Chapter 11 - World War II

1. Strategy
   1. Allies – Hitler was considered the most dangerous threat and no one thought Japan or Italy were long term threats. Allies decided on a Europe First strategy
   2. Axis – no real plan on how they were going to defeat the allies. They all had common enemies but individual dreams. Hitler wanted to dominate Europe and eliminate inferior people, Mussolini wanted an Italian empire from the Adriatic to East Africa and Tojo wanted Japanese control of the Western Pacific and Asia.
2. Turning the Tide in Europe
   1. Battle of the Atlantic – to stop the Americans from saving England with supplies, Hitler hoped his U-boats using a wolf pact technique would stop all supply lines. They sunk roughly 3500 ships. Finally in mid 1943, the Allies started to use convoys to protect shipments. They also developed radar to help locate the u-boats and were able to use long range bombs and underwater depth charges.
   2. Stalingrad – The Germans had a three prong attack on the Soviet Union in the spring of 1941. They sent troops to Leningrad in the North, Moscow and Stalingrad in the south. He was successful in killing and capturing many Russians, but never on controlling all of the Soviet Union. In 1942 he decided to just focus on Stalingrad so he could get at the oil fields of the Caucus mountains. Fighting was house to house, block by block. The Soviets counterattacked, but Hitler refused to let his men retreat. The winter didn’t help the Germans, and in Jan 1943 they finally surrendered. This was the turning point of the war in Europe.
   3. North Africa - Stalin had wanted the US and England to have a second front in France, but they thought they needed more time for that invasion so they started with North Africa. In Oc. 1942 the British won at El Alamein in Egypt and moved westward. In Nov, the Americans landed in Morocco and began to push eastward – they were commanded by Gen Eisenhower. IN Feb. 1943, The Germans led by Gen. Rommel led his Afrika Korps against the allies at Kasserine Pass in Tunisia. Rommel was able to break through, but the Americans rallied and forced him to retreat. As result, the Americans realized they needed a strong leader and men who were accustomed to fighting in desert. Gen. Patton was put in charge. In May 1943, the Axis forces surrendered.
   4. Invasion of Italy – The allies met in Casablanca to determine what they were doing next. They decided to increase bombing in Germany and invade Italy. They also decided they would only accept unconditional surrender form the Axis powers – meaning no concessions. The U.S. first attacked Sicily. Although the majority of the forces escaped, the Allies now had control of the Western Mediterrainian and ended the Rule of Mussolini. The Italians surrendered on Sept 3, 1943 and 5 weeks later declared war on Germany. Mussolini was rescued by the Germans and put in charge of a puppet governemtn in Northern Italy. German military continued to fight in the south. Fighting continued until the spring of 1945.
   5. Bombing of Germany – To answer Stalin’s call for a second front in Europe, the Allies began a bombing routine of Germany. They used saturation bombing where large amounts of bombs were dropped on German cities. This was done at night. By day American bombers used strategic bombings to destroy their ability to make war. The Tuskegee airman played an important role in the strategic bombing as they were often escorts for the bombers. They flew over 1500 missions and never lost a plane. It was a high cost for the Allies losing 20% of the flights
3. Turning the Tide in the Pacific – The U.S. did not ignore Japan even with their Europe First strategy. Through May 1942, Japanese forces continued to advance. They pretty much had full control over the Western Pacific.
   1. Midway - The Japanese knew that with the aircraft carriers still afloat that the Americans could still defend themselves. A strategic location was Midway island. This provided protection for Hawaii and if lost American defensives would be pushed back to California. However, Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander of the Navy knew his plans. The Americans were able to break the Japanese code and were waiting for the Japanese with their only available aircraft carrier. This battle (June 1942) was the most important in the war in the Pacific. U.S. sank 4 Japanese aircraft carriers and all the planes onboard. This was the turning point and Japan was now on the defensive.
4. Victory in Europe
   1. Teheran Conference – Nov 1943, the Big Three met in Teheran, Iran to have their first face to face meeting about what the next steps were. This is when they decided to open the second front in Europe that became known as Operation Overlord.
   2. D-Day - Operation Overlord – June 6, 1944. This was the largest air, sea, and land invasion ever planned. Commanded by Gen. Eisenhower. They were going to land at 5 different beaches in Normandy (Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword). But they also created a secret plan of deception to mislead the Germans as to where the landing was going to take place. They created a fake army that only existed on paper that was going to land at Calais. It worked as Hitler moved his tanks to defend Calais. The first troops landed at 6:30 after the coastline was bombarded by over 11,000 planes. Most of the beaches had it easy, except for Omaha which is one of the two beaches assigned to the Americans. The Americans dealt with machine gun and heavy artillery fire from concrete boxes known as pillboxes that were on the cliffs. They mined the beaches. Some were let out too far from the beaches and drowned due to their heavy packs. By the end of the day, the Allies had gained ground. By the end of the month they had landed 1 million Allied troops.
   3. Liberation of Europe
      1. Paris – August 1944, Allies liberated Paris. Hitler had actually ordered that his generals destroy the city before they left, but they ignored him.
      2. Possible Overthrow of Hitler – In July 1944, some of Hitler’s top generals plotted to overthrow him. They planted a bomb, but he managed to go unharmed. Rommel took poison rather than face trial for the assassination attempt.
      3. Battle of the Bulge – Hitler remained steadfast in his belief that fate was on his side. So in Dec. 1944 he ordered a counter attack. The Battle of the Bulge almost succeeded by catching the Americans by surprise. Cloudy skies kept the American air support from happening, but on the 23rd the skies cleared and the Americans were able to attack by air. It was meant to drive a wedge between the American and British forces, but instead it used up the last of the German reserves and supplies
   4. Yalta Conference – Feb 1945, the Big Three met at Yalta to discuss post war plans. Defeat was inevitable at this point. They decided that Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania would hold free elections (but Stalin later reneged.) England and the U.S. were not in a great position to push Stalin as the Soviets controlled most of Eastern Europe at this time and the U.S. really needed him to commit to fighting Japan once Hitler was defeated.
   5. End of the war in Europe
      1. FDR's Death – FDR died on April 9th, 1945
      2. Hitler's Death – By January 1945, the Soviets had begun their invasion of Germany April 30th, 1945, Hitler committed suicide as the American army was poised to invade Berlin.
      3. VE Day – May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered to the Americans.
5. Advancing the Pacific
   1. island hopping – this was the strategy of the Americans. The plan was to capture various strategic islands to cut off the Japanese’s supply chain as they pushed toward Japan. They started with Guadalcanal in August of 1942.
   2. Kamikaze – Japanese fought to the death. It was not honorable to be taken captive or surrender so they fought to the death. To die honorably over 3000 Japanese pilots became Kamikaze’s by flying their planes into strategic locations. But it didn’t work.
   3. Battle of Iwo Jima – Feb- March 1945. This was one of the fiercest battles. 23,000 Marines died in the 36 days, but they took the island.
   4. Battle of Okinawa – April 1945 was even worse. This was the closest island to Japan and contained an air base. This was the most costly of battles and largest in the Pacific. With more than 50,000 casualties (dead and wounded) Americans and over 100,000 Japanese.
6. Victory in the Pacific
   1. Manhattan Project – this was the name of the program that created the Atomic bomb. It was long time coming and had actually started in the 1930s as scientists learned how to split the atom. Roosevelt was notified of Germany’s advancement in this area by Albert Einstein even though he was not able to work on the project. It was called the Manhattan project because the bulk of the work was completed at Colombia University in Manhattan. The project was led by J. Robert Oppenheimer. Very few who worked on the project knew exactly what they were doing. The first test was done on July 16, 1945 in Alamogordo New Mexico
   2. Potsdam Conference – After the bomb was successfully tested, Truman, Stalin, and Atlee met at Potsdam once again to formalize the post war plans. July to August 1945 They decided to divide Germany into four zones of occupation, new borders and free election in Poland and recognized Soviets rights for reparations from the German sector they controlled. Stalin agreed to join the fight in Asia. Truman also called for the unconditional surrender of Japan
   3. Decision to use the bomb – This was fully determined by Truman. There are several reasons that Truman decided to use the bomb. Some think it was psychological – show the Soviet Union their military might and they weren’t afraid to use it. But mostly it was to save American lives. The U.S. saw what the Japanese were willing to do and knew that if they were to invade Japan it would be costly to both sides.
   4. Hiroshima and Nagasaki – On August 6, 1945 the U.S. dropped the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima killing 60,000 within two minutes. Over the next three days, the Japanese deliberated on what they were going to do. On August 9th 2 things happened. The Soviets declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria and the U.S. dropped the second bomb on Nagasaki.
   5. VJ Day – Hirohito finally decided to surrender. August 15, 1945 is celebrated as VJ day and Japan officially surrendered on September 2 about the USS Missouri. Roughly 60,000,000 people – mostly civilians had died in WWII.