

Major Battles of World War II

The Axis Powers Make Early Gains: 1939-1941

Two days after Adolf Hitler ordered his armies into Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany. The British and French this ended their policy of “appeasement” which for five years had enabled Hitler to seize territory in Eastern Europe without opposition. But before the British and French could send help to Poland, the German “blitzkrieg” overran the country with tanks, infantryman, dive bombers and other aircraft.

After the fall of Poland, the German war machine swept through northern and western Europe. Denmark and Norway surrendered, then Belgium, Luxembourg and The Netherlands. Allied forces in France found themselves in a desperate situation. With German armies closing in, the Allies retreated to Dunkirk, a port city along the northern coast of France. From there, more than 300,000 British, French and Belgian troops managed to escape across the English Channel to Great Britain. Benito Mussolini, the dictator of Italy, announced that his country was entering the war on Germany’s side. Soon afterwards, France surrendered.

Great Britain was the only remaining Allied nation in Western Europe. In July 1940, the “Luftwaffe” – the German air force – began bombing British airfields and ports. Hitler hoped to force the British to surrender. But Prime Minister, Winston Churchill vowed that his country would never give up. Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF), though outnumbered, had better planes and pilots. Month after month, the Luftwaffe carried on a massive aerial bombardment. Nightly raids were made on London and other cities. Yet the British kept up a determined resistance. The RAF shot down more than 2,000 German planes and forced Hitler to abandon his plan for capturing the British isle. The Battle of Britain, as it came to be known, was one of the turning points of World War II. Not only was Great Britain saved, but the British showed that the Luftwaffe could be defeated.

Meanwhile, the Germans and Italians gained new territories in Eastern Europe and Africa. Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia joined the Axis Powers. Hitler sent the “Afrika Korps,” a highly motorized and heavily equipped army under General Erwin Rommel, to help the Italians seize lands in North Africa. Then, in the summer of 1941, 3 million Axis troops invaded Russia. Hitler expected a quick victory that would give him control over Russia’s vast supplies of food, petroleum and other raw materials. But as the Russians retreated, they burned or destroyed their own factories, dams, railroads, food supplies and other resources in order to prevent them from falling into German hands.

On the map of Europe and North Africa:

- 1) Label GERMANY and ITALY, the leading Axis Powers in Europe. Print the names in CAPITAL LETTERS. Lightly shade these countries with a colored pencil, marker, lead pencil or pen.
- 2) Label the following countries that were under Axis control by the summer of 1941. Print the names in CAPITAL LETTERS

AUSTRIA	THE NETHERLANDS	ALBANIA	MOROCCO
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	FRANCE	GREECE	ALGERIA
POLAND	HUNGARY	LITHUANIA	TUNISIA
DENMARK	ROMANIA	LATVIA	LIBYA
NORWAY	BULGARIA	ESTONIA	
BELGIUM	YUGOSLAVIA	FINLAND	

Lightly shade these countries with the same colored pencil, marker, lead pencil or pen that was used for Germany and Italy
- 3) Print Adolf Hitler inside of Germany, and Benito Mussolini next to Italy
- 4) Draw an arrow from Germany to Poland. Next to it, print 1939: World War II begins
- 5) Label the two major Allied Powers in Europe that the Germans failed to capture – GREAT BRITAIN and SOVIET UNION
- 6) Label the countries that remained neutral:

PORTUGAL	SPAIN	SWITZERLAND	SWEDEN	IRELAND
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Print the word neutral in parentheses below the name of each of these countries on the map
- 7) Fill in the boxes and battle symbols and trace the arrows in the map key with the same colors used to shade the Axis Powers and Allied Powers
- 8) Color a battle symbol next to London to represent an Allied victory. Next to it, print 1940-1941: RAF defeats Luftwaffe in Battle of Britain
- 9) Draw two arrows to show Hitler’s invasion of Russia. Between the arrows print 1941: Germany attacks Russia

America Enters the War: 1941

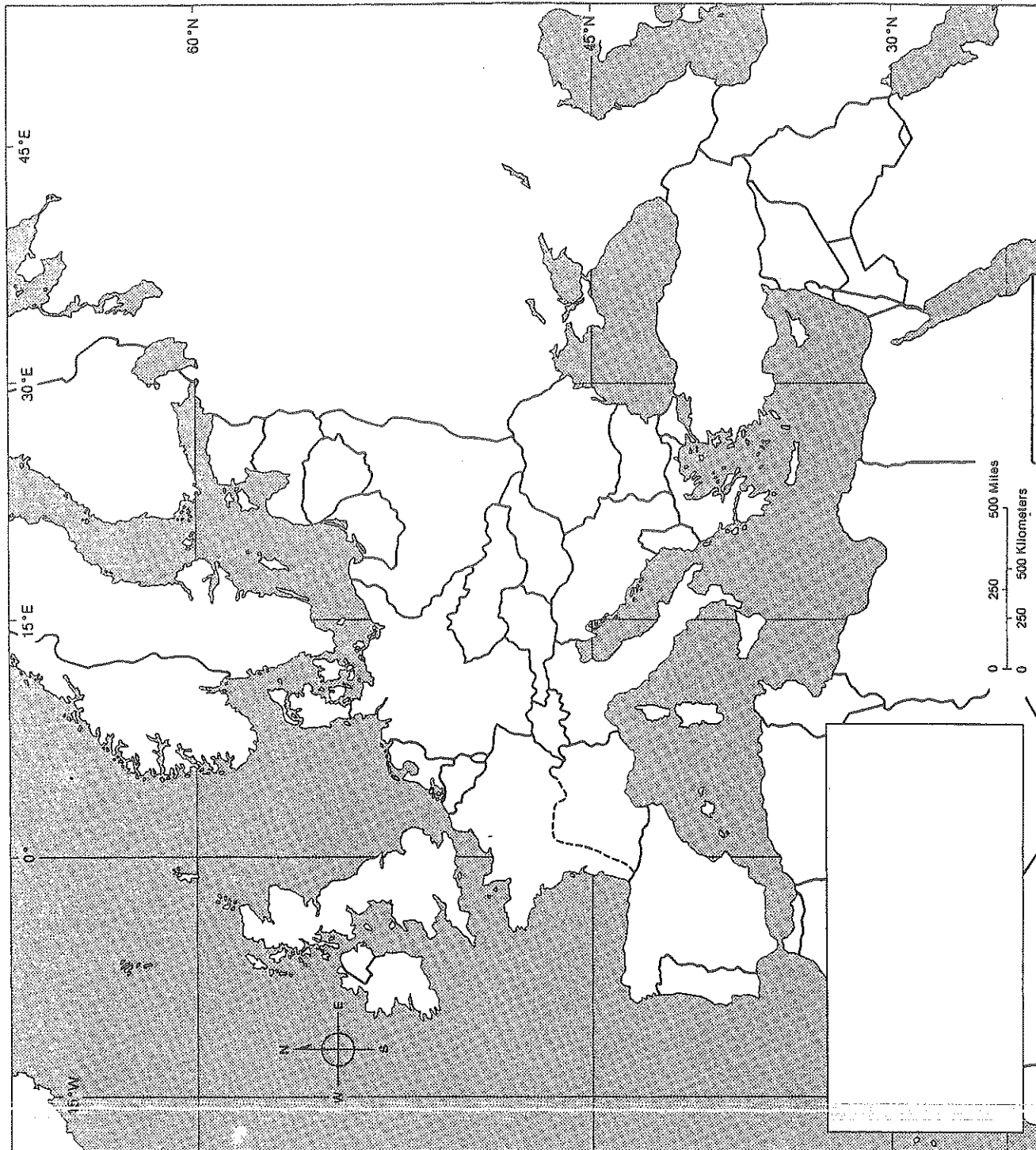
When World War II began in 1939, the United States remained neutral. But, German victories in Europe soon convinced President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the United States should start sending war materials to the Allies. He wanted America to become the "arsenal of democracy." Congress responded by passing the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. It provided the Allies, especially Great Britain and Russia, with more than \$50 billion worth of arms, food and other supplies. American and British ships helped transport these goods across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. German submarines, or U-boats, constantly harassed Allied shipping lanes throughout the war. Eventually, the Allies were able to destroy more U-boats than the submarine could sink Allied ships.

Some of the Lend-Lease aid went to China, which had come under attack by Japan in 1937. When the Japanese occupied Indochina in 1940, the United States stopped shipping gasoline, steel, iron and other materials that might help Japan's forces. Relations between the United States and Japan grew steadily worse. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese suddenly struck the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The secret raid was carried out by a fleet of 33 ships and more than 300 warplanes. Within two hours, the U.S. lost 4 battleships, 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers and 174 planes. More than 3,000 Americans were killed or wounded. The U.S. Pacific Fleet was dealt a crippling blow. President Roosevelt called December 7 "a date which will live in infamy." He asked Congress to declare war on Japan, and the declaration was quickly approved. Germany and Italy then declared war on the United States. Congress responded by declaring war on Germany and Italy.

On the map of the Pacific Regions:

- 1) Label JAPAN IN CAPITAL LETTERS. Show that Japan was an Axis Power by lightly shading it with the same colored pencil, marker, lead pencil or pen used for Germany and Italy
- 2) Draw an arrow to show Japan's attack on the Hawaiian Islands. Next to it, print Dec. 7, 1941: Japan attacks Pearl Harbor

50 World War II in Europe and North Africa



51 The Pacific Area in World War II

