

POLITICAL CARTOONS AND WAR

WHERE'S THE HUMOR?

BY BRENDA BAIR

STANDARDS

GPS - SS6H7

- (a) Describe major developments following World War I: the rise of Nazism
- (b) Explain the impact of WWII in terms of the Holocaust, the origins of the Cold War, and the rise of Superpowers.

National United States History Standard:

Standard 25: Understands the causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of America's roles in world affairs

National Civics Standard:

Standard 29: Understands the importance of political leadership, public service, and a knowledgeable citizenry in American constitutional democracy

DR. SEUSS WENT TO WAR???

Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel, 1904-1991) was a life-long cartoonist: in his many children's books, beginning with *To Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street* (1937). For two years, 1941-1943, he was the chief editorial cartoonist for the New York newspaper *PM* (1940-1948), and for that journal he drew over 400 editorial cartoons.

Whether "PM" stood for "P.M." (an afternoon paper, though its first editions came out in the A.M.) or "Picture Magazine" (it pioneered the use of photographs to convey information) no one knows for sure. It used color long before any other paper, employed the latest technology to print photographs with far greater clarity than its competitors, was a consumer advocate when no other newspapers were, and accepted no advertising during its first six and a half years. *PM* was proudly anti-Poll Tax, anti-Fascist, and a supporter of Roosevelt.

Published on June 18, 1940, *PM*'s first issue expressed its goals most succinctly:

PM is against people who push other people around.

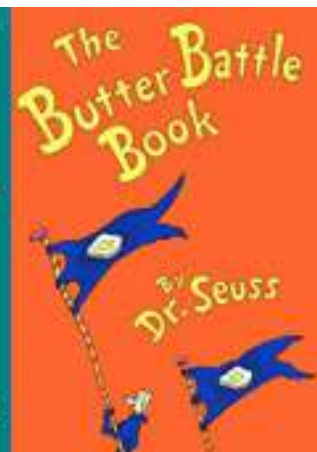
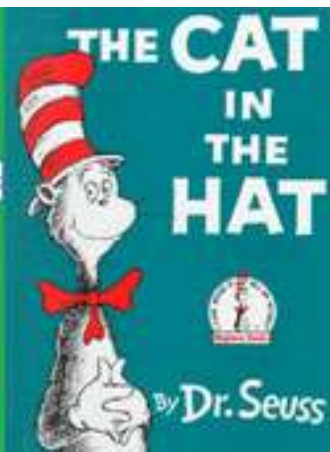
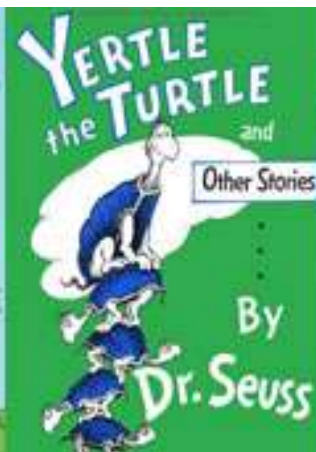
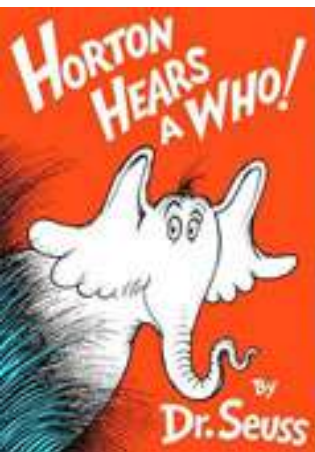
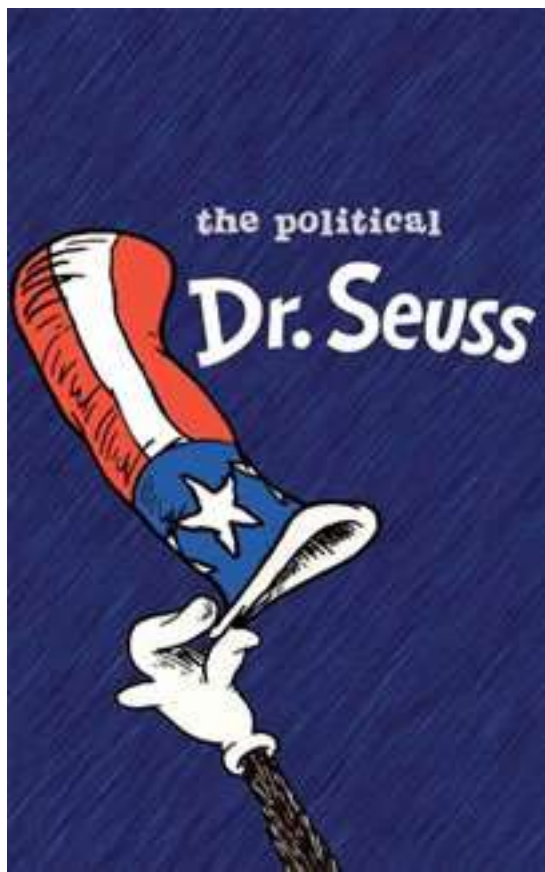
PM accepts no advertising.

PM belongs to no political party.

PM is absolutely free and uncensored.

PM's sole source of income is its readers – to whom it alone is responsible.

PM is one newspaper that can and dares to tell the truth.



VOCABULARY

Fascism: a political philosophy that glorifies the state and confers supreme power to a dictatorial leader while forcibly suppressing opposition and individual expression. Nazi Germany was an example of a fascist state.

Anti-Semitism: prejudice against Jews.

America First Movement: a movement during World War II that advocated isolationism and nonintervention in Europe. Pilot Charles Lindbergh was involved in this movement.

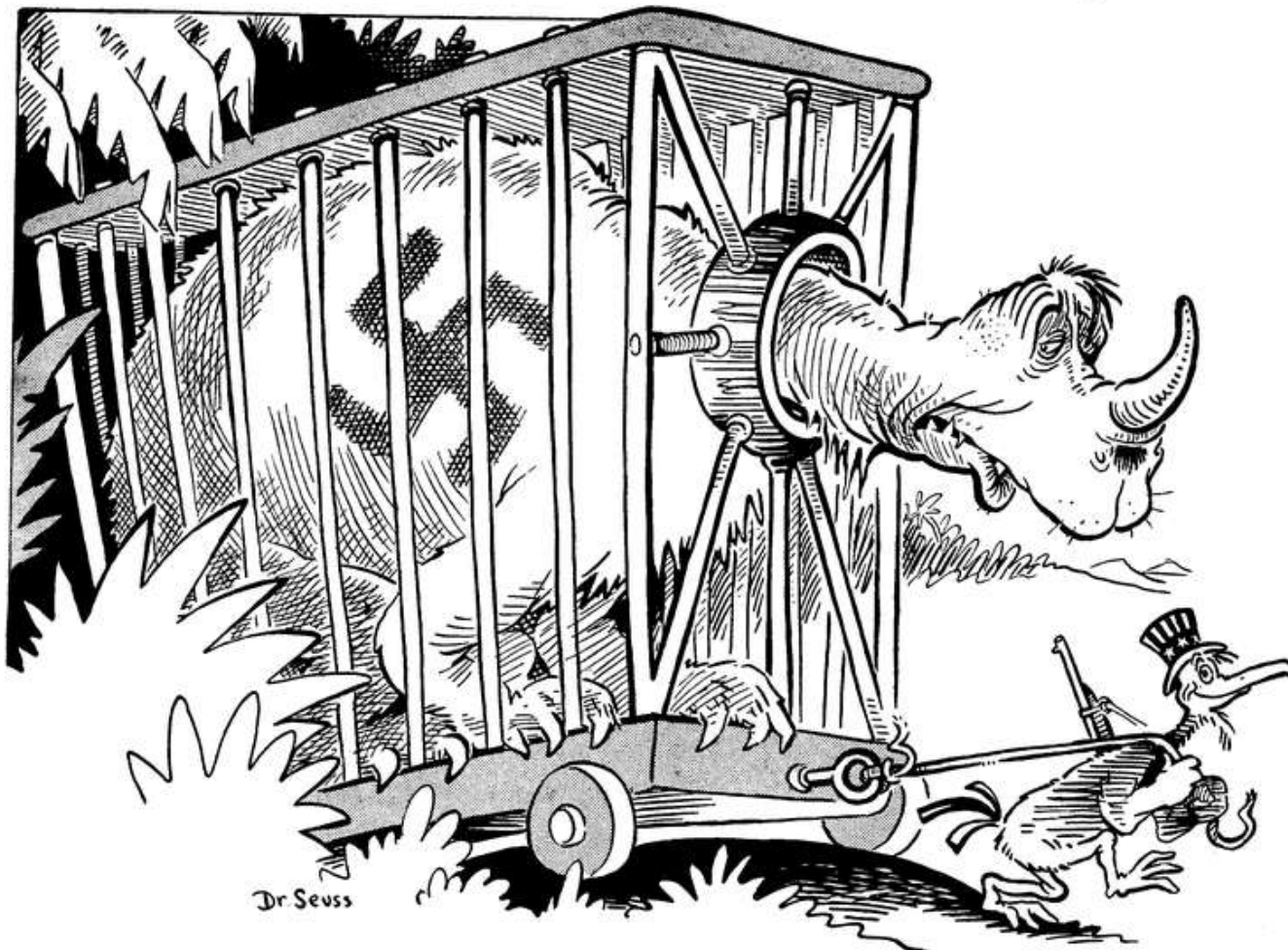
Japanese American Internment: the forced removal of Japanese Americans from their homes to internment camps during World War II.

Left-Wing: during World War II, members of the political left were against racism and anti-Semitism, opposed to Hitler, against isolationism and the America First movement, and pro-labor, but many distrusted the Japanese and condoned the internment of Japanese Americans.



CAGES COST MONEY!

CAGES COST MONEY! Buy More U. S. Savings Bonds and Stamps!



Title: Cages cost money!
Creator: Geisel, Theodor Seuss, 1904-1991
Seuss, Dr., 1904-1991
Publisher: PM Magazine
Date: December 15, 1941

MAYBE YOU'D BETTER HOCK ME...



Title: Boss, maybe you'd better hock me
and buy more U.S. Defense Bonds and
Stamps!

Creator: Geisel, Theodor Seuss, 1904-
1991

Seuss, Dr., 1904-1991

Publisher: PM Magazine

Date: December 26, 1941

HO HUM!

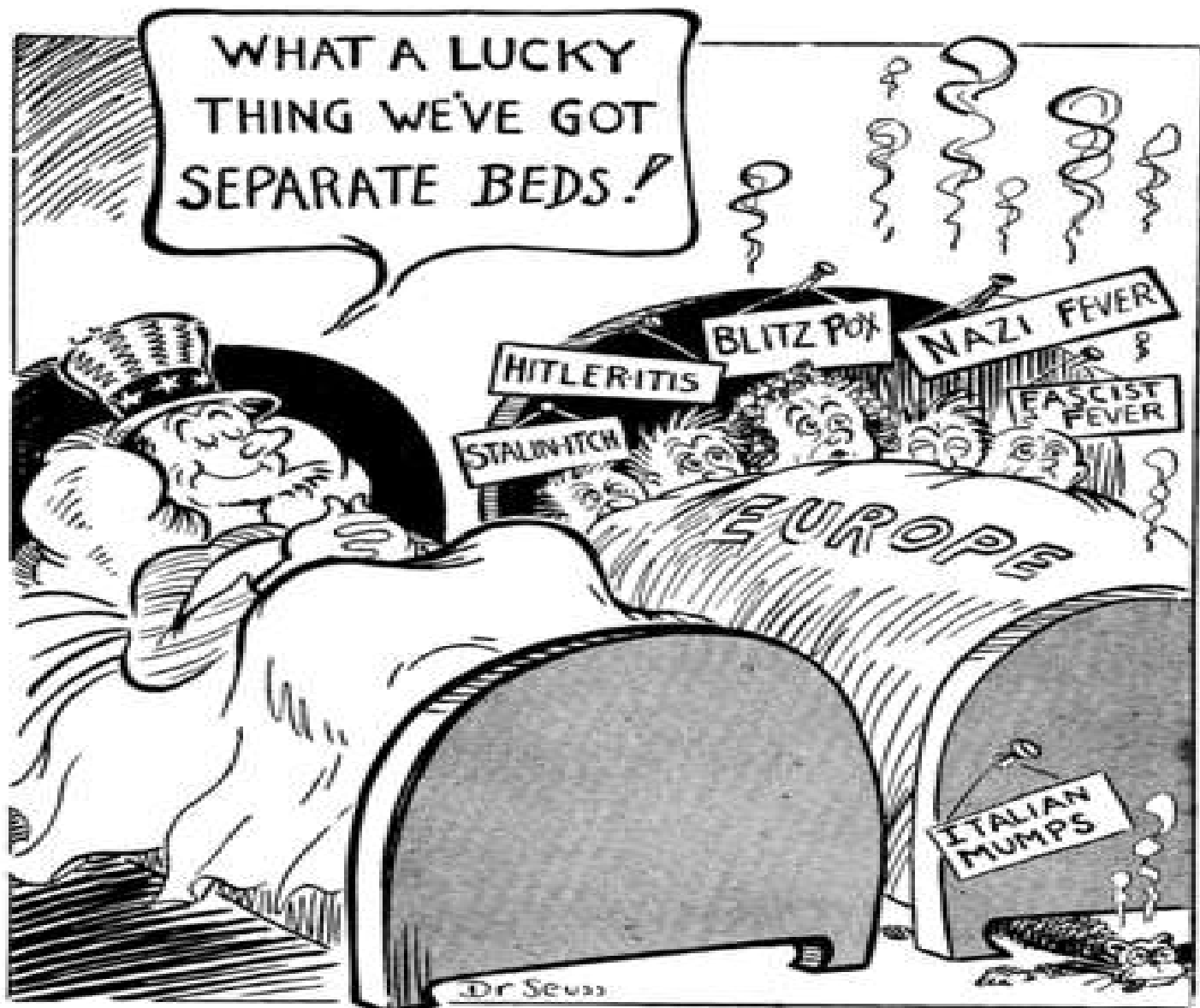


Title: Ho hum! When he's finished pecking down that last tree he'll quite likely be tired.
Creator: Geisel, Theodor Seuss, 1904-1991
Seuss, Dr., 1904-1991
Publisher: PM Magazine
Date: May 22, 1941

THE HEAD EATS...



WHAT A LUCKY THING...



Ho Hum! No chance of contagion.

By Dr. Seuss

STOP THEM PRAYING

With Adolf in Egypt



TIME TO...



RIDICULOUS HATS...



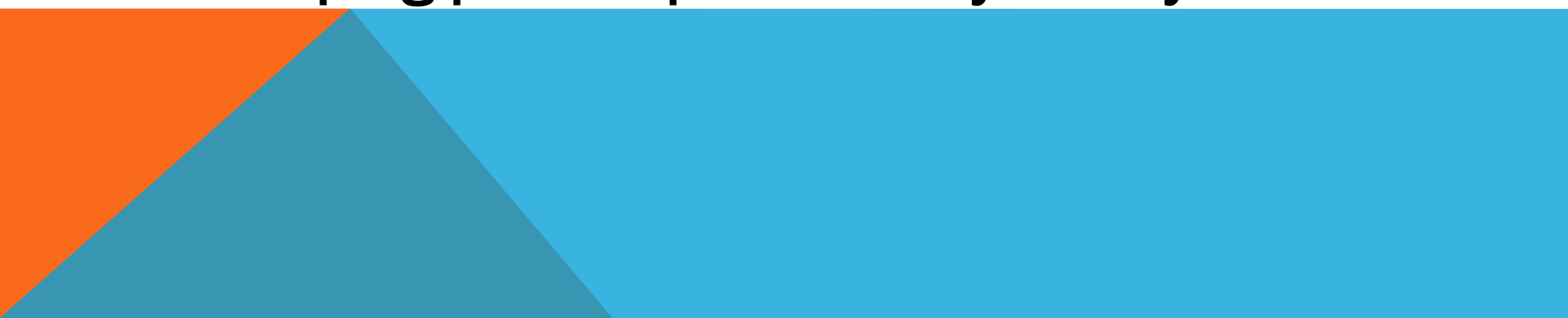
We Always Were Suckers for Ridiculous Hats . . .

DISCUSSION

How did Dr. Seuss's cartoons reflect his own political views?

How effective do you think Dr. Seuss's political cartoons are in communicating his viewpoints?

How important do you think the work of political cartoonists is in general? Do you think they still play an important role in shaping public opinion? Why or why not?



IN HIS OWN WORDS

Dr. Seuss talks about his political cartoons

“The Cat in the Hat is a revolt against authority, but it's ameliorated (perfected) by the fact that the Cat cleans up everything in the end. “

Dr. Seuss



ASSESSMENT:

Choose a current event in national or world politics. You may select an international conflict, a domestic issue under debate, or the actions of a particular political leader. You might want to choose current events you've already heard about and may have already developed opinions on.

Create political cartoons that illustrate your reaction to the event you **selected**. If you are not comfortable drawing may cut out pictures from newspapers or magazines (but not political cartoons!) and make a collage rather than an original drawing, but you must write your own text to show the point you are trying to illustrate.

Write captions explaining what the cartoon shows and why you've chosen to create your cartoon on this issue. Write captions on separate pieces of paper so people looking at the cartoon must initially try to determine its meaning without the help of the caption.

ONLINE RESOURCES

[THE POLITICAL DR. SEUSS companion Web site](#)

[Daryl Cagle's Professional Cartoonists Index](#)

[Political Cartoons of the Lilly Library](#)

[Analyze a Thomas Nast Cartoon](#)

[Herblock's History: Political Cartoons from the Crash to the Millennium](#)

[About the Newspaper *PM*](#)

[BBC - History – World War Two](#)



SOURCES

[Official Web site of the University of California, San Diego](#)

[A UC San Diego Libraries Website](#)

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All Images from [Dr. Seuss Went to War](#) (Mandeville Special Collections Library, UC San Diego).

Seuss's World War II Cartoons

Dr. Seuss Went to War. The Dr. Seuss Collection, Mandeville Special Collections Library, UC San Diego at La Jolla. <<http://libraries.ucsd.edu/speccol/dspollo/index.htm>>. A complete catalog of Seuss's World War II cartoons. Jenkins, Henry. "No Matter How Small": The Democratic Imagination of Dr. Seuss." *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*. Ed. Jenkins, Tara McPherson, Jane Shattuc. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2002. 187-208.

Minear, Richard H. *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel*. Introduction by Art Spiegelman. New York: New Press, 1999. Offers a generous selection of Seuss's cartoons and situates them historically; highly recommended.

Net, Philip. "Said a Bird in the Midst of a Blitz...: How World War II Created Dr. Seuss." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 34.2 (June 2001): 65-85. <<http://www.umanitoba.ca/publications/mosaic/backlist/2001/June/nelessey34-2.htm>>. See also the revised version of this essay, which appears as "Dr. Seuss vs. Adolf Hitler: A Political Education" in *Neil's Dr. Seuss: American Icon* (Continuum, 2004), pp. 39-62.

PBS' *Independent Lens*: "The Political Dr. Seuss" (premieres 26 Oct. 2004). Also includes a "Learn More" page, listing further resources.

The Newspaper *PM* (in which the above cartoons appeared)

Margolick, David. "PM's Impossible Dream." *Vanity Fair* January 1999: 116-132. A concise, well-written history of *PM*, including a number of great photographs. Recommended. Milkman, Paul. *PM: A New Deal in Journalism, 1940-1948*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997. The definitive history of the newspaper; highly recommended.

Net, Philip. *About the Newspaper PM*. <<http://www.ksu.edu/english/nelp/purple/miscellaneous/pm.htm>>. Draws heavily on the above two sources.

Biographies of Seuss

Cohen, Charles. *The Seuss, the Whole Seuss, and Nothing But the Seuss*. New York: Random House, 2004. Morgan, Judith, and Neil Morgan. *Dr. Seuss and Mr. Geisel*. New York: Random House, 1995. The definitive biography; highly recommended.

Seuss on the Web

Net, Philip. *Dr. Seuss on the Web*. <<http://www.ksu.edu/english/nelp/seuss/>>. A collection of links to Seuss resources.

Dr. Seuss's Overtly Political Children's Books

Seuss, Dr. *Bartholomew and the Oobleck*. 1949. New York: Random House, 1977. —. *Horton Hears a Who!* New York: Random House, 1954.

—, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* New York: Random House, 1957.

—, *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1958.

—, *The Sneetches and Other Stories*. New York: Random House, 1961.

—, *The Lorax*. New York: Random House, 1971.

—, *The Butter Battle Book*. New York: Random House, 1984.

Children's Books about Japanese-Americans and World War II:

Hamanaka, Sheila. *The Journey: Japanese Americans, Racism, and Renewal*. 1990. Orchard Books, 1995. Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*. Illus. Dom Lee. New York: Lee & Low Books, 1993.

—, *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*. Illus. Dom Lee. New York: Lee & Low Books, 1997.

Say, Allen. *Home of the Brave*. Walter Lorraine, 2002.

—, *The Bicycle Man*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1982.

Shigekawa, Marlene. *Blue Jay in the Desert*. Illus. Isao Kikuchi. Polychrome, 1993.

Takashima, Shizuye. *Child in Prison Camp*. 1971. Tundra Books, 1991. About Japanese-Canadians.

Yoshiko, Uchida. *Journey to Topaz*. Illus. Donald Carrick. Scott Foresman, 1988.

—, *Journey Home*. Illus. by Charles Robinson. Scott Foresman, 1992.

* For help in compiling this list, thanks to Terry Sherwin, Jeffrey Canton, Brian Witkowski, and Nick Glass. World War II

BBC – *History – World War II*. Includes an array of valuable resources. Highly recommended.

Steven Schoenherr's *World War II Timeline*