

The Legacy of the War

MAIN IDEA

World War II had deep and lasting effects on the United States and the world.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

As a result of World War II, the United States became the dominant power in the world.

TERMS & NAMES

Marshall Plan
G.I. Bill of Rights
Nuremberg trials
United Nations

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

When the end of the war came, Elliot Johnson was excited. He was finally going home. However, one of his captains told the troops that it might not be so easy to put the war behind them.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

"You guys are anxious to get home and put this all behind you," he said. "But you don't understand how big a part of your life this has been. "You'll put it all behind you for about ten years, and then someday you'll hear a marching band. You'll pick up the beat and it will all come back to you and you'll be right back here on the parade ground marching again." And he was right.

Elliot Johnson, quoted in *The Homefront*



Soldiers celebrate being discharged from the service on May 12, 1945, at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

World War II affected millions of Americans. The great struggle also touched the United States and the world in many other ways, as you will read in this section.



Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about important events that resulted from World War II.

IMPORTANT BATTLES IN EUROPE, AFRICA, AND THE PACIFIC

September 1, 1939—Germany invades Poland

The War's Human Cost

No war has claimed so many lives or caused so much destruction as World War II. The human cost on both sides was immense. About 20 million soldiers were killed, and millions more were wounded. The Soviet Union suffered the greatest losses, with at least 7.5 million military deaths and another 5 million people wounded. More than 400,000 American soldiers died and more than 600,000 were wounded.

Civilian casualties also numbered in the millions. Both the Allied and Axis powers had fought a war without boundaries. They bombed cities, destroyed villages, and brought destruction to civilian life. Again, the Soviet Union experienced the worst losses. All told, about 20 million

Soviet citizens died in the struggle. China, which also endured years of attack from Japan in the 1930s, lost about 10 million civilians.

The war also created an enormous wave of refugees. They included orphans, prisoners of war, survivors of Nazi concentration camps, and those who fled advancing armies. After the war, 21 million refugees, most starving and homeless, tried to put their lives back together amid the ruins of Europe and Asia.

World War II Military Casualties, 1939–1945		
NATION	DEAD	WOUNDED
Soviet Union	7,500,000	5,000,000
Germany	3,500,000	7,250,000
China	2,200,000	1,762,000
Japan	1,219,000	295,247
United States	405,399	671,278
Great Britain	329,208	348,403
France	210,671	390,000
Italy	77,494	120,000

Source: World Book

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts

- Which two nations suffered the most casualties in World War II?
- Which of the major combatants suffered the fewest casualties?

ReadingHistory

A. Finding Main Ideas Why did the United States emerge from World War II so strong?

Economic Winners and Losers

The war left many of the world's economies in ruins. Bombing campaigns had destroyed factories, transportation centers, and other important buildings. Only the United States—where no major battles were fought (except for Pearl Harbor)—came out of the war with a strong economy. The boom in industry during the war had pulled the nation out of the Great Depression. After the war, the U.S. economy continued to grow.

With the world's strongest economy, the United States set out to help rebuild the shattered economies of Europe and Japan. U.S. forces occupied Japan for several years after the war. During that time, they introduced programs that put Japan on the road to recovery. In 1948, Congress approved the **Marshall Plan** to help boost the economies of Europe. The plan was named after the man who came up with it, Secretary of State George C. Marshall. Under the plan, the United States gave more than \$13 billion to help the nations of Europe get back on their feet.

Changes in American Society

The nation faced important social changes in the years following the war. For one thing, the country had to deal with the return of millions of soldiers. With so many servicemen suddenly back home, the competition for jobs and education was great. The government responded by passing a law that is commonly known as the **G.I. Bill of Rights** or G.I. Bill. This measure provided educational and economic help to veterans. The government paid for returning soldiers' schooling and provided them with a living allowance. More than 7.8 million World War II veterans attended school under the G.I. Bill.

The return of so many fighting men also created a great demand for housing. The Truman administration took steps to address the country's housing shortage. However, many Americans had to live in crowded urban slums or in country shacks.

The U.S. soldiers who returned home found an America that had changed. During the war, millions of Americans had moved to find war-related jobs in California and in the cities. Included in this group was a large number of African Americans. By war's end, hundreds of thousands of African Americans had moved from the South to various Northern cities and California. There, they lived in overcrowded ghettos and experienced prejudice. However, many also found economic opportunity.

Now and then

WAR CRIMES

More than 40 years after the Nuremberg trials (shown below), the world community once again brought army officials to trial for war crimes. These crimes were committed during brutal civil wars in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1999. An international tribunal met in The Hague in 1996 to begin trying persons for their role in the conflicts.

These civil wars pitted Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, and Albanians against each other. Many people, especially Serbs, were accused of undertaking a policy of "ethnic cleansing"—the systematic attempt to rid a region of people from certain ethnic groups, often by killing them.



The Nuremberg Trials

As the United States dealt with important matters at home, the nation also joined the world in dealing with war crimes. The international community put together a court to try Nazi leaders for their role in World War II.

The trial opened in November 1945 in Nuremberg, Germany. The original 24 defendants included some of Hitler's top officials. The charges against them included crimes against humanity. These crimes referred to the Nazis' murder of millions of Jews and others. In his opening argument, the U.S. chief counsel at Nuremberg spelled out why a trial was necessary.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

What makes this inquest significant is that these prisoners represent sinister influences that will lurk in the world long after their bodies have returned to dust. They are living symbols of racial hatreds, of terrorism and violence, and of the arrogance and cruelty of power.

Robert H. Jackson, *The Nürnberg Case*

After nearly a year-long trial, 19 of the defendants were found guilty. Twelve were sentenced to death. About 185 other Nazi leaders were found guilty in later trials. The **Nuremberg trials** upheld an important idea: People are responsible for their actions, even in wartime.

Creation of the United Nations

The war helped to establish another principle—nations must work together in order to secure world peace. The outbreak of World War II demonstrated the weakness of the League of Nations, the international peacekeeping

body created after the First World War. The League was weak in large part because the United States had refused to join out of a strong desire to stay out of foreign affairs. Toward the end of World War II, President Roosevelt urged his fellow Americans not to turn their backs on the world again.

The country listened. In April 1945, delegates from 50 nations—including the United States—met in San Francisco to discuss creating a new international peace organization. In June, all 50 nations approved

ReadingHistory

B. Solving Problems Why did President Roosevelt support U.S. participation in the United Nations?

the charter creating the new peacekeeping body known as the **United Nations**, or UN.

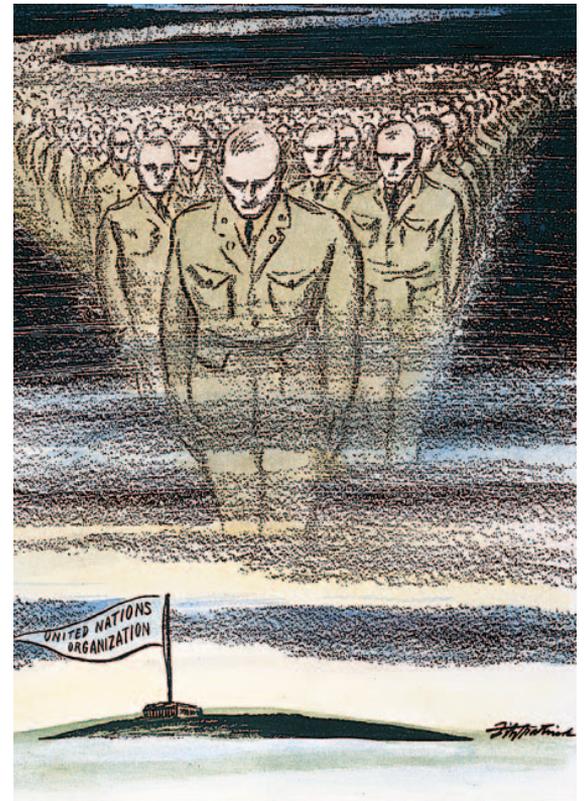
International Tensions

The horrors of World War II had caused many countries to work together toward lasting peace. However, tensions still arose among nations in the wake of the war. For example, in 1948 the United Nations helped found the nation of Israel to create a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Fighting immediately broke out as neighboring Arab nations attacked Israel. In addition, colonies around the world began fighting for their independence.

The United States, however, was more concerned with the rise of the Soviet Union. Despite suffering so much damage and loss of life, the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as a great power. It had conquered much of Eastern Europe.

During the war, the United States and the Soviet Union had been uneasy partners. After the war, Stalin angered the United States by breaking a wartime promise to promote democracy in the nations he had occupied in Eastern Europe. Instead, Stalin forced the countries to live under Communist regimes. The Soviet Union wanted to spread communism. The United States wanted to halt it. This led to future conflict.

Finally, the end of the war marked the beginning of the atomic age. The atomic bombs dropped on Japan showed the world a powerful new weapon. In the next chapter, you will learn how atomic weapons increased tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union.



D.R. Fitzpatrick drew this cartoon, entitled “... Shall Not Have Died in Vain.” He hoped the memory of U.S. losses would push Americans to support the UN and preserve peace.

ReadingHistory

C. Reading a Map

Look at the map on page R33 to find out where Israel is.

Background

An important reason for U.S. leaders to drop the atomic bombs on Japan was to make the Soviets fear U.S. power.

Section 5 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- Marshall Plan
- G.I. Bill of Rights
- Nuremberg trials
- United Nations

2. Using Graphics

Use a cluster diagram like the one shown to review the effects of World War II.



Which effect seems the most important to you?

3. Main Ideas

- What was the Marshall Plan?
- How did the G.I. Bill of Rights help World War II veterans?
- What principles did the Nuremberg trials establish?

4. Critical Thinking

Analyzing Causes Why did the United States emerge from the war so much better off than other nations?

THINK ABOUT

- the geographic location of the United States
- the role of American industry

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS

SPEECH

As a reporter, research and write a **news article** on a defendant at the Nuremberg trials or, as a lawyer, deliver a closing **speech** against a defendant.