

World War II Vocabulary

Use the following World War II vocabulary list as a resource for activities and discussions.

1. **Allies:** countries fighting with the United States against the Axis powers.
2. **atom bomb:** powerful weapon created from the splitting of atoms. It was used by President Harry S. Truman on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end World War II.
3. **Axis powers:** the alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan.
4. **“Big Three”:** Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt. They worked together to defeat Germany.
5. **Sir Winston Churchill:** Prime Minister of Great Britain during the war.
6. **Concentration Camps:** prison camps established by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party for Jews and other political prisoners during the war.
7. **D-Day:** invasion of Normandy, France, by the Allies (June 6, 1944).
8. **Dictator:** a person who has complete power and authority over a country.
9. **Dwight D. Eisenhower:** supreme commander of the Allied forces during the war who later became the 34th president of the United States.
10. **Hiroshima:** Japanese city on which the first atomic bomb was dropped (August 6, 1945).
11. **Adolf Hitler:** dictator of Germany during the war.
12. **Holocaust:** mass murder of European Jews by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party.
13. **Home front:** term given to the United States mainland during the war.
14. **Jews:** people persecuted by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis because their religion was Judaism.
15. **Benito Mussolini:** dictator of Italy during the war.
16. **Nagasaki:** Japanese city on which the second atomic bomb was dropped (August 9, 1945).
17. **Nazis:** shortened name for the German political party called the National Socialist German Worker’s Party and commanded by Adolf Hitler.
18. **Patriotic:** showing love and support for one’s own country.
19. **Pearl Harbor:** American base in Hawaii that was bombed by Japanese planes on December 7, 1941. The bombing of Pearl Harbor forced the United States to enter the war.
20. **Ration:** to allow only certain amounts of food, gasoline, and other goods to each person.
21. **Relocation camps:** special camps in the United States where Japanese Americans were detained after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
22. **Franklin D. Roosevelt:** 32nd president of the United States. He has been the only president who was elected four times, serving a total of twelve years.
23. **Rosie the Riveter:** symbol of American women who went to work in factories during the war. (A rivet is a small metal nail that joins two pieces of metal.)
24. **Joseph Stalin:** dictator of the Soviet Union from 1929 - 1953.
25. **Swastika:** emblem on the Nazi flag. The swastika was a cross with the ends bent at right angles.
26. **General Hideki Tojo:** military dictator who controlled Japan during the war.
27. **Harry S. Truman:** became the 33rd United States president after President Roosevelt died.
28. **Veteran:** soldier who returns home from war.
29. **V-E Day:** “Victory in Europe Day” when Germany surrendered (May 8, 1945).
30. **V-J Day:** “Victory in Japan” when Japan surrendered (September 2, 1945).
31. **War bonds:** certificates sold by the United States government to pay for the war.

Glossary

Allies Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States, which fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan, referred to as the Axis.

Anti-Semitism Systematic prejudice against Jews.

Aryan Under the Nazis, this word was applied to a mythical Germanic race and given an underpinning of validity by pseudoscientific definitions.

Auschwitz [OWSH-vitch] The German name for Oswiecim, a city in Poland that was the site of one of the largest of the Nazi killing centers (Auschwitz-Birkenau) as well as a concentration camp and labor camp for I. G. Farben.

Concentration camp Barracks and other structures built at the beginning of the Third Reich to house "enemies of the Third Reich." Concentration camps had various purposes: Some were labor camps, some were prison camps, others were transit camps, and the most infamous were death camps or killing centers.

Death camps (killing centers) A concentration camp built for the purpose of killing the inmates. The death camps associated with the Holocaust were in Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Belzek, Chelmno, Madjanek, Sobibor, Treblinka.

Deportation During the Holocaust, this term was a euphemism for the removal of Jews either from their homes to a ghetto or from a ghetto to a killing center.

Einsatzgruppen [INE-sats-groopen] Mobile killing units ("task groups") that operated during the invasion of the Soviet Union. Their purpose was to kill Jews and others deemed undesirable by the Third Reich.

Final solution Nazi euphemism for the plan to kill the Jews of Europe. Part of the elaborate coded language devised and used by the Nazi command to keep the German people and the intended victims ignorant of the plan.

Genocide [JEN-o-side] The deliberate annihilation of an entire people or nation.

Gestapo [guess-TOP-oh] The internal security police of the Third Reich; charged with protecting the regime from political opposition. Under Heinrich Himmler's command, the Gestapo enjoyed broad investigative powers into every aspect of German life.

Ghetto A walled section of a city in which Jews were forced to live in medieval times.

Holocaust From a Hebrew word meaning "burnt offering."

Judenrat [YOU-den-raht] Nazi-appointed Jewish community authority, ultimately required to choose Jews for transports to the killing centers.

Kristallnacht [KRIS-tal-nakht] Meaning "night of broken glass," it refers to organized attacks by Nazis and their followers against Jewish property, synagogues, and individuals on November 9, 1938. In the aftermath, "for their own protection," Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps.

Nazi, National Socialist German Workers' Party [NOT-zee] A political party taken over by Adolf Hitler in the 1920s. In 1933, after an indecisive election, Hitler took over the government and established the Third Reich. The Nazi Party became the sole political party in Germany.