

## **Year 3:**

### **Unit 1**

# **"Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat" - World War II and the Holocaust (1919 - 1945): Introduction**

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## **Unit Purpose: Why This Unit?**

This unit begins where scholars left off last year: a period of economic depression that has spread beyond the United States and across the world. World War I and the Treaty of Versailles left Germany's economy in shambles. Many German citizens were angry, believing that their losses from the war and the treaty were insults to their national pride, and they wanted economic relief from the hardships and suffering. If Germany honored the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles, many Germans believed that the government was not representing their interests. Many people were also angry that Jewish Germans did not seem to be as hard-hit by the depression, and this, coupled with a history of anti-Semitism in Europe, made it easier to villainize them during this time period and blame them for the German loss in World War I. The anger Germans felt toward both the government and Jewish Germans paved the way for the rise of the Nazi Party and Adolf Hitler, who appealed to this anger through anti-Semitic rhetoric and nationalistic pride.

Hitler and the Nazis, upon gaining total control of Germany through elections and politics, began an aggressive policy of expansion. The countries of Europe, fearing the consequences of a second world war, were determined to avoid war and do everything possible to maintain peace with Germany through a policy of appeasement. After a series of invasions and acts of aggression against Germany's neighbors, the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, ultimately forcing Great Britain and France to declare war on Germany, marking the beginning of World War II. Throughout the violence on the warfront, within the European nations under Nazi control, the Nazis committed the worst mass genocide in world history: the Holocaust.

World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust affected people around the world, forcing nations to confront how and why such a tragedy could have occurred. Despite the United States' isolationist interests, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, entry into the war was inevitable. After years of gruesome battle and senseless murder, in 1945 the Allies succeeded in defeating Hitler and the Axis Powers,

bringing World War II and the Holocaust to an end. From the ashes of World War II, new social systems would develop. As the world dealt with the horrors and destruction of the war and the Holocaust, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as rival superpowers. World War II fundamentally changed the United States, at home and abroad, bringing an end to American isolationism and ushering in a new era of globalism.

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## Unit 1 Learning Goals

### Essential Question

**If you are successful in this unit, your scholars will be able to answer the Unit 1 Essential Question: Why did public opinion about the course and conduct of World War II change over time?**

### Big Ideas

The Big Ideas, outlined below, help answer the Unit 1 Essential Question and reflect the key ideas that scholars must master by the end of this unit. As you teach Unit 1, connect every lesson back to the Big Idea(s) that the lesson helps illustrate. The Unit 1 Big Ideas were adapted from the UCLA National History Standards United States Era 8 and the New York State Common Core Social Studies 9–12 Framework.

- **Big Idea 1: German discontent about the outcome of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles led to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany in the 1930s, ultimately sparking the outbreak of World War II.**
  - National socialism and communism were attractive political party beliefs in Germany during the interwar period because of a growing dissatisfaction with the democratic government's compliance with the Treaty of Versailles after World War I.
  - The breakdown of the Versailles settlement and League of Nations in the 1930s was a result of Germany's military aggression after the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, which Europe's policy of appeasement was not able to deter.
  - American isolationist sentiment in the interwar period was a result of economic depression and fear that getting involved in European affairs would lead to more senseless American deaths, as it had in World War I, leaving Hitler's military aggression unchecked.
  - Growing tensions between the United States and Japan culminated with the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, which officially brought the United States into World War II.
- **Big Idea 2: The participation of the United States in World War II increased American power and influence abroad, ended the Great Depression, and united citizens through national pride.**
  - The United States mobilized its economic and military resources during World War II to support the Allied Powers.
  - The war fostered cultural exchange and interaction between men and women and people of different races, while promoting nationalism and American identity.
  - Fear after the attack at Pearl Harbor led to the internment of Japanese Americans during the war and the enduring debate over the role of the government in providing safety for Americans or protecting Americans' civil liberties.

- World War II altered the American family and challenged traditional gender roles as women joined the workforce to support the war effort.
- The war had a major impact on science, medicine, and technology, especially in nuclear physics and weaponry.
- **Big Idea 3: The Allied Powers prevailed in World War II through superior military and economic strength, but all countries involved faced enormous human and financial consequences as a result of the war.**
  - World War II was fought on multiple fronts, affecting not just soldiers' lives but citizens' lives around the world.
  - When the tide of the war turned to favor an Allied victory, Hitler's response was to implement the "Final Solution" to exterminate the Jewish population in Europe, leading to the mass murder of millions of Jewish Europeans.
  - The U.S. response to the Holocaust evolved over time. Initially, Americans refused to believe the magnitude of the Holocaust and help Jewish Europeans, but eventually the United States coordinated rescue missions and participated in concentration camp liberations at the end of the war.
  - The decision to employ nuclear weapons against Japan officially ended World War II but sparked controversy and debate, especially after the devastation to Japanese citizens was reported.

## Key Terms

**The following people, places, and events are foundational to understanding the Big Ideas of this unit. As these words are introduced in each lesson, add them to your word wall and hold scholars accountable for using them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.**

- Anti-Semitism
- Holocaust
- Propaganda
- Adolf Hitler
- Nazi Party
- Third Reich
- Appeasement
- Winston Churchill
- Franklin D. Roosevelt
- Isolationism
- Pearl Harbor
- Executive Order 9066
- Korematsu v. United States
- American home front
- Concentration camps
- Final Solution
- St. Louis
- War Refugee Board

- D-Day/VE Day
  - Atomic bomb
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## Intellectual Preparation

**Class Materials** Once you have internalized the Big Ideas of the unit, to be successful you must study all scholar documents and materials before you teach the first lesson:

- All documents in the [Unit 1 Sourcebook](#)
- All scholar and teacher materials in the [Unit 1 Workbook](#)

**Additional Resources** The resources below provide additional historical background for the content covered in Unit 1:

- Read “Teaching Hard History” from the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project.
- Review the “Timeline of Events” on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website.
- Read the Holocaust Museum’s “Teaching About the Holocaust”; the essays “The Global Effect of World War I” and “World War II” on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History\* website; “Anti-Semitism” and “Introduction to the Holocaust” on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website; and “Fascism” on the Encyclopedia Britannica website.
- Watch “The Path to Nazi Genocide” on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum website and “The Legacy of WWI” on the History Channel website, and browse the Video Toolbox on the Echoes and Reflections website.
- Browse the articles and videos on the History Channel: WWII and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum websites.

\*To access these readings and more free American History content and resources, create an account on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website.

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## Unit 1 Lesson Sequence

**Essential Question:** Why did public opinion about the course and conduct of World War II change over time?

The first three lessons set the stage for the lead-up to the outbreak of World War II. The first lesson traces anti-Semitism over time to give scholars the background necessary to understand Hitler’s rise to power, which they will learn about in the second lesson. The third lesson addresses European appeasement to Hitler’s military aggression and how it ultimately failed and led to the outbreak of World War II. By the end of these three lessons, scholars will understand how World War II started and be prepared to examine opinions and experiences during World War II.

**Lesson 1:** Anti-Semitism (Video Analysis)

- **Central Question:** How did a history of anti-Semitism in Europe make the Holocaust possible?

## **Lesson 2: The Election of 1932 (Simulation)**

- **Central Question:** Why did Germans vote for the Nazi Party?

## **Lesson 3: Nazi Aggression and Appeasement (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** Why did European leaders appease Nazi aggression?

**Lessons 4 through 7 describe American actions and public opinions leading up to participation in World War II. Lessons 4 and 5 address arguments for and against American isolationism. Lesson 6 addresses the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and Lesson 7 discusses one of the responses to this attack: the internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast, for fear that they might commit another attack. By the end of Lesson 7, scholars will understand why the United States ultimately joined World War II despite its previous isolationist stance.**

## **Lessons 4–5: American Isolationism (Source Analysis, Exit Ticket Revision)**

- **Central Question:** To what extent did Americans support entry into World War II?

## **Lesson 6: U.S. Entry into World War II (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** Why did the United States join World War II?

## **Lesson 7: Japanese Internment (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** Why were Japanese Americans interned during World War II?

**Lessons 8 and 9 describe the experience of soldiers on each front of the war, as well as the experience of Americans on the home front. By the end of Lesson 9, scholars will understand the geography of the war and how the war changed not only Europe but the United States as well.**

## **Lesson 8: The Battlefield (Jigsaw)**

- **Central Question:** To what extent were the experiences of soldiers on each front of World War II similar?

## **Lesson 9: American Home Front (Gallery Walk)**

- **Central Question:** How did World War II affect American life on the home front?

**Lessons 10 and 11 describe the atrocities of the Holocaust and the evolution of American opinions and responses to it. By the end of Lesson 11, scholars will have examined the consequences of anti-Semitism, both in Europe and the United States. Scholars will also be able to articulate the disconnect between American public opinion and action in response to the Holocaust. As a result of these lessons, scholars will understand the dire consequences of World War II for Jewish populations across Europe.**

## **Lesson 10: The Holocaust (Source Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** How did the Holocaust devastate the lives of people across Europe?

**Lesson 11: U.S. Response to the Holocaust (Video Analysis)**

- **Central Question:** How did the U.S. response to the Holocaust evolve over time?

**Lessons 12 through 14 explain the end of the war in both Europe and the Pacific. Lesson 12 describes the major battles that ended the war in Europe, while Lessons 13 and 14 evaluate the American decision to drop the atomic bomb, ending the war in the Pacific and, thus, World War II. By the end of Lesson 14, scholars will understand why the Allies prevailed and will be able to articulate the consequences of an Allied victory, both in Europe and in the Pacific.**

**Lesson 12: The Fall of the Nazis (Gallery Walk)**

- **Central Question:** How did the Allies defeat the Nazis?

**Lessons 13–14: The Atomic Bomb (Debate, Exit Ticket Revision)**

- **Central Question:** Should the United States have dropped the atomic bomb on Japan?