

World War II: America's Motivation and Impact

How did the United States' motivations for entering World War II impact our actions?

Following World War I, the United States hoped to avoid further entanglement with European politics that had drawn us into war. A strong isolationist sentiment developed that questioned the wisdom of our entry into The Great War as it was then known. However, the rise of military government in Germany, Italy and Japan and their invasions of neighboring countries became a major concern for United States leaders including President Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Germany Instigates World War I

In Europe, Adolf Hitler led the rise of the Nazi Party, which claimed that Germany was treated unfairly in the peace treaty that ended WWI. He also sought to unite all German-speaking peoples, a policy that put him at odds with several neighbors like Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Great Britain and France tried to negotiate an end to German expansion, but the Soviet Union on Germany's eastern front signed a non-aggression treaty with Hitler that opened the door to Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939. France and England came to the aid of the Poles and declared war on Germany. Hitler's armies quickly overran Poland and then France, leaving Britain alone against German armies and air force. President Roosevelt wanted to come to the aid of our British allies, but public sentiment was not yet ready to send American soldiers to fight in another European war.

Meanwhile, Germany and Italy became partners with Japan that had designs on domination of Eastern Asia. Japan lacked natural resources like oil and rubber and created plans to attack neighboring countries that could supply them. They invaded Korea and Manchuria and then China. They also looked southward to the European colonies of Dutch East Asia and British Malaysia. They knew that the United States and Great Britain would fight to stop them. To weaken U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, Japan bombed the naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. America declared war on Japan, and on December 11, Germany and Italy lived up to their agreement with Japan and declared war on the United States. Iowan Henry A. Wallace had been elected vice president in 1940 and served there throughout most of the war.

American Offensive in European and Pacific Fronts

Instead of putting all its efforts to fight Japan, the United States made Europe its first priority. Roosevelt met with Winston Churchill, the British prime minister, and they agreed that Hitler was a greater danger than Japan. German planes were bombing London regularly, and many expected a Nazi invasion. The United States began mobilizing armies, converting its factories to produce war supplies, and encouraging farmers to boost production. British and American generals developed a plan to invade Europe through Italy before attempting an attack across the English Channel against heavily fortified defenses. Meanwhile, German armies had invaded the Soviet Union and were imposing frightening losses on military and civilian populations alike. The Soviets, with the aid of a brutal Russian winter, halted the Nazi advance and forced a German retreat. Finally, in June 1944, a combined American-British invasion force landed on the French coast of Normandy, established a beach head, and from there began an offensive that led to a German surrender in May 1945.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy took the offensive in the Pacific against Japan. The route to Japan led through several Pacific Islands that the Japanese defended with determination. Two Allied naval victories broke the strength of the Japanese fleet and allowed the Allied forces to get close enough to establish air bases from which bombers could strike Japanese cities. The estimates of the loss of life that would be required to force the main Japanese islands to surrender reached a million. During the war, in a very secret project, U.S. scientists had developed a bomb that was hundreds of times more powerful than anything before. In August, 1945, President Harry Truman ordered atomic bombs to be dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing the world into the nuclear age. Japan surrendered within a matter of days, and WWII was over.

Some estimates of the loss of life due to fighting, disease and other war-related factors run as high as 60 million, or about 3 percent of the world's population at the time. The Soviet Union suffered the greatest cost, with some 20 million civilian and military casualties. The United States, protected by two oceans from the battlefields, sustained around 420,000 war-related deaths. Iowa soldiers killed or wounded are recorded as around 2,800.

Supporting Questions

Why did the US get involved in World War II?

- [“Their Cry is Answered,” July 25, 1940 \(Image\)](#)
- [Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941 \(Document\)](#)
- [USS West Virginia on Fire during Attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941 \(Image\)](#)
- [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” Speech, December 8, 1941 \(Document\)](#)
- [“United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm” Newspaper Article, December 10, 1941 \(Document\)](#)
- [“Many Local People in Pacific War Zone” Newspaper Article, December 11, 1941 \(Document\)](#)
- [“Warning Our Homes Are In Danger Now,” 1942 \(Image\)](#)
- [“The Unconquered People” Sketch, July 1942 \(Image\)](#)
- [“Remember Pearl Harbor - Work - Fight - Sacrifice!!” 1943 \(Political Cartoon\)](#)
- [“Roosevelt and Hitler” Buster Ezell’s World War II Song, March 1944 \(Document\)](#)

Why did America fight differently in the two theaters?

- [Destruction of a Burmese Village after a Japanese Bombing, ca. 1942 \(Image\)](#)
- [Japanese Plane Carrier Circling to Avoid Attack at Midway, ca. 1942 \(Image\)](#)
- [Memo from Joseph Stalin about Opening of Second Front during World War II, August 13, 1942 \(Document\)](#)
- [Allied Civilian Relief in Tunisia, 1943 \(Image\)](#)
- [Australian Troops Fighting the Japanese in Burma \(Myanmar\), 1944 \(Image\)](#)
- [D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force, June 1944 \(Document\)](#)
- [American Troops Move Through a Bombed German Street at the End of World War II, April 16, 1945 \(Image\)](#)
- [Interview with Merrill’s Marauders Commando Grant Jiro Hirabayashi, June 29, 2005 \(Video\)](#)
- [Interview with Conscientious Objector Rothacker Smith, March 24, 2006 \(Audio\)](#)

How was victory achieved on each front?

- [Nagasaki, Japan, After the Atomic Bomb, 1945 \(Image\)](#)
- [General Leslie Groves’ Statement to the Officers about the Atomic Bomb, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [German Instrument of Surrender, May 7, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [Petition from Leo Szilard and Other Scientists to President Harry S. Truman, July 17, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [Letter from Dr. Luis Alvarez to his Son about the Atomic Bomb, August 6, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [“Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History” Newspaper Article, August 6, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [Japanese Instrument of Surrender, September 2, 1945 \(Document\)](#)
- [Letter from President Dwight D. Eisenhower to William D. Pawley, April 9, 1955 \(Document\)](#)
- [Interview of Navy Petty Officer Augustus Prince, October 20, 2004 \(Video\)](#)
- [Interview with Robert Holmberg, Who Worked on the Manhattan Project, September 22, 2005 \(Video\)](#)

[*Printable Image and Document Guide](#)

Additional Resources

[World War II Casualties List](#): This database by the National Archives allows the viewer to search for World War II casualties of Iowans by county.

[“Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History”](#): This Wordpress website by Iowa State University Special Collections and University Archives includes newspaper clippings, photographs and more that show the connection between ISU and the invention of the atomic bomb.

[“The War” by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick](#): This is the main webpage for the PBS documentary “The War,” which provided a vast overview of America on the homefront and battlefield during World War II.

[Voices of the Manhattan Project](#): This website produced by the Atomic Heritage Foundation contains a number of oral histories from individuals who had some part in the Manhattan Project to create the first atomic bomb.

[IPTV’s “World War II:”](#) This Iowa Pathways website “World War II” includes a number of primary and secondary resources and links featuring Iowans who experienced World War II.

“Their Cry is Answered,” July 25, 1940



Courtesy of The Pella Chronicle, “Their Cry is Answered,” Sparling, *The Pella Chronicle*, pp. 6, 25 July 1940

Description

The cartoon from *The Pella Chronicle* depicts events occurring in Europe over a year before the United States entry into war. The role of the Red Cross is highlighted in the image and shows the increasing destruction occurring in Europe.

[Transcript of “Their Cry is Answered”](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- What was the United States’ role during the early outbreak of war in Europe, according to the source? What did this communicate about the motivation for the U.S. involvement in Europe?
- How were the refugees depicted in the cartoon? How was this similar to the depiction of those receiving [relief in Tunisia](#)?

Citation Information

“Their Cry is Answered,” *The Pella Chronicle*, pp. 6, 25 July 1940. [Courtesy of The Pella Chronicle](#)

Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941

ATLANTIC CHARTER

*Joint declaration by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom August 14, 1941*¹

55 Stat. 1603; Executive Agreement Series 236

The President of the United States of America and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security;

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

¹ Released simultaneously at Washington and London as part of a joint statement following a meeting between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill which took place Aug. 9-12, 1941, aboard the American cruiser *Augusta* and the British battleship *Prince of Wales* at sea near Argentia, Newfoundland.

For a list of countries which signified their acceptance of the purposes and principles of the Atlantic Charter by signing the Declaration by United Nations done at Washington Jan. 1, 1942 (EAS 236), see *post*, p. 697.

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Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Joint declaration by the President of the United States of America and Mr. Winston Churchill, representing His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom, known as the Atlantic Charter," 14 August 1941

Description

This declaration is the Atlantic Charter, which was a pivotal policy statement issued during World War II by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The leaders of the United Kingdom and the United States drafted the work and all the Allies of World War II later confirmed it.

[Transcript of the Atlantic Charter](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- What was the intention of the Atlantic Charter? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.
- Consider the historical context of the document. How would this document foreshadow the United States' involvement in Europe?
- How did the second point of the Charter contradict United States' actions in its own "sphere of influence?"

Citation Information

"Joint declaration by the President of the United States of America and Mr. Winston Churchill, representing His Majesty's government in the United Kingdom, known as the Atlantic Charter," 14 August 1941. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

USS West Virginia on Fire during Attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. USS West Virginia aflame..." 7 December 1941

Description

This black and white photograph shows the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, with the USS West Virginia shown on fire in the harbor. Disregarding the dangerous possibilities of explosions, United States sailors are seen manning their boats at the side of the burning battleship to better fight the flames started by Japanese torpedoes and bombs. Take note of the national colors flying against the smoke-blackened sky.

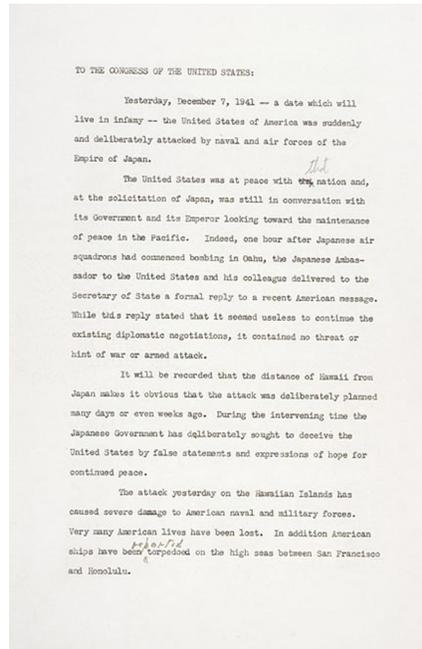
Text-Dependent Questions

- What type of destruction was captured in this photograph?
- Why would a photographer have captured an image like this instead of focusing on the dead and wounded? Why would photographing a rescue effort be important?
- How would this image have motivated Americans to join the conflict in the Pacific theater?

Citation Information

"Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. USS West Virginia aflame. Disregarding the dangerous possibilities of explosions, United States sailors man their boats at the side of the burning battleship, USS West Virginia, to better fight the flames started by Japanese torpedoes and bombs. Note the national colors flying against the smoke-blackened sky," 7 December 1941. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" Speech, December 8, 1941



Courtesy of National Archives, Roosevelt, Franklin D., "Day of Infamy Speech," 8 December 1941

Description

On December 8, at 12:30 p.m., President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a joint session of U.S. Congress, and via radio, the nation, regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii the day before. The U.S. Senate responded with a unanimous vote in support of war, with only Representative Jeanette Rankin from Montana (a pacifist) dissenting.

[Transcript of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" Speech](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did President Franklin Delano Roosevelt characterize the actions undertaken by Japan? What evidence did he use to support this characterization?
- Consider Roosevelt's call for absolute victory against Japan. How would that influence the way the war was fought?

Citation Information

Roosevelt, Franklin D., "Day of Infamy Speech," 8 December 1941. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

“United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm” Newspaper Article, December 10, 1941



Courtesy of the Postville Herald, “United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm,” Postville Herald, 10 December 1941

Description

The article in the *Postville Herald* described the impact of World War II on life in the early days of the war. In addition, as typically done in small town news publications at the time, all of the soldiers stationed at Pearl Harbor were listed.

[Transcript of “United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm” Newspaper Article](#)

[Printable Excerpt of “United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm” Newspaper Article](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- What was the purpose for posting the names of all the local soldiers in the paper? How did that impact public opinion about the war effort?
- How did the article characterize the attack on Pearl Harbor? Look at the [USS West Virginia on Fire during Attack on Pearl Harbor photo](#). Why do you think the article downplays the tragedy?
- What impact did the war effort in the early days have on the community?

Citation Information

“United States Is At War But Citizens Are Calm,” *Postville Herald*, 10 December 1941. [Courtesy of the Postville Herald](#)

“Many Local People in Pacific War Zone” Newspaper Article, December 11, 1941



Courtesy of Pocahontas Record-Democrat, “Many Local People in Pacific War Zone,” Pocahontas Record-Democrat, 11 December 1941

Description

This article from the *Pocahontas Record-Democrat* in Centerville, Iowa, shows a map of the Pacific theater during World War II. The article lists local residents who were serving in some capacity in the Pacific.

[Full Transcript of “Many Local People in Pacific War Zone” Newspaper Article](#)

[Transcribed Excerpt from “Many Local People in Pacific War Zone” Newspaper Article](#)

[Printable Excerpt of “Many Local People in Pacific War Zone” Newspaper Article](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How was the attack by Japan characterized in the article? How was this similar to the article from the [Postville newspaper](#)? How does this show the motivation for entering World War II?
- What purpose did the addition of the map serve in the article? How did this show the interest at a local level for these international events?
- What did this communicate about the resolve to support the war during World War II?

Citation Information

“Many Local People in Pacific War Zone,” *Pocahontas Record-Democrat*, 11 December 1941. [Courtesy of Pocahontas Record-Democrat](#)

“Warning Our Homes Are In Danger Now,” 1942



Courtesy of National Archives, “Warning Our Homes Are In Danger Now,” General Motors Corporation, 1942

Description

Propaganda posters during World War II by public relations specialists who were advising the U.S. government believed that the most effective war posters were the ones that appealed to the emotions. The poster shown here, produced by General Motors Corporation, played on the public’s fear of the enemy. A looming Japanese Hideki Tojo and German Adolf Hitler are shown approaching the U.S. borders, threatening America by being at its doorstep. The image text reads, “Warning,” “Our Homes Are In Danger Now,” “Our Job Keep ‘Em Firing.”

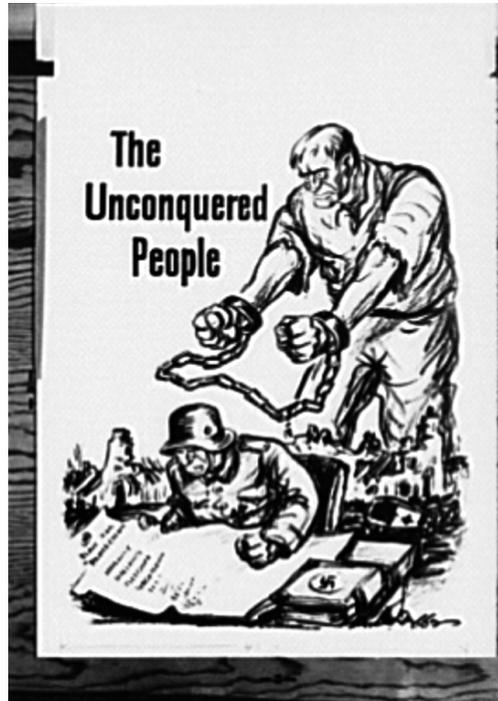
Text-Dependent Questions

- Compare and contrast the characterizations of the people that represent Germany and Japan in the poster.
- Consider the differences in the characterization in the image. Does this poster show bias toward one country over the other? Why or why not?

Citation Information

“Warning Our Homes Are In Danger Now,” General Motors Corporation, 1942. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

“The Unconquered People” Sketch, July 1942



Courtesy of Library of Congress, “Sketch from ‘The Unconquered People...’ July 1942

Description

The U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) published this 12-page pamphlet after the U.S. had entered World War II. The sketch shown above is of “The Unconquered People,” and describes the European resistance to Adolph Hitler and Germany on the part of people in the occupied countries of Europe.

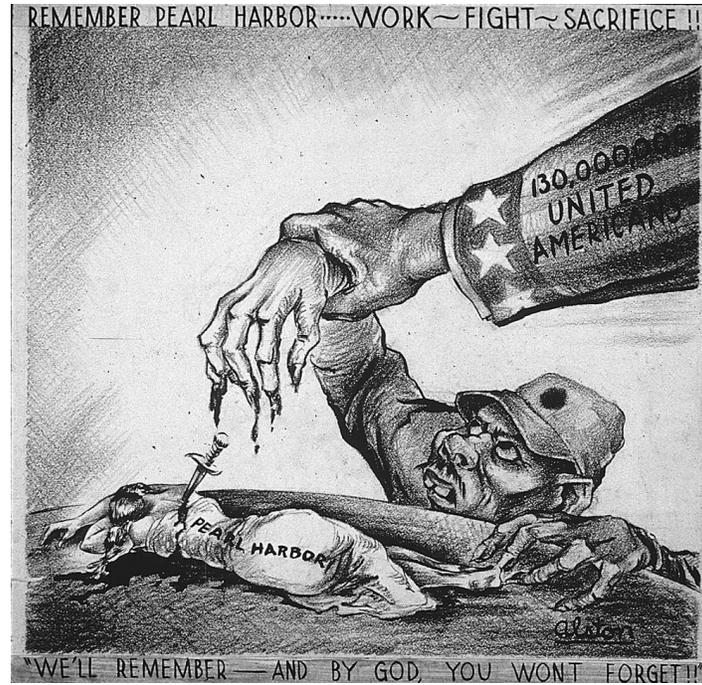
Text-Dependent Questions

- Why did the U.S. Office of War publish a brochure with this information after the United States had already entered the war? Why would it be important to highlight resistance by Europeans to Germany?
- What did the Office of War want citizens to believe about why the United States entered the war in Europe? Use evidence from the image to support your answer.
- Consider the imagery used by the artist to depict the “unconquered” people. How does this connect to the reason they thought the United States would enter the war in Europe?

Citation Information

“Sketch from ‘The Unconquered People.’ One of the illustrations from ‘The Unconquered People,’ a twelve page pamphlet published by the Office of War Information (OWI), Washington, D.C., describing the resistance to Hitler on the part of the people of the occupied countries of Europe,” July 1942. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

“Remember Pearl Harbor - Work - Fight - Sacrifice!!” 1943



Courtesy of National Archives, Alston, Charles H., “Remember Pearl Harbor - Work - Fight - Sacrifice!!”/“We’ll Remember - And By God, You Won’t Forget!!” 1943

Description

This political cartoon was created by the U.S. Department of War following the events at Pearl Harbor. The illustration shows Lady Liberty (with the words “Pearl Harbor” written on her) stabbed in the back by a Japanese soldier. The Japanese soldier’s hand is being lifted by a larger arm covered in a sleeve that resembles the American flag. On the sleeve “130,000,000 United Americans” is written. The poster was used to motivate action by Americans as the U.S. entered the war effort.

[Transcript of “Remember Pearl Harbor - Work - Fight - Sacrifice!!”](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How does the artist’s imagery and headings characterize the actions of the Japanese soldiers? How does the artist’s choice of words in the image characterize Pearl Harbor?
- What motivation for the United States entering armed conflict can you infer from the image? What evidence from the image can you use to support this inference?
- How does this image compare with the [“The Unconquered People” illustration](#)? How does that illustrate the two different motivations for entering the conflict?

Citation Information

Alston, Charles H., “Remember Pearl Harbor - Work - Fight - Sacrifice!!”/“We’ll Remember - And By God, You Won’t Forget!!” 1943. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

“Roosevelt and Hitler” Buster Ezell’s World War II Song, March 1944

Roosevelt and Hitler: Bus (Buster) Ezell’s War Time Song, or, Strange Things Are Happening in the Land

You may read the Holy Bible
Where Matthew’s does record
There are quakes (quakes) and earthquakes
And also rumors of war
There you can see
The Bible do fulfill
There are strange things a-happenin’ in the land.

(Chorus)
Strange things are happenin’ in this land—
Strange things are happenin’ in this land.
The war is goin’ on.
‘Cause many hearts to mourn.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Nations against Nations.
Are risin’ in this land
Kingdoms against kingdoms.
You jus’ can’t understand.
But you need not to be surpris’d
For the time is drawin’ nigh.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in
this land.

We have read also of famines
That shall come in this land.
But if you notice closely,
You can see and understand.
Provisions are so high,
‘Til we can’t hardly buy,
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Roosevelt with Hitler
He tried to live in peace.
But Hitler he’s destroyin’
Every vessel he could see
He’s treatin’ us so mean
With his dreadful sub-marines.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Hitler, he’s a fightin’
And makin’ every charge.
He’s tryin’ to win the victory,
So his land might be enlarge.
He’s fightin’ everywhere
On land and in the air.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Some said Roosevelt was coward.
And said he would not fight.
But he was jus’ only a-waitin’
‘Till he got things fixed up right.
When he made it up in his mind
He got on the fightin’ line
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Hitler tried to fool the Negroes,
By sayin’ they ought not to fight.
They have no home or country
No flag or equal rights.
But the Negroes knowed the best
They deeds did prove the rest.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

When Uncle Sam called for them
They answered, “Here we are,
To perform a soldier’s duty,
Wherever we may be.”
They answered true and brave,
Ef the trenches makes they grave
There are strange things a-happenin’ in
this land.

Hitler called the Japanese
They could not help from cryin’.
They say, “Ef you go up against that
race,
You comin’ out behin’.”
If you try to take they place,
You can’t not keep from dyin’.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

There are ancient notes in the
ballad John Work says he heard
an old blind seaman in Missis-
sippi sing a 1917 version in
which Woodrow Wilson and the
Kaiser were the chief protagon-
ists. The refrain is a theme
familiar in old mountain ballads
of Civil War days: it dates
back even older. Credit Bus Ezell,
paraphrasing with the power as
well as the heart of a creative
poet of his craft. (Ed. note.)

Hitler told his wife at the supper table
He dreamt a mighty dream.
‘Ef I cut out these submarines,
I will see some many of men.
But ef I fight and Ef I win,
I will gain a many a friend.’
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Now sinners, God is Power
You jus’ can’t understand.
The whole world will tremble
From the movin’ of his hand.
His beyond the human sights,
But all he does is right.
There are strange things a-happenin’ in this land.

Page Five

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Ezell, Buster, “The Peachite Vol. II, No. 2, Folk Festival Number,” March 1944

Description

This song was written during World War II. John Work arranged the song with Bus Ezell. Bus Ezell heard an old blind guitarist in Mississippi sing a 1917 version of this song, in which President Woodrow Wilson and the German Kaiser were the chief protagonists. The refrain is a theme familiar in old mountain ballads of Civil War days.

Transcript of “Roosevelt and Hitler” Song

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did the lyrics describe German goals in World War II? How did the lyrics characterize the Germans?
- How was patriotism portrayed in this song? How did this message signal the way the conflict would be fought in Europe? How does the lyric “Hitler tried to fool the Negroes,” connect to the actions of the Double V campaign?

Citation Information

Ezell, Buster, “The Peachite Vol. II, No. 2, Folk Festival Number,” March 1944. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Destruction of a Burmese Village after a Japanese Bombing, ca. 1942



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "There was no military objective in this happy Burmese village. The object of the savage Japanese bombing was to create panic and drive the native population on to the roads and into the jungle," ca. 1942

Description

The black and white photograph shows the destruction caused by a Japanese bombing raid that struck a Burmese village. The caption of the image from the war department stated, "(t)here was no military objective in this happy Burmese village. The object of the savage Japanese bombing was to create panic and drive the native population on to the roads and into the jungle."

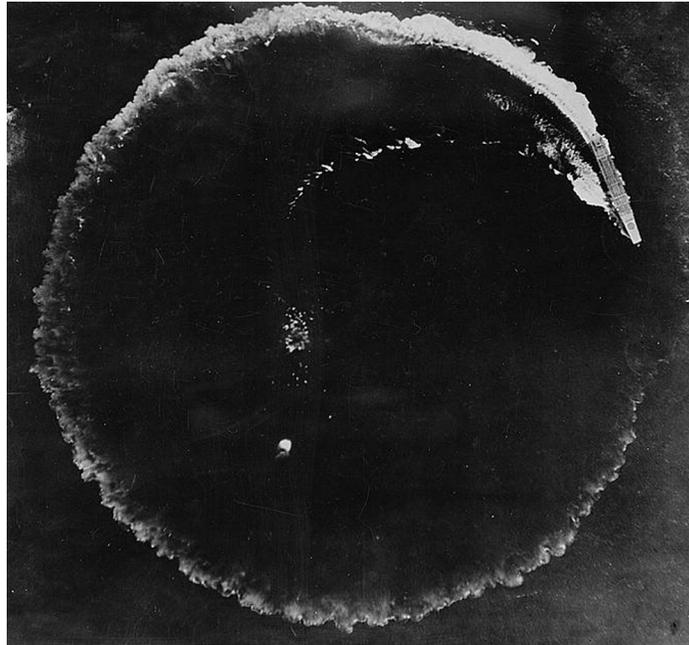
Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe the geography depicted in the photograph. How did this lead to different tactics than the image from the European theater?
- Burma (Myanmar) was a British colony before it was invaded and occupied by Japan. Why would Burma (Myanmar) be significant in World War II?

Citation Information

"There was no military objective in this happy Burmese village. The object of the savage Japanese bombing was to create panic and drive the native population on to the roads and into the jungle," ca. 1942. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Japanese Plane Carrier Circling to Avoid Attack at Midway, June 1942



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Japanese plane carrier circling to avoid attack by United States airmen at Midway, as seen from a B-17 American bomber," June 1942

Description

The image shows a Japanese carrier circling to avoid a U.S. attack during the Battle of Midway between June 4-7, 1942. This battle took place six months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Midway began with a Japanese attack and ended with a decisive U.S. Naval victory.

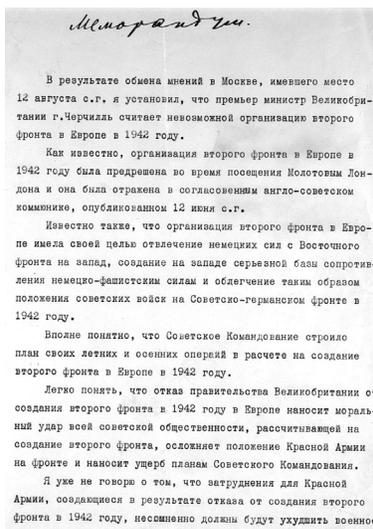
Text-Dependent Questions

- Using evidence from the photograph, describe how the geography of the Pacific Ocean impacted the way the war was fought in this theater?
- How does this image compare to the images of conflict in the European theater, like [American Troops Move Though a Bombed German Street](#)?

Citation Information

"Japanese plane carrier circling to avoid attack by United States airmen at Midway, as seen from a B-17 American bomber," June 1942. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Memo from Joseph Stalin about Opening of Second Front during World War II, August 13, 1942



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Stalin, Joseph, "Memorandum in Russian from Joseph Stalin about opening a second front in Europe during World War II, with English translation of same," 13 August 1942

Description

In August 1942, Roosevelt appointed W. Averell Harriman to represent the United States at a conference with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin. The Moscow Conference sought a common understanding of Soviet and Anglo-American military plans and was the highest level meeting to that time of the three allies. At the conference, Churchill delivered some unwelcome news. He told Stalin that western military planners had concluded that an Anglo-American invasion of Europe that year was "military folly." The Soviets, however, wanted a "second-front" to relieve Nazi pressure. In response to Churchill, Stalin gave Harriman this memo, condemning the prime minister's decision and arguing that British and American forces were capable of invading Europe in 1942.

[Transcript of Joseph Stalin's Memo](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did Joseph Stalin describe the significance of a second front to the conflict in Europe both in Russia and to its allies?
- How would you consider the strength the alliance between the Soviet Union and its European and American allies? Use evidence from the source.
- What did the change of plans and impact of that change communicate about the United States' goals in Europe? How did its nonaction in this matter align with its motivations?
- Based on the geographic location of the Soviet Union, why might the U.S. not want the USSR to join the fight against Japan?

Citation Information

Stalin, Joseph, "Memorandum in Russian from Joseph Stalin about opening a second front in Europe during World War II, with English translation of same," 13 August 1942. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Allied Civilian Relief in Tunisia, 1943



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Mejex-El-Bab, Tunisia...." 1943

Description

The photograph shows individuals receiving aid in Mejex-El-Bab, Tunisia. A market was operated by the Allied civilian relief groups to sell food, clothing, kerosene and other supplies from the U.S. Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations. These items were meant for native Tunisians and Europeans who were victims of war deprivation.

Text-Dependent Questions

- Reflect on this photograph of individuals receiving aid in Tunisia to [Their Cry is Answered](#). How are the characterizations of each area different?
- Tunisia is located very near to the southern tip of Italy. Why was Tunisia a key location in the European theater?
- A market operated by Allied civilian relief groups provided supplies for the Tunisians and Europeans affected by the war. Why was relief aid located in Tunisia?

Citation Information

"Mejex-El-Bab, Tunisia. A market operated by the Allied civilian relief groups to sell at cost food, clothing, kerosene, etc., supplied by the U.S. Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations to natives and Europeans, victims of war deprivation," 1943. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Australian Troops Fighting the Japanese in Burma (Myanmar), 1944



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Troops in Australia," 1944

Description

In the final assault on Burma (Myanmar), American light tanks, manned by Australian crews, smashed through Japanese pillboxes. In this photograph, taken during the actual fighting, an Australian mortar crew has fired on enemy troops 150 yards away fleeing from a busted pillbox. Note the shell-torn coconut tree in foreground.

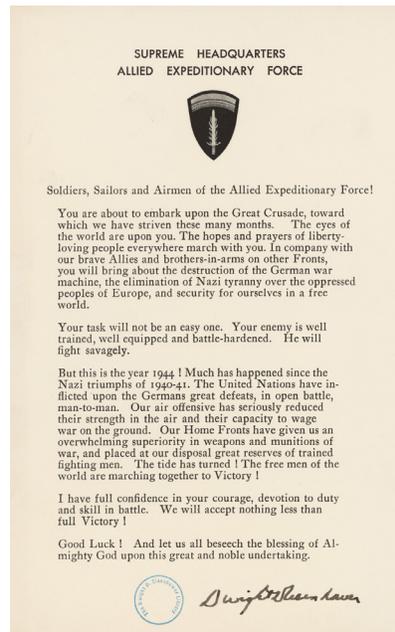
Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe the geography depicted in the photograph. How did this lead to different tactics than the image from the European Theater?
- In this photo, Australian troops were using American tanks. Why would it be necessary for allied troops to fight together and use tools provided by other countries?
- Compare this photo with the [Destruction of a Burmese Village photo](#). What is similar? What is different? How does this demonstrate the geography of Burma (Myanmar) in World War II?

Citation Information

"Troops in Australia," 1944. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force, June 1944



Courtesy of National Archives, Eisenhower, Dwight D., "D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force," June 1944

Description

This document was the written statement from General Dwight D. Eisenhower that was delivered on the eve of D-Day. The statement was written to soldiers, airmen and sailors to show the scope of military action and how significant the joint action would be.

[Transcript of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did General Dwight D. Eisenhower describe the outcomes of the American Expeditionary Force's work?
- Consider this statement from the letter, "you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world." How was this different from the characterization of Japanese actions?

Citation Information

Eisenhower, Dwight D., "D-Day Statement to Soldiers, Sailors, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force," June 1944. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

American Troops Move Through a Bombed German Street at the End of World War II, April 16, 1945



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Harris, Jacob, "Infantrymen of the 255th Infantry Regiment move down a street in Waldenburg to hunt out the Hun after a recent raid by 63rd Division," 16 April 1945

Description

This photograph shows American troops moving down a street in Germany at the end of World War II. The photo shows the aftermath of fighting in an urban area.

Text-Dependent Questions

- Describe the geographic conditions soldiers in Europe were fighting in during World War II?
- How was the destruction captured in this photograph similar or different from the [Japanese bombing in Burma](#)?

Citation Information

Harris, Jacob, "Infantrymen of the 255th Infantry Regiment move down a street in Waldenburg to hunt out the Hun after a recent raid by 63rd Division," 16 April 1945. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Interview with Merrill's Marauders Commando Grant Jiro Hirabayashi, June 29, 2005



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Hirabayashi, Grant J., "Interview with Grant Hirabayashi [6/29/2005]," Veterans History Project, 29 June 2005

Description

This video interview is with Grant Jiroo Hirabayashi, who was one of the famed commandos of Merrill's Marauders. This was a unit of soldiers who slogged their way through the Burmese jungles to overcome the Japanese occupiers, and consisted of a number of Japanese Americans, or Nisei. Hirabayashi also served in India and China. In the late days of World War II, he interrogated Japanese prisoners of war (POWs), one of whom accused him of betraying his people.

[Condensed Transcript of Interview with Merrill's Marauders Commando Grant Jiro Hirabayashi](#)

[Transcribed Excerpt from Grant Jiro Hirabayashi Interview](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- Why was this target important to continued operations in the Pacific?
- How did the geography of the region influence tactics and strategy?
- How were the soldiers' condition described at the end of the engagement?

Citation Information

Hirabayashi, Grant J., "Interview with Grant Hirabayashi [6/29/2005]," Veterans History Project, 29 June 2005.
[Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Interview with Conscientious Objector Rothacker Smith, March 24, 2006



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Smith, Rothacker C., "Interview with Rothacker Smith [3/24/2006]," Veterans History Project, 24 March 2006

Description

A conscientious objector, Rothacker Smith, served in the 366th Infantry Regiment as a medic during World War II. The 366th shipped out to Italy but was assigned to guard duties, making Smith's life as a medic a fairly easy job. When they were attached to the 92nd Division in December 1944, he was called upon to use his training in combat. On December 26, 1944, he was wounded by friendly artillery fire that he later found out was called in by Medal of Honor recipient John Fox on his own position in Sommocolonia to stop an enemy advance. Smith subsequently was captured by the Germans and held until the end of the war. He attended the White House ceremony when Fox's widow received his medal from President Bill Clinton.

[Condensed Transcript of Interview with Conscientious Objector Rothacker Smith](#)

[Transcribed and Condensed Excerpt of Interview with Conscientious Objector Rothacker Smith](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did Rothacker Smith describe the geography of the battlefield and the objective of the Germans?
- How did Smith describe the attack he was injured in?
- What was the German motivation for not taking black prisoners of war? How did that influence Smith's mental state during the conflict?

Citation Information

Smith, Rothacker C., "Interview with Rothacker Smith [3/24/2006]," Veterans History Project, 24 March 2006.
[Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Nagasaki, Japan, After the Atomic Bomb, 1945



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Nagasaki, Japan after atomic bombing / U.S. Army A.A.F. photo," 1945

Description

This photograph shows an aerial view of Nagasaki, Japan, after American forces dropped an atomic bomb on the city. The city was bombed on August 9, 1945, and the Japanese surrendered on September 2, 1945.

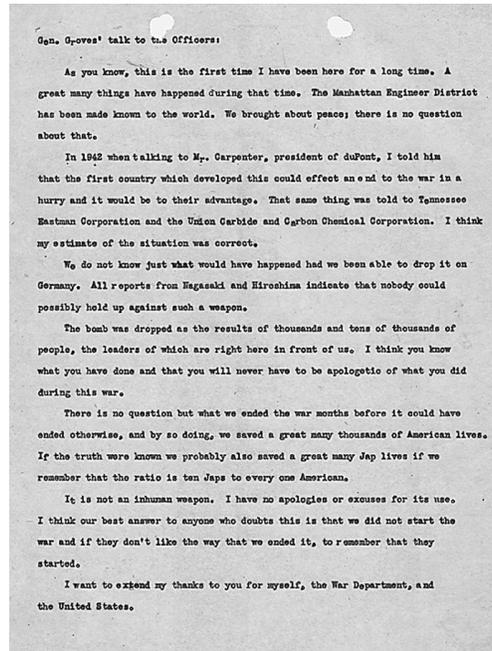
Text-Dependent Questions

- How would you caption the photograph to illustrate the impact of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki?
- Consider the destruction captured in the image. How does this compare to the tactics used by the United States in the European theater?
- The Geneva Convention of 1929 prohibited intentionally targeting civilian populations. How does using an atomic weapon make complying with the Geneva Convention challenging?

Citation Information

"Nagasaki, Japan after atomic bombing / U.S. Army A.A.F. photo," 1945. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

General Leslie Groves' Statement to the Officers about the Atomic Bomb, 1945



Courtesy of National Archives, Groves, Leslie, "General Groves speaking to the Officers regarding the atom bomb," 1945

Description

General Leslie Groves was the director of the Manhattan Project. In this document, he explained to his soldiers the necessity of the atomic bomb to hasten the end of World War II.

[Transcript of General Leslie Groves' Statement to the Officers about the Atomic Bomb](#)

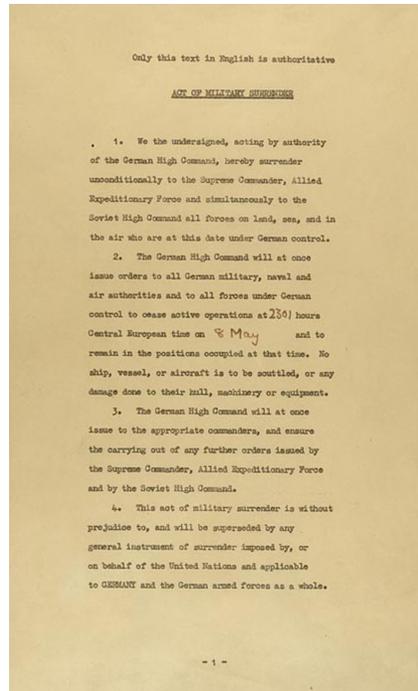
Text-Dependent Questions

- According to General Leslie Groves, why was the atomic bomb dropped?
- How did Groves argue that dropping the atomic bomb was humane for both sides? Based on Groves' statement and the [photo of Nagasaki](#), make an argument that dropping the atomic bombs was not humane.

Citation Information

Groves, Leslie, "General Groves speaking to the Officers regarding the atom bomb," 1945. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

German Instrument of Surrender, May 7, 1945



Courtesy of National Archives, "Act of Military Surrender (Reims)," 7 May 1945

Description

The unconditional surrender of the German Third Reich was signed in the early morning hours of Monday, May 7, 1945, at Supreme Headquarters in Reims in northeastern France. After the signing of the Reims Accord, Soviet Chief of Staff Gen. Alexei Antonov expressed concern to the Americans that the continued fighting in the east between Germany and the Soviet Union made the Reims surrender look like a separate peace. The Soviet command wanted the "Act of Military Surrender," with certain additions and alterations, to be signed in Berlin. To the Soviets, the documents signed in Berlin on May 8, 1945, represented the official, legal surrender of the Third Reich. The Berlin document had a few significant changes from the one signed a day earlier in Reims.

[Transcript of Germany's Instrument of Surrender](#)

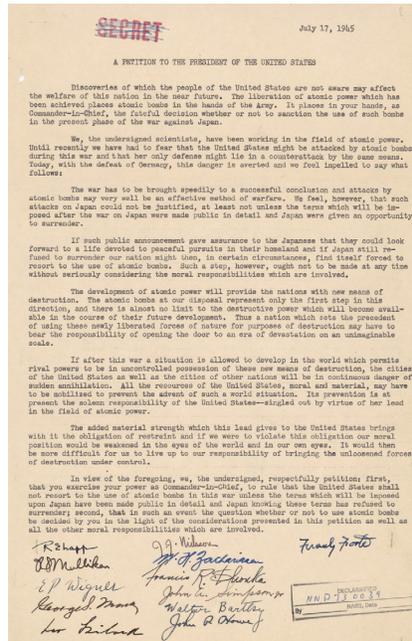
Text-Dependent Questions

- What are the conditions of surrender outlined by the document?
- How were the terms of surrender different for Germany than [Japan](#)? Use specific evidence from the source in your answer. What might have motivated the different response?

Citation Information

"Act of Military Surrender (Reims)," 7 May 1945. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

Petition from Leo Szilard and Other Scientists to President Harry S. Truman, July 17, 1945



Courtesy of National Archives, "Petition from Leo Szilard and Other Scientists to President Harry S. Truman," 17 July 1945

Description

This letter was sent to President Harry Truman by some scientists involved in the Manhattan Project following the end of the war in Europe. In the letter, the scientists outline the responsibility and concerns regarding the United States having and using atomic technology as offensive military action.

[Transcript of Petition from Leo Szilard and Other Scientists to President Harry S. Truman](#)

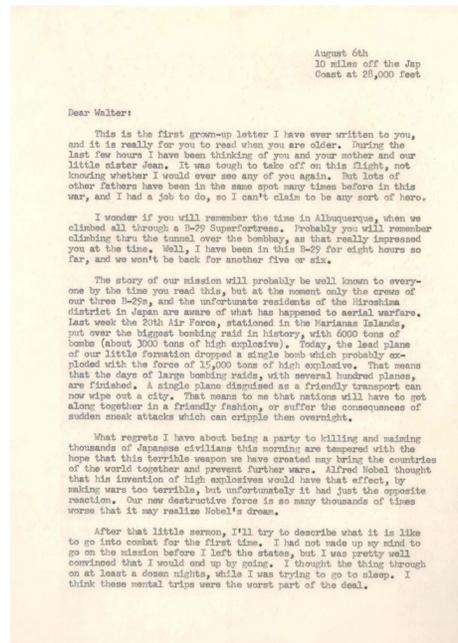
Text-Dependent Questions

- How did the scientists describe the responsibility the U.S. considering atomic weapons?
- What conditions did the scientists feel needed to be present to consider dropping the atomic bomb? Were those conditions met?

Citation Information

"Petition from Leo Szilard and Other Scientists to President Harry S. Truman," 17 July 1945. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

Letter from Dr. Luis Alvarez to his Son about the Atomic Bomb, August 6, 1945



Courtesy of National Archives, Alvarez, Luis, "Letter from Luis Alvarez to His Son," 6 August 1945

Description

This item is an unsigned, three-page typewritten letter to Dr. Luis Alvarez's son Walter, headed "August 6th, 10 minutes off the Jap coast at 26,000 feet." This part described the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Alvarez's work on the atomic bomb led to the technique for detonation of the bomb. He also helped develop the ground-controlled landing approach system and the method for aerial bombing.

[Full Transcript of Dr. Luis Alvarez's Letter to his Son](#)

[Transcribed Excerpts from Dr. Luis Alvarez's Letter to his Son](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- In the last two paragraphs, how did Dr. Luis Alvarez describe the build up and actual dropping the atomic bomb?
- What were Alvarez's regrets? What reason does he give for those regrets? How did this show the motivation for dropping the atomic bomb to end the war in the Pacific?

Citation Information

Alvarez, Luis, "Letter from Luis Alvarez to His Son," 6 August 1945. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

“Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History” Newspaper Article, August 7, 1945



Courtesy of The Ames Tribune, “Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History,” Ames Daily Tribune, 7 August 1945

Description

This newspaper article appeared in *The Ames Daily Tribune*, and it “unveiled” that Iowa played a pivotal role in the development of the atomic bomb.

[Transcribed Excerpt from “Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History”](#)

[Printable Excerpt of “Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History”](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did Dr. Spedding describe the atomic bomb and its future?
- Why were deferments “difficult” for draft boards to issue on this project?
- What role did Iowa State University play in the development of the atomic bomb?

Citation Information

“Atomic Bomb Opens New Era in Scientific History,” *The Ames Daily Tribune*, 7 August 1945. Courtesy of The Ames Tribune

Japanese Instrument of Surrender, September 2, 1945



Courtesy of National Archives, "Surrender of Japan," 2 September 1945

Description

On September 2, 1945, Japanese representatives signed the official "Instrument of Surrender," prepared by the U.S. War Department and approved by President Harry Truman. That morning, on the deck of the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, the Japanese envoys Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and General Yoshijiro Umezumi signed their names on the Instrument of Surrender. Afterward, General Douglas MacArthur, commander in the Southwest Pacific and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, also signed the document. He accepted the Japanese surrender "for the United States, Republic of China, United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and in the interests of the other United Nations at war with Japan."

[Transcript of Japan's Instrument of Surrender](#)

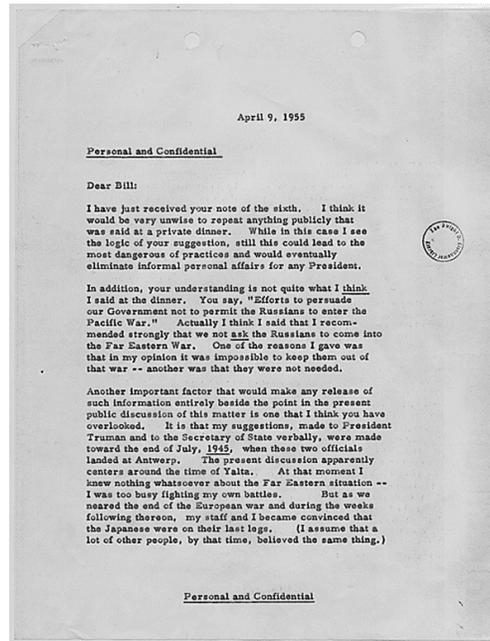
Text-Dependent Questions

- Using evidence from the source, describe the terms of surrender for Japan.
- How were the terms of surrender different for Japan than Germany? Use specific evidence from the source in your answer. What might have motivated the different response?

Citation Information

"Surrender of Japan," 2 September 1945. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

Letter from President Dwight D. Eisenhower to William D. Pawley, April 9, 1955



Courtesy of National Archives, Eisenhower, Dwight D., "Letter from President Eisenhower to William D. Pawley," 9 April 1955

Description

This document is a typed letter from President Dwight D. Eisenhower to William D. Pawley that was sent on April 9, 1955. Eisenhower recalls a conversation he had with U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson about the use of an atomic bomb during World War II. Stimson told Eisenhower, who was not in favor of the bomb, that the bomb was going to be used to save "thousands of American lives."

[Transcript of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's Letter to William D. Pawley](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How does President Dwight D. Eisenhower's recollection of the reasons for dropping the atomic bomb compare to [General Leslie Groves](#)?
- What new information does Eisenhower add to the rationale for dropping the atomic bomb? How does he characterize the way the war in the Pacific was fought?

Citation Information

Eisenhower, Dwight D., "Letter from President Eisenhower to William D. Pawley," 9 April 1955. [Courtesy of National Archives](#)

Interview of Navy Petty Officer Augustus Prince, October 20, 2004



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prince, Augustus, "Interview with Augustus Prince [10/20/2004]," Veterans History Project, 20 October 2004

Description

In the video, Augustus Prince recalls his service in World War II 60 years after he served in the Navy. Prince clearly recalls his being accepted as a radar man aboard the USS Santee, knowing in retrospect what that acceptance meant to him, a young African-American man struggling for respect in a largely segregated Navy.

[Full Transcript of Augustus Prince Interview](#)

[Transcribed Excerpt from Augustus Prince Interview](#)

Text-Dependent Questions

- How did Augustus Prince describe the battlefield in the Pacific? How did the nature of the battlefield impact the tactics used?
- How did the use of kamikazes by the Japanese influence the decision to use different tactics in the Pacific by the Americans to end the war?

Citation Information

Prince, Augustus, "Interview with Augustus Prince [10/20/2004]," Veterans History Project, 20 October 2004.

[Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

Interview with Robert Holmberg, Who Worked on the Manhattan Project, September 22, 2005



Courtesy of the Atomic Heritage Foundation, Holmberg, Robert, "Robert Holmberg's Interview," 22 September 2005

Description

Robert Holmberg was born in Fort Dodge, Iowa, and began working on the Manhattan Project at the Chicago Met Lab and at Ames Laboratory in Iowa. He was then drafted into the Special Engineer Detachment and sent to Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He continued to work on nuclear research after the war.

Text-Dependent Questions

- What Iowa connections did Robert Holmberg describe with the creation of the atomic bomb?
- How did Holmberg describe the secrecy involved with the project? What did that communicate about the priority placed on the bomb?

Citation Information

Holmberg, Robert, "Robert Holmberg's Interview," 22 September 2005. [Courtesy of the Atomic Heritage Foundation](#)