Specific Objective: Identify and locate the Allied and Axis powers on a map; Discuss turning points of the war, theaters of conflict, key strategic decisions, and resulting war conferences and political resolutions, with an emphasis on geographic factors.

Read the summary to answer questions on the next page.

World War II was fought between:
- the Axis powers of Germany, Italy, and Japan
- and
- the Allied powers of Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States, and other nations that came together to fight the Axis powers.

Major Turning Points in World War II
1940–1941 Germany invades Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and much of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In Europe, only Great Britain remains free of German control.

Dec. 7, 1941 Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; the United States enters the war.


Feb. 1943 German forces, weakened by winter Battle of Stalingrad, surrender to the Russians.

June 4, 1944 The Allies claim victory over Italy.

June 6, 1944 On D-Day, the Allies launch a massive land and sea attack at Normandy in northern France; by August, France and neighboring areas are free of Axis control.

Apr. 1945 Germany faces attacks from Allied forces (west) and Soviets (east).

May 7, 1945 Germany surrenders to the Allies.

Aug. 14, 1945 Japan surrenders to the Allies.

A Continent Divided
The end of World War II brought peace to Europe, but the continent was left divided. In 1945, even before the war ended, the Allied leaders met at the Yalta Conference to plan for dividing Germany into two halves—west and east—in order to weaken it. But the rest of Europe was left divided into (generally) democratic western nations and communist eastern nations. The boundary of this divide was called the iron curtain.
The Course of World War II

Directions: Choose the letter of the best answer.

1. What was the immediate cause of U.S. entry into World War II?
   A. Germany invaded Poland.
   B. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor.
   C. Germany invaded the Netherlands.
   D. Great Britain sought to mobilize the Allies against Hitler.

2. In what order were the Axis powers defeated in World War II?
   A. Italy, Germany, Japan
   B. Japan, Germany, Italy
   C. Germany, Italy, Japan
   D. Germany, Japan, Italy

3. What was a decisive factor in the German defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad?
   A. superior Russian technology
   B. United States intervention
   C. Russian attack by land and sea
   D. a prolonged harsh winter

4. In April, 1945, Germany was attacked from the
   A. east and west.
   B. north and south.
   C. east and south.
   D. north and west.

5. Why was Germany divided into two parts following World War II?
   A. the Allies wanted to weaken it
   B. to protect its ethnic minorities
   C. to give the Soviet Union control of some of its natural resources
   D. the Germans could not agree on whether to accept communism

6. The term “iron curtain” refers to the division between
   A. Axis and Allied powers.
   B. democratic and communist nations in Europe.
   C. engaged and neutral nations in World War II.
   D. the Soviet Union and eastern Europe.