

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide



## World War II and the Holocaust, 1939–1945

### Lesson 1 World War II Begins

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

*Why do political actions often lead to war? How does war impact society and the environment?*

#### Reading HELPDESK

##### Academic Vocabulary

**dominate** to influence or control

**violation** a disregard of rules or agreements

##### Content Vocabulary

**demilitarized** elimination or prohibition of weapons, fortifications, and other military installations

**appeasement** satisfying reasonable demands of dissatisfied powers in an effort to maintain peace and stability

**sanctions** restrictions intended to enforce international law

#### TAKING NOTES: *Categorizing*

**ACTIVITY** As you read, create a chart like the one below listing examples of Japanese and German aggression prior to the outbreak of World War II.

Japanese Aggression	German Aggression

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### Lesson 1 World War II Begins, *continued*

#### IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Both Germany and Japan invaded neighboring countries in the 1930s. They wanted to gain resources and land for their empires. Hitler became partners with Italy, took over Austria, and occupied the Sudetenland. Japan conquered Manchuria. At first, other world powers tried to ignore these acts of aggression, or attacks. They thought they could avoid war. However, Germany and Japan continued their threats, and their actions would finally lead to war.

#### The German Path to War

**Guiding Questions** *What was Hitler's motivation for German expansion? What alliances and events contributed to the outbreak of World War II?*

World War II in Europe had its beginnings in the ideas of Adolf Hitler. Hitler believed that Germans belonged to a so-called Aryan race. Aryan was actually the name for people speaking Indo-European languages, who settled in ancient Iran and northern India. Hitler misused the name to mean a race that included modern-day Germans and Scandinavians (people from countries such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark). According to Hitler, the Aryan race was superior to all other races and nationalities. Hitler believed that Germany, as the nation of Aryans, could build a great civilization. However, Hitler thought that Germany needed more land to support a larger population to be a great power.

In the 1920s, Hitler suggested that a Nazi regime would find this land to the east, in the Soviet Union. As a result, Germany had to prepare for war with the Soviet Union. Once Hitler had conquered the Soviet Union, he planned for German peasants to resettle its land. The native Slavic peoples could be used as slave labor. Hitler wanted to create an Aryan racial state that he thought would **dominate** Europe for a thousand years.

#### Hitler Violates Treaty

The Treaty of Versailles had limited Germany's military power after World War I. Nations such as France did not want Germany to be powerful again and be able to attack them. As chancellor, or chief minister of the government, Hitler pretended to be dedicated to keeping peace. He stressed that Germany wished to change the unfair provisions of the treaty by peaceful means. Hitler claimed Germany wanted only its rightful place among the European states.

On March 9, 1935, Hitler announced the creation of a new German air force. One week later, he began a military draft. The draft expanded Germany's army from 100,000 to 550,000 troops. These steps were in direct **violation** of the Treaty of Versailles.

France, Great Britain, and Italy condemned Germany's actions and warned against future aggressive, or warlike, steps. However, these nations were experiencing the effects of the Great Depression. They were troubled by their own internal problems, so they did nothing further about Hitler.

Hitler was convinced that the Western states would not use force to maintain the Treaty of Versailles. So, on March 7, 1936, he sent German troops into the Rhineland. The Rhineland was part of Germany, but the Treaty of Versailles ordered it to be a **demilitarized** area. That is, Germany was not allowed to have weapons or fortifications there. France had the right to use force against any violation of this provision. However, France would not act without British support.

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Great Britain did not support the use of force against Germany. The British government viewed the occupation of German territory by German troops as a reasonable action by a dissatisfied power. *The London Times* noted that the Germans were only “going into their own back garden.” Great Britain then began to practice a policy of **appeasement**. According to this policy, European states should satisfy the reasonable demands of dissatisfied powers and then the dissatisfied powers would be content (happy). In the end, Europe would remain stable and peaceful.

#### New Alliances

Meanwhile, Hitler gained new allies, or partners. Benito Mussolini of Italy had long dreamed of creating a new Roman Empire. Mussolini’s forces invaded Ethiopia, in Africa, in October 1935. Mussolini was angered by French and British opposition to his invasion. Mussolini was glad to have Hitler’s support. He began to get closer to the German dictator.

In 1936 both Germany and Italy sent troops to Spain to help General Francisco Franco in the Spanish Civil War in his fight against the republican government there. In October 1936, Mussolini and Hitler made an agreement recognizing their common interests. One month later, Mussolini spoke of the new alliance, or partnership, between Italy and Germany. It was called the Rome-Berlin Axis. Also in November, Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. It promised a common front against communism.

#### Union With Austria

Germany was once more a “world power,” as Hitler proclaimed in 1937. He believed neither France nor Great Britain would provide much opposition to his plans. In 1938 he decided to pursue his goal of *Anschluss* (AHN-shloos), or union, with his native land of Austria. Hitler threatened to invade Austria. As a result, he forced the Austrian chancellor to put the Nazis in charge of the Austrian government. The new Austrian government promptly invited German troops to enter Austria and “help” maintain law and order. On March 13, 1938, one day after his triumphal return to his native land, Hitler annexed, or added, Austria to Germany.

#### Demands and Appeasement

Hitler’s next objective was to destroy Czechoslovakia. On September 15, 1938, he demanded that Germany be given the Sudetenland. The Sudetenland was an area in northwestern Czechoslovakia where mostly Germans lived. Hitler said that he was ready to risk “world war” to achieve his objective.

A conference in Munich was quickly arranged. British, French, German, and Italian representatives at the conference did not oppose Hitler’s plans. Instead, they reached an agreement that gave Hitler almost all of his demands. German troops were allowed to occupy the Sudetenland. The Czechs were abandoned by their Western allies, and they had to accept the loss of the Sudetenland.

The Munich Conference was the high point of Western appeasement of Hitler. Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, returned to England from Munich and boasted that the agreement meant “peace for our time.” One British statesman, Winston Churchill, warned instead that the settlement at Munich was “a disaster of the first magnitude.” Hitler had promised Chamberlain that he would make no more demands. Chamberlain and many others believed him.

In fact, Hitler was more convinced than ever that Western democracies would not fight against him. He was sure he could not make a mistake and grew more and more confident of his power. He had not been satisfied at Munich. He wanted more.

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide

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## World War II and the Holocaust, 1939–1945

### Lesson 1 World War II Begins, *continued*

In March 1939, Hitler looked to western Czechoslovakia. He invaded it and took control of Bohemia and Moravia. The eastern part of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia, became a puppet state. This meant it was in reality controlled by Nazi Germany. On the evening of March 15, 1939, Hitler was in the Czechoslovakian city of Prague. There he proudly declared that he would be known as the greatest German of them all.

At last, Western states reacted to the Nazi threat. Hitler's aggression made it clear that his promises were worthless. Hitler next began to demand the Polish port of Danzig. Great Britain saw the danger and offered to protect Poland in the event of war. Both France and Britain realized that only the Soviet Union was powerful enough to help limit Nazi aggression. They began political and military negotiations with Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, but these failed.

### Hitler and the Soviets

Hitler continued to believe that the West would not fight over Poland. He now feared, however, that the West and the Soviet Union might make an alliance. Such an alliance could mean a two-front war for Germany. To prevent this, Hitler made his own agreement with Stalin.

Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact on August 23, 1939. In it, the two nations promised not to attack each other. To get the nonaggression pact, Hitler offered Stalin control of eastern Poland and the Baltic states. It did not matter to Hitler what he promised. He did not intend to keep his promises in any case.

Hitler shocked the world when he announced the treaty. Germany was now free to attack and take control of Poland. He knew that the Soviet Union would not fight to protect it. Hitler told his generals that he was pleased about the opportunity to invade Poland. He only feared that another country would try to appease him again. An offer of appeasement meant he would have to negotiate and he would not be able to invade Poland immediately as he planned.

This time the Western nations did not choose appeasement. On September 1, German forces invaded western Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany.



#### Reading Progress Check

**Determining Cause and Effect** How did World War I affect European leaders' attitudes toward international aggression?

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### The Japanese Path to War

**Guiding Question** *Why did Japan want to seize other countries?*

Japan controlled part of Manchuria, in northeast Asia, but it wanted to control more. The Japanese needed an excuse to take over the rest of the country. On the night of September 18, 1931, Japanese soldiers disguised themselves as Chinese soldiers and blew up a small section of the Manchurian

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Railway near the city of Mukden. The Japanese soldiers planned to blame the “Mukden incident” on the Chinese. The Japanese army used this incident to justify its actions. It then took all of Manchuria in a series of rapid military advances.

Manchuria had many resources the Japanese needed. After taking control of Manchuria, the Japanese army became committed to an expansionist policy. This policy was a plan to make the Japanese Empire bigger.

The Japanese army had formed Manchuria into a separate state and renamed it Manchukuo by September 1932. They placed a puppet ruler, Henry Pu Yi, on the throne. As an infant, Henry Pu Yi had been China’s “last emperor.” He had abdicated that throne following the revolution of 1911 in China, which had led to the end of the empire.

There were worldwide protests against the Japanese seizure of Manchuria. These protests led the League of Nations to send in investigators, and they issued a report that condemned the seizure. As a result, Japan withdrew from the League. The United States refused to recognize the Japanese takeover of Manchuria but did not want to threaten to use force in support of Manchuria.

Over the next several years, Japan continued its expansion. It gained control over the eastern part of Inner Mongolia and areas in north China around Beijing. Neither the Japanese emperor, Hirohito, nor government leaders could control the army. In fact, it was the army that made Japanese foreign policy. The military had great power. Militants in the government and the armed forces gained control of Japanese politics by the mid-1930s.

### War With China

The leader of the Chinese government, Chiang Kai-shek, tried to avoid a conflict with Japan. He considered the Chinese Communists a greater threat. He wanted his military power focused on them. When fights between Chinese and Japanese troops broke out, he tried to appease Japan. He allowed the Japanese to govern areas in north China.

As Japan moved steadily southward, protests against Japanese aggression grew stronger in Chinese cities. Chiang ended his military efforts against the Communists in December 1936. He formed a new united front against the Japanese. In July 1937, Chinese and Japanese forces battled south of Beijing, and hostilities spread.

Japan had not planned to declare war on China, but the 1937 incident turned into a major conflict. The conflict was led by newly appointed Chief-of-Staff Hideki Tōjō. Japan seized the Chinese capital of Nanjing in December. The Japanese army destroyed the city, and they massacred over 100,000 civilians and prisoners of war. The event was so cruel and brutal that it became known as the “Rape of Nanjing.” Chiang Kai-shek refused to surrender. He moved his government upriver, first to Hankou and then to Chongqing. Temporarily defeated, the Chinese continued to resist.

### The New Asian Order

Japanese military leaders had hoped to force Chiang to agree to join a New Order in east Asia. It would be made up of Japan, Manchuria, and China. Japan’s plan was to establish a new system of control in Asia. Japan would guide its Asian neighbors to prosperity.

Part of Japan’s plan was to seize Soviet Siberia, an area rich in resources. During the late 1930s, Japan began to cooperate with Nazi Germany. Japan assumed that the two countries would ultimately launch a joint attack on the Soviet Union. They would then divide Soviet resources between them.

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When Germany signed the nonaggression pact with the Soviets in August 1939, Japanese leaders had to rethink their goals. Japan lacked the resources to defeat the Soviet Union without help. As a result, the Japanese looked to south Asia for raw materials to supply its military machine.

#### Japan Launches Attack

Japan knew that a move southward would risk war with the European powers and the United States. The attack on China in 1937 had already caused strong criticism, especially in the United States. Despite the risks, in the summer of 1940, Japan demanded to use the economic resources in French Indochina.

The United States objected. It warned Japan that it would apply economic **sanctions**. To avoid sanctions, Japan had to withdraw from the area and return to its borders of 1931. Japan did this because it badly needed the oil and scrap iron it was buying from the United States. Sanctions would cut off Japan's supply and force Japan to find them elsewhere. Japan viewed the possibility of sanctions as a threat to its long-term objectives.

Japan now faced a difficult choice. To gain access to raw materials in Southeast Asia, Japan had to risk losing raw materials from the United States. The Japanese debated their path of action. In the end, Japan decided to launch a surprise attack on U.S. and European colonies in Southeast Asia.



#### Reading Progress Check

**Summarizing** What regions did Japan consider in its search for natural resources?

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