

depth study

World War II

In this depth study, students will investigate wartime experiences through a study of World War II. This includes coverage of the causes, events, outcome and broad impact of the conflict as a part of global history, as well as the nature and extent of Australia's involvement in the conflict.

This depth study MUST be completed by all students.

2.0 World War II (1939–1945)

The explosion of the USS *Shaw* during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941

depth study

World War II

(1939–1945)

World War II was one of the defining events of the 20th century. The war was played out all across Europe, the Pacific, the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The war even briefly reached North America and mainland Australia.

Technology changed greatly throughout World War II. When war broke out, trench warfare, cavalry and World War I-era battleships were still in use. By 1945, weapons introduced during the war included jet aircraft, ballistic missiles, radar-guided anti-aircraft guns and missiles, assault rifles, bazookas, Napalm and the atomic bomb. Advances were also made in medicine, communications, electronics, and industry, all of which had a major impact on the rest of the 20th century.

In World War II, civilians became involved in warfare in new ways. The strategic bombing of cities on both sides probably killed over one million civilians and caused tremendous damage. The **Holocaust** claimed the lives of an estimated six million Jews, as well as around five million people from other persecuted groups (such as Gypsies, communists and homosexuals). The health impacts of the atomic bombings of Japan in 1945 lasted for several generations.

Key inquiry questions

- 2.1 What were the causes of World War II and what course did it take?
- 2.2 What were some of the most significant events of World War II?
- 2.3 How did the events of World War II affect people around the world and in Australia?
- 2.4 How did the events of World War II shape Australia's international relationships?

Many rows of stone heads now stand in the ground at the Mauthausen war memorial in Austria, the site of a Nazi concentration camp during World War II.

World War II

Although World War I had been called the 'war to end all wars', only 20 years after its conclusion the world was once again plunged into war. The Paris Peace Conference paved the way for World War II, and the Great Depression also played a role in destabilising world economies and political systems making them ripe for conflict.

Specific ideologies such as **Nazism**, **fascism** and **communism** also shaped the events that led to the outbreak of war in September 1939. As was the case in World War I, Germany was again seen as the main aggressor. Germany's invasion of Poland was the final trigger that brought most of Europe into the war. Italy and Japan were allies of Germany and, for a short time, so was the USSR. France and Britain were again allies, and Australia was involved through its membership in the British Empire. The USA entered the war in December 1941, following the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

1910

1919

The Paris Peace Conference is held and the Treaty of Versailles is signed, leaving Germany humiliated.



Signing of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919

1933

Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany leading the National Socialist German Workers Party (better known as the Nazi Party)

9–10 November 1938

A series of attacks take place on Jewish homes, businesses and synagogues across Germany and Austria. The attacks become known as *Kristallnacht* (or the Night of the Broken Glass).



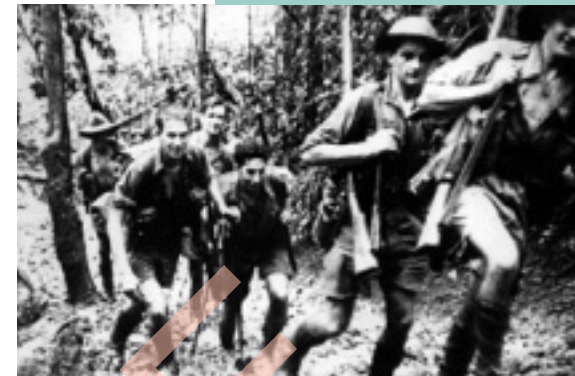
A Jewish-owned shopfront after *Kristallnacht*

1 September 1939

Germany attacks Poland and German troops cross the border, causing Britain and France to declare war on Germany. All countries in the British Empire, including Australia, also declare war on Germany.

1940

Fall of France, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands to Germany; Dunkirk evacuation



Kokoda Trail campaign

19 February 1942

Darwin bombed and Australia put on 'total war' footing

July–November 1942

Kokoda Trail campaign fought between Australia and Japan in New Guinea

22 June 1941

Beginning of Operation Barbarossa (German invasion of the USSR)



The conquest of Kiev in June 1941

December 1941

Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Singapore—the Pacific war begins



USS Arizona sinking in Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941; the USA enters the war the next day

6 June 1944

D-Day landing of Allied troops in Europe



American troops in landing craft in Normandy, France

30 April 1945

Hitler commits suicide in Berlin, leading to the surrender of Germany

8 May 1945

VE (Victory in Europe) Day—marks the end of the war in Europe

6–9 August 1945

The USA drops two atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (6 August) and Nagasaki (9 August) leading to Japan's surrender and end of war in the Pacific



Aerial view of Hiroshima, Japan, after the atomic bomb was dropped

15 August 1945

VP (Victory in the Pacific) Day—marks the end of the war in the Pacific



Source 2.2 Adolf Hitler salutes a parade of Nazi Brownshirts in Nuremberg, Germany, 1927.

2.1 What were the causes of World War II and what course did it take?

World War II started a generation after ‘the war to end all wars’. Certainly the treaties devised at the end of World War I played a role, creating resentment in countries like Germany and Austria. Japan also resented the humiliating abandonment of a racial equality clause at the Paris Peace Conference. Fascism emerged in European countries as a response to economic recession and the rise of communism. National aspirations and imperial ambitions helped ignite a conflict that would eventually erupt in theatres of war across four continents.

In the case of World War II, there were many short- and long-term factors that contributed to the outbreak of conflict. The terms of the Versailles peace treaty that had ended World War I, and the economic impact of the Great Depression both played a role

in the beginning of World War II. Specific individuals and ideologies also shaped the events that led to the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939.

Australia became involved in World War II because of its relationship with Britain. In September 1939, the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was established and recruiting began. Australian troops were dispatched to fight in the Middle East and Europe. However, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 and the fall of Singapore in February 1942, the theatre of war moved into the Pacific region. The Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, made Australia’s first independent declaration of war, against Japan.

Causes of World War II

The Paris Peace Conference

The Paris Peace Conference was held by the victorious Allies in 1919, to negotiate the peace terms of the defeated nations (see Source 2.3). The Treaty of Versailles imposed a series of harsh terms on Germany, which can be seen as contributing to the outbreak of World War II.

The notorious ‘war guilt clause’ blamed Germany for starting the war, and forced the Germans to pay a massive war reparations bill, which was only fully repaid in 2010. German territory was given to neighbouring France, Denmark, Belgium, Poland and the newly formed Czechoslovakia. Germany’s colonies were divided between the Allies, including Australia, which claimed German New Guinea and Nauru.

The treaty also limited the German army to just 100 000 men, abolished conscription, disbanded the air force, and limited the production of weapons and munitions in German factories. This created an unstable economy with mass unemployment, as well as a sense of resentment and bitterness.

The conference also alienated some of the Allies. Italy was outraged that it received few benefits for joining the Allies, contributing to the rise of fascism in this disillusioned nation. The conference also laid the seeds of the war in the Pacific.

Japan was permitted to keep Chinese territory it had seized from Germany but unsuccessfully tried to introduce a ‘racial equality’ clause to the treaty, which was opposed by the British delegation and by Australia in particular. Japan’s failure to ensure its equality with the other powers contributed to the breakdown in Japan’s relations with the West, and the rise of Japanese nationalism and militarism.



Source 2.3 British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, French Premier Georges Clemenceau and US President Woodrow Wilson walk together in Paris during negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles.

significance: the League of Nations

The League of Nations was established as part of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. The League was the brainchild of US President Woodrow Wilson. The idea was that the League would settle disputes between nations by imposing **sanctions**, with the aim of preventing another world war. Only as a last resort would troops be sent in.

One of the major weaknesses of the scheme was that the USA did not join the League. Although the US President had masterminded it, the US Congress refused to join. Wilson's party, the Democrats, were defeated at the 1920 election. It seemed that a majority of Americans wanted to return to their **isolationist** position and not become caught up in world affairs.

The League had no armed forces of its own, and had little power to force members to comply with its directions. It had some minor successes in the 1920s, such as peacefully dividing Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland, but the League failed in its central aim of preventing another world war. By 1939, Japan, Germany, Italy and the USSR had all terminated their membership of the organisation.



Source 2.4 Europe after the Treaty of Versailles



Source 2.5 A Nazi poster featuring Adolf Hitler. The poster reads 'Long live Germany!' and shows the Nazi flag with swastika, the symbol of the Third Reich

The rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party

At the end of World War I in 1918, Germany was defeated and Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated (gave up the throne of ruler of Germany). A new democratic government, known as the Weimar Republic, was established instead. Many Germans blamed the new government for agreeing to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which made it very unpopular.

The new government also had serious economic problems to deal with. Workers went on strike, German currency depreciated in value, and the economy suffered as foreign investors took their money out.



Source 2.6 A German housewife using millions of Deutschmarks to light her stove. During the hyperinflation of 1923, the heat from burning the currency for cooking was of more value than the currency itself.

In addition to these problems, the government of the Weimar Republic had to deal with the threat of paramilitary groups such as the **Nazi** Brownshirts (*Sturmabteilung* or storm troopers) and the Communist Red Front.

Adolf Hitler took advantage of the conditions created by this political instability and the **Great Depression**. After a failed attempt to seize power in 1923, for which he served eight months in prison, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933. He set up a totalitarian government that ensured its popularity by reducing unemployment and inflation, and by promising to restore Germany's national pride.



Sources 2.7 and 2.8 Nazi propaganda posters showing the swastika and the eagle (both symbols of the Third Reich)

significance: Nazi ideology

In order to understand the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis in Germany, it is important to examine the extreme right-wing movements that gained widespread popularity in Europe and other parts of the world in the 1920s and 1930s.

Right-wing paramilitary groups

The start of the Great Depression in 1929 led to widespread global unemployment. Extreme right-wing movements became popular in many parts of the world. Some of these movements developed into paramilitary groups (groups that are armed like the traditional military but are outside the control of the state). These groups generally believed in extreme authoritarian social and economic policies and **totalitarian** forms of government. They were also fiercely opposed to communism. In Italy and Spain, right-wing groups seized power and set up fascist regimes. Almost every nation in the world had extreme right-wing movements, including Australia, Britain, Canada and the USA, but they were far smaller and less popular in countries with strong democratic traditions.

The Nazi Party

In Germany, one of the extreme right-wing groups that emerged after World War I was the Nazi Party. Nazism was characterised by the strong and charismatic leadership of Adolf Hitler, supported by a small, powerful inner circle of people. Its ideology was built on German nationalism, anti-communism, anti-Semitism, a belief in the 'stab-in-the-back myth' (the idea that Germany was not defeated in World War I, but was betrayed by the socialists and Jews on the home front), and the idea that ethnic Germans were racially superior to all other races. The Nazi Party attempted to seize power in 1923 in Munich in an uprising known as the 'Beer Hall Putsch'. This uprising failed, and the ringleaders, including Hitler, received short prison sentences. After this incident, Hitler was determined to win power legally at the ballot box. In 1933 he was appointed Chancellor of Germany after negotiating a deal with other leaders. In November 1932, the Nazi Party had received 37.3 per cent of votes, more than any other party but not a majority. This was Germany's last free election until the defeat of the Nazis in 1945.



Source 2.9 Nuremberg Rally, 1933

The Third Reich

In Nazi Germany, also known as the Third Reich, there was little or no personal freedom. People were encouraged to report on friends, neighbours and even family members suspected of disloyalty to the regime. **Propaganda** was used to convince citizens of the beliefs of the regime and to silence critics. Punishments were severe and often involved torture and internment in concentration camps. Jews were the primary targets of Nazi persecution. Writers, artists, playwrights, university professors and others traditionally associated with free thinking were also targets of Nazi persecution.

Ceremonies, uniforms, symbols, marches, music and rallies were used by the Nazis to create a sense of belonging. There was a particular attempt to gain the support of young people through organisations such as Hitler Youth. The huge Nuremberg rallies held in the 1930s played an important role in gaining popular support for the Third Reich.

The **Holocaust** was the most extreme consequence of the Nazi ideology. Beginning in 1941, it claimed the lives of six million Jews—one-third of the entire world Jewish population, including 1.5 million children. Another five million people from other groups were also targeted and murdered by the Nazis. These included Roma and Sinti (Gypsy) people, Poles, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Freemasons, political dissidents, and those with intellectual and physical disabilities.

When France fell to the German invasion in 1940, much of northern France was occupied by German troops. The southern and eastern regions of France that remained under French control became known as 'Vichy France'. In these areas, the government introduced policies that supported German anti-Semitic initiatives, while in Denmark, the authorities resisted Nazi attempts to exterminate their Jewish communities. With the help of fellow Danes, most Danish Jews managed to escape to neutral Sweden.



Source 2.10 Jews captured during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Nazis are rounding up the people to take them to concentration or extermination camps.

The Great Depression

Another significant event that contributed to the outbreak of World War II was the Great Depression. The Great Depression was a period of severe economic hardship that began in 1929 and lasted until the late 1930s. Germany was one of the worst affected nations during the Depression, with mass unemployment becoming a major problem (see Source 2.11). The instability this caused made the extreme and rather simplistic policies offered by Hitler and the Nazis attractive to many Germans in desperate economic circumstances. This gave Hitler the opportunity to rise to power.

Japanese imperialism

At the end of World War I, Japan was a modern industrialised nation and a global power. It had fought with the Allies during the war, and a Japanese delegation attended the Paris Peace conference. Japan was disappointed by the outcomes of the Conference, however. The racial equality proposal was rejected and Japan's territorial gains were limited to small former German colonies like the Marshall and Mariana islands and some territory in China. In 1923, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty ended, while the United States excluded Japanese migrants from 1924. This combination of factors drove Japan away from cooperation with the West. By 1933, Japan had withdrawn from the League of Nations.

Throughout the inter-war period, Japanese politics was dominated by nationalist and militarist movements. Out of these movements came the idea of a 'Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere'. This was the idea that East Asia could exist free of Western colonialism, with Japan as the leaders of a bloc of Asian and Pacific nations. This idea quickly became linked to Japanese imperialism, and provided justification for the invasion of China in 1937. The struggle for dominance in Asia and the Pacific developed into the Pacific theatre (arena) of World War II, especially after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.



Source 2.11 The queue outside a slaughterhouse, Berlin 1931

Check your learning

- 1 Identify the main causes of World War II.
- 2 What were the aims of the League of Nations? Why did it fail to achieve them?
- 3 What military restrictions did the Treaty of Versailles impose on Germany?
- 4 Why was the Weimar Republic unpopular in Germany in the 1920s?
- 5 Why did Japan turn away from cooperation with the West in the build-up to World War II?

significant **individuals**

Adolf Hitler

For generations, the name Adolf Hitler has been linked with the idea of ‘evil’. What is often forgotten is that Hitler exploited democratic processes to seize unparalleled power and impose his ideology on the world.



Source 2.12 Hitler held crowds mesmerised for hours with his speeches.

Early life

Hitler was born in the Austrian village of Braunau in 1889. He was very close to his mother Klara but is said to have had a bad relationship with his father who died when Adolf was 13. Hitler showed early academic promise in primary school but dropped out of secondary school at 16 and went to Vienna to become an artist.

During his time in Vienna, Hitler was a drifter. He was twice rejected by the Academy of Fine Arts. Historians debate whether Hitler already held anti-Semitic views before he moved to Vienna, or whether his experiences there caused him to look for others to blame and inspired his hatred of Jewish people.

During World War I

Despite his Austrian birth and his father’s position in the Austrian public service, Hitler became a strong believer in German nationalism. He evaded conscription into the Austro-Hungarian army by travelling across the border to Munich, where he enlisted in the German army in 1914. Hitler served as a message runner on the Western Front, a job that was considered fairly ‘safe’. Despite this perception, he was wounded in October 1918, and was in hospital at the time of the armistice. He passionately opposed the armistice, and this influenced his later ideology. During the war, Hitler’s superiors thought he lacked leadership skills, so he was never promoted beyond the rank of corporal.

Key influences and ideas

Hitler was influenced by a number of competing ideologies, such as German nationalism, ideas of ‘racial purity’, anti-communism and, arguably most importantly, by anti-Semitism.

Anti-Semitism (hostility towards and persecution of Jews) existed in German society, and in other European countries, long before the Nazi Party came to power in 1933. In fact, anti-Semitism can be traced back as far as the ancient world.

After World War I, Hitler was a strong believer in the ‘stab-in-the-back’ myth that Germany was not defeated in World War I, but was instead betrayed from within by the working class and ‘the Jews’. Hitler was sent to spy on the German Workers’ Party (DAP) in 1919, but found that his personal ideology began to blend with that of the DAP. He joined the DAP and in 1920 convinced fellow party members to change the party’s name to the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, better known as the Nazi Party.

The Nazis wanted to make Germany great again after its defeat in World War I. As part of this goal, they used pseudoscientific theories about race that have since been discredited. These theories divided the human family into a hierarchy of distinct racial groups. The *Völkisch* (nationalist) movement and the pseudoscientific eugenics movement (see ‘Beginnings of the Holocaust’) influenced their thinking. The Nazis believed that ‘Aryan’ Germans were a ‘master race’ destined to rule the world. Jews were seen as the single most dangerous threat to this plan because of their supposed racial differences, economic power and social values.

The Nazis used anti-Semitic propaganda to influence the German public. Jews everywhere were portrayed as acting as a single unit. Anti-Semitism was emphasised as a ‘racial’ prejudice rather than a religious one. In order to achieve their ‘Aryan’ society, other races



Source 2.13 Hitler is sworn in as the new Chancellor in January 1933 by President Hindenburg (right).

considered by the Nazis to be ‘weak’ or ‘polluting’ were to be removed from society. In addition to the Jews, these groups included Slavs and Sinti/Roma people (Gypsies), as well as non-‘racial’ groups such as those with disabilities, Jehovah’s Witnesses and homosexuals. While Nazi persecution of these groups was widespread, Jews in particular were made a scapegoat for many of Germany’s problems.

Rise to power

The Nazi Party’s first attempt to seize power in 1923 was a disaster. Hitler was charged with **treason** (betrayal of country), but received friendly treatment from the court. His defence was based on the claim that he had honourable and nationalistic motives. The judge allowed Hitler to discuss his ideas with few restrictions. He eventually served only eight months in prison enjoying many privileges such as daily visits from friends and family, and no forced labour. Hitler used this time to write *Mein Kampf*, a book outlining his ideology, experiences and plans for the Nazi Party.

On his release from jail, Hitler decided that the Nazis should try to gain power using the political system rather than attacking it. His party gained a small number of seats in the Reichstag (the German legislative assembly) during the 1920s, but it was the Great Depression that gave them their real opportunity. By 1932 the Nazi Party was the largest single party in the Reichstag and Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in January 1933 by President Hindenburg. After Hindenburg’s death in 1934, Hitler, combined the roles of Chancellor and President, making himself the supreme ruler or *Führer* of Germany. Hitler’s government then began implementing

many of the plans and policies described in *Mein Kampf*. These included the expansion of the military, systematic persecution of the Jewish community, compulsory sterilisation for many Jewish and Sinti/Roma people, as well as those with disabilities and the expansion of Germany’s borders.

World War II

For the first three years of the war, the Germans seemed to have the upper hand and Hitler’s popularity remained strong. However, in 1942 Germany suffered severe military losses in North Africa and Russia. German cities were regularly bombed by the Allies and, as things began to change, life in wartime Germany became harsh. Some Germans began to turn against Hitler. There were at least 17 recorded assassination attempts against him and many more were rumoured to have occurred. Hitler gradually withdrew from public life and directed operations from his ‘bunker’ in Berlin. He took his own life as the Soviet Army overran Berlin on 30 April 1945.

Check your learning

- 1 What special treatment did Hitler receive when he was tried for treason after the Nazi Party’s first attempt to seize power in 1923? Why do you think that was?
- 2 What were some of the key characteristics of Hitler’s ideology?
- 3 How did the Great Depression help Hitler and the Nazis rise to power?

The build-up to war in Europe

Under Hitler’s government, Nazi Germany violated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles by increasing the size of the military, reintroducing **conscription**, re-establishing an air force, and expanding the production of weapons and ammunition.

One of Hitler’s aims in the 1930s was to regain the territories lost by Germany in World War I. In 1936, German troops entered the Rhineland, a region of western Germany that had been demilitarised after the war. In 1938, Germany annexed Austria (a process known as the *Anschluss*) and threatened to invade Czechoslovakia (see Sources 2.14 and 2.15). The British and French response was to largely tolerate these actions in the hope that they could avoid war with Germany. This policy of appeasement merely encouraged Hitler to order further acts of aggression.



Source 2.14 German territorial expansion in Europe, 1936–1939

The failure of appeasement

In the late 1930s, Britain and France were desperate to avoid another war with Germany. Even though the *Anschluss* and the presence of German troops in the Rhineland were violations of the Versailles peace treaty, Britain and France did not react aggressively (see Source 2.17). This helped convince Hitler that these nations would not go to war over German territorial expansion.

The treaty had given the Sudetenland region, which had a population of around three million ethnic Germans, to the new nation of Czechoslovakia. In 1938, Hitler demanded that the region be returned to Germany. Representatives from Britain, France, Italy and Germany met in Munich in September, and agreed to return Sudetenland to Germany (see Source 2.18). In return, Hitler agreed not to make any further claims over disputed territory in Europe. Despite these assurances, Germany invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

The failure of appeasement resulted in Britain and France adopting a harder line against Germany. When Hitler began demanding the return of territories in Poland, Britain formed an Anglo-Polish alliance to guarantee Poland’s security. In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland; and Britain, France and the British Dominions, including Australia, declared war on Germany.



Source 2.17 British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain arrives back from his meeting with Hitler in 1938, holding the agreement which he said would deliver ‘peace for our time’.



Source 2.15 Austrian troops salute Hitler as Germans march into Austria after the annexation (known in German as *der Anschluss*).



Source 2.16 German troops march through the centre of Warsaw, Poland, in 1939.

Check your learning

- 1 Identify some of the ways in which Germany violated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- 2 What was the appeasement policy? In what way did it fail?
- 3 Why did Hitler claim to want the Sudetenland returned to Germany?

The war in Europe

For the first two years of the war, Nazi Germany and its allies enjoyed considerable military success. In a series of military campaigns, they used new tactics and equipment to establish an empire that stretched from the English Channel to the Soviet Union; from Norway to the African countries of Algeria and Libya.

Poland

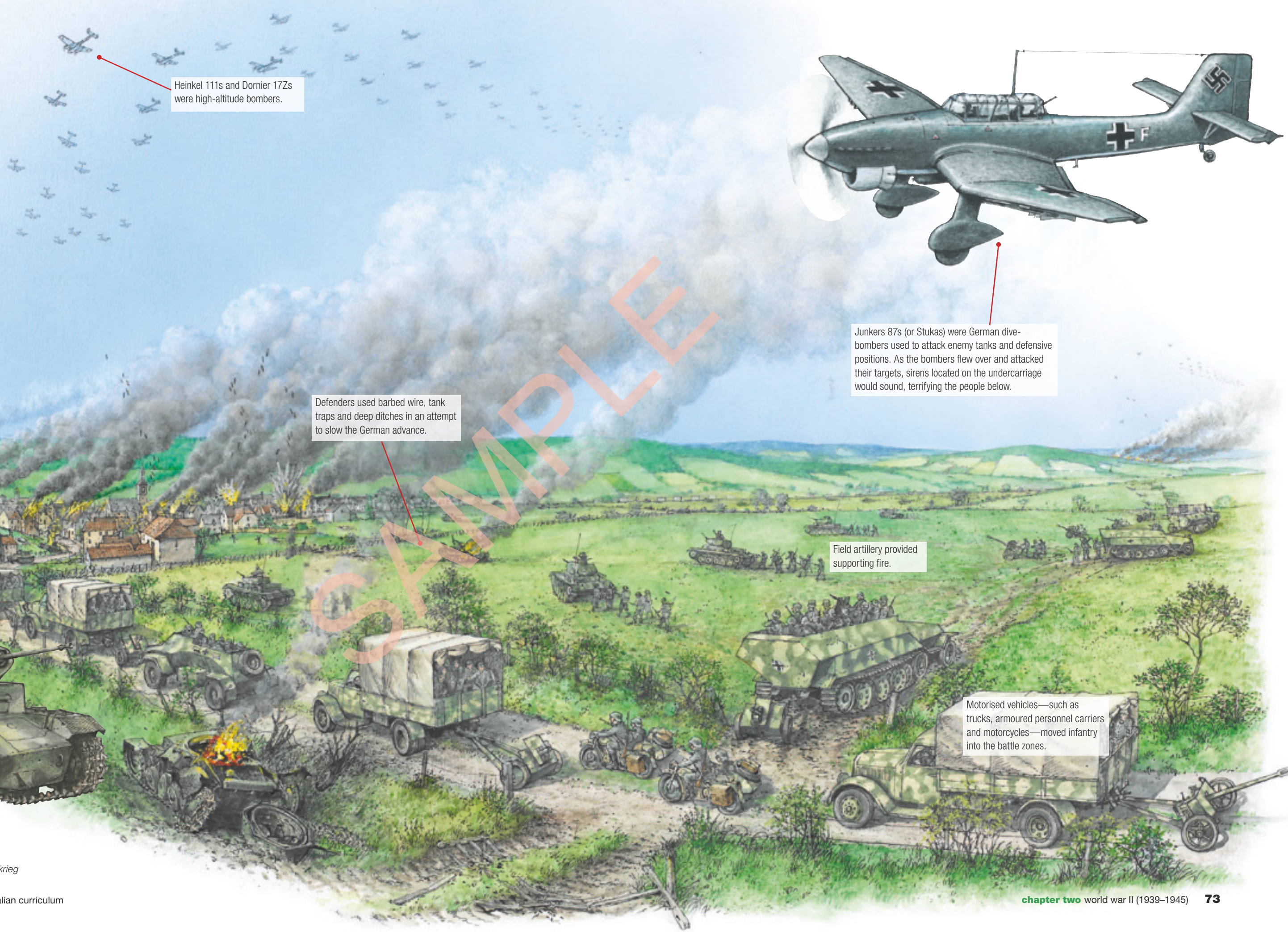
The invasion of Poland, launched on 1 September 1939, was the first example of what became known as *Blitzkrieg* (‘lightning war’) tactics (see Source 2.19). Despite the British and French commitment to support Poland, the speed of the German advance made it virtually impossible for either power to offer practical military support. By the end of September, Poland was divided between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union with which Hitler had signed a pact in August (see Source 2.16).



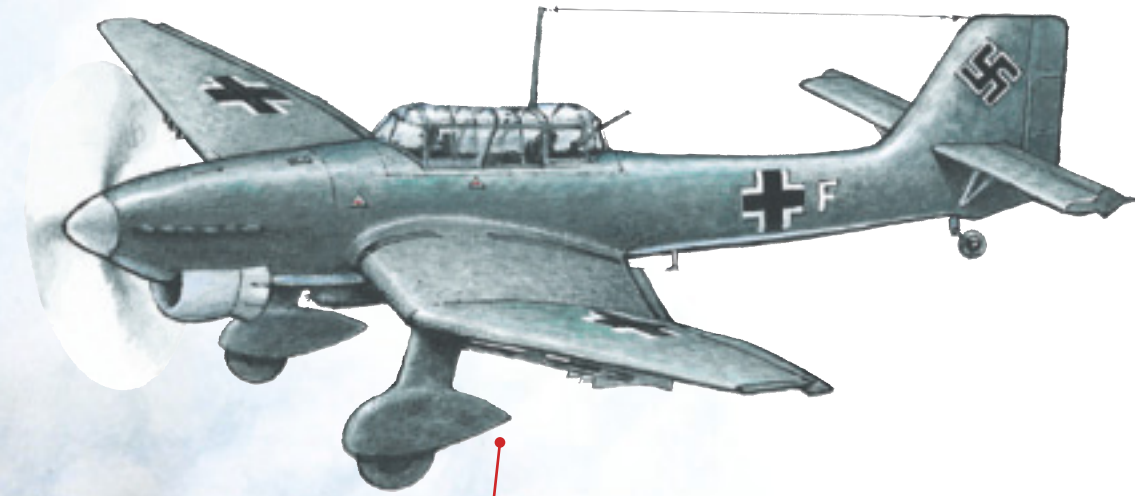
Source 2.18 Sudeten women respond to the entry of Hitler’s troops to their territory. What could be the explanation for the response of the woman on the right?

Blitzkrieg

German attacks such as the one shown here became known as *Blitzkrieg* ('lightning war') tactics. This innovative approach coordinated air and land forces to overrun the enemy. Slower-moving ground forces, often using horse-drawn transport, 'mopped up' the shattered defenders and occupied their territory.



Heinkel 111s and Dornier 17Zs were high-altitude bombers.



Junkers 87s (or Stukas) were German dive-bombers used to attack enemy tanks and defensive positions. As the bombers flew over and attacked their targets, sirens located on the undercarriage would sound, terrifying the people below.

Defenders used barbed wire, tank traps and deep ditches in an attempt to slow the German advance.

Panzers were German tanks that were used as the major strike force in *Blitzkrieg* actions.

Field artillery provided supporting fire.

Motorised vehicles—such as trucks, armoured personnel carriers and motorcycles—moved infantry into the battle zones.

Source 2.19 An artist's impression of the *Blitzkrieg*

The Phoney War

The period after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, is known as the ‘Phoney War’. Although Germany, France and Britain had declared war on each other, up until April 1940, there were no major battles. There were some sea battles, but Britain and France did not attack Germany on land; instead the British built up their strength and prepared to defend France against German attack. The Phoney War ended in April 1940, when Germany attacked and defeated Denmark and Norway.

The Battle of France

In May 1940, Germany invaded the Low Countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and France using *Blitzkrieg* tactics. Despite outnumbering the Germans, the Allied forces were unable to deal with the speed of the German attack. The British government evacuated 338 000 British and French troops from the port of Dunkirk, in northern France (see Source 2.21). On 22 June 1940, France surrendered (see Source 2.22), although some military units outside of France rejected the surrender and continued fighting Germany as the Free French Forces.



Source 2.20 German troops drive into Poland.



Source 2.21 The Dunkirk evacuation

Source 2.22 Adolf Hitler at the Eiffel Tower following the fall of France in 1940



The Battle of Britain

Germany then turned its attention to defeating Britain. The plan for an invasion required the *Luftwaffe* (German air force) to destroy Britain’s air force, before an amphibious assault could be launched. If the Royal Air Force could be destroyed, the *Luftwaffe* could prevent the Royal Navy from interfering with a German invasion fleet. Facing stiff resistance, Germany eventually changed its tactics to focus on bombing Britain’s industrial cities, a period of the war known as the **Blitz**. The British air force, which included around 450 Australians at the start of the war, was extremely successful in resisting the German attacks from July 1940 to May 1941. About 35 Australian pilots took part in the Battle of Britain. By then, Germany was focused on the invasion of Russia, and the threat to Britain had passed.

Source 2.24 British propaganda poster with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s words: ‘Never was so much owed by so many to so few’



Source 2.23 German bombers during the Battle of Britain, 1940



significant individuals

Wartime political and military leaders

In wartime, political and military leaders assume a more prominent role than they do in peacetime. They are often held responsible for the success or failure of wars.

Initially, they decide whether to declare war or stay neutral and decide how many troops to commit. They are also ultimately responsible for the actions of their troops, including the responsibility for upholding the laws of warfare. In World War II, the Allied leaders had monumental decisions to make, and had to accept the consequences of their actions. The political and military leaders discussed here are among the most important individuals of the Allied forces. Their actions changed the course and outcomes of the war.



President of the United States—Harry Truman

Truman's predecessor as President of the USA, Franklin D Roosevelt, was President for most of the war. His Vice-President, Harry Truman, however, was left with arguably the most significant decision of the war.

When Roosevelt died on 12 April 1945, Truman became President. It was only then that Truman was briefed on the ultra-secret Manhattan Project—the research and development plan for the atomic bomb. In July 1945, Truman joined the other Allied leaders for the Potsdam Conference. While in Potsdam, he was informed that the atomic bomb had been successfully tested. At Potsdam, the Allied leaders agreed on the terms of surrender to be offered to Japan. When Japan rejected this ultimatum, Truman authorised atomic strikes on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These bombings forced Japan to unconditionally surrender. Despite the consequences of the bombings, Truman never publicly regretted his decision, and said that 'under the same circumstances, I would do it again'.



Prime Minister of Great Britain—Winston Churchill

Churchill had been involved in politics since 1900, and was behind the disastrous Dardanelles campaign (including the Australian attack at Gallipoli) during World War I. He held several different positions between the wars, and became a vocal critic of the late 1930s appeasement policy. He was appointed to the War Cabinet by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on the day Britain declared war on Germany, and became Prime Minister in May 1940. Churchill's main contribution to the war effort was to maintain the morale of the British people through his rhetoric and charisma, steering the nation through the Battle of Britain, the Blitz and the D-Day Landings. Despite his popularity as a wartime leader, he was defeated in the 1945 elections.



Premier of the Soviet Union—Joseph Stalin

Stalin joined the Bolsheviks (a militant communist organisation) in 1903, and became the organisation's main operative in his home region of Georgia. When the Bolshevik Revolution installed a communist government in Russia in 1917, Stalin became an increasingly important political figure. By World War II, Stalin was the Premier and undisputed leader of the Soviet Union. He signed a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, which also divided Eastern Europe into German and Soviet spheres of influence. In 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union, violating the pact and starting the war on the Eastern Front. Stalin was heavily involved in Soviet military planning, in that he personally attempted to organise the defence of Russia. After a series of defeats and retreats, Stalin placed greater trust in his generals, and allowed them to develop plans to defeat Germany. Stalin proved to be a ruthless negotiator at the wartime and post-war conferences, and laid the groundwork for the 'Sovietisation' of Eastern Europe and the Cold War.



French General—Charles de Gaulle

Unlike the other Allied leaders, Charles de Gaulle held no official government role. When World War II broke out, he was a colonel in the French army. When his unit achieved a rare victory during the Battle of France, the French Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, appointed de Gaulle to his War Cabinet. In this role, de Gaulle argued against surrendering to Germany. When France surrendered, de Gaulle rejected the decision and fled to Britain to continue fighting. Around 7000 French soldiers, as well as some from other occupied nations like Belgium, had joined de Gaulle's 'Free French Forces' by the end of 1940.

De Gaulle frequently clashed with the other Allied leaders. Despite this, he proved a charismatic and intelligent leader. His Free French Forces continued to grow, and eventually merged with the French Army of Africa in 1943. By the time of the D-Day landings, de Gaulle's Free French Forces numbered 400 000 men. They played a significant part in the liberation of France, and de Gaulle assumed the role of Prime Minister of the Provisional Republic of France from 1944 to 1946.

Check your learning

- 1 Did President Harry Truman regret his decision to authorise the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Why did he authorise the bombings?
- 2 What was different about Charles de Gaulle's role as an Allied leader?
- 3 Conduct further research on one of these Allied leaders, covering the following:
 - a Identify how he came to power.
 - b Decide what you think his most significant decision during World War II was.
 - c Analyse his importance after World War II.

The Rats of Tobruk

Italy entered the war on Germany’s side in June 1940. Its leader, Mussolini, planned to conquer Egypt from the Italian territory of Libya. However, Australian troops spearheaded a British counterattack into Libya, capturing Bardia, Tobruk and Benghazi early in 1941. Hitler sent General Rommel with German forces to support the Italians in Libya. Rommel drove the British back into Egypt, although a force of Australian and British troops held on to Tobruk. German propaganda described these men as ‘trapped like rats’, but the ‘Rats of Tobruk’ proved very aggressive and successful, despite primitive conditions and a complete lack of air support (see Source 2.25). Royal Australian Navy ships braved enemy air attack to bring in supplies and evacuate wounded. By September 1941 most of the Australians had been replaced by Polish troops. Rommel did capture Tobruk in June 1942.



Source 2.26 German troops were defeated as much by the weather as by the Russians on the Eastern Front in 1941–42.

Check your learning

- 1 Using the text above and the map (Source 2.31) list all of the countries that were controlled by the Axis powers by the end of 1942.
- 2 What were *Blitzkrieg* tactics? Why do you think they were so effective?
- 3 What was the ‘Phoney War’? How did it end?
- 4 Who were the ‘Rats of Tobruk’? Why do you think they were called that?



Source 2.25 Some of the Rats of Tobruk (AWM 041790)

Operation Barbarossa

The peak of the Axis campaign in Europe was the *Blitzkrieg* invasion of the Soviet Union, which began in June 1941. Code-named Operation Barbarossa, it is still the largest military operation—in terms of manpower, area covered and casualties—in human history. The Axis force was made up of over three million troops, 3600 tanks and 4300 aircraft.

In 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union had signed a treaty, agreeing to remain neutral if either was attacked. The invasion in 1941 broke this agreement. There were several reasons for the invasion. The large landmass of Eastern Europe was to provide *Lebensraum* (‘living space’) for ethnic Germans, and would provide useful resources for the war effort. The motivations were also ideological. The Nazis hated communism and considered Russia’s Slavic peoples to be racially inferior to Germans.

Despite the fact that Hitler had outlined a plan to invade the Soviet Union in *Mein Kampf*, the invasion caught the Soviets unprepared. Germany won several major battles and captured huge areas of territory, while the Soviet army was forced to retreat. By November 1941, German forces were within striking distance of Moscow, the capital of the USSR.

However, the German forces were unable to capture Moscow. They were unprepared for the harshness of the Soviet winter and were met by stubborn resistance (see Source 2.26). When the winter of 1941–42 ended and the Germans could manoeuvre again, Hitler directed his forces to southern Russia and its oilfields. Their advance eventually came to a halt at Stalingrad (now known as Volgograd) in September 1942, in a battle that would become one of the bloodiest in history. The German army eventually surrendered at Stalingrad in February 1943. Nevertheless, the Nazi forces still occupied a great area of the USSR, and their control extended over most of continental Europe.

focus on ...

significance: code-breakers

Throughout the war, many different methods were used to send secret messages and instructions from command headquarters to troops fighting all over the world.

A British team of code-breakers worked to intercept and decrypt secret messages being sent by German forces. The code-breaking centre was based in the Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley Park in England. One of the most brilliant code-breakers was Alan Turing who after the war played a major role in the development of the computer.

The most common machine used to encrypt and decrypt secret messages being sent back and forth between German military command posts and troops out on the battlefield was the Enigma machine. With the help of earlier encryption technology by Polish mathematicians, Turing worked to develop a machine called the ‘bombe’, an electromagnetic machine that was used to decipher German Enigma-machine-encrypted signals during the war.

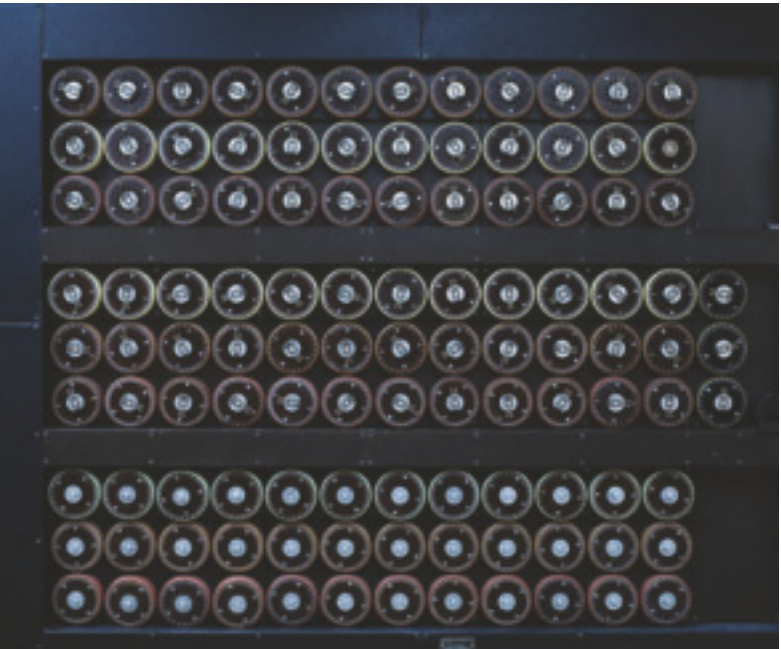
The technology associated with code-breaking during the war was not only significant because it influenced the outcome of battles and events, but also because of the fact that much of this technology went on to be adapted for use in modern-day electronic products like computers.



Source 2.27 Alan Turing



Source 2.28 A German Enigma machine



Source 2.29 A machine called a ‘bombe’, used to decipher German Enigma machine messages

The tide of war turns in Europe

By 1943, the German tactics had lost the element of surprise, and their wartime success had peaked (see Source 2.31). Britain, the British **Dominions**, the USA, the Soviet Union and the Free French Forces formed an alliance to force Germany and its allies into an unconditional surrender.

From 1943, the Soviet army inflicted a series of defeats on Germany. By 1945, Germany had been forced out of most of Eastern Europe; with Soviet troops occupying Russia, Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States. The Russians continued their advance into Germany, and reached the German capital, Berlin, in April.

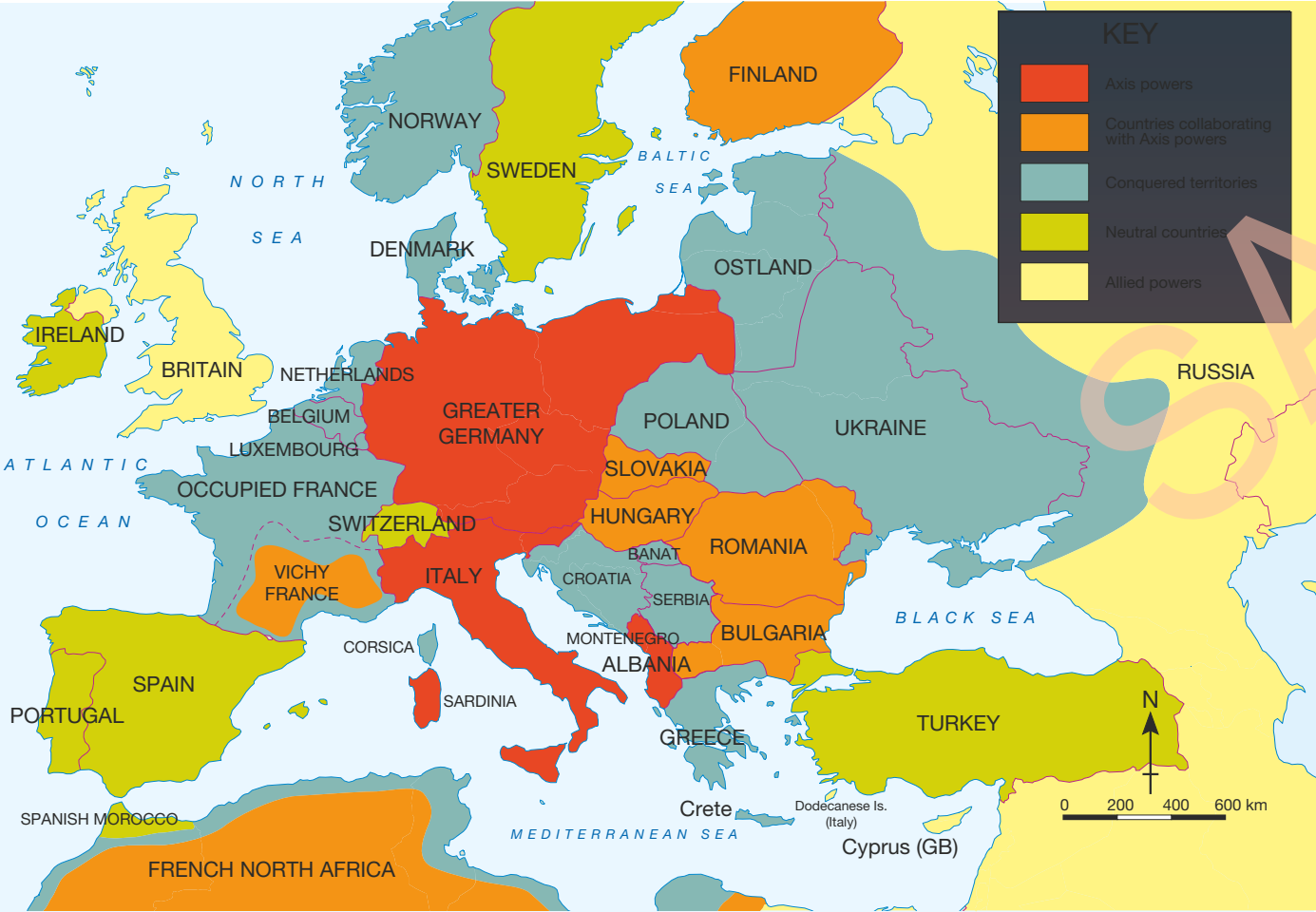
In Western Europe, the Allies began major bombing campaigns on Germany from 1942, initially focusing on destroying airfields but later bombing industrial cities. This campaign failed to significantly affect German morale or industries, and on its own could not win the war. The Allies developed a plan to invade France. On 6 June 1944, around 160 000 Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, in Northern France. This operation, known as ‘D-Day’, precipitated the Liberation of France in August 1944 (see Source 2.30).



Source 2.30 American troops storming a beach at Normandy, France, on D-Day



Source 2.32 The crew of a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber, 17 November 1943



Source 2.31 Europe and North Africa at the height of Axis power in 1942

The end of the war in Europe

In September 1944, Allied ground troops invaded Germany from the west. The Allies continued bombing major German cities, including Berlin. In April, the Soviets encircled Berlin and launched a final assault. Hitler remained in Berlin, to direct the defence of the city from his bunker. Although most of the city’s population was mobilised, the Soviets seized Berlin after a week of fighting in the streets. Hitler committed suicide on 30 April (see Source 2.33), and Germany officially surrendered on 7 May 1945.



Source 2.33 The front page of the News Chronicle (London), 2 May 1945, announces the death of Adolf Hitler.

Check your learning

- 1 Why were Germany’s military tactics less effective after 1943?
- 2 Was the Allied bombing of German cities and airfields a significant factor in the defeat of Germany?
- 3 What military campaign was D-Day the start of? Which countries were involved in this campaign?
- 4 Identify some of the main factors that led to the end of the war in Europe.

focus on ..

contestability: conflicting reports surrounding Hitler’s death

In the years following the defeat of Germany in World War II, there were many conflicting reports about Hitler’s death and what was done with his body. Numerous conflicting accounts of what actually happened were published in the days and months following the event.

Some reports claimed that Hitler had committed suicide with his wife Eva Braun and that, afterwards, their bodies were burnt. Some reports claimed that the bodies had been buried and were recovered by Soviet troops when Berlin fell and that they were shipped back to Russia. Other reports claimed that Hitler’s body was never found at all.

While there was little evidence to support the idea that Hitler had escaped, many alleged sightings of Hitler were reported all around the world in the years following the war. In addition to these reports, the FBI kept detailed records on Adolf Hitler for 30 years after the war, and is rumoured to have fully investigated any report that alleged he was still alive.

The war in Asia

In 1936, Japan signed an agreement with Germany known as the Anti-Comintern Pact. This was followed in 1940 by the Tripartite Pact, which cemented the Axis powers’ alliance. In 1937 Italy joined the pact.

Despite these alliances, Japan’s invasion of China in 1937 is not generally considered to be part of World War II (see Source 2.34). The event that symbolises Japan’s entry into World War II was the attack on Pearl Harbor (see Source 2.35).

The attack on Pearl Harbor

When World War II began in Europe, the attention of Britain, France, the USA and even Australia was diverted away from Japan. Despite evidence of Japanese aggression, there was still a belief that the Japanese did not pose a significant threat.

The attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on 7 December 1941 alerted the Allies to the nature of the Japanese threat. Japan hoped to destroy America’s Pacific fleet, as a preventative strike to stop American interference in the Pacific. While the attack on Pearl Harbor seemed to be successful, the damage inflicted on the American fleet was less than originally thought. Rather than preventing American intervention, the attack caused the USA, Australia and the Netherlands to declare war on Japan. Germany declared war on the USA, drawing it into the European war.



Source 2.34 Japanese occupation of China at the start of World War II

Check your learning

- 1 What nations were involved in the Tripartite Pact?
- 2 What was Japan’s main reason for attacking Pearl Harbor?
- 3 Why was the attack on Pearl Harbor less successful than initially thought?

War in the Pacific

For the first two years, Japan appeared to have the upper hand. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces quickly occupied Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Guam and Wake Island. They also conquered Burma in the west, and pushed south through French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos) and the Dutch East Indies to reach Australia’s doorstep in New Guinea (see Source 2.36). Britain and the USA had seriously underestimated Japan’s military ability. This, together with the element of surprise and the imaginative use of combined naval and air forces by the Japanese, gave Japan an early advantage.

The fall of Singapore

The fall of Singapore was the largest surrender of a British-led force in history. It was a defining moment of the war in the Pacific. It also had major implications for Australia’s international relationships. At the time, Singapore was a British colony and the key naval base

in the region. The ‘Singapore Strategy’ was also a key part of Australia’s military defence planning which was based on British assurances that, should Japan ever attack South-East Asia, the main British fleet would be sent to Singapore to tackle the Japanese navy and protect Australia. The Japanese first bombed Singapore on 8 December 1941, the day after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On the same day, the Japanese landed forces on the north-east coast of Malaya (now Malaysia).

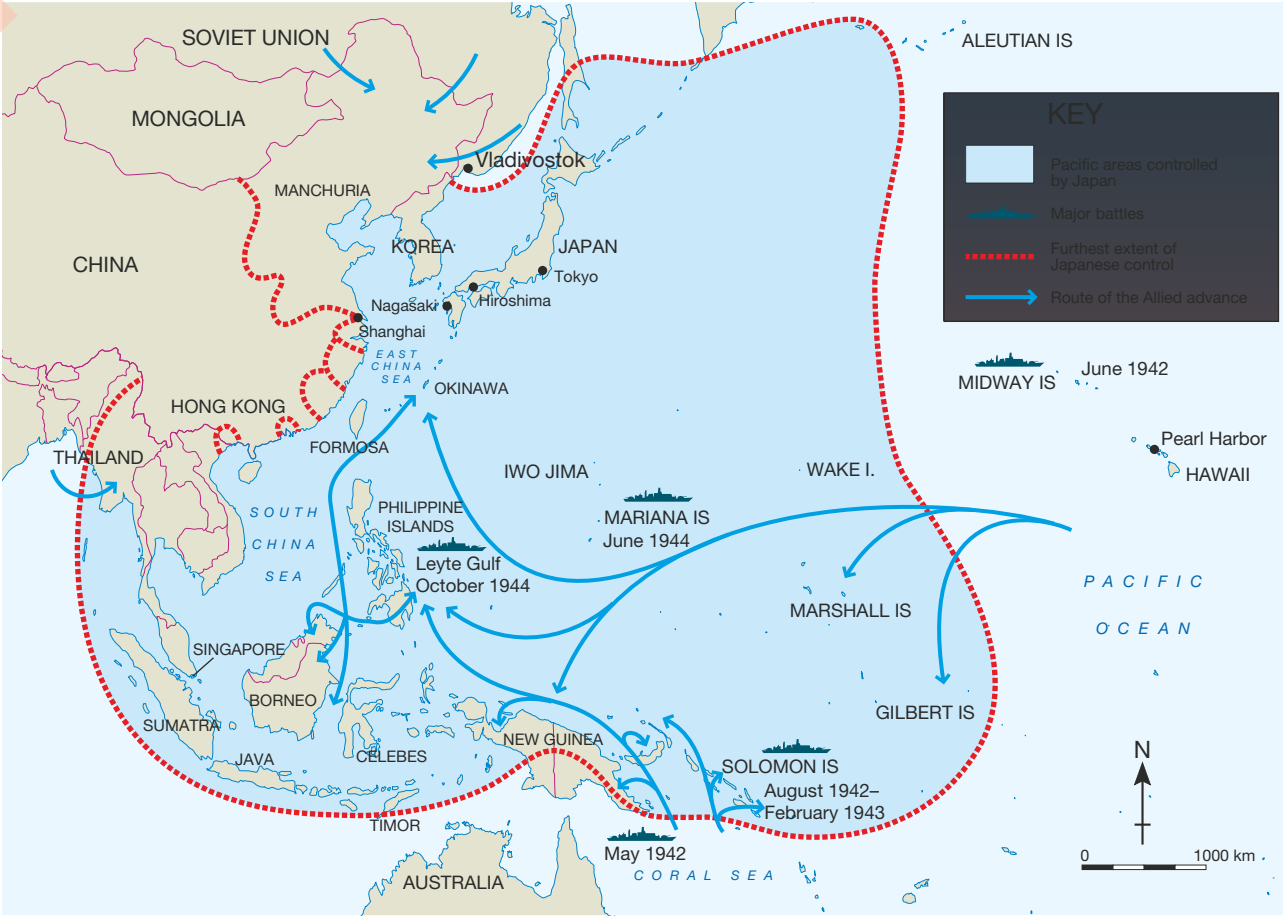
Malaya and Singapore were defended by a force of around 85 000 Allied troops, including the 8th Division of the Second AIF, and the British believed that it could withstand any attack. They also believed that the Japanese were incapable of fighting their way down to Singapore through the rugged terrain of the Malay Peninsula. Convinced that any threat to Singapore would come from the sea, the Allies focused their defences on the coast.

Despite a strong Allied presence in Malaya, the Japanese army won a series of battles over six weeks. After being held in reserve, the Australian 8th Division was deployed to stop the Japanese advance in January 1942. It suffered heavy casualties before being ordered to retreat to Singapore.

The Japanese siege of Singapore lasted for just a week and, despite outnumbering their enemies, the Allies surrendered on 15 February 1942. In the Malaya–Singapore campaign, Australian soldiers made up at least 70 per cent of the Allies’ battle casualties. In addition to the 50 000 Allied soldiers taken prisoner in Malaya, around 80 000 were taken prisoner after the fall of Singapore. Among them were nearly 15 000 Australians. Controversially, a small number of soldiers, including the Australian commander Gordon Bennett, escaped on ships to avoid capture. The vast majority of soldiers could not escape and one-third of them did not survive the Japanese prisoner of war (POW) camps.



Source 2.37 Poster used to rally Australian support following the Japanese attack on Darwin (AWM ARTV09225)



Source 2.36 The extent of the Japanese Empire in Asia and the Pacific in 1942

The Battle for northern Australia

The fall of Singapore brought the war much closer to Australia than had ever been anticipated. After World War I, Australia’s army and air force (the RAAF) had received little funding. While the navy had received roughly double the government funding of the army, battleships were extraordinarily expensive to build, and the Australian fleet was too small to ensure Australia’s security against Japan. Australia’s defence planning had always assumed that Britain would protect its former colony, but Britain was focused on its own survival in the European war. With Australia dangerously unprepared to face the Japanese threat, Prime Minister John Curtin recalled the 6th and 7th Divisions of the Second AIF, and appealed to the United States for assistance.

From December 1941, women and children began to be evacuated from Darwin and surrounding areas in fear of a Japanese attack. On 19 February 1942, Japan launched an assault on Darwin (see Source 2.38). Officially, around 250 people were killed, although the real death toll continues to be debated. Most other Australians were unaware of the seriousness of the attack. The government played down the bombing and the number of deaths. A Royal Commission into the events surrounding the attack revealed that some people, including members of the defence forces, had panicked under fire. There were also stories that some people had looted bombed buildings or simply fled the city.

By November 1943, Darwin had suffered 64 air raids. Other towns in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia were also struck. In total, there were 97 airborne attacks on northern Australia and approximately 900 Allied troops and civilians were killed. Several ships and almost 80 aircraft were lost. Many people felt that the bombing of Darwin was the beginning of a full-scale invasion of Australia.

There is still controversy as to whether the Japanese planned a full-scale invasion of Australia.

War comes to Sydney Harbour

On 31 May 1942, three Japanese midget submarines, launched from a group of five larger submarines further out to sea, entered Sydney Harbour. The submarines sank a ferry carrying military personnel. Twenty-one people were killed before Australian forces sank the submarines. A week later, two larger submarines surfaced off the coast at Bondi, shelling several Sydney suburbs and the nearby city of Newcastle. While little damage was done, the appearance of Japanese vessels emphasised to Australians that the war was now much closer to home.



Source 2.38 Bomb damage to the Darwin post office and surrounding buildings as a result of the first Japanese air raid

Check your learning

- 1 Identify and locate on the map (Source 2.36) the countries and areas taken over by the Japanese between 1937 and 1942.
- 2 Why were the British so convinced that any attack on Singapore would come from the sea?
- 3 Why do you think that official reports of the bombing of Darwin severely underestimated the seriousness of the attack?
- 4 In what way was Australia unprepared to face the threat of a Japanese invasion in 1942?
- 5 What was Prime Minister John Curtin’s response to the threat of invasion?

Turning points

In March 1942, Japanese forces established bases on mainland New Guinea, with the objective of capturing Port Moresby. From there, they could launch regular bomber raids against northern Australia. With this threat looming, Curtin agreed to place all Australian forces under the command of the American General Douglas MacArthur, formerly the commander of the US-controlled Philippines. While American forces were assembling in Australia, and the battle-hardened soldiers of the Second AIF were returning to defend Australia, it was left to inexperienced Australian militia units to stop the Japanese advance to Port Moresby.

Several battles are identified as key turning points in the Asia-Pacific war zone. At sea the most significant were the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. Both involved the navies of the USA and Australia in cooperative ventures (see Source 2.39).

The Battle of the Coral Sea (4–8 May 1942) was fought off the north-east coast of Queensland and south of New Guinea. It prevented the Japanese from launching a sea-based assault on Port Moresby. This forced them to make a land-based assault via the Kokoda Track.

In the Battle of Midway (4–7 June 1942) Japanese naval forces attempted to lure several US aircraft carriers into a trap to capture the strategically important Midway Islands. US code-breakers intercepted Japanese communications. The US Navy destroyed four aircraft carriers and more than 200 Japanese aircraft, severely weakening the Japanese war machine. The USA would use this weakness to prevent supply ships taking war materials, such as oil, munitions and food, to Japanese forces in the region. Historians have described the Battle of Midway as ‘the most stunning and decisive blow in the history of naval warfare’.



Source 2.39 The burning of the USS Lexington following the Battle of the Coral Sea, 1942

New Guinea

Japanese forces occupied parts of the north-east of New Guinea in early 1942. As the Japanese navy was halted at the Battle of the Coral Sea, Japan’s only option to seize Port Moresby seemed to be an overland assault along the Kokoda Track. Surrounded by steep mountains and jungle, the track was frequently a river of sticky mud, and it was extremely slippery on the slopes.

The Australian troops defending the track provided stronger resistance than their enemies expected, stalling the Japanese advance until reinforcements arrived (see ‘examining evidence’). At the same time, members of the AIF and CMF (Citizen Military Forces) inflicted Japan’s first decisive defeat of the war at the Battle of Milne Bay. The New Guinea campaign was fought on Australian territory, and the Australians were the first army to halt Japan’s relentless drive through the Pacific. With the USA increasing its involvement in the Pacific Theatre, New Guinea was a major turning point in the war.

The drive to Japan

With increased US involvement in the Pacific, Japan became drawn into a war of attrition, meaning that both sides attempted to wear each other down to the point of collapse, even though forces and supplies were depleted. Under pressure to replace its depleted forces, particularly after the disastrous Battle of Midway, Japan threw inexperienced recruits into the frontlines. Japan’s war industries could not keep up with the need to replace its ships and aircraft. Japan gradually lost the resources to undertake major offensives. With Japan on the back foot, the Allies made two successful counterattacks in 1943. These campaigns reduced casualties by simply avoiding many Japanese bases in the Pacific. The Australian army was given the job of ‘mopping up’ in the wake of many of the areas retaken by the Allies. This ‘mopping-up’ role was highly controversial. Many people thought the remaining Japanese forces were already isolated and posed little threat, and that the campaign was simply a waste of Australians’ lives.

For the remainder of the war, Australia’s role changed. The size of the military was decreased, and more emphasis was placed on moving Australians into war-related industries. Australia’s task was often seen as providing other nations with the food and resources needed to defeat Japan and Germany. Many Australians continued to be involved overseas, however. The Second AIF had already been deployed in Greece, Crete, North Africa and Syria. Australians of the 9th Division played a leading role in the siege of Tobruk (1941) and the decisive battle of El Alamein (1942). Hundreds of Australians took part in the D-Day landings in Normandy, and small Australian units were deployed to Borneo, Burma and India. Australian nurses continued to have a role to play in the Pacific. Around 45 Australians even volunteered for a secret guerrilla mission against the Japanese in China.

By late 1944, American B-29 bombers had bases from which they could strike Japan’s home islands. These raids were highly effective because most Japanese buildings, made of paper and wood, burned easily. On 8 March 1945, a single raid on Tokyo killed 83 000 people, mainly civilians. As US forces got closer to mainland Japan, they found that the Japanese defence was becoming tougher and more desperate. Japanese pilots would carry out suicide missions (Kamikaze), crashing their planes into US ships. The US government, in an attempt to bring the war to a swift end, began to consider new options.

examiningevidence

The Kokoda campaign

The Kokoda Trail (also known as the Kokoda Track) is a roughly 96-kilometre-long narrow path in New Guinea, connecting Port Moresby to the village of Kokoda. In 1942, the Japanese navy had been frustrated in its attempts to seize Port Moresby, forcing the army to launch an overland assault on the town via the Kokoda Trail. If Japan had successfully seized Port Moresby, it could have used the town as a base to attack northern and eastern Australia. Prime Minister John Curtin had recalled the AIF to defend Australia, but that was taking time. This meant the Kokoda campaign was initially fought by underequipped militia units dubbed ‘Maroubra Force’.

‘A fighting retreat’

Maroubra Force was assembled as the risk of a Japanese assault on Port Moresby increased. Some units were kept around Port Moresby in reserve, while a smaller force was posted to the village of Kokoda in July 1942, and tasked with defending the airfield there. This force was composed entirely of CMF and local Papuan Infantry units, and was underprepared for frontline combat. The soldiers had received little training in jungle warfare, and were equipped with old, outdated weapons. Many of these young men had only recently turned 18.

The first clash of the Kokoda campaign occurred on 23 July, when a small Australian platoon slowed the Japanese advance across the Kumusi River, before falling back to Kokoda. On 29 July, 80 men defended Kokoda against a Japanese attack, suffering heavy casualties as they engaged in hand-to-hand fighting. The next morning, they retreated further along the Trail to the village of Deniki. They suffered heavy casualties attempting to retake Kokoda on 8 August, as well as during the retreat along the Trail. This retreat was followed by a two-week break in the fighting, when the survivors from the defence of Kokoda met with reserves from Port Moresby and prepared to defend the Trail at Isurava.

The Battle of Isurava was a major turning point in the Kokoda campaign. Maroubra Force defended the Trail valiantly, but was outnumbered and suffered heavy casualties on the first day of battle. At Isurava, however, the first substantial reinforcements from the AIF began to arrive, providing a vital boost for the depleted Maroubra Force. The battle lasted four days,

Source 2.40 A still from the film *Kokoda—39th Battalion*



before the Australians had to retreat further, mounting small-scale delaying actions along the way. Further battles took place at Mission Ridge and Imita Ridge, before the Japanese troops began to run out of supplies and their advance stalled. In October, Australian troops launched a counterattack along the Trail, gradually forcing the Japanese back. By 2 November, Kokoda was back in Allied hands. Months of hard fighting lay ahead before the Allies could shift the Japanese from their bases at Buna and Gona.

Significance

The Kokoda campaign was arguably the most significant military campaign in Australia’s history. Although it is generally accepted that Japan did not plan to invade mainland Australia during World War II, this was a real fear at the time. Given the limited information available to them, the soldiers of Maroubra Force believed they were fighting the ‘battle to save Australia’. Had the militia units of Maroubra Force not held up the Japanese advance until the AIF arrived to reinforce them, the war in the Pacific would have gone on for much longer, and cost even more lives.

The campaign is made even more incredible by the conditions in which it was fought. Sources 2.41 and 2.42 provide an insight into the experiences of soldiers on the Kokoda Trail.

Source 2.41

*They’d wish they were down with Satan, instead of this hell on earth,
Straining, sweating, swearing, climbing the mountain side,
‘Just five minutes to the top’; my God how that fellow lied,
Splashing through mud and water, stumbling every yard
One falls by the wayside when the going is extra hard*

Extract from ‘The Crossing of the Owen Stanley Range’,
by Private H McLaren

Source 2.42

*You are trying to survive, shirt torn, arse out of your pants, whiskers
a mile long, hungry and a continuous line of stretchers with wounded
carried by ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzies’ doing a marvellous job. Some days you
carry your boots because there’s no skin on your feet ...*

Private Laurie Howson, 39th Battalion, diary entry

Legacy

Approximately 625 Australians were killed fighting along the Trail, while at least 16 000 were wounded and more than 4 000 suffered from serious illnesses like malaria. In the immediate aftermath of the campaign, members of Maroubra Force were hailed as ‘the men who saved Australia’. It also had an immediate impact on the organisation of both the American and Australian armies. The Australian troops on the Trail had been poorly supplied because of the unreliability of air drops. Both the Australian and American militaries developed new techniques for dropping supplies after their experiences at Kokoda.

Despite the significance of the Kokoda campaign, the Gallipoli campaign during World War I is usually the focus of public commemoration in Australia, and ANZAC Day is Australia’s national day of commemoration. Some critics of ANZAC Day argue that Kokoda would be a more appropriate focus of national commemoration than Gallipoli. They suggest that the Kokoda campaign was fought in defence of Australia, whereas Gallipoli was an invasion of a foreign nation that posed no threat to Australia. Some people also argue that the spirit and lessons of Kokoda are more relevant to modern Australia than the ‘ANZAC spirit’.

Check your learning

- 1 What was significant about the units that made up Maroubra Force at the start of the Kokoda campaign?
- 2 Describe the conditions the soldiers fought in along the Kokoda Trail.
- 3 What are the arguments for and against Kokoda and Gallipoli being the focus of Australia’s national commemoration of war?
- 4 Research the ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzies’ mentioned by Private Howson in Source 2.42. What role did they play in the Kokoda campaign? Has the contribution of the ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzies’ to the campaign been officially recognised?

2.1 What were the causes of World War II and what course did it take?

Remember

- 1 List the locations where Australian soldiers fought in World War II.
- 2 Explain what is meant by the policy of appeasement.
- 3 Which nations were alienated or angered by the results of the Paris Peace Conference?
- 4 What was the main role of the Australian army after the successful campaign in New Guinea? What was controversial about this role?

Understand

- 5 Outline some of the ways in which the early years of the war in Europe and the war in the Pacific were similar. How were they different?
- 6 Describe the *Blitzkrieg* tactics used by Germany in World War II. Why do you think these tactics stopped being so effective later in the war?
- 7 Why do you think it was significant that it was Australian militia units that fought at Kokoda? Do you think the battle would be as significant if American units had fought there instead?
- 8 Why do you think there was less public enthusiasm for World War II in Australia than there had been at the start of World War I?

Apply

- 9 Research the experiences of Australian prisoners of war (POWs) in the Pacific, and the experiences of Soviet POWs in Germany and Eastern Europe. Prepare a PowerPoint presentation that compares and contrasts the experiences of these two groups.
- 10 Explain the perspective of each of the following over the decision to recall the AIF to defend Australia during World War II:
 - a a soldier in the 6th or 7th Division of the Second AIF
 - b the Prime Minister of Australia, John Curtin
 - c the Prime Minister of Britain, Winston Churchill
 - d a family living in far north Queensland.

Analyse

- 11 Study the two propaganda posters used by the Nazis at the Nuremberg Rallies (Sources 2.7 and 2.8), held between 1927 and 1938 to celebrate the Third Reich.
 - a What impression do they create of the Nazi regime and the Third Reich?
 - b What aspects of the posters (such as signs, symbols, colours) help to create this impression?
- 12 During the fall of Singapore, the Australian commander Gordon Bennett escaped the city and returned to Australia after a difficult two-week journey. Bennett believed that it was his duty to escape, and was initially praised by the Australian Prime Minister John Curtin. The vast majority of the soldiers under Bennett’s command became Japanese prisoners of war, and many of them were killed.
 - a As a class, debate whether Bennett’s actions were justified.
 - b Research General Douglas MacArthur’s escape from the Philippines to Australia. Can you see any similarities between the two escapes? What are the important differences?

Evaluate

- 13 Conduct a class debate on one of the following topics:
 - Hitler himself was not personally significant. Any dictator could have seized power in Germany at that time.
 - The West pushed Japan into militarism and aggression.
- 14 During the Battle of Britain, British pilots were instructed to shoot down German sea rescue planes if the pilots thought the planes might be being used for surveillance purposes. According to the Geneva Conventions, which outline the conduct of warfare, this was a war crime. Discuss in groups whether shooting down rescue planes is acceptable conduct when your nation is fighting for its survival. Compare your responses with those of other groups.

- 15 The Gallipoli landing is generally regarded as Australia’s most significant wartime engagement. However, some argue that Kokoda was more successful and involved similar or even greater heroism and courage. It has even been suggested that Kokoda Day should replace Anzac Day as Australia’s national day of commemoration.

Research the arguments for Kokoda being a more significant battle for Australians than Gallipoli. Do you think Kokoda should replace Gallipoli as the focus for Australia’s commemoration of war?

You may find it helpful to create a table, such as the one below, in your notebook or on your computer to help you organise your thoughts and develop your argument.

	Kokoda		Gallipoli
Reasons for making this Australia's main focus of commemoration		Reasons for keeping this as Australia's main focus of commemoration	
Reasons against making this Australia's main focus of commemoration		Reasons against keeping this as Australia's main focus of commemoration	

Create

- 16 Working with a partner or in small groups, research, script and perform a telephone conversation between the Australian Prime Minister, John Curtin, and the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, at the time that Curtin recalled the 6th and 7th Divisions of the AIF to defend Australia.
- 17 You have been asked by the Australian Government to design a new war memorial for one of the following groups:
 - the ‘Fuzzy-Wuzzy Angels’
 - Indigenous Australians who fought in World War II
 - Australian prisoners of war in either Japan or Europe
 - Maroubra Force.
 - a Research the group you have chosen and their role in World War II.
 - b Design a plan for an appropriate memorial to commemorate your chosen group. You should consider appropriate symbols, where your memorial will be built, the materials you would use, and the message you want your memorial to send.



Source 2.43 The conical-shaped Hall of Names in the Holocaust History Museum in the Yad Vashem Holocaust complex in Israel. The Hall of Names shows around 600 portraits of Jewish Holocaust victims.

2.2 What were some of the most significant events of World War II?

*World War II was similar to earlier wars in some ways, but it also represented a radical change in the way wars were fought. Genocide—wiping out a religious, racial or ethnic group—had been practised before, but the scale of Hitler’s campaign of persecution against minorities reached unprecedented cruelty. The **Holocaust** was a significant event that has continued to have repercussions in the modern world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was one global response to the devastation of the Holocaust.*

New technology was highlighted by the emergence of the atomic bomb. It was a weapon so frightening it became a staple of science-fiction and horror stories. The actual dropping of the atomic bombs was a significant event, not only because it ended the war, but because it created a new era. A nuclear shadow would loom over the world throughout the Cold War that followed World War II.

The Holocaust

In 1933, it is estimated that the Jewish population of Europe stood at around 11 million. By the end of the war in 1945, it is estimated that around six million Jews had died at the hands of the Nazis. To put this into perspective, more than half of all European Jews were killed. This systematic, government-endorsed persecution and murder of Jews took place throughout the Nazi-occupied territories under the command of Adolf Hitler. It is among the most brutal and destructive policies of the 20th century, and is referred to as the Holocaust. Hundreds of thousands of German military and civilian personnel were involved in the mass murder. Millions more collaborated or accepted these events without protest. The word ‘Holocaust’ is of Greek origin and means ‘sacrificed by fire’ or ‘burnt’. Jewish communities use the Hebrew word *Shoah* instead, meaning ‘catastrophe’.

Beginnings of the Holocaust

The origins of the Holocaust can be traced back further than Adolf Hitler’s lifetime. Anti-Semitism has its origins in the ancient world, and was rife throughout Europe in the Middle Ages.

In the 1880s, the eugenics movement became popular. Eugenics, a pseudoscience that aims to ‘improve’ the human gene pool through state intervention, was taught as a subject at many universities. For a time, it was supported by people like Winston Churchill, and was government policy in countries such as the United States. By the 1930s the eugenics movement’s popularity was declining, but the Nazi Party’s policies were heavily influenced by its ideas.

Hitler had outlined the development of his anti-Semitism and even some of his proposed policies towards Jews in his **manifesto** *Mein Kampf*. He declared that ‘the personification of the devil as the symbol of all evil assumes the living shape of the Jew’. *Mein Kampf* also outlined Hitler’s hatred of communism, and his belief that Germany would have to expand east to provide *Lebensraum* (‘living space’) for ethnic Germans. The seeds of Hitler’s cruel and **genocidal** policies were present in his ideology at least a decade before he became Chancellor of Germany.



Source 2.44 Nazi SA members (storm troopers) outside a Jewish business, directing people to shop elsewhere, 1933



Source 2.45 A cloth Star of David badge that Jews were required to wear in public. The word 'Jude' means 'Jew' in German.

As early as July 1933, within months of coming to power, Hitler also introduced a law that allowed the compulsory sterilisation of people with mental or physical disabilities. In other words, anyone who was disabled (and a broad definition of 'disabled,' ranging from schizophrenia, to deafness, to alcoholism, was used) could be legally forced to have an operation to ensure they could not have children. Over 400 000 were sterilised and around 5000 people died as a result of these operations. Another 70 000 were killed under the related 'T4' euthanasia program.

Anti-Semitism and eugenics eventually combined in Germany's racial policies. As well as boycotts (see Source 2.44) and violence against Jews, the government denied all Jews German citizenship and sought to remove all Jews from the government, the legal professions and the universities. Laws limited the number of Jewish students allowed in public schools, banned Jews from many public places, expelled Jewish officers from the army, and transferred ownership of many Jewish businesses to non-Jewish Germans. Other groups, like the Romani people, were similarly oppressed by Nazi legislation. From 1936, Romani could be forced into internment camps.

As Hitler's policies began to take hold, many Jews (and Germans) refused to believe the reality of what was taking place around them. Some, including the famous scientist Albert Einstein, left Germany. Others believed that they would be protected because they were German citizens. By the time the reality dawned, they had been stripped of their citizenship and, often, the avenues of escape had been closed to them.

In 1938 there was a wave of violence directed against Jewish synagogues, businesses and houses across Germany. It was known as *Kristallnacht* or the 'Night of Broken Glass'. While there is no doubt that this was orchestrated by the Nazis, Hitler claimed that it was a spontaneous attack by German people, and that it showed the depth of anti-Jewish feeling. The Nazi regime was widely criticised in the international press as a result of *Kristallnacht*.



Source 2.46 The clearing of the Warsaw ghetto after the uprising of 1943

Spread of anti-Semitism and formation of ghettos

Soon after the invasion of Poland in 1939, **ghettos** were set up in Nazi-occupied territories, such as Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union. Ghettos were small areas of larger cities that were used to contain Jews. They were bricked off or encircled with barbed wire to stop people from escaping. Over the course of the war, many Jewish people were rounded up and forced to leave their homes and move into ghettos. One of the largest ghettos was in Warsaw, Poland (see Source 2.46). Conditions inside the ghetto were extremely brutal. It was very crowded and there was often no running water, or toilet facilities. Jews were often not allowed to leave the ghetto and had to depend on the few rations provided by the Nazis. One survivor described the Warsaw ghetto as 'a prison without a roof'. Approximately 800 000 Jews died in the ghettos from malnutrition, disease and forced labour. Others were murdered outright by shooting.

Although the principal victims of the Holocaust were European Jews, Nazi policies also targeted other segments of society, such as Sinta and Romani peoples (often referred to as Gypsies) as well as homosexuals and people with physical or intellectual disabilities. Between 200 000 and 500 000 Sinta and Romani peoples alone were killed by the Nazis. These criminal actions were later labelled 'genocide'—the deliberate attempt to wipe out a religious, racial or ethnic group. Nazi occupation policies, particularly in Eastern and Central Europe, were also brutal. In Poland and the Soviet Union, for instance, they resulted in the deaths of millions of civilians.

Concentration camps

In addition to the formation of ghettos in large cities to contain Jews and others regarded as 'undesirables', the Nazi government used existing concentration camps in Germany and built many new camps throughout the occupied territories, mostly in Poland. The exact number of concentration camps is not known; however, it is generally accepted that there were between 2000 and 8000 camps.



Source 2.47 Russian, Polish and Dutch slave labourers interned at the Buchenwald concentration camp averaged a weight of 75 kilograms each before entering camp 11 months before this photograph was taken. Their average weight after this time had dropped to 31 kilograms.



Source 2.48 Crematoria where the remains of people killed at Buchenwald concentration camp were cremated

The camps varied in character. Some were forced labour camps where inmates were compelled to do hard physical labour such as mining and road building under harsh conditions (see Source 2.47), others were prisoner of war camps where Allied soldiers were held and often tortured in order to reveal secret information, still others functioned as extermination camps. Many camps, however, served a combination of these functions. The best known and largest of these camps was Auschwitz–Birkenau, where inmates considered unsuitable for forced labour were gassed and their bodies burnt in crematoria (giant ovens—see Source 2.48). Over one million Jews alone were murdered at Auschwitz.

Mass shootings

With the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, Nazi policy towards the Jews began to move into its most extreme phase. Between the start of the invasion and early 1943, roughly 1.6 million eastern European Jews were executed in mass killing campaigns that were conducted by members of the *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads). Local collaborators, the SS (Hitler’s elite forces) and some members of the *Wehrmacht* (German armed forces) also participated

in this extermination. The process generally involved rounding up the members of a local Jewish community and executing them in an area close to their homes. On 29–30 September 1941 at Babi Yar, near the city of Kiev, 33 771 Jews were executed. This phase of the Holocaust was the most public, and rumours of executions began to spread in the occupied areas and in Germany itself.

The ‘Final Solution’

In January 1942, at a meeting in the city of Wannsee near Berlin, leading Nazi officials identified a process to achieve a ‘final solution to the Jewish question’. The aim was to eliminate the estimated 11 million European Jews. This ‘Final Solution’ combined forced deportation and transportation of Jews to labour camps before extermination.

Historians generally agree that around three million Jews were killed in concentration and extermination camps, while another three million died in other violent or oppressive circumstances outside the camps. All six million deaths were a result of Nazi extermination policies. Many other non-Jewish inmates died of maltreatment, disease and starvation.



Source 2.49
Polish prisoners dig graves for their fellow prisoners after a mass execution by the Nazis, 1941.



Source 2.50 These are the tracks along which trains took people to their death at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in Oswiecim, Poland.

The Holocaust’s legacy

Over six million of Europe’s 11 million Jews were killed in a deliberate campaign of extermination. Some survivors endured slave labour in the various camps. Many others hid or were protected by sympathetic non-Jews. There were also those who took up arms against the Nazis, such as the Jewish Combat Organisation whose members led uprisings in some of the major ghettos.

After the war, many European Jews migrated to other countries, including Australia, where they have established vibrant new communities. Many Jews wished to join their fellow Jews who were already living in their ancient homeland. So, in November 1947, the UN endorsed the establishment of an independent Jewish state in what became known as Israel. Israel declared its independence in May 1948.

The horrors of the mass murders and other atrocities committed by the Nazis shocked the conscience of people all around the world. After World War II, the nations of the world were determined to prevent such grave crimes from recurring or, at least, to ensure that people committing such crimes would not go unpunished. The facts and lessons of these events are

commemorated in Holocaust museums that have been established in many countries, while memoirs and films communicate the Jewish experience of the *Shoah* to the world. New international treaties on human rights, the humane treatment of civilians in times of war, sanctuary for refugees and the elimination of racial discrimination have come into effect, recognising the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Check your learning

- 1 What was the eugenics movement? How popular was it?
- 2 What were some of the laws implemented by Nazi Germany to persecute Jews?
- 3 What was the ‘Final Solution’ and how was it carried out?
- 4 What were some of the other groups persecuted in Nazi Germany?

examiningevidence

Life and death during the Holocaust

Historians are able to develop insights into the thoughts and actions of people in the past through the examination of primary **sources**. These can include letters, diaries, photographs, artworks, legislation, buildings, clothing and artefacts from the period studied. Primary sources can also include reminiscences about an event, even if they were not recorded until many years later. All of this material forms the evidence that historians use to make speculations or draw conclusions about past events.

In the case of the Holocaust, there is considerable evidence in the laws passed in Germany during the 1930s. Once the war started, the Nazis took many photographs in the ghettos, concentration and extermination camps. Then, when the camps were liberated by the Allies in May 1945, there were more photographs taken and views recorded by the soldiers who were shocked at what they found. Still later, as Holocaust survivors began to readjust to life after the trauma, many of them recorded their experiences and feelings.

All of this material has contributed to a considerable body of evidence that leaves no doubt as to the nature and complexity of the experiences of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany, before, during and at the end of World War II.

Source 2.52a

I hated the brutality, the sadism, and the insanity of Nazism. I just couldn't stand by and see people destroyed. I did what I could, what I had to do, what my conscience told me I must do. That's all there is to it. Really, nothing more.

Oskar Schindler, German Industrialist who saved many Jews

Source 2.52b

When people came to gas chamber, they had a soldier going around and said, 'Women here, men here. Undress. Take shower.' They told them, 'You're going to a camp. Going to work. Tie shoes together. And make sure your children tie their shoes together. Because when you come out, you don't so much spend time look for your shoes and your clothes.' All a lie. They were not thinking about it that they will be dead in another fifteen minutes.

Holocaust survivor Sigmund Boraks

Source 2.53

A Jew cannot be a citizen of the Reich. He cannot exercise the right to vote; he cannot hold public office ... Marriages between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood are forbidden ... Jews are forbidden to display the Reich and national flag or the national colours.

Selected points from the Nuremberg Laws, a series of anti-Semitic laws put in place in Germany by the Nazis

Source 2.54

I feel the urge to present to you a true report of the recent riots, plundering and destruction of Jewish property [on Kristallnacht]. Despite what the official Nazi account says, the German people have nothing whatever to do with these riots and burnings. The police supplied SA men with axes, house-breaking tools and ladders ... the mob worked under the leadership of [Hitler's] SA men.

Anonymous letter from a German civil servant to the British Consul, 1938



Source 2.55 A Jewish boy selling Star of David armbands in Warsaw. All Jews were required to wear them.



Source 2.56 Jews taken to the death camps were told they were being re-housed. They packed their most important possessions, which were confiscated on arrival.



Source 2.57 Eyeglasses confiscated from prisoners at Auschwitz extermination camp. The glasses were recycled and issued to members of the German army.

Check your learning

- 1 How do these sources explain the Nazi attitude to Jews?
- 2 Is there any evidence that supports the assertion the Nazis attempted to dehumanise Jews?
- 3 What evidence can you find to suggest that not all Germans supported the Nazis' anti-Semitic policies?
- 4 How could this evidence have influenced the post-war desire to achieve a Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

The atomic bombings

The development of more sophisticated technology in World War II culminated in the emergence of the atomic bomb. In spite of the horrific bombing raids experienced in Europe during the war, and the huge loss of life, the bombing of Japan by the Allies using these ‘nightmare’ weapons remains as a symbol of the terrifying power and force of nuclear weapons. The use of the two bombs that effectively ended the war also signalled the beginning of the Cold War and the ever-present threat of imminent destruction.

The Potsdam Declaration

Following the end of the war in Europe, the Allies turned their attention to forcing Japan to surrender. At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, the Allied leaders issued the Potsdam Declaration to Japan. This was an ultimatum, threatening that if Japan did not unconditionally surrender it would face ‘prompt and utter destruction’.



Source 2.58 Robert Oppenheimer and General Leslie Groves (centre) examine the wreckage of the tower and shack that held the first nuclear weapon, 11 September 1945

The Manhattan Project

The Manhattan Project was the name given to the research program that developed the first atomic bomb. It had its origins in a letter from two of the world’s leading physicists, Leo Szilard and Albert Einstein, to President Franklin D Roosevelt. The letter outlined their fears that Nazi Germany was beginning research into atomic bombs, and recommended that the USA should begin its own program. Roosevelt accepted their proposal, and began funding covert research into atomic energy. In 1942, the research program was placed under the command of the American military, and became the Manhattan Project.

Even before the USA entered World War II, it was dedicating huge resources to the Manhattan Project. By 1944, approximately 129 000 people were working on the Manhattan Project, including scientists, construction workers and military personnel. The Project also merged its efforts with the smaller nuclear programs of Britain and Canada.

After three years of using their research to develop an actual weapon, the members of the Manhattan Project tested the first atomic bomb on 16 July 1945, in New Mexico. This test was codenamed ‘Trinity’. Before the test, the observers set up a betting pool on what the result would be. The predictions varied from nothing at all happening to the complete destruction of the state of New Mexico. Some observers even bet that the atmosphere would ignite and incinerate the entire planet.

The Trinity test was extremely successful, and at the time was the largest man-made explosion in history. The shock wave made by the explosion was felt up to 160 kilometres away. The observers immediately contacted President Harry Truman, who was at the Potsdam Conference, and told him that the test had been successful. Truman had already authorised his generals’ plan to invade Japan, code-named ‘Operation Downfall’, but now believed he had the chance to prevent millions of soldiers and civilians from being killed. When Japan rejected the Potsdam Declaration, he authorised the use of atomic bombs.

The Japan campaign

In mid 1945, Japan was losing the war in the Pacific. America had recaptured the Mariana Islands and the Philippines, and Japan was running out of resources. American military planners had developed Operation Downfall, but as the American forces fought their way towards Japan, they encountered increasingly stiff resistance.

The Japan campaign began with a series of minor air raids. These raids soon developed into a major strategic firebombing campaign in late 1944. The change to firebombing tactics resulted in devastating attacks on 67 Japanese cities, killing as many as 500 000 Japanese. Despite the damage and the huge civilian death toll, the Japanese military refused to consider surrendering.

America therefore continued to push towards the Japanese Home Islands (the islands that the Allies had decided would be the extent of Japan’s territory after the war). Two major land battles, at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, revealed how fierce Japan’s defence of the Home Islands would be. Both islands were heavily fortified and fiercely defended. Around 6800 American troops and approximately 21 000 Japanese soldiers were killed at Iwo Jima. The Battle of Okinawa (see Source 2.59) was the bloodiest in the Pacific, with 62 000 American casualties, including 12 000 killed. Approximately 95 000 Japanese soldiers were killed, including many who committed suicide rather than surrendering. It is unknown how many civilians were killed in the American invasion of Okinawa, but estimates vary from 42 000 to 150 000.

Despite the incredible loss of life on both sides at Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the American commanders in the Pacific continued preparations for Operation Downfall. The Soviet Union also prepared to enter the war in the Pacific, planning to declare war on Japan and invade the Japanese-occupied region of Manchuria on 9 August. However, these commanders were not aware of the Manhattan Project. Japan’s rejection of the Potsdam Declaration in July 1945 caused President Truman to authorise the atomic bombings of Japanese cities, hoping that it would force Japan to surrender and save millions of lives that might be lost in Operation Downfall.



Source 2.59 US marines watch a phosphorus shell attack on the Japanese in the Battle of Okinawa.

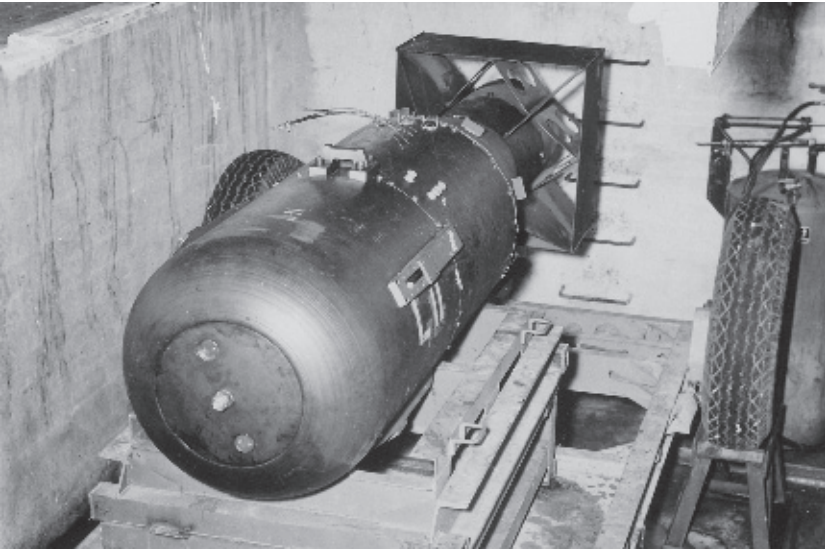
The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

On 6 August 1945, an atomic bomb nicknamed ‘Little Boy’ was dropped on the city of Hiroshima (see Source 2.60). Hiroshima was chosen because it was a large, urban, industrial city that also served as a military storage area and an assembly point for troops. No one knew how much damage the bomb would do, so Hiroshima was one of the few major cities not targeted by the American firebombing campaign, so that the damage caused by the bomb could be more easily observed.

The bombing occurred at 8.15 on a Monday morning in Hiroshima. The city’s residents had been given no warning of the atomic bombing. The bomb’s immediate impact was incredible. Approximately 80 000 people, or 30 per cent of Hiroshima’s population, were killed, and another 70 000 were injured. Roughly 69 per cent of the city’s buildings were completely destroyed. The long-term effects of the bombing were even worse. People suffered from burns, radiation, cancer and many other side effects related to the bomb. The exact figures are disputed, but the total number of deaths caused by the bomb by the end of 1945 was between 90 000 and 160 000. By 1950, around 200 000 people had died because of the bomb.

After the bombing of Hiroshima, President Truman released a statement saying that a new weapon had been used, and that ‘if they [the Japanese government] do not now accept our terms, they may expect a rain of ruin from the air’. On the same day, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded the Manchuria region. However, the Japanese government still did not respond to the Potsdam Declaration. On 9 August, a second atomic bomb was dropped on the important port city of Nagasaki.

The bomb’s impact in Nagasaki was just as devastating as it was in Hiroshima. Between 40 000 and 75 000 people were killed by the immediate effects of the bomb, and a further 74 000 were injured. By the end of 1945, at least 80 000 were dead because of the bomb’s long-term effects. It is often forgotten that the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki also killed at least 2000 Korean forced labourers, and an unknown number of Allied prisoners of war.



Source 2.60 ‘Little Boy’—the atomic bomb that destroyed almost 70 per cent of Hiroshima in August 1945

focus on ...

empathy: Sadako Sasaki



Source 2.61 Statue of Sadako Sasaki holding a crane in the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima

Sadako Sasaki is one of the most famous victims of the atomic bombings. She was only two when the atomic bomb was dropped on her home city of Hiroshima. She survived the explosion, but began to develop symptoms nearly a decade after the bombing. In November 1954, Sasaki developed swelling on her neck, and purple spots on her legs. She was diagnosed with leukaemia, and hospitalised in February 1955.

While in hospital, she was visited by a friend who taught her to fold paper to make origami cranes. There is a Japanese tradition that folding 1000 paper cranes are a symbol of good luck, or that they grant the person who folds them one wish. Sasaki attempted to fold 1000 cranes, but died in October 1955 before she could complete her task. Her friends and family finished the cranes, and also built a memorial to Sasaki, and all the children who were affected by the bombings.

Sasaki’s story is just one of tens of thousands of victims of the atomic bombings. However, she puts a human face on the suffering of the victims, and helps to ensure that the victims are not considered simply as statistics.

Japan surrenders

Japan was shocked and devastated by the twin shocks of the atomic bombings and the Soviet declaration of war. Although the Japanese military wished to continue the war, Emperor Hirohito ordered his cabinet to surrender after the bombing of Nagasaki. On 14 August, the Japanese government notified the Allies that they would accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, provided the Emperor retained full sovereignty. That night, the military unsuccessfully attempted a coup to depose Hirohito and continue the war. On 15 August 1945, however, the Emperor’s surrender speech was broadcast on Japanese radio, marking the end of World War II. The formal declaration of surrender was signed on 2 September, and the Allies occupied Japan from then until 1952.

Debate about the bombings

Immediately after World War II ended, most Americans supported the use of the atomic bombs to force Japan to surrender. Disturbing images of maimed survivors were censored in the USA, and many people were so used to anti-Japanese propaganda that they felt little empathy for the victims of the bombings. Since then, however, there have been fierce debates over whether the atomic bombings were justified or necessary to win the war.

Some argue that the bombings saved millions of lives by preventing the need for an invasion of the Japanese Home Islands. The ferocity with which Japanese soldiers fought at Iwo Jima and Okinawa made this a popular view among American soldiers and their families. Other supporters of the decision to use the atomic bombs say that Japan’s ‘never surrender’ warrior culture meant that, without the bombings, Japan would not have surrendered. Another argument is that the atomic bombings were the inevitable result of both sides engaging in total war. At the time, many people believed that it would be almost impossible to spend \$2 billion on the Manhattan Project, and then not use the atomic bombs it created to save American lives.

Some critics of the bombings argue that the surprise bombing of civilians with atomic weapons was fundamentally and morally wrong. Others argue that the bombings constituted war crimes, or crimes against humanity. In a 2003 interview, Robert McNamara, who was the American Secretary of Defense in the 1960s, recalled General Curtis LeMay, who was involved in planning the bombings, telling him ‘if we’d lost the war, we’d all have been prosecuted as war criminals’.



Source 2.62 General Sir Thomas Blamey, the commander of the Australian army, accepts the surrender of the 2nd Japanese Army at Mostai, in September 1945. (AWM 115645)



Source 2.63 Hiroshima before (13 April) and after (11 August) the bombing

perspectives: the atomic bombings

Some of the earliest criticisms of the use of atomic bombs to end the war came from the scientists who made the Manhattan Project possible. Both Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard, whose letter to President Franklin Roosevelt kick-started the nuclear research program in America, were horrified by the effects of the atomic bombings. Einstein was not involved in the Manhattan Project beyond its conception, but lobbied against the build-up of nuclear arsenals after the war. Szilard was so horrified by his involvement in the Manhattan Project that he abandoned theoretical physics, devoting the rest of his career to molecular biology instead. Robert Oppenheimer, considered by many the 'father of the atomic bomb', was also troubled by the way his invention was used.

By contrast, some of the people actively involved in using the atomic bombs had no regrets. President Harry Truman, the man who authorised the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, never publicly regretted his decision. Colonel Paul Tibbets, the pilot who dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, said that he never regretted his involvement in the bombings, and felt only pride and relief when he released the bomb. There has been fierce debate about the atomic bombings since they occurred, and the perspectives of those who were involved in the bombings are split. The following quotations provide an insight into the differing perspectives of two men who were heavily involved at different stages of the chain of events leading up to the bombings.



Source 2.64 The Genbaku Dome in Hiroshima after the bombing

Source 2.65

I knew what I was doing when I stopped the war ... I have no regrets and, under the same circumstances, I would do it again.

Harry S Truman, letter to Irving Kupcinet, 5 August 1963, from the National Archives

Source 2.66

I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.

J Robert Oppenheimer, 1965, quoting the *Hindu Bhagavad Gita* in 'The Decision to Drop the Bomb'

Source 2.67

7 August

The status of medical facilities and personnel dramatically illustrates the difficulties facing authorities. Of more than 200 doctors in Hiroshima before the attack, over 90 percent were casualties and only about 30 physicians were able to perform their normal duties a month after the raid. Out of 1780 nurses, 1654 were killed or injured. Though some stocks of supplies had been dispersed, many were destroyed. Only three out of 45 civilian hospitals could be used, and two large Army hospitals were rendered unusable. Those within 3000 feet of ground zero were totally destroyed, and the mortality rate of the occupants was practically 100 per cent. Two large hospitals of reinforced concrete construction were located 4900 feet from ground zero. The basic structures remained erect but there was such severe interior damage that neither was able to resume operation as a hospital for some time and the casualty rate was approximately 90 percent, due primarily to falling plaster, flying glass, and fire. Hospitals and clinics beyond 7000 feet, though often remaining standing, were badly damaged and contained many casualties from flying glass or other missiles.

With such elimination of facilities and personnel, the lack of care and rescue activities at the time of the disaster is understandable ...

Effective medical help had to be sent in from the outside, and arrived only after a considerable delay.

Firefighting and rescue units were equally stripped of men and equipment. Father Siemes reports that 30 hours elapsed before any organized rescue parties were observed ...

Extract from US Strategic Bombing Survey:
The Effects of the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Check your learning

- 1 What were the 'twin shocks' that forced Japan to surrender?
- 2 How did the Japanese military react to Emperor Hirohito's decision to surrender to the Allies?
- 3 Who sent the letter to President Roosevelt that kick-started the Manhattan Project? What were the two main points of the letter?
- 4 What evidence is there that Leo Szilard regretted his involvement in the Manhattan Project?

bigideas

2.2 What were some of the most significant events of World War II?

Remember

- 1 What were some of the reasons for the choice of Hiroshima as the target for the first atomic bombing?
- 2 Which social movement influenced the Nazi Party's racial policies?
- 3 What was the ghetto system?
- 4 What was Operation Downfall? Why was it never carried out?

Understand

- 5 Why has World War II been described as 'the most terrible war in history'?
- 6 Why do some sources say that there were six million victims of the Holocaust, and some say 11 million?
- 7 Explain the difference between concentration camps and extermination camps.

Apply

- 8 How would the end of the war in the Pacific have been different if the Japanese military's coup against Emperor Hirohito had succeeded? How do you think the Allies would have reacted to a successful coup?
- 9 Hitler outlined his anti-Semitic attitudes in *Mein Kampf*, and introduced anti-Semitic policies after coming to power in 1933. Why do you think that so few Jews fled Germany before it was too late?

Analyse

- 10 Consider the various perspectives on the use of the atomic bombs in Japan in 1945 that you have read in this chapter. With a partner, develop a graphic presentation showing the reasons for and against the use of the bomb at the time, and assess those reasons.

Evaluate

- 11 Outline some of the arguments for and against the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. Do you believe the bombings were justified?

Create

- 12 Collect a series of images and quotations to create a PowerPoint presentation showing the impact of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima or Nagasaki. You should consider both the short-term and long-term effects of the bombings.



Source 2.68 The mushroom cloud over Hiroshima



Source 2.69 Members of the Australian Women's Land Army (AWM 4731075)



Sources 2.70 Propaganda poster



Source 2.71 Propaganda poster

2.3

How did the events of World War II affect people around the world and in Australia?

When World War II broke out, in Australia it was not greeted with the same level of enthusiasm as World War I. Australia's armed forces were poorly funded and underequipped, and the then Prime Minister Robert Menzies was reluctant to mobilise the nation for the war effort. The focus of the Australian home front was 'business as usual'.

Despite the declaration of war, Menzies was initially reluctant to commit Australian troops to fight in Europe. Australia's military was in a depleted state, and Menzies wanted to ensure that Australia could defend itself. The first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) had been disbanded after World War I. In 1939, the army consisted of around 3000 professional soldiers, and a voluntary **militia** called the Citizen Military Force (CMF), which could only serve in defence of Australia. These units were mainly equipped with weapons brought home from World War I by the first AIF.



Source 2.72 Propaganda poster

Australia's commitment

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, however, Australia gave its full support to the declaration. Only a few hours after Britain declared war on Germany, the Australian Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, made a radio broadcast to the nation (see Source 2.73).

Source 2.73

Fellow Australians,

It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially, that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war. No harder task can fall to the lot of a democratic leader than to make such an announcement.

From a speech made by Prime Minister Robert Gordon Menzies, 3 September 1939

Despite his doubts, Menzies authorised the creation of a second AIF in September 1939. The Australian government had promised 20000 soldiers for the British war effort, but initially struggled to fulfil this commitment. Soldiers in the AIF were paid less than those in the CMF, and AIF wages were even lower than the dole. The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was also much more attractive to many Australians, because it seemed more exciting and offered higher wages. Many members of the CMF were also reluctant to transfer to the AIF. It took three months to fill the 6th Division of the AIF, a big contrast to the three weeks it took to raise 20000 men at the start of World War I.



Source 2.74 Robert Gordon Menzies (1894–1978), Prime Minister of Australia when World War II was declared



Source 2.75 Second AIF recruitment poster (AWM ARTV06723)

The fall of France in 1940 changed Australia’s perception of the war. Recruitment rates surged, three new divisions of the AIF were formed, and the government began to regulate war-related industries. From 1940 to 1942, the AIF served mainly in Libya, Greece, Crete, Syria, Egypt and Malaya. The Australian air force and navy also served in a variety of theatres or arenas during the war.

Conscription was still a matter of great debate in Australia at the start of World War II. When conscription was introduced in October 1939, it only required unmarried men aged 21 to report for three months, militia training and service in the CMF. They could also only serve in Australia or its territories. This mild form of conscription did not cause too much upset in 1939. Soon after, in 1942, however, all men aged 18–35 and single men aged 35–45 became eligible to be conscripted into the CMF. These conscripts, despite being given the derogatory nickname ‘Chocos’ (short for ‘chocolate soldiers’ because militia were thought to ‘melt’ in the heat of battle), performed admirably under incredibly difficult conditions in the Kokoda and Milne Bay campaigns.

From September 1939 until December 1941, Australia gave full support to the European war but there was little impact in Australia. This changed dramatically with the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the fall of Singapore.

After John Curtin was elected Prime Minister in 1941 and Japan entered the war, Australia’s experience of the war changed as the whole population mobilised to support the war effort. Women were encouraged to enter the workforce, industry was regulated, and coastal defences were extended and reinforced. With the fall of Singapore, Australia was directly under threat for the first time.

On 8 December 1941, the Prime Minister, John Curtin, addressed the nation (see Source 2.77).



Source 2.76 Soldiers of the Second AIF leaving Australia to serve in the war, January 1940. Their helmets show their enlistment numbers and the cases on their chests hold their gas masks. (AWM 011141)

Source 2.77

Men and women of Australia, we are at war with Japan. That has happened because, in the first instance, Japanese naval and air forces launched an unprovoked attack on British and United States territory; because our vital interests are imperilled and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are assailed. As a result, the Australian Government this afternoon took the necessary steps which will mean that a state of war exists between Australia and Japan. Tomorrow, in common with the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Netherlands East Indies governments, the Australian Government will formally and solemnly declare the state of War it has striven so sincerely and strenuously to avoid.

John Curtin, Declaration of war on Japan; excerpt from ABC radio broadcast of the Prime Minister’s address to the nation, 8 December 1941

The war actually reached Australia’s shores in February 1942, when Japanese fighter and bomber planes launched a series of bomb attacks across northern Australia. The most serious was the bombing of Darwin on 19 February (see Source 2.78). The Prime Minister declared that Australia was now in a state of ‘total war’.



Source 2.78 The bombing of Darwin in February 1942

Check your learning

- 1 What do Menzies’ words (see Source 2.73) tell us about the relationship between Britain and Australia in 1939?
- 2 What were some of the reasons why the AIF initially struggled to fulfil its commitment of 20 000 soldiers? What event boosted recruitment?
- 3 Why were members of the CMF nicknamed ‘Chocos’?

The Australian experience of war— abroad and at home

In the early years of World War II, Australia’s contribution to the war effort closely mirrored that of World War I. Roughly 550 000 Australian men served overseas in the armed forces out of a total population of seven million. Australian servicemen saw action in Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific.

In 1941, Australian ground forces were stationed in North Africa, Greece, Crete and Syria as part of the wider imperial commitments. Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) pilots and crew also played a major role in the Allied bombing campaigns over Germany, where 6500 died.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor and Singapore brought on an escalation of the level of Australia’s involvement. From 1942, the majority of Australian forces were deployed in the South-West Pacific area—in New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and the Pacific Islands.

In 1943, **conscription** into the armed forces in Australia’s overseas territories including New Guinea and the Solomon Islands was introduced with little opposition. Because of the real threat of Japanese invasion, the issue of conscription was much less divisive than it had been during World War I.



Source 2.80 Australian POWs in a Japanese prison camp at the end of the war (AWM 019199)



Source 2.79 Australian Army, Rising Sun Badge from 1942

In Australia, as with the other nations involved in World War II, total war meant that both servicemen and civilians became part of the war effort. From early 1942, when the war came close to Australia’s shores, all aspects of the Australian economy were focused on the war effort. ‘Luxury’ industries like furniture making were disbanded, and men involved in ‘critical’ war-related industries were not allowed to enlist. The USA made Australia its main base for the South-West Pacific and up to one million American servicemen were based in Australia. The economy was geared to meet the needs of these soldiers as well as supporting the Australian forces and maintaining the war effort.

Prisoners of war

Australian service personnel were captured by the enemy in all the major areas of war. Roughly 8184 Australians were held as prisoners of war (POWs) in German and Italian camps. Of these, 269 died. These men had largely been captured in Greece and North Africa, while many members of the RAAF had been shot down in bombing raids over Germany and captured. Most Australian POWs in Europe were imprisoned in specific POW camps in decent conditions. Nine Australians were, however, among a group of 168 Allied pilots shot down over France and imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp.

The majority of Australian POWs were captured by the Japanese (see Source 2.80). Between January and March 1942, over 22 000 Australian service personnel were captured by Japanese forces in the region, with 15 000 captured in Malaya and Singapore alone. By 1945, over 8000 had died. The significantly higher rate of deaths among POWs captured by the Japanese can be attributed to Japan’s attitude towards prisoners. Japanese military culture, shaped by traditional values, meant that the Japanese regarded prisoners poorly. Japan refused to follow the terms of the **Geneva Convention**, an international agreement on the treatment of captured civilians and military personnel.

At camps in Ambon in Indonesia and Rabaul in Papua New Guinea, conditions were so appalling that more than half those captured died, and hundreds of Australian prisoners were massacred. POWs were also killed in tragic accidents. In 1942, 1053 Australian POWs were killed while being transported from New Guinea to Japanese-occupied China. The Japanese ship they were on was torpedoed and sunk by an American submarine that was unaware that the ship was carrying POWs.

The Japanese also made use of POWs as forced labour, most notably on the Burma Railway. Along with British, Dutch and American prisoners, 13 000 Australian POWs were used as forced labour to build a railway line from Thailand to Burma to supply the Japanese campaign (see Source 2.81). About 2800 Australians died from malnutrition, mistreatment and disease.



Source 2.81 Malnourished prisoners on the Thailand–Burma Railway (AWM P00761-011)

significance: Edward (Weary) Dunlop



Source 2.82 Sir Edward (Weary) Dunlop, right, in Singapore, 1942

Among Australia’s prisoners of war there were many remarkable stories of heroism and resilience. One of the most notable was the story of ‘Weary’ Dunlop, a Melbourne doctor who was captured by the Japanese in Java in 1942. Dunlop was sent to the Burma Railway where he often put his own life on the line to care for sick and wounded soldiers and to stand up to the Japanese on behalf of those unfit for work.

Source 2.83

... thousands of us starved, scourged, racked with malaria, dysentery, beri beri, pellagra and the stinking tropical ulcers that ate a leg to the bone in a matter of days, and always Weary Dunlop and his fellow MOs [medical officers] stood up for us, were beaten, scorned, derided, and beaten again.

An ex-prisoner-of-war (from Weary Dunlop page at vicnet)

Life on the home front

When Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies committed Australia to the war in 1939 the direct threat to the Australian mainland was fairly low. The war was seen as a European conflict. However, when the threat of a Japanese invasion of Australia became a reality in 1941, the Australian war effort had greater consequences for the civilian population.

National Security Act

One of the first steps towards ‘total war’ taken by the Australian government was the National Security Act. This Act, passed on 8 September 1939, introduced laws that gave the federal government greater powers to respond to the threat of war. It allowed newspapers and the media to be **censored**, and legalised the detention of so-called ‘enemy aliens’—for example, Germans living in Australia. It also meant that groups that opposed the war, such as the Communist Party of Australia and Jehovah’s Witnesses, were banned.



Source 2.85 Mail being censored (AWM 139316)



Source 2.84 A campaign poster urging civilians in Australia not to gossip (AWM ARTV02497)

Censorship

During the war years, the Australian government believed that strict censorship was necessary to maintain national security and boost public morale. The Department of Information was responsible for its administration. All forms of media, such as newspapers and radio broadcasts, were subject to controls that limited what they could report. For example, when Japanese forces bombed Darwin in 1942, the extent of damage, the scale of the attack and the loss of life were downplayed in newspapers and on radio.

Similarly, when Australian and US soldiers brawled in the so-called ‘Battle of Brisbane’ on 26 November 1942, the death of one Australian and the injury to others was censored because the event was seen as threatening US–Australian relations (see ‘focus on ... significance: Americans in Australia’).

In addition to this, the Department of Information censored mail (see Source 2.85) and monitored phone calls to ensure that military information relating to troop movements and locations was not communicated to the enemy.

Propaganda

Closely related to censorship was **propaganda**. Throughout the war, newspapers, radio, posters and other forms of mass communication (like the short newsreels shown before feature films in cinemas) encouraged people to think and act in particular ways. This was viewed as a technique for maintaining morale. The way in which the bombing of Darwin and the ‘Battle of Brisbane’ were reported might be described as propaganda because of how the government influenced the news. Sometimes propaganda was very much like advertising that encouraged Australians to support the war effort. Posters encouraged people to enlist in the armed forces (see Source 2.86), or reminded them that their everyday efforts were an important part of war. There were also newsreels aimed specifically at women, encouraging them to enlist in the auxiliary forces or to make sacrifices for the war effort.

There was also a more sinister aspect to some forms of propaganda, such as posters that used prejudicial stereotypes of the Germans or Japanese to ensure that Australians remained supportive of the war (see Source 2.88).

Internment

As in World War I, the Australian government again took steps against people living in Australia who they believed threatened national security. Initially, this included internment (holding in special camps) of Germans and Italians living in Australia who were believed to be pro-Nazi or pro-fascist (see Source 2.87). When war with Japan began, all Japanese who lived in Australia were interned. Approximately 7000 ‘enemy aliens’, many of whom had lived peacefully and innocently in Australia for decades, were interned in various locations around the country.



Source 2.87 Italian POWs at Liverpool Prisoner of War and Internment Camp, New South Wales, during World War II (AWM 123706)



Source 2.86 Propaganda poster encouraging men to join the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) (AWM ARTV04273)



Source 2.88 Propaganda poster featuring an anti-Japanese theme (Beauforts were aircraft) (AWM ARTV09053)

Everyday life

Although northern Australia suffered numerous air attacks by the Japanese, the lives of most Australians were not dramatically affected by the actual fighting of World War II. However, their lives were influenced in other ways, including the types of work they were allowed to perform. The government gave priority to industries such as manufacturing (for war materials like aircraft and munitions) and agriculture (which was vital for food supplies).

In 1942, the federal government established the Directorate of Manpower to control the workforce. This enabled people to be allocated to particular industries in a form of industrial conscription rather than military service.

Other government policies influenced many aspects of Australian life during the war years. The fear of air raids, for example, led to the introduction of blackouts, which plunged major cities into darkness. Streetlights were switched off, car headlights reduced to narrow beams, and houses were required to have blackout curtains to prevent light showing in the street (see Source 2.89). Failure to comply could result in fines.

The wartime government also imposed many other restrictions. They reduced hotel and bar trading hours and set maximum prices for restaurants. In 1942, the government brought in national identity cards that included personal details as well as what industry the individual worked in. Daylight saving was introduced to save power, and annual leave entitlements were cut back.



Source 2.89 Preparing for the night-time blackout

Rationing

As World War II progressed, **trade embargoes** and the need for goods to support the war effort led to shortages of many products that had been considered necessities. This led the Australian government to introduce rationing of a range of consumer items including **dairy products**, eggs, meat, tea, clothes, shoes and petrol. Alcoholic drinks were also rationed and people were encouraged to restrict travel unless it was absolutely necessary.

The government issued civilians with **ration books** containing coupons, which had to be presented when paying for certain **goods** (see Source 2.90). Families with young children were given extra rations, as were pregnant women.

During the war, some items simply could not be produced, such as pyjamas, lawnmowers and children’s toys. Recycling was encouraged and depots were set up for scrap metal, cloth and rubber. People were also urged to grow their own food to supplement rationing. Vegetable patches appeared in front gardens and many families kept chickens in the backyard. Australians responded imaginatively to wartime rationing. Newspapers and magazines such as the *Women’s Weekly* offered advice to housewives about how to cope with the shortages. This included handy hints for cooking, or advice about how to paint seams on the backs of their legs to look as if they were wearing stockings. Women were encouraged to avoid buying new items, and to repair and patch clothes for as long as possible.



Source 2.90 Ration coupons entitled civilians to certain goods.

Men on the home front

Almost three-quarters of a million Australians (mostly men) enlisted in the Second Australian Imperial Force. However, a great many more men and women were engaged in the war economy. Many men were not allowed to enlist in the armed forces because they worked in reserved occupations, such as farming and manufacturing (see Source 2.91). Men were needed at home to construct vital wartime infrastructure and military buildings, such as ports, aerodromes, bridges and barracks, and also to make war equipment and munitions. The Allied Works Council was set up in 1942 to oversee such projects. As part of this program, the Civil Construction Corps was established. The Corps, while a civilian organisation, was run with military-style discipline. By mid 1943, more than 50 000 men served in the corps, which was mostly made up of labourers, carpenters and truck drivers.

Men who were unable to enlist because of age, health or their positions in reserved professions also joined the Volunteer Defence Force. Members of this force, including many veterans of World War I, were trained to protect against enemy attack on the home front. The Volunteer Air Observers Corps monitored the sky for potential air raids. Air-raid wardens made sure that everyone followed blackout procedures and participated in evacuation drills.



Source 2.91 Men unable to enlist were recruited into war support occupations. They often faced public criticism.

Women’s role in the war

Australian women had a very broad range of duties and responsibilities during World War II. The needs of the armed forces, the war economy and the deployment of many men overseas created new types of work possibilities. Before World War II, Australian women were not permitted to serve in the military. Most working women were employed in factories, shops or in family businesses. It was expected that women would resign from their employment once they had children. It is important to note that, while there was only an increase of about 5 per cent of women involved in the workforce between 1939 and 1945, what was significant was the types of work they were beginning to perform.

At the start of World War II, women on the home front were encouraged to take the sorts of roles that they had held during World War I. They were not required in the services but were expected to knit and sew, pack parcels, raise money, encourage enlistment and maintain the home.



Source 2.92 Recruitment poster to attract women into the services (AWM ARTV00332)



Source 2.93 Australian Women's Army Service mechanics carrying out maintenance work on Land Headquarters Signals motor vehicles at Albert Park, Melbourne (AWM 60917)

This changed as the war came closer to Australia. From late 1940, women were not only permitted but were encouraged to join the services (see Source 2.92). Around 35 000 women served in the army, making up around 5 per cent of the entire force. The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force established in October 1940 was quickly followed by the women's Army and Navy forces. Women were not to be sent overseas to fight, but were trained in many of the home-front tasks so that more servicemen could be freed to join the overseas forces.

By the end of the war, the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was made up of 18 500 women; the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) had 24 000 women (see Source 2.93); and the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) boasted 2000. Most commonly, women's roles in the armed forces were clerical. However, some were involved in traditional men's roles, as signallers, truck and ambulance drivers, intelligence officers, wireless telegraphers or aircraft ground staff (see Source 2.94). Women were still not permitted to take on combat roles or serve outside Australia. The exception to this was the nurses who served in most areas where Australian troops were sent.



Source 2.94 Female plane-maintenance workers

Even if women did not enlist in the Auxiliary Forces, it was argued that increasing women's employment would enable more men to enter military service. However, the understanding was that their employment was only for the duration of the war. Women entered new areas of work, acting as tram conductors, and taxi and truck drivers. As the war progressed, Australian women worked increasingly in war industries, such as manufacturing munitions and military equipment. Under Manpower regulations, women could be deployed in occupations that suited their skills. A woman trained as a florist could be compelled to work in a factory because of her skills with wire; a dancer could be sent to work on a farm because she was agile and physically fit. By mid 1943, nearly 200 000 women were employed in roles that would assist the war effort. They were paid roughly two-thirds of men's pay rates.

As the war continued, and conscription called up more and more men, many farms were suffering from a shortage of workers. The Women's Land Army was set up to distribute female labour to farms and orchards to keep food production going (see Source 2.95). Around

3000 women were members of the Land Army. Volunteer groups such as the Australian Women's National League continued to take on the more traditional tasks for the war effort, such as knitting socks for the troops, preparing Red Cross food parcels, and raising money for soldiers' families. Other volunteers completed training in emergency services such as first aid and ambulance driving in case of air raids.

At the end of the war there was a general expectation that women would return to domestic duties in the home and that the returned soldiers would be welcomed back into the workforce. This is mostly what happened, but there were some women, especially single women, who remained in their jobs.

It is often argued that women were forced out of the workforce and back to a dull domestic existence at the end of the war. There is some truth in this, but there is also evidence that many women wanted to return to traditional roles. Many who had had boring and unfulfilling jobs during the war were glad to be rid of them. Others who had put off marriage and childbearing during the war were delighted to return to domesticity and begin raising their families.



Source 2.95 Members of the Australian Women's Land Army gather flax straw as part of their farm work. (AWM P00784.128)

significance: Americans in Australia

During World War II, the USA made Australia its main base for the South-West Pacific. In December 1941, Curtin had announced that 'Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'. American servicemen were based in nearly every city in Australia. Many Australian men were jealous of the attention women showed these troops, who were often better paid and—because they were foreign—perceived as more interesting than local men. There were several recorded accounts of fist fights between US and Australian troops, the most famous of which was the 'Battle of Brisbane' in 1942, which went on for several days. There was also racial tension over the presence of black American soldiers in Australia. The government only reluctantly agreed to black American units being stationed in Australia, and made deliberate efforts to keep them away from white Australian women.

However, it has been suggested that this negative response of Australian soldiers to the Americans has been exaggerated. Many families welcomed the US soldiers into their homes and there are stories of Australian men taking their US counterparts to sporting fixtures, drinking with them in bars and joining them in the illegal gambling game of Two-up. With almost one million Americans based in Australia, the US military was a major employer and introduced new American foods, such as hamburgers. The need to feed up to one million US troops as well as Australian soldiers gave a huge boost to Australia's food-growing and food-processing industries.

After the war, about 15 500 Australian women went to the USA as war brides.



Source 2.96 American soldiers with their Australian girlfriends, walking by the Yarra River in Melbourne in 1943. (AWM 011543)



Source 2.97 US soldiers in Australia during World War II

Indigenous Australians

It is impossible to know how many Indigenous Australians served during World War II. At the start of the War, the AIF officially only accepted Aborigines who were of 'substantially European descent'. However, the RAAF accepted Aborigines from the outset, and many others joined the AIF by claiming another nationality. Due to the early shortage of recruits, many recruiters may have simply accepted Aboriginal volunteers, despite official restrictions. Reg Saunders became the first Aboriginal commissioned officer in the Australian army in 1944. After the bombing of Darwin, the restrictions on Aborigines joining the AIF were relaxed. A small number of Torres Strait Islanders were also recruited into the United States army. It is estimated that around 3000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander soldiers served in the armed forces during World War II, but the number who enlisted under another nationality was probably much higher.

In addition to the regular army, a number of Indigenous Australians served in Special Forces. The Torres Strait Light Infantry was formed in 1941 to defend the strategically important Torres Strait area. In 1941, anthropologist and soldier Donald Thomson was authorised to organise and lead the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit. This unit contained 51 Aborigines and five white Australians, and lived off the land while they patrolled the coastline of northern Australia. In the event of a Japanese invasion, they were to conduct a guerrilla campaign from behind enemy lines using traditional Aboriginal weapons. The Aboriginal soldiers in these units were not formally enlisted in the army, and received goods like tobacco rather than monetary pay until 1992, when back-pay and medals were awarded.



Source 2.98 Aboriginal soldiers on parade in 1940 (AWM P02140.004)

Other Indigenous Australians were also employed by the army in a variety of roles. Aborigines worked on farms and in butcheries; built roads and airfields; were construction workers, truck drivers and general labourers. They also filled more specialised roles, such as salvaging downed aircraft and organising munitions stockpiles. Many Aboriginal women were also involved in these roles, as well as joining organisations like the Australian Women's Army Service. Despite their important work, pay rates remained low for Indigenous workers. The RAAF briefly increased wages for Aboriginal workers, but was pressured to lower them again by the civilian government.

Indigenous Australians made a huge contribution to the war effort. By 1944, almost every able-bodied male Torres Strait Islander had enlisted. This meant that, as a proportion of its population, no other community in the world voluntarily contributed as many men to the war effort. There seems to have been remarkably little racism or tension between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the army. When they returned to civilian life, however, many Aboriginal veterans faced the same discrimination they had left behind during the war. Many were banned from Returned and Services League (RSL) Clubs except on ANZAC Day. Most Indigenous Australians were not given the opportunity to use the skills they had learnt during the war when they returned home. Len Waters, who joined the RAAF in 1942 and flew 95 missions, dreamed of becoming a civilian pilot after the war. Waters was forced to return to his pre-war occupation as a shearer.

One ex-soldier, Tommy Lyons who had served at Tobruk said that on his return: 'In the army you had your mates and you were treated as equal, but back here you were treated like dogs.'

Check your learning

- 1 What kinds of jobs did women do, in the services and the general economy, during World War II?
- 2 Did Indigenous Australians who had served in World War II receive the same benefits as non-Indigenous veterans?
- 3 Who was Len Waters? What does his experience suggest about the treatment of Indigenous Australians after World War II?
- 4 Some men who were unable to enlist still did valuable war work but received little recognition. Why was this the case?
- 5 Why was the death rate for Australian POWs in Japan so much higher than that of those in Europe?
- 6 What is propaganda, and how was it used in wartime Australia?



Source 2.99 Informal group portrait of members of the 2/18th Australian Field Workshop, which included Indigenous and non-Indigenous soldiers. Alick Jackomos (centre front row), a Greek Australian, worked for Aboriginal rights and was one of the founders of the Aboriginal Advancement League after the war. (AWM P00898.001)

bigideas

2.3 How did the events of World War II affect people around the world and in Australia?

Remember

- 1 What were some of the items that were rationed in Australia?
- 2 What evidence is there that there was resentment towards American soldiers in Australia during World War II?
- 3 Which event contributed to Prime Minister Curtin's decision to pursue an alliance with the USA over Britain, and to recall the AIF to Australia?

Understand

- 4 What was Len Waters' experience of World War II? What can you learn about Australian society at the time from Waters' story?
- 5 Do you think that the changed position of women in Australia during World War II reflected a change in attitudes, or simple necessity? Support your answer.

Apply

- 6 Why do you think the Australian government was reluctant to allow black American soldiers into Australia?
- 7 Use the Internet to conduct some research on the Coloured Digger Project and the proposed memorial to Aboriginal soldiers. Record some of the opinions on the proposed memorial.

Analyse

- 8 Examine Sources 2.86, 2.88 and 2.89. They are all photographs and posters used by the Australian government to encourage support for the war and keep morale high.
 - a What sorts of images, words and techniques are used?
 - b How effective do you think they would have been?
- 9 As a class, discuss the effect the Internet would have had on propaganda and censorship on the home front in World War II if it had been invented. Do you think censorship would have been possible with the Internet?

Evaluate

- 10 Why do you think there was minimal opposition to the introduction of conscription in World War II when the same issue caused such controversy and division during World War I?
- 11 In pairs, discuss how significant you think Reg Saunders' promotion to become the first Aboriginal commissioned officer was. Why do you think it took until 1944 for an Aboriginal soldier to get promoted to officer rank? Compare your responses with other groups.

Create

- 12 Write a role play based around some of the issues women faced at the end of World War II. Adopt the roles of the following two characters:
 - a woman who has been working as a meteorologist during the war. She is single and has been earning a good wage during the war. She has also enjoyed the work and the independence. She does not see why she should now be forced to leave the workforce.
 - a man who has recently returned from the war and is keen to begin work as an accountant with his previous employer. Unfortunately, there are no vacancies at the accounting firm, because all available roles are filled by well-qualified women.

Each person must speak at least five times during the role play and support their arguments for and against the sacking of women and the reemployment of men in the workforce after the war.

- 13 Imagine Twitter was available during World War II. Write a series of Twitter updates from the perspective of any of the following:
 - a soldier conscripted into the CMF during the Kokoda campaign
 - an Indigenous Australian in the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit
 - an American soldier on relief in Australia
 - an 'enemy alien' interned in Australia
 - a young woman who has entered the workforce for the first time.



Source 2.100 An injured man slumps on a bench amid the ruins of Berlin.

2.4 How did the events of World War II shape Australia's international relationships?

World War II completely changed the way Australians viewed their place in the world. The fall of Singapore forced Australia to realise that Britain would always look after itself before its former colonies. The USA emerged from the War as an indisputable global superpower, and Australia continued to link its interests, its security and its future to the USA. This was a major change in Australian foreign policy. It also ensured that Australia was placed firmly in the American camp as the Cold War divided the globe.

The massive displacement of people in Europe led to a surge in migration to Australia, forever changing the nature of Australian society and its relationship with Europe. The **White Australia policy** remained firmly in place. The Baltic peoples escaping Soviet expansion were the ideal citizens for post-war Australia—white and anti-communist. The United Nations created a new medium for international relations, which gave small countries like Australia a platform to air their grievances. From the outset, Australia was heavily involved in the formation of the United Nations.

The war shapes Australia

Although Australia did not experience the levels of war damage of many of its allies and was never occupied by enemy forces, the conflict had a number of important consequences. It fundamentally altered Australia's relationship with Britain and the USA. The legacies of World War II also laid the foundations for great economic and social change in the second half of the 20th century.

Australia and the USA

In 1939, Australia's Prime Minister Robert Menzies had committed Australia to a war in support of the British Empire.

By 1945, the world had changed markedly. Britain entered the conflict as one of the world's greatest powers. The countries of the empire cooperated to confront Nazi aggression in Europe. However, as the conflict expanded into a global one, the strains of war took their toll. In confronting Nazi Germany, Britain became dependent on the financial, military and economic support of the USA. Stretched in its goals to defend itself and fight Germany and Italy in Europe and North Africa, Britain could only send limited resources to Asia. When Japan struck, Britain experienced its greatest wartime defeat with the fall of Singapore in 1942.

To address this changing situation, Prime Minister John Curtin moved Australian troops from the Middle East to Australia, against the advice of the British government. This was a practical, short-term solution to a major strategic problem. The long-term consequence was the realisation that Australia could no longer rely on Britain to defend it. Australia now focused on a strategic relationship with the USA. As a result of this new arrangement, Curtin placed Australian forces under the control of the broader US military campaign in the Pacific. American General Douglas MacArthur would also establish his base for the South-West Pacific campaign in Australia (see Source 2.101). Until this point, Australia's foreign policy had largely been determined by the needs of the British Empire. This relationship with the USA was an important step in establishing an independent Australia and continues to have an important bearing on Australian foreign policy decisions.

Domestic changes

The social and economic implications of the war were also far-reaching for Australia. Wartime industries had encouraged the growth of manufacturing and services. For the first time in the nation's history, farming ceased to be the major area of economic activity. Food processing and canning, the expansion of steel production, and the manufacture of consumer goods such as washing machines and refrigerators all expanded during and after World War II. The first Holden car rolled off the assembly line at Fisherman's Bend, Victoria, on 29 November 1948, and cost the equivalent of two years' wages for the average worker—£675 (\$1350).



Source 2.101 Australian Prime Minister John Curtin welcomes General Douglas MacArthur to Australia, 1942.



Source 2.102 The first production-model Holden rolled off the assembly line in 1948.



Source 2.103 US sailors and soldiers on their arrival in Australia quickly made friends wherever they went, and were received with hospitality.



Source 2.104 Memorial to those who lost their lives in the bombing of Darwin, February 1942

The presence of almost one million American service personnel in Australia during the war also had a significant cultural impact. For some Australian women these men would become boyfriends or husbands. The influence of American cinema, language and culture made its first major inroads in Australia during this period. Australians had mixed feelings about this cultural ‘invasion’. On one level, many feared the loss of Australian culture and traditions.

On the other hand, for many younger Australians there was a fascination with American music, dress and slang.

The experiences of the war years also reshaped the role of Australian governments in people’s lives and cemented the place of the federal parliament as the most significant or the three tiers of government in the nation. In order to fight the war, the federal government had significantly expanded the scope of its activities. Income taxation and its spending were now centrally controlled, and the banking system was regulated by government. The Australian public placed greater reliance and expectations on the government to successfully manage the economy and social issues.

The experience of war and the death of roughly 28000 Australian service personnel and civilians also shaped Australia’s future. The commemoration of the 1939–45 fallen was incorporated into commemorations of World War I. Local communities recognised the sacrifice of the more recent deaths by extending and expanding the monuments originally constructed to remember the dead of the 1914–18 conflict, ironically described as ‘the war to end all wars’.

Check your learning

1

Why did Prime Minister Curtin turn to the USA for support?

2

What moves did Curtin make once war loomed on Australia’s doorstep?

3

What had been the major economic activity in Australia before the war and how did this change?

Post-war migration

After World War II, many Australians felt that they had only narrowly avoided a Japanese invasion. The government, under the new Prime Minister Ben Chifley, decided that Australia needed to increase its population to protect itself from the threat of foreign invasion. The slogan ‘Populate or perish’ was coined by the Immigration Minister, Arthur Calwell, to promote this new immigration policy. The ‘Populate or perish’ campaign initially focused on encouraging British migrants, but this failed to increase the population enough. For the first time, Australia began to actively seek migrants from continental Europe (see Source 2.105).

The war had left somewhere between 11 and 20 million refugees in Europe. Many of these refugees, including Holocaust survivors and people who had fled the Soviet occupation of Eastern European nations, were housed in Displaced Persons Camps (DP Camps). These camps were initially organised by the armies of various nations, but were gradually taken over by the United Nations. They provided shelter, nutrition and basic health care for the refugees. A more permanent solution had to be found, however. Around six million refugees were returned to their own countries by the end of 1945, but a huge number of refugees still faced persecution in their homelands and remained in the DP Camps. In 1947, around 850000 refugees were still living in DP Camps in Europe. The International Refugee Organisation (IRO) was founded by the United Nations in 1946 to find homes for these people.

In 1947, desperate to increase its population, Australia reached an agreement with the IRO to resettle 12000 refugees a year. These ‘new Australians’, as they came to be called, were accepted on the condition that they agreed to work in government-selected jobs. Australia eventually exceeded its commitment to the IRO, and resettled approximately 180000 refugees.



Source 2.105 Immigrants arrived from all corners of Europe as part of the ‘Populate or perish’ campaign.

As well as refugees, the government sought to encourage people from southern and central Europe to migrate to Australia. In the 20 years after the end of World War II, almost two million people migrated to Australia. The influx of migrants from non-English speaking nations, as well as the belief that Australia’s security was linked to its population size, changed Australia’s migration policy. The dictation test, which had been used to effectively exclude migrants on the basis of race, was abolished in 1958. This led to Australia accepting refugees throughout the rest of the 20th century, including those from the Middle East and Vietnam; and, eventually, to accepting Asian migration. World War II was the catalyst to change Australia’s migration policies, and Australia’s relationships with the rest of the world.

Check your learning

1

Who coined the slogan ‘Populate or perish’?

2

What was the role of the International Refugee Organisation (IRO)?

3

Why were many people forced to remain in Displaced Persons Camps across Europe long after World War II had finished?

4

Why did Australia want a larger population after World War II?

Foundation of the United Nations

The League of Nations, which had been set up after World War I to provide an international forum to promote peace, had clearly failed. The first step towards establishing its replacement was the Declaration of the United Nations. Even while World War II was still in progress, plans were underway to create a new international body.

The United Nations officially came into existence in 1945, with 51 nations as founding members. The first major meeting to prepare the Charter of the United Nations was held in San Francisco in April 1945 (see Source 2.106). Australian delegate Herbert ‘Doc’ Evatt—the then Minister for External Affairs—played a key role in drafting the charter of the United Nations. The Charter outlined the role of the United Nations as an international organisation to prevent war. It also included provisions for the United Nations to aid refugees, support economic reconstruction after the war, and protect human rights.

Evatt argued that larger powers, such as the USA and the Soviet Union, should not dominate the system; and that smaller nations, such as Australia, had an important role to play. Evatt was involved in negotiating the establishment of the state of Israel, one of the first initiatives of the United Nations. He also played a key role in the drafting of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Evatt went on to become one of the first Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly, the UN’s main organisational structure. Other elements of the United Nations (such as the Security Council, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the International Atomic Energy Commission, the International Court of Justice, and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) all have their origins in the foundation of the United Nations and continue to play a significant part in world affairs.



Source 2.106 Australia’s delegation to the United Nations Conference, San Francisco, 25 April 1945. Herbert ‘Doc’ Evatt is seated second from the right.

Check your learning

- 1 Which Australian politician played a key role in the foundation of the United Nations and the drafting of the Declaration of Human Rights?
- 2 What was the overall aim of the United Nations?
- 3 How many nations were founding members of the United Nations?

2.4 How did the events of World War II shape Australia’s international relationships?

Remember

- 1 What happened in World War II to convince Australia that it needed a larger population to survive?
- 2 How did the war change Australia’s foreign policy?
- 3 Which organisation worked to find homes for displaced refugees after World War II?
- 4 As well as the overall aim of preventing future world wars, what were some of the secondary aims of the United Nations?

Understand

- 5 How did World War II change the composition of Australian society?
- 6 Why do you think the United Nations was formed immediately after World War II?
- 7 In your own words, explain why certain types of people (European anti-communists) were considered to be most suitable for emigration to Australia after World War II.

Apply

- 8 How do you think Australia would be different today if Robert Menzies had remained prime minister throughout World War II? Give reasons for your response.

Analyse

- 9 Can the wartime relationship between Australia and the USA be described as a ‘love–hate relationship’? Give reasons for your response.
- 10 Look at the photograph of John Curtin with General Douglas MacArthur (Source 2.101). What message can you get from the body language of both men? What does it tell you about the nature of the relationship between Australian and the USA at this time?

Evaluate

- 11 How do you think Australia’s foreign policies would be different today if Japan had not entered the war? Think about Australia’s involvement in overseas conflict in recent history and discuss your ideas with a partner.
- 12 In your notebook, create a table such as the one below, and fill in examples of changes that World War II had upon Australia. Note whether those changes were temporary or permanent. As a class, you could discuss whether these changes were, on the whole, good or bad for Australia.

Changes to Australia after World War II	
Type of change	Permanent or temporary

Create

- 13 In groups, script and perform a discussion between members of an Eastern European family in a Displaced Persons Camp. The discussion should be about reasons for and against migrating to Australia.

connectingideas

History as tourism

‘Historical tourism’ is the term used to describe a sector of the tourism industry that promotes sites based on their historical significance. These popular sites are often museums or memorials, but they also include battlefields, shipwrecks and buildings that are connected to historical events. Historical tourism has existed for a long time, but sites associated with World War II have become increasingly popular in the last decade or so.



Source 2.107 Visitors peer at suitcases seized from murdered prisoners, exhibited at Auschwitz I, Block 5, in Oswiecim, Poland.

Sites of historical tourism

Many World War II sites, such as museums and memorials, are now the focus of large-scale historical tourism. Battlefields, former extermination camps, museums and even entire towns have become popular sites for historical tourists. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has had approximately 32 million visitors since it opened in 1993. Also, the small French port town of Dunkirk is famous in Britain for its role in the evacuation of British troops after their defeat in the Battle of France. In 2010, to mark the 70th anniversary of the Dunkirk evacuation, tens of thousands of British tourists travelled to the town to celebrate the ‘Miracle of Dunkirk’.

- 1 Why is Dunkirk a significant site for British tourists?
- 2 With a partner, brainstorm some of the different types of historical sites that have become important for historical tourism.



Source 2.108 A group of trekkers crossing a log bridge along the legendary Kokoda Track

The Kokoda Track

The Kokoda Track has become an important site for Australian historical tourists. As well as visiting memorials commemorating those who fought in the Kokoda campaign, walking the trail has become increasingly popular since 2001. It has been described as a ‘pilgrimage’ for many Australians. Some people see experiencing the difficult conditions of the track as a way of honouring the soldiers who fought there. Since 2005, there has even been a ‘Kokoda Challenge’ race. Other sites, like Gallipoli and the Western Front, also attract large numbers of Australian tourists. The Kokoda Track, however, provides tourists with the unique opportunity to measure their determination and stamina against previous generations as a form of commemoration.

- 1 Why do you think that walking the Kokoda Track has become so much more popular since 2001?
- 2 What other sites associated with World War II do you think might become sites of historical tourism for Australians in the future?

Keeping sites sacred

While some World War II sites have become popular with tourists, others have been protected from historical tourism by government legislation. The sinking of the *HMAS Sydney* is Australia’s worst maritime disaster. It became involved in a battle with the German ship *Kormoran* in 1941 off the coast of Western Australia, which ended when both ships sank. All 645 crew on the *Sydney* were killed. The location of the wrecks of both *Sydney* and *Kormoran* was unknown until 2008, when they were rediscovered. Both wrecks are now protected by an exclusion zone, which makes it illegal to come within 800 metres of the site without a permit issued by the Australian government. This means that historical tourism has not developed around the wreck of *Sydney* like it has around the Kokoda Track.

- 1 Why has historical tourism not developed around the site of *Sydney* and *Kormoran*?
- 2 Do you think historical tourism is a positive or negative thing for history and historical sites? Should other historical sites associated with World War II, such as the Kokoda Track, be protected from historical tourism?

Source 2.109 The *HMAS Sydney* Memorial on Mount Scott, Geraldton, Western Australia



In small groups, discuss whether historical tourism is a valid way of commemorating World War II.