

The War in the Pacific

TERMS AND NAMES

- Douglas MacArthur** American commander in the Philippines
- Chester Nimitz** Commander of American naval forces in the Pacific
- Battle of Midway** American victory that was the turning point in the Pacific War
- kamikaze** Japanese suicide flight
- J. Robert Oppenheimer** Scientist who led the Manhattan Project
- Hiroshima** City that was the site of the first atomic-bomb drop in Japan
- Nagasaki** Japanese city that was the site of the second atomic-bomb drop
- Nuremberg Trials** Tribunal that tried Nazi leaders for war crimes

BEFORE YOU READ

In this section, you will see how the Allies defeated Japan in the Pacific.

AS YOU READ

Use the diagram below and list the key military and diplomatic actions of the last years of the war. Tell why they were important.

MILITARY/DIPLOMATIC ACTION	IMPORTANCE
<i>U.S. withdraws from Philippines</i>	<i>Japan begins conquering Pacific islands</i>

The Allies Stem the Japanese Tide

What was so important about the Battle of Midway?

In the first six months after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese military had great success. They conquered huge areas of the Asian mainland and many islands in the Pacific. In 1942, Japanese forces threatened the American army in the Philippines. General **Douglas MacArthur** was the commander of the American army. In March 1942, MacArthur left the Philippines but told people left behind, "I shall return."

The United States started to fight back against the Japanese. In the spring of 1942, Lt. Colonel

James Doolittle led a bombing raid on Tokyo. The U.S. Navy defeated the Japanese at the Battle of Coral Sea. This ended the Japanese threat to invade Australia.

Then, in June 1942, the Japanese steamed toward Midway, an island northwest of Hawaii. American forces broke the Japanese code and knew of their plans. Admiral **Chester Nimitz** commanded American forces that crushed the Japanese. The **Battle of Midway** was a turning point in the Pacific War. After Midway, the Allies began "island hopping," moving closer to Japan.

1. Why was the Battle of Midway important?

The Allies Go on the Offensive

What were the important battles in the Pacific?

American forces, led by General MacArthur, now went island-hopping towards Japan. They avoided islands that were well defended by the Japanese. Airfields were built on captured islands. Planes could then bomb Japanese supply lines.

American marines stormed the island of Guadalcanal in August 1942. This marked Japan's first defeat on land. In October 1944, Americans landed on the island of Leyte in the Philippines. The Japanese launched **kamikaze** raids. In these suicide attacks, Japanese pilots crashed their planes into Allied ships supporting the invasion. Still, Japan lost so many ships in the Battle of Leyte Gulf that the Japanese Navy was essentially knocked out of the war.

The Americans took the island of Iwo Jima in March 1945. This extremely bloody battle gave the United States a base to launch heavy bombers that could reach Japan itself.

A fierce battle raged over the island of Okinawa. The island was Japan's last defensive *outpost*. The Americans finally won on June 22, 1945, but it cost 7,600 American lives. Japan lost 110,000 men. The Allies feared the human cost of invading Japan.

2. Why was the Battle of Leyte Gulf so important?

The Atomic Bomb Ends the War

Why did the United States use the atomic bomb?

As American forces neared Japan in March 1945, President Roosevelt died. Vice-President Harry S. Truman became president.

President Truman was told about the Manhattan Project. This was the secret development of the atomic bomb led by **J. Robert Oppenheimer**. On July 16, 1945, the first atomic bomb was tested. It was even more powerful than predicted. Many sci-

entists felt it would be immoral to drop the bomb on Japan. Others said it would shorten the war and save lives. It would also give the United States an advantage over the Soviets after the war. Truman decided to use the bomb.

On August 6, 1945, an atomic bomb was dropped on **Hiroshima**, Japan. Almost every building collapsed into dust. But Japan did not surrender. A second bomb was dropped on **Nagasaki**, killing 200,000. Emperor Hirohito was horrified. Japan surrendered September 2, 1945. The war was over.

3. Why did Truman decide to use the atomic bomb?

Rebuilding Begins

How did the Allies try to shape the postwar world?

In February 1945, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at the Yalta Conference. Stalin and Churchill disagreed on how to treat Germany. Roosevelt made concessions to Stalin. He wanted Stalin to help in the fight to defeat Japan. And he wanted Stalin to support the United Nations. At Yalta, the allies agreed to divide Germany into four zones. Stalin agreed to allow free elections in Poland and other Eastern European countries now occupied by the Soviet Army.

The **Nuremberg Trials**, trials held by an international *tribunal*, was held to try Nazi leaders. For the first time, a nation's leaders were held legally responsible for their wartime acts. They were tried for starting the war; for acts against the customs of war, such as killing prisoners; and for the murder and enslavement of civilians.

American forces, headed by General MacArthur, occupied Japan for six years. First, Japanese officials were put on trial for war crimes. Then, the Americans helped Japan set up a free-market economic system and create a new democratic constitution.

4. How did the Yalta Conference shape the postwar world?
