GRADE 11 STUDY GUIDE | 2025

World War Two (1939-1945)

History

1. Outbreak and Early Years

- Germany invaded Poland 1 September 1939; Britain and France declared war
- Blitzkrieg (lightning war): fast-moving tanks and aircraft overwhelmed defenders
- Fall of France June 1940; Dunkirk evacuation
- Battle of Britain: Luftwaffe bombed Britain; RAF held on; Hitler abandoned invasion plan
- Operation Barbarossa June 1941: Germany invaded Soviet Union -- opened Eastern Front

2. The Holocaust

The Holocaust was the systematic, state-sponsored murder of six million Jews (and millions of others: Roma, disabled people, political opponents, POWs) by the Nazi regime.

- Anti-Semitism was central to Nazi ideology: Jews blamed for Germany's problems (scapegoating)
- Nuremberg Laws 1935: Jews stripped of citizenship and civil rights
- Kristallnacht (Night of Broken Glass) November 1938: organised attacks on Jewish property
- Wannsee Conference 1942: Nazi officials coordinated the "Final Solution" -- genocide
- Einsatzgruppen: mobile killing units shot Jews in occupied USSR (e.g. Babi Yar, 33 000 killed)
- Death camps (Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor): gas chambers and crematoria; industrial-scale murder
- Liberation 1945: Allied soldiers discovered camps; survivors in terrible condition; Nuremberg Trials

3. The Pacific War

- Japan had expansionist ambitions in Asia; invaded China 1937; captured much of SE Asia
- Pearl Harbor December 1941: Japan bombed US Pacific Fleet; USA entered war
- USA island-hopping strategy to reach Japan
- Hiroshima 6 Aug 1945 and Nagasaki 9 Aug 1945: USA drops atomic bombs; Japan surrenders

4. Consequences of WWII

- Approximately 70-85 million people killed -- deadliest conflict in human history
- United Nations created 1945 to maintain peace and security
- Cold War: USA vs USSR rivalry begins; Europe divided (Iron Curtain)
- Decolonisation: European powers weakened; independence movements strengthened in Asia and Africa
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 in response to wartime atrocities
- Marshall Plan: USA helped rebuild Western Europe to prevent spread of communism