

WORLD HISTORY

Crash Course Video

Name _____
World War II #38

Like, when did World War II start? In September 1939, when the _____ invaded _____? I'd say ____! It actually started when _____ invaded _____ in _____, or at the very latest when the _____ invaded _____ in _____, because they didn't stop fighting until 1945. Then again, you could also argue 1933, when Hitler took power, or 1941, when America started fighting. It's complicated.

But anyway, in China the fighting was very brutal, as exemplified by the infamous rape of _____, which featured the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Chinese people and is still so controversial today that:

1. It affects relations between Japan and China
2. Even though I have not described it in detail, you can rest assured that there will be angry comments about my use of the word "slaughter."

But the World War II we know the most about from movies and TV is primarily the war in the European theater, the one that _____ started. Hitler is the rare individual who really did make history - specifically he made it worse - and if he hadn't existed, it's very unlikely that World War II would've ever happened. But he did exist, and after coming to power in _____, with the standard revolutionary promises to return the homeland to its former glory, infused with quite a bit of paranoia and anti-_____, Germany saw rapid re-militarization and eventually, inevitably, war.

In the beginning, it was characterized by a new style of combat made possible by the mechanized technology of tanks, airplanes, and especially, trucks. This was the _____, A devastating tactic combining quick movement of troops, tanks, and massive use of air power to support infantry movements. And in the very early years of the war, it was extremely effective. The Nazis were able to roll over Poland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, and then all of France, all within about _____ months between the fall of 1939 and the summer of 1940.

So after knocking out most of central Europe, the Nazis set their sights on _____, but they didn't invade the island, choosing instead to attack it with massive _____. I mean, you look at this poster and think, "Man, the Queen wants me to finish my term paper, so I can do it," but when this poster was first produced in 1939, it was to quell terror in the face of bombardment.

The Battle of Britain was a duel between the _____ and the _____, and while the RAF denied the Nazis total control of British airspace, the Nazis were still able to bomb Great Britain over and over again in what's known as the _____.

Meanwhile, Europeans were also fighting each other in North Africa. The Desert campaigns started in 1940 and lasted through 1942, this is where _____ general "Monty" Montgomery outfoxed German general Irwin "the _____" Rommel. It's also the place where Americans first fought Nazis in large numbers.

1941 was a big year for World War II... 1st, the Nazis invaded _____, breaking a _____ pact that the two powers had signed in 1939. This hugely escalated the war, and also made allies of the most powerful capitalist countries and the most powerful communist one, an alliance that would stand the test of time and never end... until like three seconds after the defeat of the Nazis.

The Nazi invasion of Russia opened the war up on the so-called _____ Front, although if you were Russian, it was the Western Front, and it led to millions of deaths, mostly Russian. Also, 1941 saw a day that would "live in infamy" when the _____ bombed _____, hoping that such an audacious attack would frighten the _____ into staying neutral, which was a pretty stupid gamble because:

1. The U.S. was already giving massive aid to the Allies and was hardly neutral and
2. The United States is not exactly famed for its pacifism or political neutrality.

1941 also saw Japan invading much of Southeast Asia, which made Australia and New Zealand understandably nervous. As part of the British Commonwealth, they were already involved in the war, but now they could fight the Japanese closer to home.

But by the time the Americans and Australians started fighting the Japanese, it was already a World War. Sometimes this meant fighting or starving or being bombed; other times, it meant production for the war - you don't think of Argentina as being a World War II powerhouse, for instance, but they were vital to the Allies, supplying _____% of British _____ during World War II.

So, not to sound jingoistic, but the entry of the _____ into the war really did change everything, although I doubt the Nazis could've taken Russia regardless. No one conquers Russia in the _____, unless you are - wait for it - the Mongols.

Okay, we're going to skip most of the big battles of 1942 - like the Battle of _____, which effectively ended _____ chance of winning the war - and focus on the Battle of _____. The German attack on Stalingrad, now known as Volgograd because Stalin sucks, was one of the bloodiest battles in the history of war, with more than _____ million dead. The Germans began by dropping more than 1,000 tons of bombs on Stalingrad, and then the Russians responded by "_____ " the Germans, staying as close to their front lines as possible so that German air support would kill Germans and Russians alike.

This kind of worked, although the Germans still took most of the city. But then, a Soviet counterattack left the sixth army of the Nazis completely cut off. And after that, due partly to Hitler's overreaching megalomania and partly to lots of people being scared of him, the sixth army slowly froze and starved to death before finally surrendering. And of the _____ Axis _____ from Stalingrad, only about _____ ever returned home.

Stalingrad turned the war in Europe and by 1944, the American strategy of " _____ " in the _____ was taking GIs closer and closer to Japan. _____ was liberated in June by Americans and Canadians; and the successful British, Canadian, and American _____ invasion of _____ was the beginning of the end for the _____.

An Open Letter to Canada, but first, let's see what's in the secret compartment today. Oh, it's Canadian mittens. I wanna thank the Canadian Crash Course fans, who sent us these mittens. Canadians are just so nice, Stan. Like, all we ever do on this show is make fun of them, and they're just like, "It's so kind of you to mention us. Here's some mittens!"

Dear Canada,

We're not always nice to you here on Crash Course, but you are awesome. I'm pointing, but you can't tell because I'm wearing mittens. _____ Canadians died fighting for the Allies in World War II, which means that, per capita, Canada lost more people than the United States.

You fought with the Royal Air Force to defend Great Britain from the beginning of the war and you were there on D-Day, successfully invading Juno Beach. And, as many of you have pointed out in comments, you defeated the United States in the War of 1812, meaning that, arguably, Canada, you are the greater military power.

Plus, you have lumberjacks, and excellent beer, and hockey, and universal healthcare, and Justin Bieber. I'm jealous! That's what it is - I'm jealous! Best Wishes, John Green.

So, by the end of 1944, the _____ were advancing from the West and the Russian _____ Army was advancing from the East and then, the last-ditch German offensive at the battle of the _____ in the winter of 1944-1945 failed. _____ was executed in April of 1945. _____ committed suicide at the end of that month. And, on _____ the Allies declared victory in Europe after Germany surrendered unconditionally.

Three months later, the United States dropped the only two _____ weapons ever deployed in war, Japan surrendered, and World War II was over.

The war had a definite cause: unbridled military expansion by _____, _____, and, to a small extent, _____. Now, it's easy to claim that Hitler was crazy or evil, and, in fact, he was certainly both, but that doesn't explain the Nazis decision to invade Russia, and it sure doesn't explain Japan's decision to bomb Pearl Harbor.

And there are many possible explanations beyond mere evil; but the most interesting one, to me, involves _____. Hitler had a number of reasons for wanting to expand Germany's territory, but he often talked about Lebensraum or _____ for the German people. German agriculture was really inefficiently organized into lots of small farms, and that meant that Germany needed a lot of land in order to be self-sufficient in food production.

The plan was to take Poland, the Ukraine, and Eastern Russia, and then resettle that land with lots of Germans, so that it could feed German people. This was called the _____ because the plan called for _____ million people to starve to death. Many would be the Poles, Ukrainians, and Russians who'd previously lived on the land. The rest would be Europe's _____, who would be worked to death.

_____ Jews were killed by the Nazis, many by starvation, but many through a chillingly planned effort of extermination in _____ camps. These death camps can be distinguished from concentration camps or labor camps in that their primary purpose was _____ of Jews, Roma people, communists, homosexuals, disabled people, and others that the Nazis deemed unfit. Some historians believe that the Nazis opened the death camps because the Jews weren't dying as _____ as The Hunger Plan had intended.

This was a sickening plan, but it made a kind of demented sense. Rather than becoming more involved in global trade, as the British had, the Germans would feed themselves by taking land and killing the people who'd previously lived there. Similarly, Japan, at the beginning of the war, was suffering from an acute fear of food shortage because its agricultural sector was having trouble keeping up with population growth. And the Japanese too, sought to expand their agricultural holdings by, for instance, resettling farmers in Korea.

So while it's tempting to say that World War II was about the Allies fighting for _____ ideals against the _____ militaristic imperialism of the _____ Axis powers, it just doesn't hold up to scrutiny. For instance, a hugely important Allied power, Stalin's Soviet Union, was, like, the least democratic place, ever. Stan just said that was hyperbole, but it's not. Stalin's Soviet Union is tied with all of the other completely undemocratic countries for last place on the democracy scale. It's a big community there, at last place, but they're definitely in there somewhere.

And, by far, the biggest imperialists of the war were the _____. They couldn't have fed or clothed themselves - or resisted the Nazis - without their colonies and commonwealth.

So, why is World War II so important? Well first, it proved the old Roman adage *homo homini lupus*: _____. This is seen most clearly in the Holocaust, but all the statistics are staggering.

More than a million Indian British subjects died, mainly due to _____ that could have been avoided if the British had redistributed food. And their failure to do so helped convince _____ that the so-called superior civilization of the British was a sham. More than a million Vietnamese died, mainly due to famine. _____. Americans. More than a million noncombatants in both Germany and Japan. And _____ million people in the _____, most of them civilians.

These _____ were targeted because they helped sustain the war, mostly through industrial and agricultural production. In a _____ war, when a nation is at war, not just its army, there is no such thing as a non-military target. From the firebombing of Dresden to Tokyo to Hiroshima, the line between soldier and civilian blurred.

And then, of course, there is the _____, which horrifies us because the elements of Western progress - record-keeping, industrial production, technology - were used to slaughter millions. World War II saw modern industrial nations, which represented the best of the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, descend into once unimaginable cruelty.

And what makes World War II such a historical watershed is that in its wake, all of us - in the West or otherwise - were forced to question whether Western dominance of this planet could, or should, be considered progress.