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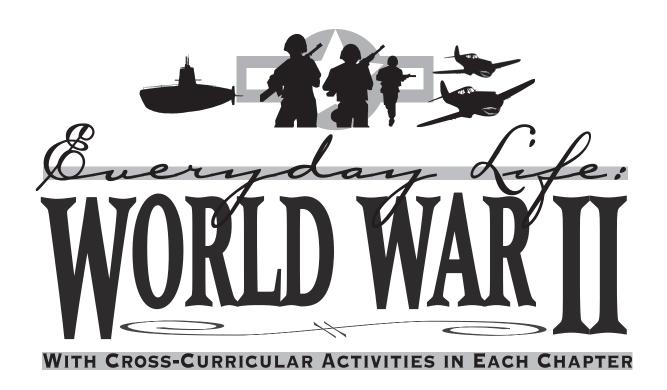
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WALTER A. HAZEN

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### Dedication

To the memory of my brother, Walton, and my sister, Betty.

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### **Table of Contents**

Introduction		1
Chapter 1-	The Background Interpret a Picture Distinguish between Fact and Opinion Create a Dialogue Make False Statements True	2 6 7 8 9
Chapter 2-	-Blitzkrieg Solve a Blitzkrieg Puzzle Write a Story for <i>The London Times</i> Write a Letter to the Editor Name Those Synonyms	10 14 15 16 17
Chapter 3-	-Important Leaders  Make a Cereal Box Report  Name That Leader  Write a Brief Biography	18 23 24 25
Chapter 4-	-Pearl Harbor Use Your Critical Thinking Skills Solve Some Sea-related Word Problems Make Two Journal Entries Make Complete Sentences from Fragments	26 30 31 32 33
Chapter 5-	The Soldier's Life Interpret a Bar Graph Write a Letter Recall Information about Soldiers' Lives Write a Blurb for a Book about Soldiers	34 38 39 40 41
Chapter 6-	-Major Battles Make a Mobile Rewrite a Part of History Do Research on Russia Use Context Clues to Complete Sentences	42 46 47 48 49





# Table of Contents continued

Chapter 7—	Tell What You Would Do Solve a Puzzle about Women in the Military Distinguish between Sentences and Fragments Fill in a Venn Diagram	50 54 55 56 57
Chapter 8—	- The Home Fronts	58
_	What Do You Think?	62
	Carry Out a Mock Scrap Drive	63
	Make a Shoe Box Diorama	64
	Create a Dialogue	65
Chapter 9—	- Unusual and Interesting Stories	66
1	Use Your Critical Thinking Skills	70
	Recall Information You Have Read	71
	Complete a Geography/History Exercise	72
	Conduct an Interview	73
Chapter 10—	-The Atomic Bomb	74
1	Make a Diary Entry	78
	Use Your Critical Thinking Skills	79
	Solve Three Word Problems	80
	Distinguish between Fact and Opinion	81
Chapter 11—	-The Aftermath	82
1	Write a Persuasive Essay	86
	Draw a Map	87
	Solve Chart-related Word Problems	88
	Rewrite a Part of History	89
Answers to	Activities	90
Additional Resources		92



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### Introduction

hen World War I ended in 1918, people saw it as "the war to end all wars." Never again, they vowed, would the nations of the world plunge into a bloody conflict that would take the lives of more than twenty-five million people. Yet, just a little more than twenty years later, the world was at it again.

In *Everyday Life: World War II*, you will learn why the peace that ended World War I failed to last. You will also take a brief look at the major battles that were fought and at the terrible results and consequences of the war. These aspects, however, make up only a small portion of the book. Most of the narrative deals with the everyday lives of the people involved—civilians as well as military personnel.

In *Everyday Life: World War II*, you will read what it was like to be a soldier in combat or a civilian carrying on the war at home. You will see and appreciate the contributions made by women and children in the war effort. You will learn about important leaders and enjoy a selection of interesting and unusual stories. Finally, you will learn how the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war and how the use of the atomic bomb brought the war to an end.

Activities that follow each chapter in *Everyday Life: World War II* should make reading this book both interesting and rewarding.

Walter A. Hazen



CHAPTER I

### The Background

t noon on August 31, 1939, Polish soldiers attacked a German radio station on the German-Polish border. Brave and alert German soldiers immediately shot and killed them. Thus, Adolf Hitler had his excuse for going to war.

That was how the story appeared in the newspapers. What really happened was this: Half a dozen prisoners from a German concentration camp were drugged and dressed in Polish army uniforms. They were then taken to the radio station and shot. Their bodies were photographed and soon appeared in all the German newspapers. This gave Adolf Hitler "proof" that Poland had attacked Germany. He launched World War II the following morning.



Hitler accepts the German Reichstag's ovation in March 1938 after announcing the "peaceful" acquisition of Austria. Later, Germany would also annex the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland. Although Germany's invasion of Poland officially started World War II, its underlying causes go back to the years following World War I. After 1918, much of Europe was characterized by unrest. Hunger, unemployment, poverty, and street fights among rival groups were especially widespread in Germany and Italy. Had democratic governments been able to solve the problems they faced, dictators may not have risen to power. But those governments were

unsuccessful. Therefore, dictators in Italy—Benito Mussolini—and Germany—Adolf Hitler—were able to seize control in their respective countries.

Unrest may have been worse in Germany. In addition to hunger and unemployment, Germans were upset over other things. Not the least of these was the Treaty of Versailles, which had ended World War I. This treaty made the Germans accept total responsibility for starting the war. This infuriated nearly all Germans, who felt that other nations were just as responsible.

Another reason why Germany was a hotbed of discontent had to do with reparations. Reparations are payments for war damages that a defeated country is expected to meet. More than any Allied nation, France suffered terribly from the war, and the French were determined to make the Germans pay. The Allies even continued their blockade of Germany long after the peace terms were





signed. This added even more to German discontent. The blockade also added to the hunger that swept the nation.

Germans went to any extreme to stay alive. Those who had any savings soon used up their money to buy what food they could find. Often, they ate dog biscuits and horse meat. They also struggled to stay warm, roaming the countryside looking for firewood. Pictures from the time show middle-class women decked out in fine hats and coats pulling carts filled with sticks and branches.

Unrest and discontent also characterized Italy. In addition to hunger and unemployment, Italians were unhappy with territory they had gained by fighting on the side of the Allies. They sometimes took out their anger on Italian soldiers returning from the war. Crippled veterans had their crutches kicked out from under them by roughnecks. One soldier in Milan was attacked, stripped of his medals, and tossed bodily into the street. A few soldiers were even murdered. Two officers in Venice drowned when they were stuffed into a sentry box that was then thrown into a canal.

Italy was also troubled by strikes. In 1920, there were more than two thousand work stoppages alone. Striking workers ranged from prison wardens to electricians. Postal workers got into the act by pouring sulfuric acid into boxes packed with letters. Thus Italy, like Germany, was a nation ripe for revolution. Both countries looked to strong men who could restore order and improve their lives. Those men were Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler.

Italy's Benito Mussolini had helped found the Fascist Party in 1919. The Fascist Party was an extremely nationalistic organization. As its head, Mussolini boasted that he would restore the old Roman Empire, referring to the Mediterranean Sea as *mare nostrum* (our sea). Three years later, Mussolini rose to the position of premier of Italy. As the country's leader, he invaded and acquired Abyssinia (Ethiopia) in 1936 and Albania in 1939.

Mussolini went out of his way to convince Italians that he was indeed the strong man they had been wishing for. He skied in the winter while stripped to the waist and he jumped horses over high barriers. He even had his picture taken inside a cage containing two grown lions. (This stunt was later revealed as a hoax. A foreign correspondent who covered the story let it be known that the lions' teeth had been extracted and that they were fed macaroni.)

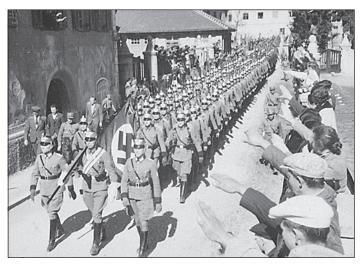
In spite of his boasting and swagger, Mussolini never was the powerful world leader that Adolf Hitler became in the early 1930s. In fact, after World War II began, Mussolini was only able to stay in power with Hitler's help.





Hitler, on the other hand, became one of the most absolute dictators the world has ever known. Not only did he plunge the world into war, he was personally responsible for the extermination of millions of innocent people.

In addition to unrest and widespread unemployment, Hitler's rise to power was aided by a fear of communism. After World War I, Communists had actually seized control of Munich for a few weeks. German industrialists and big businessmen feared that communists would be successful in taking over Germany and staying in power. Hitler played on this fear in his many speeches, making people believe that Germany's problems were caused by Jews and communists. In fact, he lumped them together, blaming them not only for Germany losing World War I but also for the disastrous economic conditions in Germany following the war. By 1933, Hitler's party, the Nazis (National Socialists), had enough representation in the German legislature for him to be named chancellor, or prime minister.



German police entering an Austrian city in March 1938. The Germans occupied Austria without firing a shot. Once in power, Hitler quickly turned a weak democratic government into a dictatorship. It was a dictatorship that in a few years began to gobble up weaker countries to the east. Without firing a shot, Hitler's forces seized Austria and Czechoslovakia. Shortly afterward he invaded Poland and started World War II.

Italy and Germany were not the only major nations to come under the control of military dictators. Another was Japan. Economic problems brought on by the Great Depression led to a military

takeover of the government in the early 1930s. Once in power, Japan's military set out on a policy of conquest aimed at making Japan the most powerful nation in Asia.

Japan first turned its attention to Manchuria, a large province of China. Manchuria contained coal and iron ore deposits that the Japanese wanted for their industries. On September 18, 1931, Japanese troops crossed into Manchuria from Korea, a country Japan had taken over in 1894. They met little resistance and soon occupied most of the province. It was here that the Japanese began to commit the terrible atrocities that marked their advance through other parts of Asia.





With Manchuria under invasion, China appealed to the League of Nations for help. But the League was powerless to act. The world organization had no armed force with which to force an aggressor nation to withdraw. All it could do was condemn the invader and threaten it with economic sanctions.

The weakness of the League of Nations was another factor that brought on World War II. It was weak for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, it had no way to force an aggressor (attacking) nation to do anything. Second, and possibly more important, was the fact that the United States never joined. After World War I, few Americans wanted to become involved in the affairs of the rest of the world ever again. Such a feeling is called *isolationism*. Because of this feeling, the U.S. Senate refused to ratify (approve) the treaty that would have made the United States a member. Wilson's unsuccessful fight for the League led to a stroke from which he never recovered.

With its march into Manchuria, Japan was the first aggressor nation to break the peace after World War I. To be sure, Italy and Germany took notice of the inability of the League to act to prevent war. Italy's later invasion of Ethiopia and Albania was further proof of this. Japan, Italy, and Germany also knew that such leading nations as France and Great Britain would do little to stop their quests for new territories. This was especially true of France. Because World War I was fought mostly on French soil, the French wanted to avoid another war at all costs.

Great Britain was almost as determined as the French to avoid any conflict. After Adolf Hitler started occupying countries in Europe before a shot was ever fired, the British government went out of its way to appease the Nazi dictator. To "appease" means to give in to any demand to avoid war. This policy resulted in Britain not moving to prevent the Germans from occupying Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

And what about the United States? When Japan invaded Manchuria in 1931, the American press gave little space to the incident. Leading New York newspapers devoted less than a column to the attack. It was, they stated, a "problem of the League of Nations." At the time, the Great Depression was foremost in the minds of Americans. Most people were too concerned wondering where their next meal would come from to worry about what the Japanese were doing.

Hunger, inflation, unemployment, civil unrest, and the desire of other nations to keep the peace at all costs led aggressor nations to start World War II. By the time it ended, more than twenty-two million people had lost their lives.





Name	Date
INVIIV	<i>Dww</i>

### Interpret a Picture

The picture below has appeared in numerous textbooks about World War II. The Czech woman crying while offering the Nazi salute to German soldiers passing by must have been typical of most people in her country.



What thoughts do you think were racing through the woman's mind at the time? Was she possibly thinking about the safety of her family? Was she wondering how her life was about to change? Was she wondering if other nations would come to Czechoslovakia's aid? On the lines provided, write what you think she may have been thinking at the time.

 <del></del>
<del></del>
<del></del>



Name \_ Date



### Distinguish between Fact and Opinion

✓ any times people say things they believe to be true. In reality they may only be stating an opinion. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between fact and opinion.

Carefully read the statements on this page. Then, on the blank line before each, indicate whether you think it is a fact or an opinion. Mark **F** 

1	Had the Treaty of Versailles not been so harsh
	on Germany, World War II would never have
	broken out.

- 2. \_\_\_\_ Hunger and unemployment caused unrest and discontent in both Italy and Germany after World War I.
- 3. \_\_\_\_ Germany was solely responsible for bringing on World War I.
- 4. \_\_\_\_ Adolf Hitler would never have risen to power if democracy had succeeded in Germany.
- 5. \_\_\_\_ Italians were disappointed in their territorial gains after World War I.
- 6. \_\_\_\_ Following World War I, Italians looked to a strong leader to restore order in their country.
- 7. \_\_\_\_ Benito Mussolini was the greatest leader in Italian history.
- 8. \_\_\_\_ Mussolini went to extremes to convince the Italian people that he was a true "strong man."
- 9. \_\_\_\_ Adolf Hitler was the most evil dictator the world has ever known.
- 10. \_\_\_\_ The fear of communism aided Hitler in his rise to power.
- 11. \_\_\_\_ Nothing could have prevented Japan, Italy, and Germany from pursuing their aggressive policies.
- 12. \_\_\_\_ World War II could have been prevented had the United States joined the League of Nations.



