



Location

The Second World War was a truly global conflict. The Allies and Axis powers drew more than 30 countries into the conflict. From its beginnings in Western Europe, battles raged across Europe, around the Mediterranean, in Africa and the Middle East and around the Pacific.



Conflict

In the decades after the First World War, Europe was still under the threat of another great conflict. Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party in Germany, had come to power promising to rebuild the German army and was soon invading parts of Europe. Britain and France agreed to help Poland if it was invaded, but that did not stop Hitler. His army moved into Poland, and the Second World War had begun. The conflict involved some of the most famous battles in history, including the Battle of Britain between the British and German airforces, and D-Day, when Allied forces invaded occupied France in June 1944. Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese and brought the United States into the war in 1941. The Second World War also witnessed the use of a powerful new weapon, the atomic bomb, which the USA used on two cities in Japan.

The Second World War was the most deadly conflict the world has ever seen. It brought into opposition the countries of the Allies (France, Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union) and the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan). By the end of the conflict, approximately 50 million people had been killed, and the political and social organisation of the world was changed forever. The Second World War is one of the most significant events in history, and its influences are still felt in daily life today.

Topic related vocabulary:

Allies	the collective name for the countries (including Britain, the USA, France and the Soviet Union) fighting against the Axis powers.
Axis	the collective name for the countries (including Germany, Japan, Italy and others) fighting against the Allied forces.
Blitz	the name given to the bombing campaign made against Britain; from the German word 'blitzkrieg' meaning 'lightning war'.

Topic related vocabulary:

Evacuation	Moving people (particularly children) from dangerous areas to safer places to avoid bombing.
Invasion	when an army or country uses forces to enter and take control of another country or area.
Luftwaffe	the German air force, responsible for the Blitz.

Topic related vocabulary:

Nazi	short for National Socialist Party (in Germany); the name given to supporters of Hitler.
Occupied	taken over by enemy forces.
Rationing	controlling the supply of food, clothes, petrol and other products to avoid or reduce shortages.

1939: Germany invade Poland; Britain and France declared war on Germany

July 1940: The Battle of Britain begins, and lasts until October 1940

December 1941: Pearl Harbour is attacked, and the USA join the war on the side of the Allied forces

June 1944: D-Day – the Allied invasion of occupied France

August 1945: VJ Day – Japan surrenders, marking the end of World War II

May 1940: British forces evacuated from Dunkirk

September 1940: A German bombing campaign known as the Blitz begins, lasting until May 1941

1942: Mass killings of Jewish people and others by Nazi Germany begin

May 1945: VE Day – victory for the Allies in Europe is declared

