THE HOME FRONT

Too often wars are described in terms of presidents and generals, emperors and kings, in terms of grand strategy and elaborate campaigns. But wars affect the lives of all people—the soldiers who fight and the women and children and men who stay home. World War II especially had an impact on all aspects of society—the economy, the movies and radio, even attitudes toward women and blacks. For many people, the war represented opportunity and the end of the Depression. For others, the excitement of faraway places meant that they could never return home again. For still others, the war left lasting scars.

Mobilizing for War

Converting American industry to war production was a complex task. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB) and appointed Donald Nelson, executive vice president of Sears, Roebuck, to mobilize the nation’s resources for an all-out war effort. The WPB offered businesses cost-plus contracts, guaranteeing a fixed and generous profit. Often the government also financed new plants and equipment. Secretary of War Henry Stimson explained: “If you . . . go to
war . . . in a capitalist country, you have to let business make money out of the process or business won't work.”

Roosevelt set up the Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD) to perfect new weapons and other products. The most important science and technology project carried on during the war was the development of the atomic bomb, but OSRD also improved radar and developed high-altitude bomb sights, jet engines, pressurized cabins for airplanes, and penicillin and other miracle drugs. Scientists under contract to the government also developed DDT and other effective insecticides, but none of the scientists recognized the dangerous side effects that DDT would have on the environment. The wartime collaboration of science, industry, and the government would lay the groundwork for massive projects in the postwar years.

The Roosevelt administration tried hard to gain the cooperation of businesspeople, many of them alienated by New Deal policies. The president appointed many business leaders to key positions and abandoned antitrust actions in any industry that was remotely related to the war effort. The policy worked. Industrial production and net corporate profits nearly doubled during the war. Large commercial farmers also profited. The war years accelerated the mechanization of the farm and dramatically increased the use of fertilizer, but between 1940 and 1945 the farm population declined by 17 percent.

Many government agencies in addition to the War Production Board helped monitor the war effort. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) set prices and rationed products—and because it affected so many lives so disagreeably, many Americans regarded it as oppressive. The National War Labor Board (NWLB) had the authority to set wages and hours and to regulate working conditions, and it could seize factories whose owners refused to cooperate.

Union membership grew rapidly during the war, from 10.5 million in 1941 to 14.7 million in 1945. In return for a “no-strike pledge,” the NWLB allowed agreements that required workers to retain their union membership through the life of a contract. Labor leaders, however, complained about increased government regulations and argued that wage controls coupled with wartime inflation were unfair. The NWLB finally allowed a 15 percent cost-of-living increase on some contracts, but that did not apply to overtime pay, which helped drive up wages in some industries during the war by about 70 percent.
In addition to wage and price controls and rationing, the government tried to reduce inflation by selling war bonds and by increasing taxes. The Revenue Act of 1942 raised tax rates, broadened the tax base, increased corporate taxes to 40 percent, and raised the excess-profits tax to 90 percent. In addition, the government initiated a payroll deduction for income taxes. The war made the income tax a reality for most Americans for the first time.

Despite some unfairness and much confusion, the American economy responded to the wartime crisis and produced the equipment and supplies that eventually won the war. American industries built 300,000 airplanes, 88,140 tanks, and 3,000 merchant ships. In 1944 alone, American factories produced 800,000 tons of synthetic rubber to replace the supply of natural rubber captured by the Japanese. Although the national debt grew from about $143 billion in 1943 to $260 billion in 1945, the government policy of taxation paid for about 40 percent of the war’s cost. At the same time, full employment and the increase in two-income families, together with forced savings, helped provide capital for postwar expansion. In a limited way, the tax policy also tended to redistribute wealth, which the New Deal had failed to do. The top 5 percent income bracket, which controlled 23 percent of the disposable income in 1939, accounted for only 17 percent in 1945.

The war stimulated the growth of the federal bureaucracy and accelerated the trend, begun during World War I and extended in the 1920s and 1930s, toward the government’s central role in the economy. The war also increased the cooperation between industry and government, creating what would later be called a military-industrial complex. But for most Americans, despite anger at the OPA and the income tax, the war meant the end of the Depression.

**Patriotic Fervor**

The war, so horrible elsewhere, was remote in the United States—except for the families that received the official telegram informing them that a loved one had been killed. The government tried to keep the conflict alive in the minds of Americans and to keep the country united behind the war effort. The Office of War Information controlled the news the American public received about the war and promoted patriotism. The government also sold war bonds, not only to help pay for the war and reduce inflation but also to sell the war to the American people. Schoolchildren purchased war stamps and faithfully pasted them in an album until they had accumulated stamps worth $18.75, enough to buy a $25 bond (redeemable 10 years later). Their bonds, they were told, would purchase bullets or a part for an airplane to kill “Japs” and Germans and defend the American way of life. “For Freedom’s Sake, Buy War Bonds,” one poster announced. Working men and women purchased

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**The Enemy** During the war American magazines and newspapers often depicted the Japanese as monkeys, insects, or rodents. Germans were rarely pictured this way. This December 12, 1942, issue of Collier’s magazine pictures Japanese prime minister Hideki Tojo as a vampire bat carrying a bomb to drop on the United States. The Japanese, on the other hand, often pictured Americans and British as bloated capitalists and imperialists. What effect, do you suppose, did these caricatures have on attitudes and actions during the war? (akg-images)
bonds through payroll deduction plans and looked forward to spending the money on consumer goods after the war. In the end, the government sold more than $135 billion in war bonds. While the bond drives did help control inflation, they were most important in making millions of Americans feel that they were contributing to the war effort.

Those too old or too young to join the armed forces became air raid wardens or civilian defense and Red Cross volunteers. They raised victory gardens and took part in scrap drives. Even small children could join the war effort by collecting old rubber, wastepaper, and kitchen fats. Some items, including gasoline, sugar, butter, and meat, were rationed, but few people complained. Even horsemeat hamburgers seemed edible if they helped win the war. Newspaper and magazine advertising characterized ordinary actions as either speeding victory or impeding the war effort.

**Internment of Japanese Americans**

Wartime campaigns not only stimulated patriotism but also promoted hatred for the enemy. The Nazis, especially Hitler and his Gestapo, had become synonymous with evil even before 1941. At the beginning of the war there was little animosity toward the German people, but before long most Americans ceased to make distinctions. All Germans seemed evil, although the anti-German hysteria that had swept the country during World War I never developed.

The Japanese were easier to hate than the Germans. The attack on Pearl Harbor created a special animosity toward the Japanese, but the depiction of the Japanese as warlike and subhuman owed something to a long tradition of fear of the so-called yellow peril and a distrust of all Asians. Movies, magazine articles, cartoons, and posters added to the image of the Japanese soldier or pilot with a toothy grin murdering innocent women and children or shooting down helpless Americans. Two weeks after Pearl Harbor, *Time* magazine explained to Americans how they could distinguish our Asian friends the Chinese “from the Japs.” “Virtually all Japanese are short, Japanese are seldom fat; they often dry up with age,” *Time* declared. “Most Chinese avoid horn-rimmed spectacles. Japanese walk stiffly erect, hard-heeled. Chinese, more relaxed, have an easy gait. The Chinese expression is likely to be more kindly, placid, open; the Japanese more positive,
dogmatic, arrogant." But Americans were not very good at distinguishing one Asian face from another. The Chinese and the Koreans tried to help by putting up signs that read, "We Are Not Japs," or "This Is a Chinese Shop."

The racial stereotype of the Japanese played a role in the treatment of Japanese Americans during the war. Some prejudice was shown against German and Italian Americans and some were relocated, but Japanese Americans were the only group confined in internment camps in large numbers and for the duration of the war. It was the greatest mass abridgment of civil liberties in American history.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, about 127,000 Japanese Americans lived in the United States, most on the West Coast. About 80,000 were nisei (Japanese born in the United States and holding American citizenship) and sansei (the sons and daughters of nisei); the rest were issei (aliens born in Japan who were ineligible for U.S. citizenship). The Japanese had long suffered from racial discrimination and prejudice in the United States. They were barred from intermarriage with other groups and excluded from many clubs, restaurants, and recreation facilities. Many worked as tenant farmers, fishermen, and small-business owners. Others made up a small professional class of lawyers, teachers, and doctors and a large number of landowning farmers.

Although many retained cultural and linguistic ties to Japan, they posed no more threat to the country than did the much larger groups of Italian Americans and German Americans. But their appearance made them stand out as the others did not. After Pearl Harbor, an anti-Japanese panic seized the West Coast. A Los Angeles newspaper reported that armed Japanese were in Baja, California, ready to attack. Rumors suggested that Japanese fishermen were preparing to mine the harbor, blow up tunnels, and poison the water supply.

West Coast politicians and ordinary citizens urged the War Department and the president to evacuate the Japanese. The president capitulated and issued Executive Order 9066 authorizing the evacuation in February 1942. "The continued pressure of a largely unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, bound to an enemy nation by strong ties of race, culture, custom and religion, constituted a menace which had to be dealt with," General John De Witt argued, justifying the removal on military grounds. But racial fear and animosity, not military necessity, stood behind the order.

Eventually, the government built the "relocation centers" in remote, often arid, sections of the West. "The Japs live like rats, breed like rats, and act like rats. We don't want them," the governor of Idaho announced. The camps were primitive and unattractive. "When I first entered our room, I became sick to my stomach," a Japanese American woman remembered. "There were seven beds in the room and no furniture nor any partitions to separate the males and the females of the family. I just sat on the bed, staring at the bare wall."

The government evacuated about 110,000 Japanese, including about 60,000 American citizens. Those who were forced to leave their homes, farms, and businesses lost almost all their property and possessions. Farmers left their crops to be harvested by their American neighbors. Store owners sold out for a small percentage of what their goods were worth. Very few personal items or household goods could be transported. The Japanese Americans lost their worldly possessions, and something more—their pride and
Asian, African, and Hispanic Americans at War

The Pacific War made China an ally of the United States, but Congress did not repeal the Chinese Exclusion Act until 1943, and then only 105 Chinese a year were allowed to enter the United States legally. Despite this affront, Chinese communities in the United States joined the war effort enthusiastically. They bought war bonds, collected scrap metal, and in other ways tried to show that they were loyal citizens. Almost 13,500 Chinese men enlisted or were drafted into the army. Many others took jobs in war industries. Formerly restricted to jobs in laundries or restaurants, they eagerly sought employment in factories. In fact, so many waiters left their jobs that four restaurants in New York’s Chinatown had to close in 1942.

The Korean, Filipino, and Asian Indian population also contributed to the war effort. In California, 16,000 Filipinos registered for the first draft, and many served behind enemy lines in the battle to recapture the Philippine Islands. As members of the United States Armed Forces, they were allowed to become citizens, but the Koreans were classified as enemy aliens. Still, many served in the army and proved valuable because they often could speak Japanese. The 1923 Supreme Court decision that had denied citizenship to Asian Indians was altered during the war in part because the United States needed India as an ally in the Pacific War. Despite increased acceptance during the war, Asians still faced prejudice and were often denied service in restaurants or refused admittance to theaters. Many Americans hated the Japanese; to them, all Asians looked like the enemy.

Even in much of the North, the United States remained a segregated society in 1941. African Americans could not live, eat, travel, work, or go to school with the same freedom that whites enjoyed. Black Americans profited little from the revival of prosperity and the expansion of jobs early in the war. Those who joined the military were usually assigned to menial jobs as cooks or laborers and were always assigned to segregated units with whites as the high-ranking officers. The myth that black soldiers had failed to perform well in World War I persisted. “Leadership is not embedded in the negro race yet,” Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote, “and to try to make commissioned officers . . . lead men into battle—colored men—is only to work a disaster to both.”

Some black leaders found it especially ironic that as the country prepared to fight Hitler and his racist policies, the United States persisted in its own brand of racism. “A jim crow Army cannot fight for a free world,” announced The Crisis, the journal of the NAACP. A. Philip Randolph decided to act rather than talk. The son of a Methodist minister, Randolph had worked with the first wave of African Americans migrating from the South to the northern cities during and just after World War I. He spent years trying “to carry the gospel of unionism to the colored world.” He organized and led the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and in 1937, he finally won grudging recognition of the union from the Pullman Company.

Respected and admired by black leaders of all political persuasions, Randolph convinced many of them in 1941 to join him in a march on Washington to demand equal rights. The threat of as many as 100,000 African Americans marching in protest in the nation’s capital alarmed Roosevelt. At first, he sent his assistants, including his wife, Eleanor (who was greatly admired in the black community), to
Many African Americans moved north, lured by jobs in war industries. Prejudice remained even in the North, and some blacks were denied employment or were given the most menial tasks. Others, like these welders, found good jobs, improved their lives, and helped change the dynamics of race relations in the United States. What other developments resulted from the wartime employment of women and minorities?

By threatening militant action, the black leaders wrested a major concession from the president. Finally, he talked to Randolph in person on June 18, 1941. Randolph and Roosevelt struck a bargain. Roosevelt refused to desegregate the armed forces, but in return for Randolph’s calling off the march, the president issued Executive Order 8802, which stated that it was the policy of the United States that “there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin.” He also established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to enforce the order.

By threatening militant action, the black leaders wrested a major concession from the president. But the executive order did not end prejudice, and the FEPC, which its chairman described as the “most hated agency in Washington,” had limited success in erasing the color line. Many black soldiers were angered and humiliated throughout the war by being made to sit in the back of buses and being barred from hotels and restaurants. Years later, one former black soldier recalled being refused service in a restaurant in Salina, Kansas, while the same restaurant served German prisoners from a camp nearby. “We continued to stare,” he recalled. “This was really happening. . . . The people of Salina would serve these enemy soldiers and turn away black American G.I.’s.”

Jobs in war industries helped many African Americans improve their economic conditions. Continuing the migration that had begun during World War I, about 1 million southern blacks moved to northern and western cities. The new arrivals increased pressure on overcrowded housing, aggravating tension among all hard-pressed groups. In Detroit, a race riot broke out in the summer of 1943 after Polish Americans protested a public housing development that promised to bring blacks into the neighborhood. Before federal and state troops could restore order, 25 blacks and 9 whites had been killed and more than $2 million worth of property was destroyed. Groups of white men roamed the city attacking blacks, overturning cars and setting fires. Other riots broke out in Mobile, Los Angeles, New York, and Beaumont, Texas. In all these cities, and in others, the legacy of hate lasted long after the war.

Mexican Americans, like most minority groups, profited during the war from the increased job opportunities provided by wartime industry, but they, too, faced racial prejudice. In California and in many parts of the Southwest, Mexicans could not use public swimming pools. Often lumped together with blacks, they were excluded from certain restaurants. Usually they were limited to menial jobs and were constantly harassed by the police, picked up for minor offenses, and jailed on the smallest excuse.

In Los Angeles, anti-Mexican prejudice flared into violence. The increased migration of Mexicans into the city as well as old hatreds created a volatile situation. Most of the hostility and anger focused on Mexican gang members, or pachucos, especially those wearing zoot suits. The suits consisted of long, loose coats with padded shoulders, ballooned pants pegged at the ankles, and a wide-brimmed hat. A watch chain and a ducktail haircut completed the uniform. The zoot suit had originated in the black sections of northern cities and became a national craze during the war. It was a look some teenage males adopted to call attention to themselves and shock conventional society.

The zoot-suiters especially angered soldiers and sailors who were stationed in or on leave in Los Angeles. After a number of provocative incidents, violence broke out between the Mexican American youths and the servicemen in the spring of 1943.
The servicemen, joined by others, beat up the Mexicans, stripped them of their offensive clothes, and then gave them haircuts. The police, both civilian and military, looked the other way, and when they did move in, they arrested the victims rather than their attackers.
SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE WAR

Modern wars have been incredibly destructive of human lives and property, but they have social results as well. The Civil War ended slavery and ensured the triumph of the industrial North for years to come; in so doing, it left a legacy of bitterness and transformed the race question from a sectional to a national problem. World War I ensured the success of woman suffrage and prohibition, caused a migration of blacks to northern cities, and ushered in a time of intolerance. World War II also had many social results. It altered patterns of work, leisure, education, and family life; caused a massive migration of people; created jobs; and changed lifestyles. It is difficult to overemphasize the impact of the war on the generation that lived through it.

Wartime Opportunities

More than 15 million American civilians moved during the war. Like the Momadays, many left home to find better jobs. In fact, for many Native Americans, wartime opportunities led to a migration from rural areas and reservations into cities. Americans moved off farms and away from small towns, flocking to cities, where defense jobs were readily available. They moved west: California alone gained more than 2 million people during the war. But they also moved out of the South into northern cities, while a smaller number moved from the North to the South. Late in the war, when a shortage of farm labor developed, some reversed the trend and moved back onto the farms. But a great many people moved somewhere. One observer, noticing the heavily packed cars heading west, decided that it was just like The Grapes of Wrath, without the poverty and the hopelessness.

The World War II migrants poured into industrial centers. 200,000 came to the Detroit area, nearly half a million to Los Angeles, and about 100,000 to Mobile, Alabama. They put pressure on schools, housing, and other services. Often they had to live in new Hoovers, trailer parks, or temporary housing. In San Pablo, California, a family of four adults and seven children lived in an 8-by-10-foot shack. Nowhere was the change more dramatic than in the West, and especially in California, where the wartime boom transformed the region more dramatically than any development since the nineteenth-century economic revolution created by the railroads and mining. The federal government spent more than $70 billion in the state (one-tenth of the total for the entire country) to build army bases, shipyards, supply depots, and testing sites. In addition, private industry constructed so many facilities that the region became the center of a growing military-industrial complex. San Diego, for example, was transformed from a sleepy port and naval base into a sprawling metropolis. The population grew by 147 percent between 1941 and 1945, from 202,000 to 380,000. Vallezo, a small city near Oakland, grew from 20,000 to more than 100,000 in just two years. The U.S. Navy’s Mare Island Shipyard, which was nearby, increased its workforce from 5,000 to 45,000. Vanport, just north of Portland, Oregon, was an empty mud flat in 1940; three years later, it was a bustling city of more than 40,000. Almost everyone in the new town worked for the Kaiser Ship Yards.

This spectacular growth created problems. There was a housing shortage, schools were overcrowded, and hospitals and municipal services could not keep up with the demand. Crime and prostitution increased as did racial tensions. Some migrants had never lived in a city and were homesick. On one occasion in a Willow Grove, Michigan, school, the children were all instructed to sing “Michigan, My Michigan”; no one knew the words because they all came from other states.

For the first time in years, many families had money to spend, but they had nothing to spend it on. The last new car rolled off the assembly line in February 1942. There were no washing machines, refrigerators, or radios in the stores, no gasoline and no tires to permit weekend trips. Even when people had time off, they tended to stay at home or in the neighborhood. Some of the new housing developments had the atmosphere of a mining camp, complete with drinking, prostitution, and barroom brawls.

The war required major adjustments in American family life. With several million men in the service and others far away working at defense jobs, the number of households headed by a woman increased dramatically. The number of marriages also rose sharply. Early in the war, a young man could be deferred if he had a dependent, and a wife qualified as a dependent. Later, many servicemen got married, often to women they barely knew, because they wanted a little excitement and perhaps someone to come home to. The birthrate also began to rise in 1940, as young couples started families as fast
as they could. The number of births outside marriage also rose, and from the outset of the war, the divorce rate began to climb sharply. Yet most of the wartime marriages survived, and many of the women left at home looked ahead to a time after the war when they could settle down to a normal life.

Women Workers for Victory

Thousands of women took jobs in heavy industry that formerly would have been considered unladylike. They built tanks, airplanes, and ships, but they still earned less than men. At first, women were like. They built tanks, airplanes, and ships, but they that formerly would have been considered unladylike. Thousands of women took jobs in heavy industry out of its long slump, unem-
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Women Workers for Victory

Thousands of women took jobs in heavy industry that formerly would have been considered unladylike. They built tanks, airplanes, and ships, but they still earned less than men. At first, women were rarely hired because as the war in Europe pulled American industry out of its long slump, unemployed men snapped up the newly available positions. But by 1943, with many men drafted and male unemployment virtually nonexistent, the government was quick to suggest that it was women's patriotic duty to take their place on the assembly line. Nearly 3 million women served in the Women's Land Army to replace farm laborers who were in the army, but it was the woman factory worker who captured the public's imagination. A popular song was "Rosie the Riveter," who was "making history working for victory." She also helped her marine boyfriend by "working overtime on the riveting machine."

At the end of the war, the labor force included 19.5 million women, but three-quarters of them had been working before the conflict, and some of the additional ones might have sought work in normal times. The new women war workers tended to be older, and they were more often married than single. Some worked for patriotic reasons. "Every time I test a batch of rubber, I know it's going to help bring my three sons home quicker," a woman worker in a rubber plant re-

Women in War" Poster

Betty Crocker

New York City hire a black telephone operator. Still, some black women moved during the war from domestic jobs to higher-paying factory work. Married women with young children also found it difficult to obtain work. There were few day-care facilities, and women were often informed that they should be home with their children.

Women workers often had to endure catcalls, whistles, and more overt sexual harassment on the job. Still, most persisted, and they tried to look feminine despite the heavy work clothes. In one Boston factory, a woman was hooted at for carrying a lunch box. Only men, it seemed, carried lunch boxes; women brought their lunch in a paper bag.

Many women war workers quickly left their jobs after the war ended. Some left by choice, but dismissals ran twice as high for women as for men. The war had barely shaken the notion that a woman's place was at home. Some women would have preferred to keep working. But most women, and an even larger percentage of men, agreed at the end of the war that women did not deserve an "equal chance with men" for jobs. For most Americans, a woman's place was still in the home.

Entertaining the People

According to one survey, Americans listened to the radio an average of 4 1/2 hours a day during the war. The major networks increased their news programs from less than 4 percent to nearly 30 percent of broadcasting time. Americans heard Edward R. Murrow broadcasting from London during the German air blitz with the sound of the air raid sirens in the background. They listened to Eric Sevareid cover the battle of Burma and describe the sensation of jumping out of an airplane. Often the signal faded out and the static made listening difficult, but the live broadcasts had drama and authenticity never before possible.

Even more than the reporters, the commentators became celebrities on whom the American people depended to explain what was going on around the world. Millions listened to the clipped, authoritative voice of H. V. Kaltenborn or to Gabriel Heatter, whose trademark was "Ah, there's good news tonight." But the war also intruded on almost all other programming. Music, which took up a large proportion of radio programming, also conveyed a war theme. There were "Goodbye, Mama (I'm Off to Yokohama)" and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Am-

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much a part of wartime memories as ration books and far-off battlefields.

For many Americans, the motion picture became the most important leisure activity and a part of their fantasy life during the war. Attendance at the movies averaged about 100 million viewers a week. There might not be gasoline for weekend trips or Sunday drives, but the whole family could go to the movies. Even those in the military service could watch American movies on board ship or at a remote outpost. “Pinup” photographs of Hollywood stars decorated the barracks and even tanks and planes wherever American troops were stationed.

Musical comedies, cowboy movies, and historical romances remained popular during the war, but the conflict intruded even on Hollywood. Newsreels that offered a visual synopsis of the war news, always with an upbeat message and a touch of human interest, preceded most movies. Their theme was that the Americans were winning the war, even if early in the conflict there was little evidence to that effect. Many feature films also had a wartime theme, picturing the war in the Pacific complete with grinning, vicious Japanese villains (usually played by Chinese or Korean character actors). In the beginning of these films, the Japanese were always victorious, but in the end, they always got “what they deserved.”

The movies set in Europe differed from those depicting the Far Eastern war. British and Americans, sometimes spies, sometimes downed airmen, could dress up like Germans and get away with it. They outwitted the Germans at every turn, sabotaging important installations, and made daring escapes from prison camps. Many wartime movies featured a multicultural platoon led by a veteran sergeant with a Protestant, a Catholic, a Jew, a black, a farmer, and a city resident. In several movies, the army was integrated, but in the real army, blacks served in segregated platoons.

Religion in Time of War

One of the four freedoms threatened by German and Japanese aggression was the “freedom to worship,” and Roosevelt continually emphasized that the enemy was opposed to all religion. According to one estimate in 1940, 65 million Americans belonged to 250,000 churches and other religious institutions. There were about 23 million Catholics and 5 million Jews, and the rest were of one Protestant denomination or another. Most Americans thought of the United States as a Christian nation, and by that they usually meant a Protestant nation. While the war did lead to a measure of religious tolerance, anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism did not disappear. According to one poll, although 18 percent of Americans never went to church, more than 30 percent said that the war had strengthened their religious faith.

Those who joined the armed forces were given three choices under religion: They were asked to check Protestant, Catholic, or Jew, and their “dog tags” were marked P, C, or H (for Hebrew). There was no room for Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, or atheist. Some men refused to fight on religious grounds. During World War I, only members of the traditional peace churches (Quaker, Brethren, and Mennonite) were deferred from military service as conscientious objectors. In World War II, the criterion was broadened to include those who opposed war because of “religious training and belief.” More than 70,000 claimed exemption on those grounds, and the government honored about half those claims. Twenty-five thousand were assigned to noncombat military service.

A few clergymen remained pacifists and opposed the war, but far fewer than in World War I. A great many more volunteered to serve as chaplains, and like the men, they were categorized as Protestant, Catholic, or Jew. One of the most influential of the ministers who supported the use of force to combat evil was the Protestant theologian and clergyman Reinhold Niebuhr. In a series of books including Moral Man and Immoral Society (1932) and Children of Light and Children of Darkness (1944), he struck out against what he saw as a naive faith in the goodness of men, a faith that permeated the Social Gospel movement, the Progressive movement, and the New Deal. In a world gone mad, he interpreted all men as sinful, and he stressed the “evil that good men do.” He argued for the use of force against evil. Niebuhr’s Christian Realism had little impact on most Americans, but he influenced the continuing debate in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s over the proper American response to evil around the world.

The GIs’ War

GI, the abbreviation for government issue, became the affectionate designation for the ordinary soldier in World War II. The GIs came from every background and ethnic group. Some served reluctantly, some eagerly. A few became genuine heroes. All were turned into heroes by the press and the public, who seemed to believe that one American could easily defeat at least 20 Japanese or Germans. Ernie Pyle, one of the war correspondents who chronicled the authentic story of the ordinary GI, wrote of soldiers “just toiling from day to day in a world full of insecurity, discomfort, homesickness, and a dulled sense of danger.”
In the midst of battle, the war was no fun, but only one soldier in eight who served ever saw combat, and even for many of those, the war was a great adventure (just as World War I had been). “When World War II broke out I was delighted,” Mario Puzo, author of *The Godfather*, remembered. “There is no other word, terrible as it may sound. My country called. I was delivered from my mother, my family, and delivered without guilt.” World War II catapulted young men and women out of their small towns and urban neighborhoods into exotic places, where they met new people and did new things.

The war was important for Mexican Americans, who were drafted and volunteered in great numbers. One-third of a million served in all branches of the military, a larger percentage than for many other ethnic groups. Although they encountered prejudice, they probably found less in the armed forces than they had at home, and many returned to civilian life with new ambitions and a new sense of self-esteem.

Many Native Americans also served. In fact, many were recruited for special service in the Marine Signal Corps. One group of Navajo completely befuddled the Japanese with a code based on their native language. But the Navajo code talkers and all other Native Americans who chose to return to the reservations after the war were ineligible for veterans’ loans, hospitalization, and other benefits. They lived on federal land, and that, according to the law, canceled all the advantages that other veterans enjoyed after the war.

For African Americans, who served throughout the war in segregated units and faced prejudice wherever they went, the military experience also had much to teach. Fewer blacks were sent overseas (about 79,000 of 504,000 blacks in the service in 1943), and fewer were in combat outfits, so the percentage of black soldiers killed and wounded was low. Many illiterate blacks, especially from the South, learned to read and write in the service. Blacks who went overseas began to realize that not everyone viewed them as inferior. One black army officer said, “What the hell do we want to fight the Japs for anyhow? They couldn’t possibly treat us any worse than these ‘crackers’ right here at home.” Most realized the paradox of fighting for freedom when they themselves had little freedom; they hoped things would improve after the war.

Because the war lasted longer than World War I, its impact was greater. In all, more than 16 million men and women served in some branch of the military service. About 322,000 were killed in the war, and more than 800,000 were wounded. The 12,000 listed as missing just disappeared. The war claimed many more lives than World War I and was the nation’s costliest after the Civil War. But because of penicillin, blood plasma, sulfa drugs, and rapid
battlefield evacuation, the wounded in World War II were twice as likely to survive as those wounded in World War I. Penicillin also minimized the threat of venereal disease, but all men who served saw an anti-VD film, just as their predecessors had in World War I.

**Women in Uniform**

Women had served in all wars as nurses and cooks and in other support capacities, and during World War II many continued in these traditional roles. A few nurses landed in France just days after the Normandy invasion. Nurses served with the army and the marines in the Pacific. They dug their own foxholes and treated men under enemy fire. Sixty-six nurses spent the entire war in the Philippines as prisoners of the Japanese. Most nurses, however, served far behind the lines tending the sick and wounded. Army nurses who were given officer rank were forbidden to date enlisted men. "Not permitting nurses and enlisted men to be seen together is certainly not American," one soldier decided.

Though nobody objected to women's serving as nurses, not until April 1943 did women physicians win the right to join the Army and Navy Medical Corps. Some people questioned whether it was right for women to serve in other capacities, but Congress authorized full military participation for women (except for combat) because of the military emergency and the argument that women could free men for combat duty. About 350,000 women joined the military service, most in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the women's branch of the Navy (WAVES), but others served in the coast guard and the marines. More than 1,000 women trained as pilots. As members of Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), they flew bombers from the factories to landing fields in Great Britain.

Many recruiting posters suggested that the services needed women “for the precision work at which women are so adept” or for work in hospitals to comfort and attend to the wounded “as only women can do.” Most women served in traditional female roles, doing office work, cooking, and cleaning. But others were engineers and pilots. Still, men and women were not treated equally. Women were explicitly kept out of combat situations and were often underused by male officers who found it difficult to view women in nontraditional roles.

Men were informed about contraceptives and encouraged to use them, but information about birth control was explicitly prohibited for women. Rumors charged many servicewomen with sexual promiscuity. On one occasion, the secretary of war defended the morality and the loyalty of the women in the service, but the rumors continued, spread apparently by men made uncomfortable by women's invasion of the male military domain. One cause for immediate discharge was pregnancy; yet
AMERICAN VOICES

PFC Robert Kotlowitz
Faces Battle

Robert Kotlowitz, of Polish-Jewish background, grew up in Baltimore. After high school he started college at the Johns Hopkins University, but in 1943 at age 18 he dropped out and was drafted into the army. "I believed in the war," he wrote. "It seemed just and righteous to me." The war didn't seem so righteous on October 12, 1944, when Kotlowitz's platoon, led by Lieutenant Francis Gallagher, not much older than his men, was ordered to attack a hill in Northeastern France.

Within a few moments, . . . a lot had happened. Lieutenant Gallagher, for one, was already dead. We saw him die, quickly. A bullet pierced his scrawny boy's neck . . . as he moved forward ahead of us, just over the top of the rise . . . . Someone yelled Kaputt! as though it was an order. Gallagher stood there, upright and motionless, his ferret's face full of surprise, when the German's began to fire their Mausers. At the same moment, perfectly synchronized, a 180-degree sweep of machine-gun fire, which at first I mistook for our own, took us from right to left . . . dropping the platoon where it stood. It then came around in a second sweep.

I saw a hole open up in the back of Lieutenant Gallagher's neck, when the bullet passed through the front—surprised at how large and black it was, clean, too, as though it had been drilled by a mechanic's precision tool. There was a surge of surface blood at first, then a gurgle, like a tap being turned on, then a sudden torrent as he fell without a sound. Both of his carotid arteries must have poured in one stream through the wound. All of this took perhaps a dozen seconds: Gallagher's death, the machine-gun assault, and the paralysis of the third platoon.

We lay on the ground without moving. It was no light . . . . The sounds . . . . never before heard, swelling over the noise of small-arms and machine-gun fire, of boys' voices calling for help or screaming in pain or terror—our own boys' voices, unrecognizable at first, weird in pitch and timbre. . . . There was no response from the rest of C Company behind us, no answering artillery or heavy weapons fire, and no supporting troops to help us slip out of the . . . rise that we had trapped ourselves in. . . . Slowly then, as the morning wore on, and the knowledge began to sink in, I came to realize that for us there was nothing to do but wait, flat out as we were, for our own deaths.

Did the brutal reality of war cancel out the patriotism and the idealism that made many young men join the army?

the pregnancy rate for both married and unmarried women remained low.

Thus, despite difficulties, women played important roles during the war, and when they left the service (unlike the women who had served in other wars), they had the same rights and privileges as the male veterans. The women in the service did not permanently alter the military or the public's perception of women's proper role, but they did change a few minds, and many of the women who served had their lives changed and their horizons broadened.
A WAR OF DIPLOMATS AND GENERALS

Pearl Harbor catapulted the country into war with Japan, and on December 11, 1941, Hitler declared war on the United States. Why he did so has never been fully explained; he was perhaps impressed by the apparent weakness of America that was demonstrated at Pearl Harbor. He was not required by his treaty with Japan to go to war with the United States, and without his declaration, the United States might have concentrated on the war against Japan. But Hitler forced the United States into the war against the Axis powers in both Europe and Asia.

War Aims

Why was the United States fighting the war? What did it hope to accomplish in a peace settlement once the war was over? Roosevelt and the other American leaders never really decided. In a speech before Congress in January 1941, Roosevelt had mentioned the four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression,
freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. For many Americans, especially after Norman Rockwell expressed those freedoms in four sentimental paintings, this was what they were fighting for. Roosevelt spoke vaguely of the need to extend democracy and to establish a peacekeeping organization, but in direct contrast to Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, he never spelled out in any detail the political purposes for fighting. There were some other implied reasons for going to war. Henry Luce, the editor of Life magazine, made those reasons explicit in an editorial written nine months before Pearl Harbor. He called his essay “The American Century,” and he argued that the United States had the responsibility to spread the American way of life around the world.

Roosevelt and his advisers, realizing that it would be impossible to mount an all-out war against both Japan and Germany, decided to fight a holding action in the Pacific while concentrating efforts against Hitler in Europe, where the immediate danger seemed greater. But the United States was not fighting alone. It joined the Soviet Union and Great Britain in what became a difficult, but ultimately effective alliance to defeat Nazi Germany. Churchill and Roosevelt got along well, although they often disagreed on strategy and tactics. Roosevelt’s relationship with Stalin was much more strained, but he often agreed with the Russian leader about the way to fight the war. Stalin, a ruthless leader who had maintained his position of power only after eliminating hundreds of thousands of opponents, distrusted both the British and the Americans, but he needed them, just as they depended on him. Without the tremendous sacrifices of the Russian army and the Russian people in 1941 and 1942, Germany would have won the war before the vast American military and industrial might could be mobilized.

A Year of Disaster
The first half of 1942 was disastrous for the Allied cause. In the Pacific, the Japanese captured the Dutch East Indies with their vast riches in rubber, oil, and other resources. They swept into Burma, took Wake Island and Guam, and invaded the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. They pushed the American garrison on the Philippines onto the Bataan peninsula and finally onto the tiny island of Corregidor, where U.S. General Jonathan Wainwright surrendered more than 11,000 men to the Japanese. American reporters tried to play down the disasters, concentrating their stories on the few American victories and tales of American heroism against overwhelming odds. One of the soldiers on a Pacific island picked up an American broadcast one night. “The news commentators in the States had us all winning the war,” he discovered, “their buoyant cheerful voices talking of victory. We were out here where we would see these victories. They were all Japanese.”

In Europe, the Germans pushed deep into Russia, threatening to capture all the industrial centers and the valuable oil fields. For a time, it appeared that they would even take Moscow. In North Africa, General Erwin Rommel and his mechanized divisions, the Afrika Korps, drove the British forces almost to Cairo in Egypt and threatened the Suez Canal. In contrast to World War I, which had been a war of stalemate, the opening phase of World War II was marked by air strikes and troops supported by trucks and tanks covering many miles each day. In the Atlantic, German submarines sank British and American ships more rapidly than they could be replaced. For a few dark months in 1942, it seemed that the Berlin–Tokyo Axis would win the war before the United States was ready to fight.

The Allies could not agree on the proper military strategy in Europe. Churchill advocated tightening the ring around Germany, using bombing raids to weaken the enemy and encouraging resistance among the occupied countries but avoiding any direct assault on the continent until success was ensured. Remembering the vast loss of British lives during World War I, he was determined to avoid similar casualties in this conflict. Stalin demanded a second front, an invasion of Europe in 1942, to relieve the pressure on the Russian army, which faced 200 German divisions along a 2,000-mile front. Roosevelt agreed to an offensive in 1942. But in the end, the invasion in 1942 came not in France but in North Africa. The decision was probably right from a military point of view; it would have been impossible to launch an invasion of France in 1942, and landing in Morocco helped relieve the pressure on the British army, which was fighting desperately to keep Cairo and the Suez Canal out of German hands. But Stalin never forgave Churchill and Roosevelt for not coming to the aid of the beleaguered Soviet troops.

Attacking in North Africa in November 1942, American and British troops tried to link up with a beleaguered British army. The American army, enthusiastic but inexperienced, met little resistance in the beginning. At Kasserine Pass in Tunisia, the Germans counterattacked and destroyed a large American force, inflicting 5,000 casualties. Roosevelt, who launched the invasion in part to give the American people a victory to relieve the dreary news from the
Far East, learned that victories often came with long casualty lists.

He also learned the necessity of political compromise. To gain a cease-fire in conquered French territory in North Africa, the United States recognized Admiral Jean Darlan as head of its provisional government. Darlan persecuted the Jews, exploited the Arabs, imprisoned his opponents, and collaborated with the Nazis. He seemed diametrically opposed to the principles the Americans said they were fighting for. Did the Darlan deal mean the United States would negotiate with Mussolini? Or with Hitler? The Darlan compromise reinforced Soviet distrust of the Americans and angered many Americans as well.

Roosevelt never compromised or made a deal with Hitler, but he did aid General Francisco Franco, the Fascist dictator in Spain, in return for safe passage of American shipping into the Mediterranean. But the United States did not aid only right-wing dictators. It also supplied arms to the left-wing resistance in France, to the Communist Tito in Yugoslavia, and to Ho Chi Minh, the anti-French resistance leader in Indochina. Roosevelt also authorized large-scale lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union. Although liberals criticized his support of dictators, Roosevelt was willing to do almost anything to win the war. Military expediency often dictated his political decisions.

Even on one of the most sensitive issues of the war, the plight of the Jews in occupied Europe, Roosevelt's solution was to win the war as quickly as possible. By November 1942, confirmed information had reached the United States that the Nazis were systematically exterminating Jews, but that evidence got little attention in the United States. The Roosevelt administration did nothing for more than a year, and even then it did scandalously little to rescue European Jews from the gas chambers. Only 21,000 refugees were allowed to enter the United States over a period of 3½ years, just 10 percent of those who could have been admitted under immigration quotas.

The U.S. War Department rejected suggestions that the gas chambers and railway lines be bombed. That might not have worked, but anti-Semitic feelings in the United States in the 1940s and the fear of massive Jewish immigration help explain the failure of the Roosevelt administration to act. The fact that the mass media, Christian leaders, and even American Jews failed to mount effective pressure on the government does not excuse the president for his indifference to the systematic murder of millions of people. Roosevelt could not have prevented the Holocaust, but vigorous action on his part might have saved many thousands of lives during the war.

A Strategy for Ending the War

The commanding general of the Allied armies in the North African campaign emerged as a genuine
leader. Born in Texas, Dwight D. Eisenhower spent his boyhood in Abilene, Kansas. His small-town background made it easy for biographers and newspaper reporters to make him into an American hero. Eisenhower, however, had not come to hero status easily. In World War I, he trained soldiers in Texas and never got to France. He was only a lieutenant colonel when World War II erupted. George Marshall, the army's top general, had discovered Eisenhower's talents even before the war began. Eisenhower was quickly promoted to general and achieved a reputation as an expert planner and organizer. Gregarious and outgoing, he had a broad smile that made most people like him instantly. He was not a brilliant field commander and made many mistakes in the African campaign, but he had the ability to get diverse people to work together, which was crucial in situations in which British and American units had to cooperate.

The American army moved slowly across North Africa, linked up with the British, invaded Sicily in July 1943, and finally stormed ashore in Italy in September. The Italian campaign proved long and bitter. Although the Italians overthrew Mussolini and
surrendered in September 1943, the Germans occupied the peninsula and gave ground only after bloody fighting. The whole American army seemed bogged down for months. The Allies did not reach Rome until June 1944, and they never controlled all of Italy.

Despite the decision to make the war in Europe the first priority, American ships and planes halted the Japanese advance in the spring of 1942. In the Battle of Coral Sea in May 1942, American carrier-based planes inflicted heavy damage on the Japanese fleet and prevented the invasion of the southern tip of New Guinea and probably of Australia as well. It was the first naval battle in history in which no guns were fired from one surface ship against another; airplanes caused all the damage. In World War II, the aircraft carrier proved more important than the battleship. A month later, at the Battle of Midway, American planes sank four Japanese aircraft carriers and destroyed nearly 300 planes. This was the first major Japanese defeat; it restored some balance of power in the Pacific and ended the threat to Hawaii.

In 1943, the American sea and land forces leapfrogged from island to island, gradually retaking territory from the Japanese and building bases to attack the Philippines and eventually Japan itself. Progress often had terrible costs, however. In November 1943, about 5,000 marines landed on the coral beaches of the tiny island of Tarawa. Despite heavy naval bombardment and the support of hundreds of planes, the marines met fierce opposition. The four-day battle left more than 1,000 Americans dead and more than 3,000 wounded. One marine general thought it was all wasted effort and believed that the island should have been bypassed. Others disagreed. And no one asked the marines who stormed the beaches; less than half of the first wave survived.

The Pacific War was often brutal and dehumanizing. American soldiers often collected Japanese ears, skulls, and other body parts as souvenirs, something unheard of on the European battlefields. “In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people,” Ernie Pyle, the American war correspondent, remarked. “But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman or repulsive, the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.”

The Invasion of France
Operation Overlord, the code name for the largest amphibious invasion in history, the invasion Stalin had wanted in 1942, finally began on June 6, 1944. It was, according to Churchill, “the most difficult and complicated operation that has ever taken place.” The initial assault along a 60-mile stretch of the Normandy coast was conducted with 175,000 men supported by 600 warships and 11,000 planes. Within a month, more than a million troops and more than 170,000 vehicles had landed. Such an invasion would have been impossible during World War I.

British and American forces, with some units from other countries, worked together, but Overlord was made possible by American industry, which, by the war’s end, was turning out an astonishing 50 percent of all the world’s goods. During the first few hours of the invasion, there seemed to be too many supplies. “Everything was confusing,” one soldier remembered. It cost 2,245 killed and 1,670 wounded to secure the beachhead. “It was much lighter than anybody expected,” one observer remarked. “But if you saw faces instead of numbers on the casualty list, it wasn’t light at all.”

For months before the invasion, American and British planes had bombed German transportation lines, industrial plants, and even cities. In all, more than 1.5 million tons of bombs were dropped on Europe. The massive bombing raids helped make the invasion a success, but evidence gathered after the war suggests that the bombs did not disrupt German war production as seriously as Allied strategists believed at the time. Often a factory or a rail center would be back in operation within a matter of days, sometimes within hours, after an attack. In the end, the bombing of the cities, rather than destroying morale, may have strengthened the resolve of the German people to fight to the bitter end. And the destruction of German cities did not come cheaply. German fighters and antiaircraft guns shot down 22 of 60 B-17s on June 23, 1943, and in July 1943, 100 planes and 1,000 airmen were lost and an additional 75 men had mental breakdowns.

The most destructive bombing raid of the war, carried out against Dresden on the nights of February 13 and 14, 1945, had no strategic purpose. It was launched by the British and Americans to help demonstrate to Stalin that they were aiding the Russian offensive. Dresden, a city of 630,000, was a communications center. Three waves of 1,200 planes dropped more than 4,000 tons of bombs, causing a firestorm that swept over eight square miles, destroyed everything in its path, and killed an estimated 25,000 to 40,000 civilians. One of the American pilots remarked, “For the first time I felt sorry for the population below.” The fire-bombing
The German war machine swept across Europe and North Africa and almost captured Cairo and Moscow, but after major defeats at Stalingrad and El Alamein in 1943, the Axis powers were in retreat. Many lives were lost on both sides before the Allied victory in 1945. Reflecting on the Past: How was the African campaign important to the Allies’ strategy to defeat Germany and Italy? Why was the invasion of France necessary even after the capture of North Africa and a portion of Italy? Why was the Soviet Union crucial to the war in Europe? Why was the war in Europe very different from the war in the Pacific?

of Tokyo on March 9, 1945, also killed an estimated 100,000 people. The massive “strategic” bombing of European and Asian cities for the purpose of breaking the morale of the civilian population introduced terror as a strategy and eventually made the decision to drop the atomic bomb on two Japanese cities easier.

With the dashing and eccentric General George Patton leading the charge and the more staid General Omar Bradley in command, the American army broke out of the Normandy beachhead in July 1944. Led by the tank battalions, it swept across France. American productive capacity and the ability to supply a mobile and motorized army eventually brought victory. But not all American equipment was superior. The American fighter plane, the P-40, could not compete early in the war with the German ME-109. The United States was also far behind Germany in the development of rockets, but that was not as important in the actual fighting as was the inability of the United States, until the end of the war, to develop a tank that could compete in armament or firepower with the German tanks. But the American army made up for the deficiency of its tanks in part by having superior artillery. Perhaps even more important, most of the American soldiers had grown up tinkering with cars and radios. Children of the machine age, they managed to make repairs and
to keep tanks, trucks, and guns functioning under difficult circumstances. They helped give the American army the superior mobility that eventually led to the defeat of Germany.

By late 1944, the American and British armies had swept across France, while the Russians had pushed the German forces out of much of eastern Europe. The war seemed nearly over. However, just before Christmas in 1944, the Germans launched a massive counterattack along an 80-mile front, much of it held by thinly dispersed and inexperienced American troops. The Germans drove 50 miles inside the American lines before they were checked. During the Battle of the Bulge, as it was called, Eisenhower was so desperate for additional infantry that he offered to pardon any military prisoners in Europe who would take up a rifle and go into battle. Most of the prisoners, who were serving short sentences, declined the opportunity to clear their record. Eisenhower also promised any black soldiers in the service and supply outfits an opportunity to become infantrymen in the white units, though usually with a lower rank. However, his chief of staff, pointed out that this was against War Department regulations and was the “most dangerous thing I have seen in regard to race relations.” Eisenhower recanted, not wishing to start a dangerous thing I have seen in regard to race relations. Eisenhower also promised any black soldiers in the service and supply outfits an opportunity to become infantrymen in the white units, though usually with a lower rank. However, his chief of staff, pointed out that this was against War Department regulations and was the “most dangerous thing I have seen in regard to race relations.” Eisenhower recanted, not wishing to start a social revolution. Black soldiers who volunteered to join the battle fought in segregated platoons commanded by white officers.

The Politics of Victory

As the American and British armies raced across France into Germany in the winter and spring of 1945, the political and diplomatic aspects of the war began to overshadow military concerns. It became a matter not only of defeating Germany but also of determining who was going to control Germany and the rest of Europe once Hitler fell. The relationship between the Soviet Union and the other Allies had been badly strained during the war; with victory in sight, the tension became even greater. Although the American press pictured Stalin as a wise and democratic leader and the Russian people as quaint and heroic, a number of high-level American diplomats and presidential advisers distrusted the Russians and looked ahead to a confrontation with Soviet communism after the war. These men urged Roosevelt to make military decisions with the postwar political situation in mind.

The most pressing concern in the spring of 1945 was who should capture Berlin. The British wanted to beat the Russians to the capital city. Eisenhower, however, fearing that the Germans might barricade themselves in the Austrian Alps and hold out indefinitely, ordered the armies south rather than toward Berlin. He also wanted to avoid unnecessary American casualties, and he planned to meet the Russian army at an easily marked spot to avoid any unfortunate incidents. The British and American forces could probably not have arrived in Berlin before the Russians in any case, but Eisenhower’s decision generated controversy after the war. Russian and American troops met on April 25, 1945, at the Elbe River. On May 2, the Russians took Berlin. Hitler committed suicide. The long war in Europe finally came to an end on May 8, 1945, but political problems remained.

In 1944, the United States continued to tighten the noose on Japan. American long-range B-29 bombers began sustained strikes on the Japanese mainland in June 1944. In a series of naval and air engagements, especially at the Battle of Leyte Gulf, American planes destroyed most of the remaining Japanese navy. By the end of 1944, an American victory in the Pacific was all but ensured. American forces recaptured the Philippines early the next year, yet it might take years to conquer the Japanese on their home islands.

While the military campaigns reached a critical stage in both Europe and the Pacific, Roosevelt took time off to run for an unprecedented fourth term. He agreed to drop Vice President Henry Wallace from the ticket because some thought him too radical and impetuous. To replace him, the Democratic convention selected a relatively unknown senator from Missouri. Harry S Truman, a World War I veteran, had been a judge in Kansas City before being elected to the Senate in 1934. His only fame came when, as chairman of the Senate Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, he had insisted on honesty and efficiency in war contracts. He got some publicity for saving the taxpayers’ dollars.

The Republicans nominated Thomas Dewey, the colorless and politically moderate governor of New York, who had a difficult time criticizing Roosevelt without appearing unpatriotic. Roosevelt seemed haggard and ill during much of the campaign, but he won the election easily. He would need all his strength to deal with the difficult political problems of ending the war and constructing a peace settlement.

The Big Three at Yalta

Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin, together with many of their advisers, met at Yalta in the Crimea in February 1945 to discuss the problems of the peace settlements.
Most of the agreements reached at Yalta were secret, and in the atmosphere of the subsequent Cold War, many would become controversial. Roosevelt wanted the help of the Soviet Union in ending the war in the Pacific to avoid the needless slaughter of American men in an invasion of the Japanese mainland. In return for a promise to enter the war within three months after the war in Europe was over, the Soviet Union was granted the Kurile Islands, the southern half of Sakhalin, and railroads and port facilities in North Korea, Manchuria, and Outer Mongolia. Later that seemed like a heavy price to pay for the promise, but realistically the Soviet Union controlled most of this territory and could not have been dislodged short of going to war.

When the provisions of the secret treaties were revealed much later, many people would accuse Roosevelt of trusting the Russians too much. But Roosevelt wanted to retain a working relationship with the Soviet Union. If the peace was to be preserved, the major powers of the Grand Alliance would have to work together. Moreover, Roosevelt hoped to get the Soviet Union's agreement to cooperate with a new peace-preserving United Nations organization after the war.

The European section of the Yalta agreement proved even more controversial. The diplomats decided to partition Germany and to divide the city of Berlin. The Polish agreements were even more difficult to swallow, in part because the invasion of Poland in 1939 had precipitated the war. The Polish government in exile in London was militantly anti-Communist and looked forward to returning to Poland after the war. Stalin demanded that the eastern half of Poland be given to the Soviet Union. Churchill and Roosevelt finally agreed to the Russian demands with the proviso that Poland be compensated with German territory on its western border. Stalin also agreed to include some members of the London-based Polish group in the new Polish government. He also promised to carry out “free and unfettered elections as soon as possible.”

The Polish settlement would prove divisive after the war, and it quickly became clear that what the British and Americans wanted in eastern Europe contrasted with what the Soviet Union intended. Yet at the time it seemed imperative that Russia enter the war in the Pacific, and the reality was that in 1945 the Soviet army occupied most of eastern Europe.

The most potentially valuable accomplishment at Yalta was Stalin’s agreement to join Roosevelt and Churchill in calling a conference in San Francisco in April 1945 to draft a United Nations charter. The charter gave primary responsibility for keeping global peace to the Security Council, composed of five permanent members (the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and China) and six other nations elected for two-year terms.

Perhaps just as important as Yalta for structuring the postwar world was the Bretton Woods Conference, held at a resort hotel in the White Mountains of New Hampshire in the summer of 1944 and attended by delegates from 44 nations (the Soviet Union refused to participate). The economists and politicians established a Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund. They also decided on a fixed rate of exchange among the world’s currencies using the dollar rather than the pound as the standard. The Bretton Woods agreement lasted for 25 years and established that the United States, not Great Britain, would be the dominant economic power in the postwar world.

The Atomic Age Begins

Two months after Yalta, on April 12, 1945, as the United Nations charter was being drafted, Roosevelt died suddenly of a massive cerebral hemorrhage. Hated and loved to the end, he was replaced by Harry Truman, who was both more difficult to hate and harder to love. In the beginning, Truman seemed tentative and unsure of himself. Yet it fell to the new president to make some of the most difficult decisions of all time. The most momentous of all was the decision to drop the atomic bomb.

The Manhattan Project, first organized in 1941, was one of the best-kept secrets of the war. A distinguished group of scientists, whose work on the project was centered in Los Alamos, New Mexico, set out to perfect and manufacture an atomic bomb before Germany did. But by the time the bomb was successfully tested in the New Mexico desert on July 16, 1945, the war in Europe had ended. The scientists working on the bomb assumed that they were perfecting a military weapon. Yet when they saw the ghastly power of that first bomb, J. Robert Oppenheimer, a leading scientist on the project, remembered that “some wept, a few cheered. Most stood silently.” Some opposed the military use of the bomb. They realized its revolutionary power and worried about the future reputation of the United States if it unleashed this new force. But a presidential committee made up of scientists, military leaders, and politicians recommended that it be used on a military target in Japan as soon as possible.

“The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me,” Truman later remembered. “Let there be no doubt about it. I regarded
Recovering the Past

History, Memory, and Monuments

In recent years, historians have been studying collective memory—the stories people tell about the past. Collective memory is closely related to national regional identity and is often associated with patriotism and war. But memory is usually selective and often contested. The generation that lived through World War II is getting older, and often these people fear that few remember or care about their war. One veteran of the Italian campaign recently remarked: “Today they don’t even know what Anzio was. Most people aren’t interested.” The collective memory of World War II may include letters, photos, old uniforms, and stories told to grandchildren (oral history), but the collective memory of war often includes monuments as well.

Almost every small town and city in the Northeast, the Midwest, and the South has monuments to the soldiers who fought and died in the Civil War; often it is a statue of a common soldier with rifle at rest. In the South, a statue of Robert E. Lee on horseback came to symbolize the “Lost Cause.” Usually monuments to war symbolize triumph or fighting for a just cause, even in defeat.

A large monument to World War II veterans finally opened on the mall in Washington in 2004 after years of controversy. There have been many other attempts to honor the World War II generation. The Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., planned a major exhibit for 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima and the end of World War II. The Enola Gay, the B-29 that dropped the bomb, was to be the centerpiece of the exhibit, but the historians and curators who organized the exhibit also planned to raise a number of questions that historians had been debating for years. Would the war have ended in days or weeks without the bomb? How was the decision to drop the bomb made? Was there a racial component to the decision? Would the United States have dropped the bomb on Germany? Was the bomb dropped more to impress the Soviet Union than to force the Japanese to surrender? What was the impact of the bomb on the ground? What implications did dropping the bomb have on the world after 1945?

The exhibit (except in greatly modified form) never took place. Many veterans of World War II and other Americans denounced it as traitorous and un-American. For these critics the decision to drop the bomb was not something to debate. For them, World War II was a contest between good and evil, and the bomb was simply a way to defeat the evil empire and save American lives. The controversy over the Enola Gay exhibit demonstrated that 50 years later, memory and history were at odds and that the memory of the war was still contested. The main reason the exhibit did not satisfy those who remembered the war was
symbol of the country pulling together to defeat the enemy.

In November 1954, a giant statue of the flag raising, designed by Felix De Weldon, was dedicated as a memorial to the U.S. Marine Corps on the edge of Arlington National Cemetery. Vice President Richard Nixon, speaking at the dedication, said that the statue symbolized “the hopes and dreams of the American people and the real purpose of our foreign policy.”

The flag-raising image played an important role in two movies: The Sands of Iwo Jima (1949), starring John Wayne, and The Outsider (1960), starring Tony Curtis.

During the 1988 presidential campaign, George H.W. Bush chose to make a speech in front of the marine monument urging a constitutional amendment to ban the desecration of the flag. The image of the flag raising in photograph, drawing, film, and cartoon remains part of the collective memory of World War II.

Reflecting on the Past Why did the Iwo Jima monument mean so much to the World War II generation? Was the monument more important than the photograph? What makes a monument meaningful? Is it the size? The accuracy? The ability to arouse emotion? Why do some monuments and symbols become part of collective memory, while others become controversial or forgotten? There are more than 15,000 outdoor sculptures and monuments in the country, most created since the Civil War. What monuments can you locate in your community? What collective memory do they symbolize?
Yamaoka Michiko, a young Japanese high school student, was 15 on August 6, 1945, when the Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb. She survived, but she was horribly burned and disfigured. After the war she was one of 25 victims brought to the United States to receive treatment and plastic surgery.

That morning I left the house at about seven forty-five. I heard that the B-29s had already gone home. Mom told me, "Watch out, the B-29s might come again." My house was one point three kilometers from hypocenter. . . . I heard the faint sound of planes as I approached the river. The planes were tricky. Sometimes they only pretended to leave. I could still hear the very faint sound of planes. Today, I have no hearing in my left ear because of the blast. I thought, how strange, so I put my right hand above my eyes and looked up to see if I could spot them. The sun was dazzling. That was the moment. . . .

They say temperatures of seven thousand degrees centigrade hit me. You can’t really say it washed over me. It is hard to describe. I simply fainted. I remember my body floating in the air. That was probably the blast, but I don’t know how far I was blown. When I came to my senses, my surroundings were silent. . . .

The only medicine was tempura oil, I put it on my body myself. I lay on the concrete for hours. My skin was now flat, not puffed up anymore. A scorching sky was overhead. The flies swarmed over me and covered my wounds, which were already festering. People were simply left lying around. When their faint breathing became silent, they’d say, "This one’s dead," and put the body in a pile of corpses. Some called for water, and if they got it, they died immediately. . . .

When I went to America I had a deep hatred toward America. I asked myself why they ended the war by means which destroyed human beings. When I talked about how I suffered, I was told, "Well, you attacked Pearl Harbor!" I didn’t understand much English then, and it’s probably just as well. From the American point of view, they dropped that bomb in order to end the war faster, in order to create more damage faster. But it’s inexcusable to harm human beings in this way. I wonder what kind of education there is now in America about atomic bombs. They’re still making them, aren’t they?

Can you answer Yamaoka Michiko’s question?

Does the plastic surgery she received in America make up for her pain and suffering?
**Total War** Even before the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by atomic bombs, American fire-bombing raids destroyed many Japanese cities. A raid on Tokyo on March 9, 1945 (shown here a few days later), killed at least 100,000 people and left more than a million homeless. Was this kind of destruction of civilians justifiable even in a brutal war? (National Archives [80-G-490421])

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**Timeline**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931–1932</td>
<td>Japan seizes Manchuria</td>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>Hitler becomes German chancellor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>United States recognizes the Soviet Union</td>
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<td>Roosevelt extends Good Neighbor policy</td>
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<td>1934</td>
<td>Germany begins rearmament</td>
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<td>1935</td>
<td>Italy invades Ethiopia</td>
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<td>First Neutrality Act</td>
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<td>1936</td>
<td>Spanish civil war begins</td>
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<td>Second Neutrality Act</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Roosevelt re-elected</td>
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<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Hitler annexes Austria, occupies Sudetenland</td>
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<td></td>
<td>German persecution of Jews intensifies</td>
</tr>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>Nazi–Soviet Pact</td>
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<td>German invasion of Poland; World War II begins</td>
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<td>1940</td>
<td>Roosevelt elected for a third term</td>
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<td>Selective Service Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>FDR’s “Four Freedoms” speech</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proposed black march on Washington</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Executive Order 8802 outlaws discrimination in defense industries</td>
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<td>1942</td>
<td>Lend-Lease Act</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Germany attacks Russia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Japanese assets in United States frozen</td>
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<td>Japanese attack Pearl Harbor; United States declares war on Japan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Germany declares war on United States</td>
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<td>1942–1943</td>
<td>Internment of Japanese Americans</td>
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<td>Second Allied front in Africa launched</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>Invasion of Sicily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Italian campaign; Italy surrenders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Race riots in Detroit and other cities</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Normandy invasion (Operation Overlord)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roosevelt elected for a fourth term</td>
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<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>Yalta Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roosevelt dies; Harry Truman becomes president</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany surrenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Successful test of atomic bomb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombed; Japan surrenders</td>
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major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia.”

Historians still debate whether the use of the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities was necessary to end the war, but for the hundreds of thousands of American troops waiting on board ships and on island bases (even in Europe) to invade the Japanese mainland, there was no question about the rightness of the decision. They believed that the bombs ended the war and saved their lives. On August 6, 1945, two days before the Soviet Union had promised to enter the war against Japan, a B-29 bomber, the *Enola Gay*, dropped a single atomic bomb over Hiroshima. It killed or severely wounded 160,000 civilians and destroyed four square miles of the city. One of the men on the plane saw the thick cloud of smoke and thought that they had missed their target. “It looked like it had landed on a forest. I didn’t see any sign of the city.” The Soviet Union entered the war on August 8. When Japan refused to surrender, a bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on August 9. The Japanese surrendered five days later. The war was finally over. The problems of the atomic age and the postwar world were just beginning.

**Conclusion**

**Peace, Prosperity, and International Responsibilities**

The United States emerged from World War II with an enhanced reputation as the world’s most powerful industrial and military nation. The war had finally ended the Great Depression and brought prosperity to most Americans. Even N. Scott Momaday’s family secured better jobs because of the war, but, like many Americans, they had to move to take those jobs. The war also increased the power of the federal government. The payroll deduction of federal income taxes, begun during the war, symbolized the growth of a federal bureaucracy that affected the lives of all Americans. Ironically the war to preserve liberty and freedom was fought with segregated armed forces, and some American citizens, including many Japanese Americans, were deprived of their freedom. The war had also ended American isolationism and made the United States into the dominant global power. Of all the nations that fought in the war, the United States had suffered the least. No bombs were dropped on American factories, and no cities were destroyed. Although more than 300,000 Americans lost their lives, even this carnage seemed minimal when compared with more than 20 million Russian soldiers and civilians who died or the 6 million Jews and millions of others systematically exterminated by Hitler.

Americans greeted the end of the war with joy and relief. But those who lived through the war years, even those too young to fight, like N. Scott Momaday, recalled the war as a time when all Americans were united to achieve victory. They looked forward to the peace and prosperity for which they had fought. Yet within two years, the peace would be jeopardized by the Cold War, and the United States would be rearming its former enemies, Japan and Germany, to oppose its former friend, the Soviet Union. The irony of that situation reduced the joy of the hard-won peace and made the American people more suspicious of their government and its foreign policy. Yet the memory of World War II and the perception that the country was united against evil enemies, indeed that World War II was a “good war,” would have an impact on American foreign policy, and even on Americans’ perception of themselves, for decades to come.

**Questions for Review and Reflection**

1. Trace the series of international events that led to the United States’ entry into World War II. Could the United States have stayed neutral?
2. Explain why and how the United States interned Japanese Americans in the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Was the internment justified?
3. How did the war change the lives of women, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans?
4. What were the war aims of the United States, and how were they achieved?
5. What led the United States to develop the atomic bomb? What were the consequences of this new weapon for the Japanese, for Americans, and for the outcome of World War II?
In *The Dollmaker* (1954), Harriette Arnow tells the fictionalized story of a young woman from Kentucky who finds herself in wartime Detroit. Two powerful novels that tell the story of the battlefield experience are Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and Irwin Shaw’s *The Young Lions* (1948). Alan Furst has written a series of novels including *Night Soldiers* (1996) and *Red Gold* (1999) that capture the look and feel of Europe in the early days of the war. *Pearl Harbor* (2001) is a blockbuster film worth seeing for the special effects, but more interesting is *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970), a film that tells the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor from both the American and the Japanese points of view. It is compelling even as it oversimplifies history. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), a film about one platoon’s adventures on D-Day and after, is sentimental and romantic in spots but contains some graphic and violent scenes of the invasion of Normandy. *Memphis Belle* (1990) tells the story of one bomber crew. *Schindler’s List* (1993) uses the Holocaust as background and subject. It is important to sample some of the movies produced during the war even though they are often filled with propaganda. *Bataan* (1943) was the first movie featuring an ethnic platoon. *Casablanca* (1943) and *Lifeboat* (1944) are classics.

**Recommended Reading**

Recommended Readings are posted on the Web site for this textbook. Visit [www.ablongman.com/nash](http://www.ablongman.com/nash)

**Fiction and Film**

In *The Dollmaker* (1954), Harriette Arnow tells the fictionalized story of a young woman from Kentucky who finds herself in wartime Detroit. Two powerful novels that tell the story of the battlefield experience are Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and Irwin Shaw’s *The Young Lions* (1948). Alan Furst has written a series of novels including *Night Soldiers* (1996) and *Red Gold* (1999) that capture the look and feel of Europe in the early days of the war. *Pearl Harbor* (2001) is a blockbuster film worth seeing for the special effects, but more interesting is *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970), a film that tells the story of the attack on Pearl Harbor from both the American and the Japanese points of view. It is compelling even as it oversimplifies history. *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), a film about one platoon’s adventures on D-Day and after, is sentimental and romantic in spots but contains some graphic and violent scenes of the invasion of Normandy. *Memphis Belle* (1990) tells the story of one bomber crew. *Schindler’s List* (1993) uses the Holocaust as background and subject. It is important to sample some of the movies produced during the war even though they are often filled with propaganda. *Bataan* (1943) was the first movie featuring an ethnic platoon. *Casablanca* (1943) and *Lifeboat* (1944) are classics.

**Discovering U.S. History Online**

- **World War II Timeline**
  [http://history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/start.html](http://history.acusd.edu/gen/WW2Timeline/start.html)
  This interactive timeline includes the years prior to American involvement in World War II.

- **Resource Listing for World War II**
  [www.sunsite.unc.edu/pha/index.html](http://www.sunsite.unc.edu/pha/index.html)
  This site presents an extensive, categorized listing of World War II primary documents available on the Web.

- **World War II Museum**
  [www.thedropzone.org](http://www.thedropzone.org)
  A virtual museum of World War II, this site covers the European and Pacific theaters, training, Axis accounts, and an innovative collection of oral histories.

- **Remembering Pearl Harbor**
  This site includes a detailed account of the attack, illustrated with maps and photographs, as well as a searchable archive of survivors’ stories.

- **A People at War**
  [www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/a_people_at_war/a_people_at_war.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/a_people_at_war/a_people_at_war.html)
  This National Archives exhibit takes a close look at the contributions that millions of Americans made to the war effort.

- **Poster Art of World War II**
  These powerful posters at the National Archives were part of the battle for the hearts and minds of the American people during World War II.

- **Fighters on the Farm Front**
  [http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/osu/osuhomepage.html](http://arcweb.sos.state.or.us/osu/osuhomepage.html)
  This site offers an illustrated presentation of the efforts to replace the labor force lost by men going into military service.

- **Tuskegee Airmen**
  [www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/prewwii/ta.htm](http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/prewwii/ta.htm)
  The Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base maintains this site about the African American pilots of World War II.

- **African Americans in World War II**
  [www.coax.net/people/lwf/ww2.htm](http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/ww2.htm)
  This site presents an extensive compilation of links to essays, some internal and some external to the site, which detail the experience of African Americans during World War II.

- **A. Philip Randolph**
  [www.georgemeany.org/archives/apr.html](http://www.georgemeany.org/archives/apr.html)
  A biography of Randolph, emphasizing his beliefs and his work in civil and labor rights.
Japanese Americans
www.lib.washington.edu/exhibits/harmony
This site deals with all aspects of the Japanese wartime internment, relocation centers, and the human stories behind the massive removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast.

Japanese Relocation Sites
www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/anthropology74/
This book describes every relocation site used during the war and includes photographs, architectural drawings, and personal accounts. The full text is presented online.

Japanese American Relocation Photographs
www.usc.edu/isd/archives/arc/digarchives/jarda
This site presents a searchable archive of photos taken from the Los Angeles Examiner. The photos document “the relocation of Japanese Americans in California principally during the period 1941–1946. Many of the photographs show daily life in the camps.”

Latinos and Latinas & World War II
www.utexas.edu/projects/latinoarchives
This site presents a background of Hispanic involvement in World War II as well as reprints of its publication, Narratives, with individual accounts of Hispanic services in the war and on the home front.

An Oral History of Rhode Island Women During World War II
www.stg.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/tocCS.html
This site presents oral histories by students in the Honors English Program at South Kingstown High School as well as an explanation of oral history, essays on women and the war, and a timeline of World War II.

“Flygirls”
www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/flygirls
This site presents the “largely unknown story of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)” with photos, sound clips, essays, profiles, a timeline, and a transcript of the companion film with a teacher’s guide.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
www.ushmm.org
This official Web site of the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., includes more than 15 online exhibitions.

A-Bomb
http://www.csi.ad.jp/ABOMB
This site offers information about the impact of the first atomic bomb as well as the background and context of weapons of total destruction.

Fifty Years from Trinity
http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/trinity/
A complete reprint of an anniversary special section of the newspaper that “detailed the history, impacts and future of atomic weapons and nuclear power.” The site also includes teaching and discussion materials.

The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II: Normandy
www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/normandy/norpam.htm
An online version of a 45-page brochure covering the assault, including maps and photographs.