



International Relations – World War 2

History – Junior Cert

Quick Notes

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Once Hitler introduced conscription into Germany in 1935, he began to overreach himself and the allied powers lost patience with him. So in September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Within nine months, every major world power was at war. On invading Poland, Germany used blitzkrieg tactics – that is they used air force, followed by tanks, followed by troops. At that point, France and Britain declared war on Germany. From September 1939 to April 1940, no fighting took place between the two sides and this period was known as the Phoney War. In April 1940, however, Germany invaded Norway and Denmark, followed by invasions of Holland and Belgium and then France. Yet, the southern area of France was ruled by Nazis and became known as ‘Vichy France’. In May 1940, Britain (under the control of prime minister Churchill) stood alone against Nazi Germany. The German invasion of Britain was code-named ‘Operation Sealion’, but despite constant air battles and bombing of British cities, Germany lost the battle of Britain. In June 1941, Hitler began an invasion of Russia which was code-named as ‘Operation Barbarossa’. Once again, the Germans were defeated, at the Battle of Stalingrad. Japan was undergoing expansion from 1941 until 1945 and in December 1941, the Japanese attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbour killing 2,403 soldiers and civilians. The United States joined the war on the same side as Britain and France.

In October 1942, British troops defeated the German force at the Battle of El Alamein. Between July 1943 and May 1944, Britain and the US invaded Italy. Eventually, Mussolini was captured and executed. Germany was now under huge threat as it was surrounded by British troops in the west, British and American troops on the south and Russian troops in the east. In June 1944, 150,000 US and British troops landed at Normandy. The Germans put up strong resistance, but the allies eventually forced them to retreat. Over 1 million troops had landed in Germany by the end of June. In December 1944, Belgium was liberated and for the following two months, the allies staged a major blitz on major German cities. In December 1944, the Germans launched their last effort at the Battle of the Bulge but it failed. In April 1945, the Russians were on the outskirts of Berlin. Hitler and his wife, committed suicide. The following week Germany surrendered, an event that is known as ‘Victory in Europe Day’ or VE Day. The Pacific War was between Japan and the United States. Phase One of this war involved The Battle of Midway Island in June 1942 in which the Japanese were defeated. This US victory led to ‘island-hopping’ whereby Japan was

beaten island-by-island. Phase Two of this war involved the Japanese using suicide missions against the US. In August 1945, however, the US used an atomic bomb to destroy the Japanese city of Hiroshima; 80,000 people were killed instantly and two days later 60,000 were killed when Nagasaki was attacked. On 10 August 1945, the Japanese surrendered – not surprisingly this date is remembered as VJ Day or Victory over Japan Day. The Nuremberg Trials were held from November 1945 to September 1946 and they were war criminal trials.

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