
World War II

WORKSHEET A

One of the most important days in World War II was 6th June 1944 – “D-Day” – when Allied troops (mainly American, British and Canadian) landed on beaches in Normandy on the northern coast of France. It was a day of bloody fighting between the Allied troops and German soldiers – one of the battles famously forms part of Steven Spielberg’s 1998 film *Saving Private Ryan*. By the end of the day the Allies had a foothold in continental Europe: it was the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany, which from then on fought a losing battle against the Allies in the west and the Russians in the east.

On 6th June, and over the following days, more than three million troops crossed the English Channel from England to Normandy – the largest invasion by sea in military history. Almost 7,000 vessels were involved, supported by 12,000 aircraft. The battle in Normandy lasted for more than two months, ending with the liberation of Paris. World War II took place between 1939 and 1945, and resulted in more deaths than any other conflict in human history – around 60 million in total. There were 20 million deaths in the Soviet Union alone. Not all the people who died were soldiers: indeed, more than half the victims were civilians, who died as a result of disease, starvation, genocide and aerial bombing.

It was a genuine “world” war because the fighting was not restricted to Europe: it spread to North Africa, the Middle East and, after Japan’s entrance into the conflict in 1941, to Asia and the Pacific. The war in Europe ended with the surrender of Germany in May 1945, and the conflict in Asia and the Pacific ceased with the surrender of Japan in September 1945 after the atomic bombings of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Europe was in ruins at the end of the war: most of its infrastructure had been destroyed, and there were millions of homeless refugees. Fortunately, however, the American government developed the “Marshall Plan”, spending billions of dollars on rebuilding and therefore helping Europe to recover economically.

One of the outcomes of the war was the creation in 1945 of the United Nations: the aim was to build an organization which would foster international cooperation, take an active role in solving the world’s problems, and prevent a tragedy on the scale of World War II from ever happening again.

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WORKSHEET B

Fill the gaps below to complete the crossword and reveal the surname of an inspirational leader during most of World War II.

1. World War II was a tragic _____ that lasted six years.
2. Normandy is in the _____ of France.
3. Though they were not involved in D-Day, the _____ also fought against the Germans.
4. The United Nations was _____ after the end of the war in 1945.
5. After 1941 the war spread to the _____.
6. At the end of the war, millions of people in Europe were _____.
7. Many civilians died during the war as a result of _____ by airplanes.
8. There were a lot of _____ battles during D-Day.
9. The English _____ separates England from France.

