



my homeschool

Year Ten

A Window into World War II:  
Modern History In-Depth Study

By Jo Lloyd

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## Lesson 1 – A Second War Begins

World War II is generally considered to have begun on 1 September 1939 with Adolf Hitler as the Führer (leader) of Germany invading Poland and ended when Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945. However, of course, events long before September 1939 were establishing the conflict that was to occur and endure, just as well after September 1945 the effects and aftermath of the war was felt. You have previously examined the major events and dates of World War II and may have many of these recorded in your Book of Centuries, however, it is useful to review these before embarking on this in-depth study, so one of Don Watson's chapters focusing on World War II from *The Story of Australia* are included here for you to read for an overall review:

*Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union were governed by brutal dictators in the 1930s.*

*The first three countries wanted empires. The Soviet Union (or USSR) was an empire. Italy under Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia and Albania. Japan invaded China and Manchuria. In both cases hundreds of thousands of people died. Hitler would soon invade Poland, France and other European countries. Then Russia as well. Millions would die.*

*The democratic countries had done little to stop them. But when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939 Britain declared war.*

*At first Australia sent soldiers to fight with the British in the Middle East. They fought in famous battles at Tobruk and El Alamein. Others went to Greece and Crete.*

*In the first week of December 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, an American military base in Hawaii. The Japanese forces then began a rapid advance south through the colonies of South-East Asia.*

*Suddenly the war was coming closer to Australia. Though Britain was sure that Singapore would not fall, the Japanese took just a few days to capture it.*

*Fifteen thousand Australian soldiers, together with troops from Britain and her colonies, were captured and sent to prison camps in Singapore, Sandakan in North Borneo, Burma and Thailand. They were treated savagely. More than one in three died.*

*On 19 February 1942, 200 Japanese planes swept in over the sea to bomb Darwin. The town's defences were hopelessly inadequate. Eight ships in the*

*harbour were sunk. Nearly 600 people were killed or wounded. Half of Darwin's population fled.*

*In the coming months, towns from Broome to Townsville were bombed.*

*Australia became the base for the United States' campaign to drive the Japanese back. Their commander was General Douglas MacArthur.*

*The Japanese reached New Guinea in March 1942 and pushed across the mountains towards Port Moresby. On the Kokoda trail Australia and American soldiers struggled up the hills through dark and tangle jungle, and slowly drove them back. Enemy snipers waited in the trees. Illness, especially malaria, was another enemy.*

*In May 1942 the American navy defeated the Japanese fleet in the Battle of the Coral Sea. They had another victory at Midway. Two months later Australian troops and airmen won a battle at Milne Bay in New Guinea – the first defeat the Japanese had suffered on land.*

*But it took another three years of horrific fighting to defeat the Japanese, who everywhere fought to the death.*

*The Americans firebombed Tokyo, killing 100,000 people on a single night.*

*Then on a fine, clear day in the Japanese city of Hiroshima, there was a brilliant flash. A huge pillar of smoke in the shape of a mushroom rolled into the sky. The Americans had dropped the first atomic bomb. Hiroshima was flattened and 90,000 civilians died. Three days later another atomic bomb destroyed Nagasaki.*

*The Japanese surrendered and the war was over.*

*Nearly 40,000 Australian died in World War II. Worldwide, the dead numbered sixty to eighty million.*

There are also resources included in the Complementary Links which provide an overview of the whole war for you to use. Please read and watch these and include the pertinent points in your History Notebook entry too.

### Notebook Entry

Please prepare an entry in your History Notebook to reflect what you have learned this lesson. You may also wish to ensure that your Book of Centuries includes the key dates included in this lesson.