

# Second World War 1939–1945

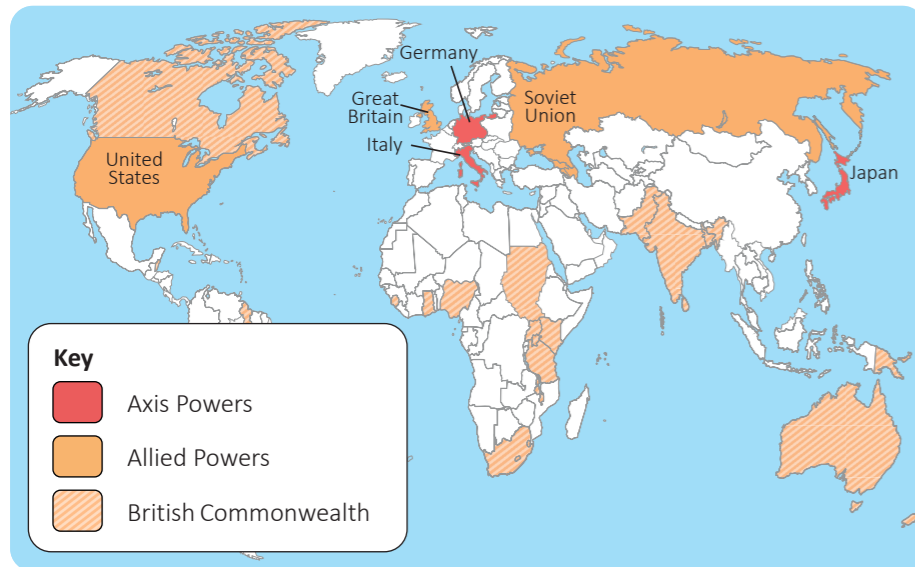
## Causes of the war

The Treaty of Versailles had devastated Germany. By the 1930s, unemployment and poverty in Germany were widespread. Adolf Hitler became Germany's leader in 1934 and claimed his Nazi Party would restore German pride and save the economy. He then invaded the surrounding countries. Britain and France tried appeasement rather than challenging this expansion. On 1st September 1939, German forces invaded Poland. Britain and France declared war on Germany.



## Warring nations

The major nations involved in the Second World War were the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and the Allied Powers (Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States). Germany was led by the fascist dictator Adolf Hitler, who wanted to expand German territory and create a pure German race. At the start of the war, Britain's prime minister was Neville Chamberlain. Winston Churchill replaced him in May 1940.



## Preparation for war

Britain had learned lessons from the First World War. Barrage balloons were placed over London to stop low-flying bombers. Gas masks were issued to the civilian population, and bomb shelters were built. Blackouts were compulsory, and children were evacuated from cities. Conscription was introduced to increase numbers in the army. Food rationing began and ration cards were issued.

## Timeline of events

### Weapons and technology

The Second World War was the most technologically advanced war in history, with many new weapons and technological innovations.

- Radar used radio waves to detect enemy positions.
- Codebreakers developed machines to intercept and decode enemy messages.
- The bouncing bomb was used to destroy German dams.
- German engineers made rocket missiles that damaged British cities.
- A new lightweight fighter plane, the Supermarine Spitfire, was developed.
- The United States used the atomic bomb on Japan.

### Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain took place in the skies above Britain from July to October 1940. Adolf Hitler was planning a land attack on Britain but first had to control the skies to prevent British air attacks. The superior British planes and their organised air-defence system overcame the German Luftwaffe. This was a turning point in the war as Adolf Hitler could not continue with his land invasion plan.



### Civilian life

Civilians in Britain had to cope with frightening air raids and bombing in cities. Finding their way during the blackout was difficult and dangerous. Children were separated from their families in the evacuation, and many women joined the Women's Land Army or worked in factories. Rationing became normal, and people found ingenious ways to make food and clothing last longer.

### End of the Second World War

The Second World War ended on 2nd September 1945, when Japan formally surrendered. Many factors brought about the end of the war. The Allied Powers' D-Day invasion, on 6th June 1944, resulted in Allied troops liberating Paris and Brussels. The Battle of the Bulge failed to break the Allied line. Adolf Hitler realised Germany had lost the war and committed suicide on 30th April 1945. The war against Japan ended after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

<b>September 1939</b>	Germany invades Poland and Poland surrenders
<b>May–June 1940</b>	Germany invades France and Operation Dynamo rescues Allied soldiers from Dunkirk
<b>July–Oct 1940</b>	Battle of Britain
<b>December 1941</b>	Japan attacks Pearl Harbor and the United States enters the war
<b>June 1944</b>	D-Day
<b>May 1945</b>	Germany surrenders (VE Day)

## Post-war world

After the Second World War, the Allied Powers split Germany into West and East Germany. International agreements were signed to ban chemical weapons, torture and genocide. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved, which still forms the basis of international human rights law. The welfare state and National Health Service were created in Britain. Many of the war's technological innovations were redeveloped for civilians.

## Remembrance

Remembrance is the act of remembering and honouring the people who died as a result of conflict. The poppy is a symbol of remembrance after poppies grew on the Western Front battlefields. Memorials, monuments and war cemeteries all serve to remind us of the sacrifice made by millions of people.



## Glossary

<b>alliance</b>	A group of countries who have agreed to work together because of shared aims.
<b>appeasement</b>	Giving the opposing side something they have demanded to prevent further disagreement.
<b>holocaust</b>	The Holocaust was the state-sponsored mass murder of millions of people (mainly Jews) that occurred during the Second World War.
<b>militarism</b>	The belief that it is necessary to have strong armed forces to win political or economic advantages.
<b>reparation</b>	Payment for harm or damage.