World War II Reading Activity/Questions

The Dictators

World War II lasted longer than World War I. World War II lasted six years. This war was fought from 1939 to 1945. After World War I during the 1920s and the 1930s, many countries became dictatorships. A dictatorship is a government ruled by a man who has all power. There were three important and strong dictators. Russia came under the rule of Stalin. In 1922. Mussolini became dictator of Italy. And in 1933. Hitler ruled Germany as a dictator. All three men had ideas on how to run a country.

Stalin's idea was Communism. Under Communism, the Communist Party runs most things. Stalin was leader of the Communist Party, so Stalin ruled Russia [technically, the Soviet Union]. Stalin wanted Communism to go into other countries.

Mussolini believed in Fascism. Under Fascism, the nation is all-important. Mussolini thought that people should do whatever the nation wanted people to do. Since Mussolini was the leader of Italy, all people in Italy had to do what Mussolini wanted. Mussolini also believed that his nation should fight to get more land.

Hitler's ideas were called Nazism. In Nazism, race is all-important, Hitler said that the Germans were the best people in the world. Because the Germans were the best. Hitler thought that the Germans should rule other people.

You can see that the ideas of Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin could mean that wars would be fought.
1. When was World War II fought? ______________

2. What is a dictatorship? ______________

3. Who was dictator of Russia? ______________

4. Who was dictator of Italy? ______________

5. Who was dictator of Germany? ______________

6. What were Stalin's ideas called? ______________

7. What did Stalin want to happen? ______________

8. What were Mussolini’s beliefs called? ______________

9. What is all-important under Fascism? ______________

10. Why did Mussolini think his nation should fight? ______________

11. What were Hitler’s beliefs called? ______________

12. What is all-important in Nazism? ______________

13. Who did Hitler say were the best people? ______________

Matching

14. Mussolini
15. Stalin
16. dictator
17. Hitler

a. believed race was all-important
b. man who rules a country with all power
c. believed in Communism
d. believed that the state (nation) was all-important
Background to World War II:

We have read how the dictators Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler wanted war. We shall read about the background to World War II. We shall read now how things led up to the fighting of World War II.

During the 1930s there were many things that almost started a war, but didn’t.

In 1936, Hitler broke the Treaty of Versailles. (Remember that the Treaty of Versailles ended World War I.) How did Hitler break the treaty of Versailles? Hitler sent German soldiers into an area of Germany called the Rhineland. The Treaty of Versailles said Germany could not have soldiers there. But Hitler sent soldiers there anyway. Hitler also began to prepare Germany for war. This, too, Germany was not supposed to do.

Next, in 1938, Hitler took over the country of Austria. The Treaty of Versailles said Germany could never have Austria. But Hitler took it anyway. And nobody did anything to stop Hitler from taking over and keeping Austria.

You can see that in three different ways Hitler had broken the Treaty of Versailles. And nothing was done to punish Hitler or Germany.

18. Into what area of Germany did Hitler send troops?
__________________________________________________________________

19. What country did Hitler take over? __________

20. In what three ways did Hitler break the Treaty of Versailles?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
In the meantime, Mussolini had made war on the African country of Ethiopia. The ruler of Ethiopia asked the League of Nations (the League of Nations was like the United Nations of today) to help his country. But the League of Nations did not do anything to help Ethiopia.

Both Mussolini and Hitler came to think that they could do whatever they wanted. They believed that the other nations would not stop them from doing what they wanted to do.

In 1938. Hitler got more land. Hitler now got land from the country of Czechoslovakia. Hitler said that if Czechoslovakia did not give him land there would be a war. The people of Czechoslovakia said they would fight Germany. But Britain and France did not want a war between Germany and Czechoslovakia. So the Prime Minister of Britain, a man named Chamberlain, asked to meet with Hitler. Chamberlain and Hitler then called for a meeting in the German city of Munich.

At Munich the countries of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy made Czechoslovakia give Hitler what he wanted. Hitler had again gotten what he wanted. The agreement at Munich is called "appeasement." ("Appeasement" means to give a bully something because he says he will hurt you.) Britain and France came to be very ashamed of the agreement at Munich.

21. What nation did Mussolini declare war on? ________________________________
22. Who wouldn't help Ethiopia? __________________
23. What country did Hitler get land from in 1938? _____________________________
24. Who was the Prime Minister of Britain? _________________________________
25. In what city did Britain, France, Italy, and Germany meet? ________________
26. Why do you think Britain and France came to be ashamed of the agreement at Munich?

Spain almost caused a war too. From 1936 to 1939, Spain had a civil war. The elected government of Spain was fighting against the Spanish army. The Spanish army was led by a man named Franco. [Note from Mr. Swiger: Franco’s Nationalists were an alliance of militant nationalists, monarchists and other traditionalist conservatives, and fascists. U.S. businesses also supported the Nationalists because the Spanish Republicans or “elected government” were supported by socialists and communists, including outside aid from the Soviet Union. Both sides committed bloody purges of the opposition in territory that they conquered.] Both Mussolini and Hitler sent men to fight for Franco against the Spanish government. The Spanish government asked Britain, France and the League of Nations for help. But Britain, France, and the League of Nations did nothing to help the Spanish government. Because of this. Franco won the Spanish Civil War. And, again, Hitler and Mussolini thought that Britain, France, and the League of Nations would not fight against Germany and Italy.

On the other side of the world, Japan, too, was taking land. In 1932, Japan took the area of Manchuria from China. China asked the League of Nations for help, but nothing was done to help China. Five years later, by 1937, Japan was fighting in China for more land.

By 1939, the countries of Germany, Italy, and Japan had gotten away with almost everything they tried to do. Hitler got the Rhineland, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. Mussolini got Ethiopia. Franco, the friend of Mussolini and Hitler, had won the Spanish Civil War. And Japan had taken lands from China. Don’t you think these countries thought they could get even more lands?
27. How long did the Spanish Civil War last? __________

28. What were the two sides in the Spanish Civil?

____________________________________________________________________________________

29. Whom did Hitler and Mussolini help in the Spanish Civil War?

____________________________________________________________________________________

30. Who won the Spanish Civil War? _______________

31. What area did Japan take from China? ________________________________________________

32. Why did Germany, Italy, and Japan think that they could get even more land?

____________________________________________________________________________________

MATCHING

........ 33. Munich
........ 34. Franco
........ 35. Manchuria
........ 36. Rhineland
........ 37. Ethiopia
........ 38. Chamberlain
........ 39. appeasement
........ 40. League of Nations

a. Japan took this from China
b. Prime Minister of Britain
c. like the United Nations of today
d. he won the Spanish Civil War
e. to give in because of fear
f. Hitler sent troops into here
g. agreement here gave Hitler land
h. Mussolini took this country over
WORLD WAR II STARTS

World War II started over the country of Poland. In 1939, Hitler said he wanted land from Poland. Hitler said Poland must give him land or there would be a war.

Hitler did not think that Britain or France would try to Stop him from taking land from Poland. But Britain and France said they would fight Hitler if he took land from Poland. Hitler did not believe them.

Besides Hitler now had a new friend. Hitler's new friend was the dictator Stalin. Hitler and Stalin said that they were friends and would help each other.

In September 1939 Hitler made war on Poland. Hitler sent his army into the western part of Poland. And, at the same time. Stalin sent his army into the eastern part of Poland. Poland was overrun by German and Russian soldiers. There was no longer a Poland.

But Britain and France kept their promises. Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had started.

41. World War II started over what country? __________________

42. Why didn't Hitler believe Britain and France would fight him? __________________

43. Who was Hitler's new friend? __________________

44. What two countries went into Poland? ________________________________

45. Why did Britain and France declare war on Hitler? ________________________________

After Poland was beaten, from October 1939 to the Spring of 1940, there was very little fighting. There was so little fighting that this time of the war is called the "phony war."
In the Spring of 1940, the "phony war" ended. For the Germans then struck at five neighbors. The Germans quickly took over the countries of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

Hitler then turned on France. By the middle of June 1940, Hitler had beaten France. The government of France was out of World War II.

How was it that Hitler could beat so many countries so fast? Hitler used a new way of fighting. Hitler’s new way of fighting was called "Blitzkrieg." "Blitzkrieg" is a German word that means "lightning war." Hitler used planes to bomb and then tanks to overrun a country. The tanks were followed by soldiers in trucks. This meant that the German army could move very, very fast. Hitler's enemies were surprised by the "Blitzkrieg." So Hitler's new way of fighting gave him many victories.

46. When was the "phony war"?

______________________________________________

47. What six neighboring countries did Hitler take over?

______________________________________________

48. What was Hitler’s new way of fighting called?

______________________________________________

49. How did the “blitzkrieg” work?

______________________________________________

Hitler and his friend Mussolini now ruled almost all of Europe. But Hitler did not rule Russia or Britain. Russia was Germany’s friend. So Britain was the only country still at war with Hitler.
Hitler wanted Britain to give the war up. But Britain would not give up. Britain now had a new ruler. Chamberlain was no longer Prime Minister. The new Prime Minister was Churchill. And Churchill said Britain would never give up the war against Hitler.

Hitler then sent his air force to bomb Britain. Almost every night the German air force, called the Luftwaffe, bombed Britain. Still Britain stayed in the fight.

Hitler got tired of fighting Britain. In June, 1941, Hitler sent his army into Russia. Hitler had turned on his friend Stalin.

The United States came into the war in 1941. For on December 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Japan and the U.S. were now at war. Hitler and Mussolini then declared war on the U.S., too. World War II was now really a war being fought all over the world.

50. By late 1940, what country was at war with Hitler? _______________

51. Who became Britain’s new Prime Minister? _________________________

52. What did Germany do to try to get Britain to give up?
________________________

53. What was the German air force called? ___________________________

54. What friend did Hitler turn on? ____________________

55. Why did the U.S. come into World War II?
____________________________________________

56. What did Japan bomb? __________________________
Matching
........57. Churchill
........58. Poland
........59. Holland
........60. Blitzkrieg
........61. Pearl Harbor
........62. Luftwaffe

g. lightning war
h. new Prime Minister of Britain
i. World War II started because of this country
j. Japan bombed this
k. German air force
l. neighboring country Hitler took over

WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE

By 1942 Hitler ruled almost all of Europe. Only Britain and Russia were still in the war. And Hitler's army was deep inside of Russia.

The German and Italian armies were also in North Africa. But the British and American armies were there too.

By 1943 things began to turn against Hitler. American and British planes were bombing German cities. The Russians had stopped the Germans at the Battle of Stalingrad. In North Africa, the German and Italian armies had lost to the British and Americans. The British and Americans had even sent their armies into Italy. Mussolini was taken from power, and Italy was out of the war.

63. By 1942 what two European countries were at war with Hitler?
________________________________________

64. Where were the British and Americans fighting the German and Italian armies?
_______________________
Germany had other problems. In the countries that Hitler took over there were problems. The people Hitler had beaten still fought the best way they could. Often common people would blow up trains, factories, and other things. They did this to hurt the German army. These acts were called "resistance." There was resistance in almost every country Hitler took over.

Some resistance leaders became very well known. Charles de Gaulle led the French resistance. Tito led the resistance in the country of Yugoslavia.

So you can see that things were not going too well for Hitler by the end of 1943.

In 1944 things got worse for Hitler. The British and American armies went into France. This was the famous D-Day invasion of an area of France called Normandy. On June 6, 1944 the British and American armies under General Eisenhower started to win France back from Hitler.

By 1945 the British, Americans, and French were inside the western part of Germany. The Russian army was coming into eastern Germany. Finally, in April of 1945, all was lost for Germany. Hitler killed himself. On May 9, 1945 World War II was over in Europe.

67. What is meant by "resistance"?
___________________________________________

68. Who led the French resistance? ____________

69. Who led the Yugoslav resistance? __________

70. What was D-Day? _________________________

71. What general began to win France back? ________________
72. Why do you think Hitler killed himself?
___________________________________________

Matching
........ 73. Tito
........74. Stalingrad
........75. North Africa
........76. De Gaulle
........ 77. Normandy

a. battle that stopped Hitler in Russia
b. French resistance leader
c. Yugoslav resistance leader
d. D-Day took place here
e. British and Americans fought Germans and Italians here

THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN

Soon after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, the Japanese took over other places. Japan took the Philippine Islands from the U.S. Japan took Indonesia from the Dutch. Singapore and Malaya were taken from the British. And Japan took Indo-China from France. Remember, too, that Japan already had a lot of land in China.

Japan then controlled much of the lands on the Pacific Ocean. Japan ruled from north of Australia almost to Alaska. Japan was very strong.

But Japan began to have problems. There was resistance against Japan. In China two men led the resistance. The two Chinese resistance leaders were Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung. Both Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung have ruled China. In Indo-China a man named Ho Chi-minh was a resistance leader. There was also resistance in the Philippine Islands.

78. What did Japan take from the U.S.A.?
____________________________________________

79. What did Japan take from the Dutch?
____________________________________________
80. What did Japan take from the British?

81. What did France lose to the Japanese?

82. What men led the Chinese resistance?

83. Who led the resistance in Indo-China?

Japan began to lose in 1942. A large part of Japan's navy was lost in the Battle of the Coral Sea. In that year, Japan was bombed for the first time. An American named Doolittle led an air attack on Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

Slowly, the American troops under General MacArthur began to take places back from Japan. The Japanese fought hard, but the Americans kept winning.

Finally, by 1945, Japan had lost almost everything. But Japan still had her own country and lands in China.

When the war ended in Europe things changed. Russia went into the war against Japan. And the U.S. had a new weapon. This new weapon was the atomic bomb. An atomic bomb was first dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, then on the city of Nagasaki.

Japan now knew the war was lost. On August 10, 1945, Japan asked for an end to the war. After six years of fighting and the death of around 40 million people, World War II was over.

84. What naval battle hurt Japan’s navy?______________________________
85. Who led an air attack on Japan?______________________________
86. What is the name of Japan's capital?______________________________
87. Who led the American troops against Japan?______________________________
88. What two things made the Japanese want the war to end?

_________________________________________________________________
89. What was the first Japanese city to be bombed with an atomic bomb?

______________________________
90. How many people were killed in World War Two?
________________________

Matching
_____ 91. Tokyo
_____ 92. Mao Tse-tung
_____ 93. Doolittle
_____ 94. Indonesia
_____ 95. Coral Sea
_____ 96. MacArthur
_____ 97. Hiroshima
_____ 98. Ho Chi-minh
_____ 99. Nagasaki
_____100. Philippine Islands

a. Chinese resistance leader
b. first city to be atomic bombed
c. Japan's capital
d. led an air attack on Japan
e. led American troops
f. land taken from U.S.A. by Japan
g. resistance leader in Indo-China
h. naval battle took place here
i. Japan took this from the Dutch
j. second city to be atomic bombed

THE PROBLEM OF PEACE

After World War II was over, the world tried to find a way to peace. After World War I the Big Four nations made peace. After World War II, the "Big Three" made peace. The Big Three nations were Britain, Russia, and the United States.

The Big Three agreed that Germany should lose some land. It was also agreed that British, American, French, and Russian soldiers should stay in Germany for a while. The Big Three also called for a trial of the leaders of Nazi Germany. A trial for war criminals was held in the German city of Nuremberg.
The Big Three agreed to build a new and better League of Nations. This new League of Nations came to be called the United Nations which was to meet in New York City. This time the United States belonged to the United Nations.

101. What were the Big Three nations? ________________________

102. What armies stayed in Germany? ______________________________

103. Where was a trial for war criminals held? ______________________

104. Where does the United Nations meet? _________________________

Japan lost all of its lands except for the four big Japanese islands. There was a trial for war crimes in Japan too. But the Japanese emperor, a man called Hirohito, was allowed to stay on as emperor. American troops stayed in Japan for a while.

Soon problems came about between the Big Three nations. The U.S.A. and Britain began to worry about Russia. Wherever the Russian army had gone it had set up Communist governments. Before World War II Russia was the only Communist country in Europe. But after World War II there were eight Communist governments. These new Communist countries were Albania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Rumania, and Hungary.

Britain and the United States were afraid that Communism would go into even more countries with Russian help. The fears of the U.S.A. and Britain seemed to be right. For Communist governments were set up in the Asian countries of China, North Korea, and a part of Indo-China called North Viet Nam.

So, no sooner was World War II over than there began a new time in world history. This new time since World War II is called the "Cold War."

"Cold War" means that there has been no big war between the big countries. In other words, there has been no real or "hot" fighting between the
big nations. But there has been a "cold" war which might turn into a "hot" war between the United States and Russia.

105. What did Japan lose after World War II?
____________________________________________

106. Who was the emperor of Japan? __________

107. Why did Britain and the U.S.A. worry about Russia?
____________________________________________

108. What 11 countries became Communist after the war?
_______________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Matching
........ 109. Hirohito
........ 110. Big Three
........ 111. New York City
........ 112. Cold War
........ 113. United Nations
........ 114. North Viet Nam

a. they agreed to the peace after the war
b. where the United Nations meet
c. took the place of the League of Nations
d. emperor of Japan
e. the Communist part of Indo-China
f. time since World War II