UNIT 3: WORLD WAR II

VOCABULARY AND IMPORTANT PEOPLE:

1. **Pan-Germanism**: a political movement of the 19th century aiming for unity of the German-speaking populations of Europe

2. **Lebensraum**: “living space;” territory believed to be needed for a nation’s natural development.

3. **Anschluss**: the joining of Austria to Germany in 1938.

4. **Sudetenland**: a region of Czechoslovakia that borders with Germany, consisting of German-speaking people.

5. **Munich Pact**: An agreement between Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, signed at Munich on September 29, 1938, under which the Sudetenland was ceded to Nazi Germany, often used as an example of misjudged or dishonourable appeasement (Vocab #10).

6. **Nazi-Soviet Pact (AKA: The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact)**: an agreement officially titled the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union (Russia) and signed in Moscow in August 1939. Named after the foreign ministers of each country, Vyacheslav Molotov (Russian) and Joachim von Ribbentrop (Germany).
7. **World War II Alliances**: there were two alliances by the end of WWII. They didn’t all start together, but they ended up like this:

- **Allied Powers**: Britain, France, USA, Russia
- **Axis Powers**: Germany (Austria), Italy, Japan

8. **League of Nations in the 1930’s**: The League of Nations was intended to resolve international disputes peacefully. However, it was extremely ineffective in dealing with threats to world peace. Some examples that show this are: Japanese occupation of Manchuria (1931-1932), Italian invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) (1935), German re-armament (1935), German occupation of the Rhineland (1936), Japanese all-out war against China (1937)

- The League of Nations was intended to resolve international disputes peacefully. Yet the League’s ineffectiveness soon became apparent. In 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, the League condemned the action. However, without either the weight of the US or the power of its own army, it was unable to stop Japan. By 1937, Japan had launched a full-scale invasion of China. In October 1935, the League imposed economic sanctions but little more when Mussolini invaded Abyssinia. In March 1936, a cautious Hitler remilitarised the Rhineland, forbidden under Versailles. The feared Anglo-French reaction never came. In the League’s council, the USSR was the only country to propose sanctions. British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin ruled out the possibility. Germany and Italy now realised that the democracies were seeking to avoid confrontation, so both countries continued to ‘test the limits’.

- In summary, the league failed for 7 reasons (WAS-DUMB):
  i. **Weak** – the League’s ‘powers’ were little more than going ‘tut-tut’. Sanctions did not work. It had no army.
  ii. **America** – the strongest nation in the world never joined. Britain and France were not strong enough to impose pace on their own.
  iii. **Structure** – the League’s organisation was muddled, so it took ages to do anything. Members couldn’t agree – but decisions had to be unanimous. This paralysed the League.
  iv. **Depression** – the world-wide Depression made countries try to get more land and power. They were worried about themselves, not about world peace.
  v. **Unsuccessful** – the more the League failed, the less people trusted it. In the end, everybody just ignored it.
  vi. **Members** – the League’s main members let it down. Italy and Japan defied and left the League. France and Britain betrayed it.
  vii. **Bullies** – in the 1920s, the League had been quite successful with small, weak countries. In the 1930s, powerful countries like Germany, Italy and Japan defied the League. They were too strong for the League to stop them.

9. **German expansion**: Germany expanded (ie. Sudetenland, Rhineland, Poland) greatly in the late 1930’s. This was to get control of land (Lebensraum – Vocab #2), to build an army, have more citizens, and improve the economy – all great makings for preparing for war. He did so in a “sneaky” manner
whereby it seemed that his requests and actions were understandable because the Treaty of Versailles was so harsh against Germany.

10. **Appeasement**: a diplomatic policy aimed at avoiding war by making concessions to another power, meaning, they’ll let the other power do whatever they want so they don’t make anger them, just to keep the peace. Many countries, including Britain and France, practiced appeasement with Germany in the 1930’s.

11. **Neville Chamberlain**: Prime Minister of Britain from 1937-1940. He supported appeasement and didn’t think much of it because he was busy with trying to deal with the Depression.

12. **Winston Churchill**: Prime Minister of Britain from 1940-1945. He was completely against appeasement, and abolished the idea of it when he was elected (although he did understand to some degree why Chamberlain didn’t have much of a choice with the Depression).

13. **Blitzkrieg "Lightening War"**: An intense military campaign intended to bring about a swift victory. Hitler started practising this after becoming the head of state in 1933, building as many tanks, guns, planes and training as many soldiers as possible (against the Treaty of Versailles) to prepare for a quick and easy war.

14. **Phony War**: The months following Britain’s declaration of war are referred to as the 'phony war' because Britain saw no military action during that time.

15. **Maginot Line**: A line of defensive fortifications constructed by the French along their eastern border, extending from Switzerland to Luxembourg, between 1929 and 1936. In World War II, although the defences held, the Germans outsmarted them, going through Belgium to conquer France, avoiding the fortifications.
16. **Kamikazes**: A Japanese aircraft loaded with explosives and making a deliberate suicidal crash on an enemy target.

17. **Battle of Britain**: The deadly air encounters between Great Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF) and the German Luftwaffe (air force) between July 1940 and June 1941. In this battle, the Germans tried to cripple the RAF and demoralize British citizens with nightly bombing raids. Hitler called off the air raids after sustaining heavy losses. No clear winner, but Allies did very well considering that it was a surprise attack, heavily due to extremely brave British pilots, the modern RADAR technology, and the leadership of Prime Minister Winston Churchill (not to mention that Hitler did not take Rommel's advice [a military officer] leading to disorganization on the German side).

18. **Dunkirk Evacuation**: commonly known as the Miracle of Dunkirk, code-named Operation Dynamo by the British, was the evacuation of Allied soldiers from the beaches and harbour of Dunkirk, France, between 26 May and the early hours of 3 June 1940, because the British, French and Belgian troops were cut off by the German army during the Battle of Dunkirk in the Second World War. Allies escape from successful German victory.

19. **Operation Barbarossa**: Operation Barbarossa was Adolf Hitler’s surprise attack on the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 that crippled the Russian Army, eventually leading to their withdrawal from the war. The attack was a "surprise" because Hitler and the Soviet leader, Josef Stalin, had cooperated previously on several ventures. Axis wins.

20. **Battle of El Alamein**: a pitched battle in World War II (1942) resulting in a decisive Allied victory by British troops over German troops. Allies win.

21. **Battle of Stalingrad**: A major battle between German and Soviet troops in World War II. The battle was fought in the winter of 1942–1943 and ended with the surrender of an entire German army. Stalingrad is considered a major turning point of the war in favor of the Allies. Allies win.

22. **Battle of the Atlantic**: The military engagements that took place in the Atlantic Ocean from 1939 through 1945 as Axis ships, submarines, and aircraft, primarily German, tried to prevent supplies and support, primarily American, from reaching Europe.

23. **Battle of the Coral Sea**: a Japanese defeat (May 1942); the first naval battle fought entirely by planes based on aircraft carriers. Along with Midway, was the greatest naval battle of all time.

24. **Battle of Midway**: a major naval battle (June 1942); American planes based on land and on carriers
decisively defeated a Japanese fleet on its way to invade the Midway Islands). Along with The Coral Sea, was the greatest naval battle of all time.

25. **Normandy Invasion (D-Day):** The day (June 6, 1944) in World War II on which Allied forces invaded northern France by means of beach landings in Normandy
   - **Juno Beach:** the beach of Normandy that The Canadian Forces (as a British Colony) invaded. They were the most successful of all the beach invasions on D-Day. By the end of D-Day, 30,000 Canadians had been successfully landed, and the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division had penetrated further into France than any other Allied force, despite having faced strong resistance at the water's edge and later counter-attacks on the beachhead by Germans on June 7 and 8.

26. **Hiroshima:** A city in southwestern Japan, on the southern coast of the island of Honshu; pop. 1,086,000. It was the target of the first atom bomb, which was dropped by the US on August 6, 1945, and resulted in the deaths of about one third of the city's population of 300,000. This, with a second attack on Nagasaki three days later, led to Japan's surrender and to the end of World War II.
   - **Opinion that it should have been dropped:** there are many arguments as to why it was necessary to drop the atom bomb.
     - Japan's army was ruthless, and something of this magnitude would be enough to make them surrender
     - The USA only had a few bombs and didn’t want to “waste” them
     - Invading Japan on foot would have easily led to just as many casualties, if not more
     - They would have used firebombs on those cities anyway
     - The use of the bomb taught the world of the extreme consequences of it, therefore discouraging the world from ever using nuclear weapons
     - Using the bomb ended the war quickly
• **Opinion that it shouldn’t have been dropped:** there are many arguments as to why it wasn’t necessary to drop the atom bomb.
  - Japan was going to surrender soon anyways
  - America refused to allow Japan to keep its emperor, prolonging the fighting in the first place.
  - A demonstration explosion over Tokyo would have had the same political effect with less casualties
  - Even if Hiroshima was necessary, the USA didn’t leave enough time for Nagasaki to prepare
  - The bomb was used partly just to justify the cost to construct it
  - The cities had more civilians than military

27. **American-Japanese Conflict:** throughout WWII there was a great deal of conflict between the USA and Japan. America succeeded over Japan, and it is easily argued that the war would have been lost if the USA hadn’t entered.

• **Pearl Harbour:** a harbour in Hawaii that has an American Naval base that was bombed by the Japanese in 1941. The Japanese saw that America having a base so close to them was a threat, heightening tensions between the two countries. Just to add to it all, America started economic sanctions (cutting off Japan’s economy to America) angering Japan even further and provoking the attack.

• **Size of American Fleet:** America had a massive fleet compared to Japan; for every one Japanese aircraft carrier, the USA had seven.

• **American Industrialization:** during the war, “motor city,” Detroit was converted into a military industrialized city. They produced more weapons, machines, boats, etc. Than many other countries combined, outnumbering Japan.

• **American Technology:** American was smarter with their technology; although Japan had faster planes, they were nowhere near as tough and more pilots died as a result.

• **Prisoners of War:** soldiers taken prisoner by the enemy. America treated their prisoners well – in fact, they treated them better than many of their fellow Americans as the country was still racially segregated. Japan, however, treated their prisoners horribly. They were put in camps
very similar to concentration camps of the Holocaust – they were malnourished, beaten, executed, and tortured.

28. Dresden: a strategic military bombing by the British and Americans on the city of Dresden, the capital of the German state of Saxony, that took place in the final months of the Second World War.

29. Holocaust: The mass murder of Jews under the German Nazi regime during the period 1941–45. More than 6 million European Jews, as well as members of other persecuted groups, such as gypsies and homosexuals, were murdered at concentration camps.

30. Atlantic Charter: A declaration of eight common principles in international relations drawn up by Churchill and Roosevelt in August 1941, which provided the ideological basis for the United Nations organization.

31. Sphere of Influence: an area or region over which a state or organization has significant cultural, economic, military or political influence.

32. Nuremberg Trials: a series of military trials, held by the main victorious Allied forces of World War II, most notable for the prosecution of prominent members of the political, military, and economic leadership of the defeated Nazi Germany.

33. Yalta Conference: a conference held near Yalta, Ukraine, with Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill to decide on the reorganization of
Europe after WWII. At this conference, Germany and its capital city Berlin were divided into four zones: Russian, French, British and American. France, Britain and America later joined together, forming West Germany and West Berlin, while Russia alone formed East Germany and East Berlin. This raised tensions between Russia and the West, eventually leading to the Cold War [Unit 4]. Also at the conference, many smaller European countries were promised free elections, however many never got them and feel under the Soviet sphere of influence.

34. **Potsdam Conference**: a conference held in Germany with Stalin, Truman, Churchill and Attlee (who was soon to be the new Prime Minister of Britain) meant to decide on the punishment for Germany, particularly the Nazi’s, after WWII. It was decided that Germany would return all land that was claimed, their land was cut down to just 75% of its original before the war, they had to pay reparations, and all military factories were ordered to be destroyed. Poland was also given some land from Germany, a new Provisional Government, and a new Eastern border. After Potsdam, America dropped the Atomic Bomb on Japan, raising tensions amongst the powers. In reverse, Harry Truman also became very suspicious of Stalin as he started to take over Eastern Europe.

35. **United Nations**: an international organization of countries from all over the world set up in 1945, in succession to the League of Nations, to promote international peace, security, and cooperation; it includes the Security Council (major countries that make the most decisions). The League of Nations had been too weak to stop aggression because major powers were unwilling to give up their self interest to such an international organization. To ensure American commitment [as they had not joined the League of Nations] the headquarters were put in the United States. The UN is divided into two parts:

- **General Assembly**: made up of all countries that aren’t on the Security Council.
- **Security Council**: the major countries; there are five permanent members (France, Britain, United States, China, and Russia. Ten other members are elected every two years. The permanent members possess veto power, meaning they can stop any action of the UN.
- **Criticism**: the UN has been criticized for its structure and principles. There are claims that the structure allows for smaller countries to lose their voice while they are controlled by much larger countries. Also, it is argued that veto power can turn out very badly as the Security Council could veto just for personal interest (this issue is taken care of by the United for Peace Resolution after the cold war [Unit 4]).
**IMPORTANT POINTS**

Assess Germany's early success in the first year of World War II.
Below is a list of Axis Power successes throughout the war. Notice how the ones involving Germany are mainly in the first couple years.

- **September 1939** - Germany invaded and occupied Poland
- **April/May 1940** - Germany invaded and occupied Denmark and Norway.
- **10th May 1940** - Hitler launched a Blitzkrieg against Holland and Belgium. Both countries were occupied.
- **19th May 1940** - British troops were pushed back to the beach at Dunkirk and had to be rescued by British boats.
- **22nd June 1940** - France was occupied by Germany.
- **1941** - Germany and Italy attacked and had successes in Yugoslavia, Greece and North Africa.
- **22nd June 1941** - Germany attacked Russia (Operation Barbarossa) and had made some gains.
- **7th December 1941** - Japan attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbour destroying ships, planes and radar stations.
- **February 1942** - Japan took Singapore from the British.