

Text	Gist
<p><b>Hitler Moves West</b></p> <p>The Allied Powers had little time to organize their forces to protect Poland. Using a strategy called <i>blitzkrieg</i>, or “lightning war,” German tanks and airplanes broke through Polish defenses. As German forces drove into Poland from the west, the Soviets attacked from the east. Within a month, the two powers had taken control of Poland.</p> <p>With Poland secure, Hitler turned toward western Europe. In the spring of 1940, Germany quickly conquered Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. German troops then invaded France, trapping hundreds of thousands of Belgian, British, and French soldiers in the French port city of Dunkirk. British ships raced to Dunkirk and carried the soldiers across the English Channel to safety in Britain.</p> <p>German forces, meanwhile, continued their march through France. As the Germans approached the French capital of Paris, Italy declared war on the Allied powers. France surrendered to Germany on June 22, 1940. Many of the French soldiers who had escaped at Dunkirk, however, continued to resist Germany’s occupation of France. In London, French general Charles de Gaulle organized a “Free French” army to fight alongside the Allies. “France has lost a battle,” de Gaulle declared. “But France has not lost the war!”</p>	
<p><b>The Battle of Britain</b></p> <p>Great Britain now stood alone against Hitler’s war machine. “The final German victory over England is now only a question of time,” said German general Alfred Jodl. Hitler prepared to invade Britain. To safely move troops and equipment across the English Channel, Germany first had to defeat the British Royal Air Force (RAF). In July 1940 the Luftwaffe, or German air force, began attacking British planes and airfields in what became known as the Battle of Britain.</p> <p>In August Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to begin bombing British cities in the hope of crushing British morale. But Winston Churchill, the new prime minister, refused to give in. “We shall fight on the beaches,” he vowed. “We shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall never surrender.” Using the new technology of radar, the RAF was able to detect and destroy some 2,300 of the Luftwaffe’s aircraft. Hitler canceled the invasion of Britain.</p>	
<p><b>The United States Joins the War</b></p> <p>Most Americans opposed Hitler’s actions, but they did not want to join the war. Many thought that the United States should continue to focus its efforts on rebuilding the economy and correcting other domestic problems. These Americans believed in isolationism, or non-involvement in foreign affairs. They urged the government to retain its policy of neutrality, even in the face of growing totalitarianism overseas. When President Franklin Roosevelt ran for re-election in 1940, he told voters that “your boys are not going to be sent into any foreign wars.” Privately, however, Roosevelt was convinced that the United States would soon be at war.</p>	

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<p><b>Helping the Allies</b></p> <p>In 1941 Roosevelt proposed new programs to assist the Allies. “We must be the great arsenal [arms supply] of democracy,” he told Congress. In March 1941 Congress passed the <b>Lend-Lease Act, allowing the president to aid any nation believed vital to U.S. defense.</b> Under Lend-Lease, the United States sent billions of dollars’ worth of aid in the form of weapons, tanks, airplanes, and food to Great Britain, the Nationalists in China, and other Allied countries. In June 1941 Hitler violated his nonaggression pact with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviets then joined the Allies in the fight against Germany. In November the United States extended the Lend-Lease program to the Soviet Union, though many Americans worried about giving aid to a Communist country.</p>	
<p><b>Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor</b></p> <p>Like Germany and Italy, Japan was quickly building an empire. After conquering much of China in the 1930s, Japanese forces moved into Southeast Asia. Japan’s leaders wanted control of oil and other resources there.</p> <p>When Japanese forces captured French Indochina in July 1941, Roosevelt protested. He demanded that Japan withdraw. Then the United States froze Japanese funds in its banks and cut off exports to Japan.</p> <p><b>Japanese military leaders had already begun planning a large-scale attack to destroy the U.S. naval fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii.</b> This would give Japan time to secure control of East Asia before the U.S. military could respond.</p> <p>At 7:55 A.M. on Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes dove from the sky and attacked Pearl Harbor. An American sailor aboard the USS Arizona remembered how quickly his battleship was hit and destroyed:</p> <p>“I began to realize there were dead men all around me ... it was obvious the ship was doomed. I made my way to the side of the ship, which by this time was sinking fast, and jumped off.”</p> <p>—George D. Phraner, quoted in <i>World War II</i>, by H. P. Willmott</p> <p>In just a few hours, the Japanese sank or damaged all of the battleships anchored at Pearl Harbor. More than 2,400 Americans were killed. Almost 200 airplanes were destroyed.</p> <p>Speaking to Congress the next day, President Roosevelt called December 7, 1941, “a date which will live in infamy [disgrace].” Congress voted to declare war on Japan. Germany then declared war on the United States. Less than 25 years after entering World War I, the United States joined the Allies in another global war. This one would be even more devastating.</p>	