

World War II**Section 1**

Hitler's Lightning War

Terms and Names

nonaggression pact Agreement that says countries will not attack or invade one another

blitzkrieg Warfare in which surprise air attacks are followed by massive attacks on land

Charles de Gaulle Leader of the French government-in-exile

Winston Churchill Leader of Britain

Battle of Britain Battle of British and German air forces fought over Britain during 1940–1941

Erwin Rommel German general who led troops in North Africa

Atlantic Charter Declaration of principles issued by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1941

Before You Read

In the last chapter, you read about actions that led up to World War II.

In this section, you will learn about the first years of the war in Europe.

As You Read

Use a chart to identify the effects of some of the early events of World War II.

GERMANY SPARKS A NEW WAR IN EUROPE (Pages 491–492)**What caused Britain and France to declare war?**

In 1939, Adolf Hitler decided to move on Poland. He had already conquered Austria and Czechoslovakia. When Hitler signed a **nonaggression pact** with Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union, they agreed not to attack each other. Secretly, they also agreed to split Poland between them. This deal removed the threat of the Soviets attacking Germany from the east.

So, on September 1, the German army invaded Poland in a surprise attack. Using planes, tanks, and troops, it moved suddenly in a technique called **blitzkrieg**,

or “lightning war.” Britain and France declared war, but Poland fell.

On September 17, after secret agreement with Hitler, Stalin invaded eastern Poland. Stalin then began annexing the regions covered in a second part of the agreement. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia fell without a struggle. However, Finland fought back. In March 1940, Finland was forced to surrender.

For seven months after Poland fell to the Germans, Europe was calm. France and Britain got their armies ready. They waited for Hitler's next move.

1. Why did Poland fall to the Germans so quickly?

Section 1, *continued***THE FALL OF FRANCE; THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN (Pages 492–494)****What happened when France and Britain were attacked?**

Suddenly in April 1940, Hitler’s armies invaded Denmark and Norway. Within two months, they also captured Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and France. Part of the French army, led by **Charles de Gaulle**, escaped to Britain to remain free and continue the fight. By then, Italy’s Benito Mussolini had joined Hitler’s side.

Great Britain—now led by **Winston Churchill**—stood alone. The German air force began bombing Britain. It wanted to weaken the country. Germany was getting prepared to invade Britain. But the British air force fought back. It was helped by the recently developed radar. This was an electronic tracking system that warned of coming attacks. Also, the British had broken the German army’s secret code. The **Battle of Britain** lasted many months. Unable to break British defenses, Hitler called off the attacks in May 1941.

2. Why did Germany fail to win the Battle of Britain?

THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE EASTERN FRONT (Pages 494–496)**What countries did Hitler invade?**

Hitler then turned his attention to the east and to the Mediterranean. Germany sent troops under General **Erwin Rommel** to North Africa to help Italy fight the British. In April 1941, German armies quickly took control of Yugoslavia and Greece. In June, Hitler began a surprise invasion of the Soviet Union. The Red Army was the largest in the world. But it was not well equipped or well trained. The Germans quickly pushed deep into Soviet

territory. The Red Army was forced to retreat.

To keep supplies out of German hands, the Red Army destroyed everything left behind. The Germans were stopped from taking Leningrad in the north. They then turned on Moscow, the Soviet capital. A strong Soviet counterattack, combined with fierce Russian winter weather, forced the Germans back. Moscow had been saved, and the battle had cost the Germans 500,000 lives.

3. What happened when Germany invaded the Soviet Union?

THE UNITED STATES AIDS ITS ALLIES (Page 496)**How did the United States take sides?**

The United States watched these events. Many Americans did not want to join in the war. President Roosevelt wanted to help the Allies, however. He asked Congress to allow Britain and France to buy American weapons. Soon, American ships were escorting British ships carrying guns bought from the United States. By the fall of 1941, U.S. ships had orders to fire on German submarines that threatened the ships. The United States and Germany were fighting an undeclared naval war.

Roosevelt met secretly with Churchill in August of 1941. Although the United States was not officially in the war, the two leaders issued a statement called the **Atlantic Charter**. It supported free trade and the right of people to form their own government.

4. Name two ways in which the United States supported the Allies.

Section 1, *continued*

As you read about war in Europe and North Africa, answer the questions about the time line.

1939			1. What did each leader gain from the secret agreement?
Aug.	Hitler and Stalin sign a non-aggression pact.		2. What strategy did Hitler use to conquer Poland?
Sept.	Hitler invades Poland.		3. What was Hitler's plan for conquering France?
1940			4. What happened at Dunkirk?
April	Hitler invades Denmark and Norway.		5. What was the outcome of the Battle of Britain?
June	France surrenders.		6. What was the outcome of the fighting at Tobruk?
Sept.	German Luftwaffe begins bombing British cities. Italy moves to seize Egypt and Suez Canal.		7. How did Hitler's invasion compare with Napoleon's invasion of Russia?
1941			
Feb.	Hitler sends Rommel to help Italian troops seize Egypt and the Suez Canal.		
June	Hitler invades the Soviet Union.		