

Name _____

What was World War II?

World War II was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945 involving over 30 countries. During the war, two opposing military alliances formed: **the Allies and the Axis**. World War II launched countries into a state of **total war**, and it became the deadliest conflict in human history with the loss of an estimated 50 to 85 million lives. Mass death was caused by the **Holocaust** and the **atomic bombings at Hiroshima and Nagasaki**.

Even though World War II began 21 years after the end of World War I, some historians believe that the two wars were part of one vast global conflict. Why do the historians argue that the wars were connected?

What were the causes of World War II? Create a visual representation of the causes of WWII

Sept. 1, 1939 Hitler invades Poland and World War II Begins

Directions: Read the excerpt below and examine the images. Respond to the questions.



Image is courtesy of researchgate.net

What is the message of this political cartoon?

Alliances Form

Many nations realized that after the annexation of Sudetenland, Poland would be Hitler's next target. In April 1939, Russia, Britain and France met to form an alliance to defend Poland. The Allies thought that Hitler would not invade Poland if it instigated a war with Russia. By August 1939, Russia changed its mind and left the alliance with France and Britain. In August 1939, Hitler and his enemy, Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Russian dictator, signed the **Nazi-Soviet Pact**, a nonaggression pact that publicly stated that the rival nations would maintain peaceful relations. This pact was surprising to the world because Hitler and Stalin had dramatically different ideologies. Even though these dictators did not like one another, they used each other for political ends. Secretly, this pact also said that they would invade Poland and split it between them.

1. After Sudetenland, what was Hitler's next target? How did Russia, Britain, and France respond?

2. What was the Nazi-Soviet Pact? Why was the Nazi-Soviet Pact surprising?

3. What was the secret agreement in the Nazi-Soviet pact?

4. What does this secret agreement reveal about appeasement and Chamberlain's argument that the Munich Agreement would bring "peace for our time"?

World War II Begins

On September 1, 1939, German forces invaded Poland. Only two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany and World War II officially began. Nazis stormed Poland with the power of **blitzkrieg**, or lightning war. The theory of the blitzkrieg was to defeat opponents using a series of short military campaigns. These military campaigns made use of tanks, planes and artillery to quickly attack opponents. These quick attacks would disorganize and shock opponents, making them more vulnerable. While Germany attacked Poland from the west, Stalin and the Soviet Union attacked from the east, annexing land promised under the secret parts of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Within a month, Poland no longer existed as an independent country, and instead became absorbed under Hitler and Stalin's dictatorships.

5. Which country did Hitler invade on September 1, 1939? How did Britain and France react?

6. What is blitzkrieg? Why was it a successful military tactic?

Name _____

Check for Understanding:

14. What happened on September 1, 1939? Why?

Synthesis:

15. How did this event lead to the beginning of World War II in 1939?

Synthesis

Directions: Complete the venn diagram below.

How were the causes of World War I similar or different from the causes of World War II?

World War I Causes

World War II Causes

