**World War II (1939 – 1945) Essential Knowledge Study Guide**

***Causes of World War II***

• Political instability and economic devastation in Europe

resulting from World War I:

- Worldwide depression

- High war debt owed by Germany

- High inflation

- Massive unemployment

• Rise of Fascism:

- Fascism is political philosophy in which total power is

given to a dictator and individual freedoms are denied and

nationalism and, often, racism are emphasized.

- Fascist dictators included Adolf Hitler (Germany), Benito

Mussolini (Italy), and Hideki Tojo (Japan).

- These dictators led the countries that became known as the

**Axis Powers**.

***The Allies***

• Democratic nations (the United States, Great Britain,Canada)

were known as the Allies. The Soviet Union joined the Allies

after being invaded by Germany.

• Allied leaders included Franklin D. Roosevelt and, later,

Harry S. Truman (United States),Winston Churchill

(Great Britain), and Joseph Stalin (Soviet Union).

***Gradual Change in American policy from Neutrality to Direct Involvement***

• Isolationism (Great Depression, legacy of World War I)

• Economic aid to Allies

• Direct involvement in the war

***War in the Pacific***

• Rising tension developed between the United States

and Japan because of Japanese aggression in East Asia.

• On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States

at Pearl Harbor without warning.

• The United States declared war on Japan.

• Germany declared war on the United States.

***Major Events and Turning Points of WWII*** -***Major Events***

• Germany invaded Poland, setting off war in Europe. (1939)

• The Soviet Union also invaded Poland and the Baltic

nations. (1939)

• Germany invaded France and captured Paris. (1940)

• The United States gave Britain war supplies and old

naval warships in return for military bases in Bermuda

and the Caribbean (Lend Lease). (1941)

• The United States declared war on Japan and Germany.

(1941)

• After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Germany declared

war on the United States. (1941)

***Turning Points***

• Germany bombed London,the Battle of Britain began. (1940)

• Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. (1941)

• The United States was victorious over Japan in the

Battle of Midway. This victory was the turning point of

the war in the Pacific. (1942)

• Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union

defeated Germany at Stalingrad, marking the turning

point of the war in Eastern Europe. (1943)

• American and other Allied troops landed in Normandy,

France, on D-Day to begin the liberation of Western

Europe. (1944)

• The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan

(Hiroshima and Nagasaki) in 1945, forcing Japan to

surrender and ending World War II. (1945)

***The Holocaust***

• Anti-Semitism – hatred of Jews

• Aryan Supremacy – German superiority

• Systematic attempt to rid Europe of all Jews

• Tactics:

- Boycott of Jewish stores

- Threats

- Segregation

- (Final Solution) Imprisonment and killing of Jews and others

in concentration camps and death camps

• Liberation by Allied forces of Jews and others who

survived in concentration camps

***Impact of the War on the Home Front***

•American Involvement in World War II brought an End to

the Great Depression

•Factories and workers were needed to produce goods to win

the war.

• Thousands of American women took jobs in defense plants

during the war (e.g., Rosie the Riveter).

• Americans at home supported the war by conserving and

rationing resources.

• The need for workers temporarily broke down some racial

barriers (e.g., hiring in defense plants), although discrimination against African Americans continued.

• While many Japanese Americans served in the armed forces,

others were treated with distrust and prejudice, and many

were forced into internment camps.