

The War for Europe and North Africa

MAIN IDEA

Allied forces, led by the United States and Great Britain, battled Axis powers for control of Europe and North Africa.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

During World War II, the United States assumed a leading role in world affairs that continues today.

Terms & Names

- Dwight D. Eisenhower
- D-Day
- Omar Bradley
- George Patton
- Battle of the Bulge
- V-E Day
- Harry S. Truman

One American's Story

It was 1951, and John Patrick McGrath was just finishing his second year in drama school. For an acting class, his final exam was to be a performance of a death scene. McGrath knew his lines perfectly. But as he began the final farewell, he broke out in a sweat and bolted off the stage. Suddenly he had a flashback to a frozen meadow in Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge in 1945. Three German tanks were spraying his platoon with machine-gun fire.

A PERSONAL VOICE JOHN PATRICK MCGRATH

“Only a few feet away, one of the men in my platoon falls. . . . He calls out to me. ‘Don’t leave me. Don’t. . . .’ The tanks advance, one straight for me. I grab my buddy by the wrist and pull him across the snow. . . . The tank nearest to us is on a track to run us down. . . . When the German tank is but 15 yards away, I grab my buddy by the wrist and feign a lurch to my right. The tank follows the move. Then I lurch back to my left. The German tank clamors by, only inches away. . . . In their wake the meadow is strewn with casualties. I turn to tend my fallen comrade. He is dead.”

—A Cue for Passion

Like countless other soldiers, McGrath would never forget both the heroism and the horrors he witnessed while fighting to free Europe.



▲ Private John P. McGrath carried this bullet-riddled letter in a pack that saved his life. In 1990, he visited Anzio, where members of his company were buried.

The United States and Britain Join Forces

“Now that we are, as you say, ‘in the same boat,’” British Prime Minister Winston Churchill wired President Roosevelt two days after the Pearl Harbor attack, “would it not be wise for us to have another conference . . . and the sooner the better.” Roosevelt responded with an invitation for Churchill to come at once. So began a remarkable alliance between the two nations.

WAR PLANS Prime Minister Churchill arrived at the White House on December 22, 1941, and spent the next three weeks working out war plans with President Roosevelt and his advisors. Believing that Germany and Italy posed a greater threat than Japan, Churchill convinced Roosevelt to strike first against Hitler. Once the Allies had gained an upper hand in Europe, they could pour more resources into the Pacific War.

By the end of their meeting, Roosevelt and Churchill had formed, in Churchill's words, "a very strong affection, which grew with our years of comradeship." When Churchill reached London, he found a message from the president waiting for him. "It is fun," Roosevelt wrote in the message, "to be in the same decade with you."

THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hitler ordered submarine raids against ships along America's east coast. The German aim in the Battle of the Atlantic was to prevent food and war materials from reaching Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Britain depended on supplies from

the sea. The 3,000-mile-long shipping lanes from North America were her lifeline. Hitler knew that if he cut that lifeline, Britain would be starved into submission.

For a long time, it looked as though Hitler might succeed in his mission. Unprotected American ships proved to be easy targets for the Germans. In the first four months of 1942, the Germans sank 87 ships off the Atlantic shore. Seven months into the year, German wolf packs had destroyed a total of 681 Allied ships in the Atlantic. Something had to be done or the war at sea would be lost.

The Allies responded by organizing their cargo ships into convoys. Convoys were groups of ships traveling together for mutual protection, as they had done in the First World War. The convoys were escorted across the Atlantic by destroyers equipped with sonar for detecting submarines underwater. They were also accompanied by airplanes that used radar to spot U-boats on the ocean's surface. With this improved tracking, the Allies were able to find and destroy German U-boats faster than the Germans could build them. In late spring of 1943, Admiral Karl Doenitz, the commander of the German U-boat offensive, reported that his losses had "reached an unbearable height."

At the same time, the United States launched a crash shipbuilding program. By early 1943, 140 Liberty ships were produced each month. Launchings of Allied ships began to outnumber sinkings.

By mid-1943, the tide of the Battle of the Atlantic had turned. A happy Churchill reported to the House of Commons that June "was the best month [at sea] from every point of view we have ever known in the whole 46 months of the war." **A**



▲ A convoy of British and American ships ride at anchor in the harbor of Hvalfjord, Iceland.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Causes

A Why had the tide turned in the Battle of the Atlantic by mid-1943?

The Eastern Front and the Mediterranean

By the winter of 1943, the Allies began to see victories on land as well as sea. The first great turning point came in the Battle of Stalingrad.

THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD The Germans had been fighting in the Soviet Union since June 1941. In November 1941, the bitter cold had stopped them in their tracks outside the Soviet cities of Moscow and Leningrad. When spring came, the German tanks were ready to roll.

In the summer of 1942, the Germans took the offensive in the southern Soviet Union. Hitler hoped to capture Soviet oil fields in the Caucasus Mountains. He also wanted to wipe out Stalingrad, a major industrial center on the Volga River. (See map, page 572.)

The German army confidently approached Stalingrad in August 1942. “To reach the Volga and take Stalingrad is not so difficult for us,” one German soldier wrote home. “Victory is not far away.” The Luftwaffe—the German air force—prepared the way with nightly bombing raids over the city. Nearly every wooden building in Stalingrad was set ablaze. The situation looked so desperate that Soviet officers in Stalingrad recommended blowing up the city’s factories and abandoning the city. A furious Stalin ordered them to defend his namesake city no matter what the cost.

For weeks the Germans pressed in on Stalingrad, conquering it house by house in brutal hand-to-hand combat. By the end of September, they controlled nine-tenths of the city—or what was left of it. Then another winter set in. The Soviets saw the cold as an opportunity to roll fresh tanks across the frozen landscape and begin a massive counterattack. The Soviet army closed around Stalingrad, trapping the Germans in and around the city and cutting off their supplies. The Germans’ situation was hopeless, but Hitler’s orders came: “Stay and fight! I won’t go back from the Volga.”

The fighting continued as winter turned Stalingrad into a frozen wasteland. “We just lay in our holes and froze, knowing that 24 hours later and 48 hours later we should be shivering precisely as we were now,” wrote a German soldier, Benno Zieser. “But there was now no hope whatsoever of relief, and that was the worst thing of all.” The German commander surrendered on January 31, 1943. Two days later, his starving troops also surrendered.

In defending Stalingrad, the Soviets lost a total of 1,100,000 soldiers—more than all American deaths during the entire war. Despite the staggering death toll, the Soviet victory marked a turning point in the war. From that point on, the Soviet army began to move westward toward Germany. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Synthesizing

B What two key decisions determined the final outcome at Stalingrad?

Dazed, starved, and freezing, these German soldiers were taken prisoner after months of struggle. But they were the lucky ones. More than 230,000 of their comrades died in the Battle of Stalingrad.



American journalist Ernie Pyle, shown here in 1944, was one of the most famous war correspondents of World War II.



THE NORTH AFRICAN FRONT While the Battle of Stalingrad raged, Stalin pressured Britain and America to open a “second front” in Western Europe. He argued that an invasion across the English Channel would force Hitler to divert troops from the Soviet front. Churchill and Roosevelt didn’t think the Allies had enough troops to attempt an invasion on European soil. Instead, they launched Operation Torch, an invasion of Axis-controlled North Africa, commanded by American General **Dwight D. Eisenhower**.

In November 1942, some 107,000 Allied troops, the great majority of them Americans, landed in Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers in North Africa. From there they sped eastward, chasing the Afrika Korps led by General Erwin Rommel, the legendary Desert Fox. After months of heavy fighting, the last of the Afrika Korps surrendered in May 1943. British general Harold Alexander sent a message to Churchill, reporting that “All enemy resistance has ceased. We are masters of the North African shores.” American war correspondent Ernie Pyle caught the mood of the victorious troops. 🗣️

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

🗣️ What was the outcome of the North African campaign?

A PERSONAL VOICE ERNIE PYLE

“This colossal German surrender has done more for American morale here than anything that could possibly have happened. Winning in battle is like winning at poker or catching lots of fish. . . . As a result, the hundreds of thousands of Americans in North Africa now are happy men.”

—Ernie’s War: The Best of Ernie Pyle’s World War II Dispatches

World War II: Europe and Africa, 1942–1944

INTERACTIVE



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- 1. Place** Which countries were neutral in 1942?
- 2. Movement** What was the name of the invasion that the Allies launched in North Africa?

THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN Even before the battle in North Africa was won, Roosevelt, Churchill, and their commanders met in Casablanca. At this meeting, the two leaders agreed to accept only the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers. That is, enemy nations would have to accept whatever terms of peace the Allies dictated. The two leaders also discussed where to strike next. The Americans argued that the best approach to victory was to assemble a massive invasion fleet in Britain and to launch it across the English Channel, through France, and into the heart of Germany. Churchill, however, thought it would be safer to first attack Italy.

The Italian campaign got off to a good start with the capture of Sicily in the summer of 1943. Stunned by their army's collapse in Sicily, the Italian government forced dictator Benito Mussolini to resign. On July 25, 1943, King Victor Emmanuel III summoned *Il Duce* (Italian for "the leader") to his palace, stripped him of power, and had him arrested. "At this moment," the king told Mussolini, "you are the most hated man in Italy." Italians began celebrating the end of the war.

Their cheers were premature. Hitler was determined to stop the Allies in Italy rather than fight on German soil. One of the hardest battles the Allies encountered in Europe was fought less than 40 miles from Rome. This battle, "Bloody Anzio," lasted four months—until the end of May 1944—and left about 25,000 Allied and 30,000 Axis casualties. During the year after Anzio, German armies continued to put up strong resistance. The effort to free Italy did not succeed until 1945, when Germany itself was close to collapse. **D**

HEROES IN COMBAT Among the brave men who fought in Italy were pilots of the all-black 99th Pursuit Squadron—the Tuskegee Airmen. In Sicily, the squadron registered its first victory against an enemy aircraft and went on to more impressive strategic strikes against the German forces throughout Italy. The Tuskegee Airmen won two Distinguished Unit Citations (the military's highest commendation) for their outstanding aerial combat against the German Luftwaffe.

Another African-American unit to distinguish itself was the famous 92nd Infantry Division, nicknamed the Buffaloes. In just six months of fighting in Europe, the Buffaloes won 7 Legion of Merit awards, 65 Silver Stars, and 162 Bronze Stars for courage under fire.

Like African Americans, most Mexican Americans served in segregated units. Seventeen Mexican-American soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. An all-Chicano unit—Company E of the 141st Regiment, 36th Division became one of the most decorated of the war.

Japanese Americans also served in Italy and North Africa. At the urging of General Delos Emmons, the army created the 100th Battalion, which consisted of 1,300 Hawaiian Nisei. (The word *Nisei* refers to American citizens whose parents had emigrated from Japan.) The 100th saw brutal combat and became known as the Purple Heart Battalion. Later the 100th was merged into the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team. It became the most decorated unit in U.S. history.

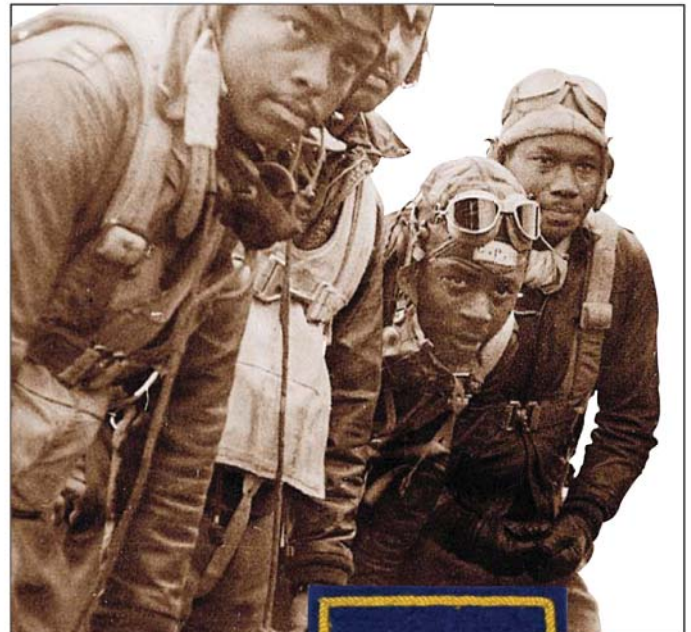
On May 31, 1943, the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first group of African-American pilots trained at the Tuskegee Institute, arrived in North Africa. Below is their regimental insignia.



MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

D What were the results of the Italian campaign?



The Allies Liberate Europe

Even as the Allies were battling for Italy in 1943, they had begun work on a dramatic plan to invade France and free Western Europe from the Nazis. The task of commanding Operation Overlord, as it was called, fell to American General Dwight D. (“Ike”) Eisenhower.

D-DAY Under Eisenhower’s direction in England, the Allies gathered a force of nearly 3 million British, American, and Canadian troops, together with mountains of military equipment and supplies. Eisenhower planned to attack Normandy in northern France. To keep their plans secret, the Allies set up a huge phantom army with its own headquarters and equipment. In radio messages they knew the Germans could read, Allied commanders sent orders to this make-believe army to attack the French port of Calais—150 miles away—where the English Channel is narrowest. As a result, Hitler ordered his generals to keep a large army at Calais.

The Allied invasion, code-named Operation Overlord, was originally set for June 5, but bad weather forced a delay. Banking on a forecast for clearing skies, Eisenhower gave the go-ahead for **D-Day**—June 6, 1944, the first day of the invasion. Shortly after midnight, three divisions parachuted down behind German lines. They were followed in the early morning hours by thousands upon thousands of seaborne soldiers—the largest land-sea-air operation in army history.

Despite the massive air and sea bombardment by the Allies, German retaliation was brutal, particularly at Omaha Beach. “People were yelling, screaming, dying, running on the beach, equipment was flying everywhere, men were bleeding to death, crawling, lying everywhere, firing coming from all directions,” soldier Felix Branham wrote of the scene there. “We dropped down behind anything that was the size of a golf ball.”

THE ALLIES GAIN GROUND Despite heavy casualties, the Allies held the beachheads. After seven days of fighting, the Allies held an 80-mile strip of France. Within a month, they had landed a million troops, 567,000 tons of supplies, and 170,000 vehicles in France. On July 25, General **Omar Bradley** unleashed massive air and land bombardment against the enemy at St. Lô, providing a gap in the German line of defense through which General **George Patton** and his Third Army could advance. On August 23, Patton and the Third Army reached the Seine River south of Paris. Two days later, French resistance forces and American troops liberated the French capital from four years of German occupation. Parisians were delirious with joy. Patton announced this joyous event to his commander in a message that read, “Dear Ike: Today I spat in the Seine.”

By September 1944, the Allies had freed France, Belgium, and Luxembourg. This good news—and the American people’s desire not to “change horses in mid-stream”—helped elect Franklin Roosevelt to an unprecedented fourth term in November, along with his running mate, Senator Harry S. Truman. **E**

Background

American paratroopers on D-Day carried a simple signaling device to help them find one another in the dark. Each had a metal toy cricket to click. No German radio operators could intercept these messages.

KEY PLAYER



**DWIGHT D. “IKE”
EISENHOWER**
1890–1969

When Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall chose modest Lieutenant General Dwight David Eisenhower to become the Supreme Commander of U.S. forces in Europe, he knew what he was doing. Ike was a superb planner and possessed a keen mind for military tactics.

More important, Eisenhower had an uncommon ability to work with all kinds of people, even competitive and temperamental allies. After V-E Day, a grateful Marshall wrote to Ike, saying, “You have been selfless in your actions, always sound and tolerant in your judgments and altogether admirable in the courage and wisdom of your military decisions. You have made history, great history for the good of mankind.” In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower became president of the United States.

MAIN IDEA

Evaluating

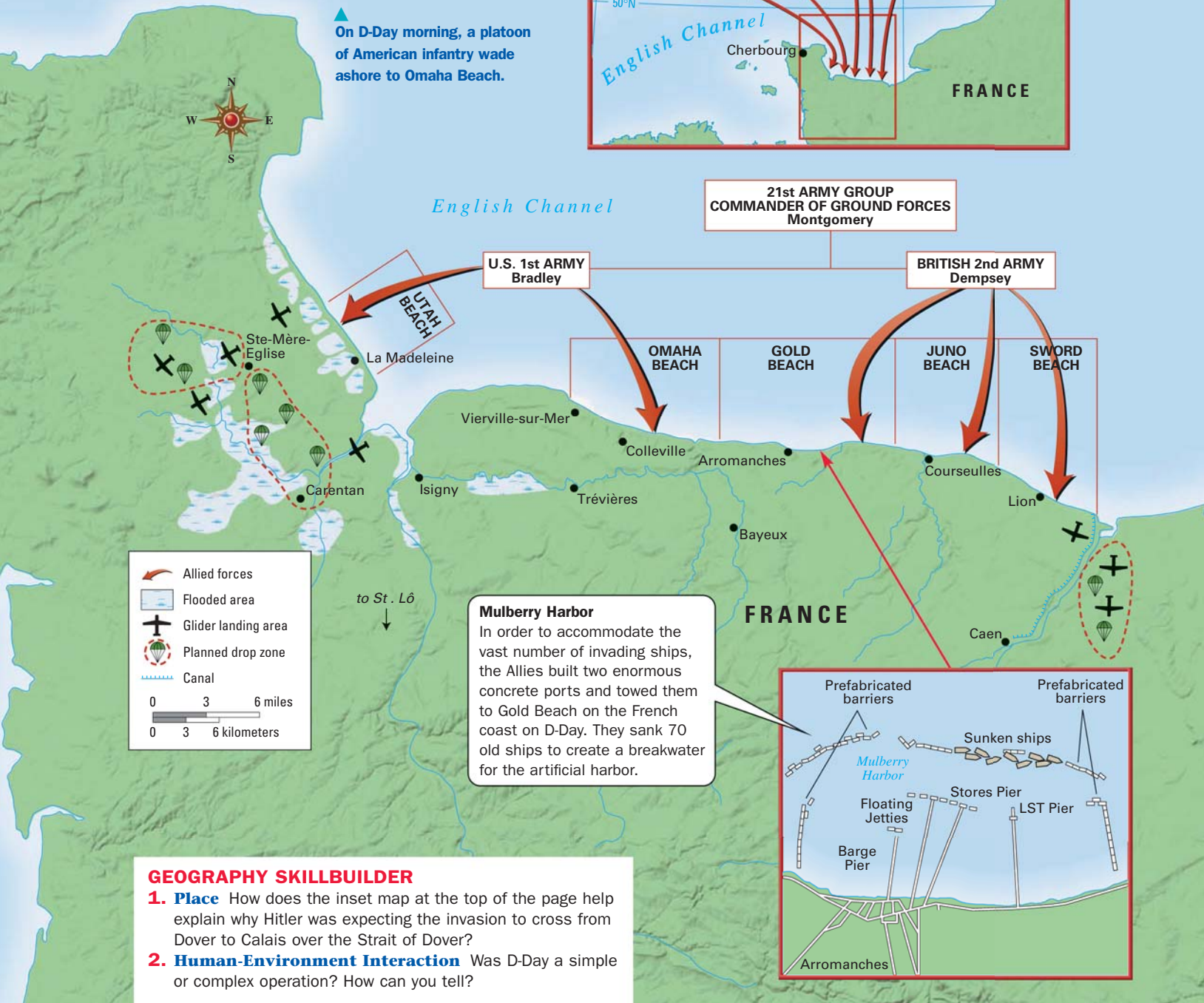
E Was the Allied invasion of Europe successful? Explain your answer.

D-Day, June 6, 1944

INTERACTIVE



▲ On D-Day morning, a platoon of American infantry wade ashore to Omaha Beach.



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER

- Place** How does the inset map at the top of the page help explain why Hitler was expecting the invasion to cross from Dover to Calais over the Strait of Dover?
- Human-Environment Interaction** Was D-Day a simple or complex operation? How can you tell?

HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT



AUDIE MURPHY

Near the end of the Second World War, Audie Murphy became famous as the most decorated American soldier of the war. He received 24 medals from the United States—including the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was also awarded three medals by France and one more by Belgium.

Born in Kingston, Texas, Murphy enlisted in the army in 1942. He served in North Africa and Europe, and in 1944 he rose to the rank of second lieutenant. His most impressive act of bravery occurred in January 1945 near Colmar, France, when in the midst of a furious German attack, he jumped onto a burning tank destroyer and killed about 50 Axis troops with his machine gun. Although wounded in the leg, he rallied his troops to retake the ground the Germans had gained earlier in the day.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE In October 1944, Americans captured their first German town, Aachen. Hitler responded with a desperate last-gasp offensive. He ordered his troops to break through the Allied lines and to recapture the Belgian port of Antwerp. This bold move, the Führer hoped, would disrupt the enemy's supply lines and demoralize the Allies.

On December 16, under cover of dense fog, eight German tank divisions broke through weak American defenses along an 80-mile front. Hitler hoped that a victory would split American and British forces and break up Allied supply lines. Tanks drove 60 miles into Allied territory, creating a bulge in the lines that gave this desperate last-ditch offensive its name, the **Battle of the Bulge**. As the Germans swept westward, they captured 120 American GIs near Malmédy. Elite German troops—the SS troopers—herded the prisoners into a large field and mowed them down with machine guns and pistols.

The battle raged for a month. When it was over, the Germans had been pushed back, and little seemed to have changed. But, in fact, events had taken a decisive turn. The Germans had lost 120,000 troops, 600 tanks and assault guns, and 1,600 planes in the Battle of the Bulge—soldiers and weapons they could not replace. From that point on, the Nazis could do little but retreat. **F**

LIBERATION OF THE DEATH CAMPS Meanwhile, Allied troops pressed eastward into the German heartland, and the Soviet army pushed westward across Poland toward Berlin. Soviet troops were the first to come upon one of the Nazi death camps, in July 1944. As the Soviets drew near a camp called Majdanek in Poland, SS guards worked feverishly to bury and burn all evidence of their hideous crimes. But they ran out of time. When the Soviets entered Majdanek, they found a thousand starving prisoners barely alive, the world's largest crematorium, and a storehouse containing 800,000 shoes. "This is not a concentration camp," reported a stunned Soviet war correspondent, "it is a gigantic murder plant." The Americans who later liberated Nazi death camps in Germany were equally horrified.

Vocabulary

elite: a small and privileged group

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Effects

F Why was the Battle of the Bulge important?

A PERSONAL VOICE ROBERT T. JOHNSON

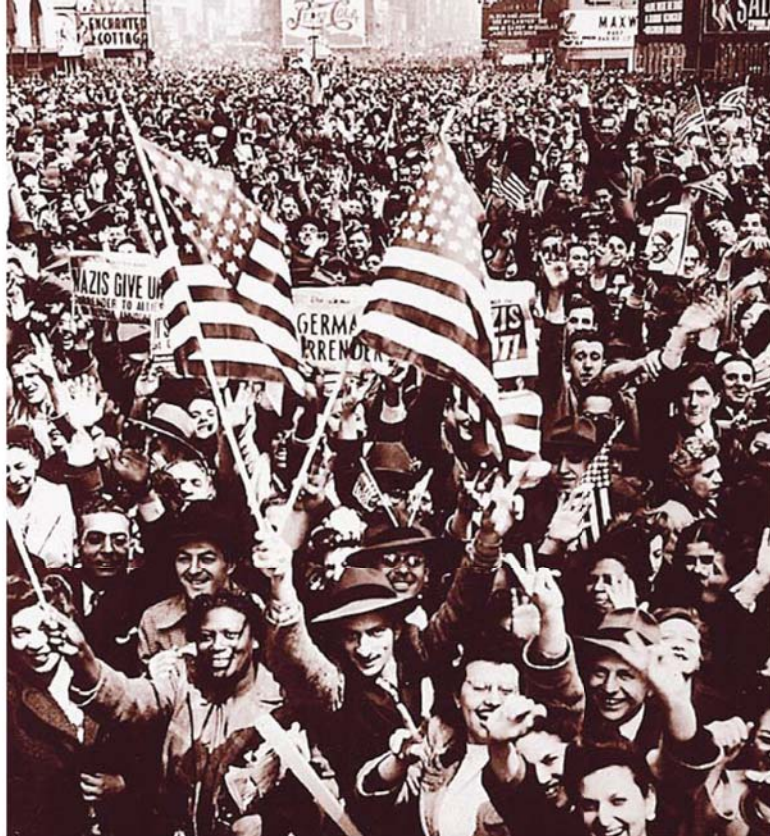
"We started smelling a terrible odor and suddenly we were at the concentration camp at Landsberg. Forced the gate and faced hundreds of starving prisoners. . . . We saw emaciated men whose thighs were smaller than wrists, many had bones sticking out thru their skin. . . . Also we saw hundreds of burned and naked bodies. . . . That evening I wrote my wife that 'For the first time I truly realized the evil of Hitler and why this war had to be waged.'"

—quoted in *Voices: Letters from World War II*

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER By April 25, 1945, the Soviet army had stormed Berlin. As Soviet shells burst overhead, the city panicked. "Hordes of soldiers stationed in Berlin deserted and were shot on the spot or hanged from the nearest tree," wrote Claus Fuhrmann, a Berlin clerk. "On their chests they had placards reading, 'We betrayed the Führer.'"

In his underground headquarters in Berlin, Hitler prepared for the end. On April 29, he married Eva Braun, his longtime companion. The same day, he wrote out his last address to the German people. In it he blamed the Jews for starting the war and his generals for losing it. “I die with a happy heart aware of the immeasurable deeds of our soldiers at the front. I myself and my wife choose to die in order to escape the disgrace of . . . capitulation,” he said. The next day Hitler shot himself while his new wife swallowed poison. In accordance with Hitler’s orders, the two bodies were carried outside, soaked with gasoline, and burned.

Vocabulary
capitulation:
 surrender



▲ New Yorkers celebrate V-E Day with a massive party that began in Times Square and went on for days at sites throughout the city.

A week later, General Eisenhower accepted the unconditional surrender of the Third Reich. On May 8, 1945, the Allies celebrated **V-E Day**—Victory in Europe Day. The war in Europe was finally over.

ROOSEVELT’S DEATH President Roosevelt did not live to see V-E Day. On April 12, 1945, while posing for a portrait in Warm Springs, Georgia, the president had a stroke and died. That night, Vice President **Harry S. Truman** became the nation’s 33rd president.

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

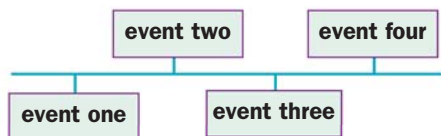
1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower
- Omar Bradley
- Battle of the Bulge
- Harry S. Truman
- D-Day
- George Patton
- V-E Day

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line of the major events influencing the fighting in Europe and North Africa.



Write a paragraph indicating how any two of these events are related.

CRITICAL THINKING

3. EVALUATING DECISIONS

Do you agree with the decision made by Roosevelt and Churchill to require unconditional surrender by the Axis powers? Why or why not?

Think About:

- the advantages of defeating a foe decisively
- the advantages of ending a war quickly
- how other conflicts, such as the Civil War and World War I, ended

4. ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

When President Roosevelt’s body was brought by train to Washington, Betty Conrad was among the servicewomen who escorted his casket.

“The body in the casket was not only our leader but the bodies of all the men and women who had given their lives for freedom. They must not and will not have died in vain.”

What did Roosevelt’s body symbolize to Betty Conrad?