

Name: _____

Date: _____

Global Studies

AIM: How did World War II unfold in Europe?

WAR BEGINS IN EUROPE

In 1939, Adolf Hitler decided to move on Poland. He had already conquered Austria and Czechoslovakia. When Hitler signed a **nonaggression pact** with Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union, they agreed not to attack each other. Secretly, they also agreed to split Poland between them. This deal removed the threat of the Soviets attacking Germany from the east. So, on September 1, the German army invaded Poland in a surprise attack. Using planes, tanks, and troops, it moved suddenly in a technique called **blitzkrieg**, or “lightning war.” Britain and France declared war, but Poland fell before they could help. On September 17, after secret agreement with Hitler, Stalin invaded eastern Poland. Stalin then began annexing the regions covered in a second part of the agreement. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia fell without a struggle. However, Finland fought back. In March 1940, Finland was forced to surrender. For seven months after Poland fell to the Germans, Europe was calm. France and Britain got their armies ready. They waited for Hitler’s next move.

FRANCE FALLS, BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Suddenly in April 1940, Hitler’s armies invaded Denmark and Norway. Within two months, they also captured Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France. Part of the French army, led by **Charles de Gaulle**, escaped to Britain to remain free and continue the fight. By then, Italy’s Benito Mussolini had joined Hitler’s side. Great Britain—now led by **Winston Churchill**—stood alone. The German air force began bombing Britain. It wanted to weaken the country. Germany was getting prepared to invade Britain. But the British air force fought back. It was helped by the recently developed radar. This was an electronic tracking system that warned of coming attacks. Also, the British had broken the German army’s secret code. The **Battle of Britain** lasted many months. Unable to break British defenses, Hitler called off the attacks in May 1941.



THE EASTERN FRONT

Hitler then turned his attention to the east and to the Mediterranean. Germany sent troops under General **Erwin Rommel** to North Africa to help Italy fight the British. In April 1941, German armies quickly took control of Yugoslavia and Greece. In June, Hitler began a surprise invasion of the Soviet Union. The Red Army was the largest in the world. But it was not well-equipped or well-trained. The Germans quickly pushed deep into Soviet territory. The Red Army was forced to retreat. To keep supplies out of German hands, the Red Army destroyed everything left behind. The Germans were stopped from taking Leningrad in the north. They then turned on Moscow, the Soviet capital. A strong Soviet counterattack, combined with fierce Russian winter weather, forced the Germans back. Moscow had been saved, and the battle had cost the Germans 500,000 lives.

1. **Why did Poland and France fall to the Germans so quickly?** _____

2. **Why did Germany fail to win the Battle of Britain?** _____

3. **What happened when the Germans invaded the Soviet Union?** _____

THE TIDE TURNS AGAINST GERMANY

In 1942, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin planned the Allies' strategy. Stalin wanted Britain and the United States to open a second front against Germany to relieve the pressure on his armies. Stalin wanted the attack in France. Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to a second front but chose to attack German General Erwin Rommel in North Africa. In late 1942, the British army led by General Bernard Montgomery drove the Germans out of Egypt and back to the west. Meanwhile, American troops under the command of General **Dwight D. Eisenhower** landed behind the Germans and began moving east. The Germans were finally forced out of Africa in May 1943. At the same time, the Soviets gained a major victory as well. German troops had invaded the Soviet city of Stalingrad in 1942. The Red Army forced the Germans to surrender in February 1943, ending the **Battle of Stalingrad**. American and British soldiers next invaded Italy and captured Sicily in August 1943. Mussolini was driven from power and the new Italian government surrendered. But Hitler did not want to give up Italy. His army fought there until 1945.

VICTORY IN EUROPE



In early 1944, the Allies built a *massive* force to retake France. In June, an invasion of thousands of ships, planes, and soldiers was launched. It was called **D-Day**. The invasion force suffered heavy losses but gained a foothold in northern France. A month later, Allied forces began to pour through German lines. In August, they marched in triumph into Paris. By September, they had driven the Germans out of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and much of the Netherlands. At the same time, the Soviets were pushing the Germans back in eastern Europe. In late 1944, Hitler ordered his army to make one final, large-scale attack in the west. In the **Battle of the Bulge**, it punched through Allied lines until an Allied counterattack forced it back to Germany. By late April 1945, Soviet troops surrounded Berlin, Hitler's headquarters. Five days later, he killed himself. A week later, the Germans surrendered. Roosevelt did not live to see this victory, however. He had died in early April. Harry Truman was now president.

4. What major victories did the Allies win? _____

5. Name three (3) events that led to the surrender of Germany.
a. _____
b. _____
c. _____

