

AN ABC OF WORLD WAR II

AN OVERVIEW

By Tom Dykes



"Somewhere in England." Squadron Leader George Stewart (Hamilton, Ontario).
RAF Pathfinder, 1943

AN ABC OF WORLD WAR II

By Tom Dykes © 2015

A for the ATLANTIC,

for U-Boats, a killing zone.

B is for BRITAIN,

with Churchill, stood alone.

C is for CANADA,

“Once more unto the breach.”

D for D-DAY,

Canadians storm ashore at Juno Beach.

E for EL ALAMEIN,

“Monty” and Rommel clash in the sand.

F is for FRANCE,

an occupied and divided land.

G is for GERMANY

Third Reich established by the Nazis.

H for the HOLOCAUST,

‘Final Solution’ sought at Wannsee.

I is for ITALY,

Mussolini’s Fascists in control here.

J for JAPAN,

Imposing its Co-prosperity Sphere.

K is for KURSK

Greatest tank battle of the war.

L for the LEADERS

Roosevelt, Churchill, King to the fore.

M is for MIDWAY,

US Carriers engage those of Japan.

N is for NUCLEAR,

Manhattan Project: Little Boy, Fat Man.

O for the OCEANS

Fleets carry battle to sea.

P for PEARL HARBOR

Japan’s “Day of Infamy.”

Q is for QUISLING,

name given to traitors inside.

R is for RUSSIA,

in the tens of millions they died.

S is for STALINGRAD,

Russia turns the tide on the Germans.

T for the TANKS

Tigers, T-34s, and the Shermans.

U for UNITED STATES,

‘Arsenal of Democracy’ comes through.

V is for VENGEANCE,

Hitler’s secret weapons, V1 and V2.

W is for WEHRMACHT,

to battle on too many fronts it will go.

X for CAMP X,

secret warriors train in Ontario.

Y is for YALTA,

discussions about the post-war world.

Z for the ZERO

Japan’s Mitsubishi fighter unfurled.

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FOCUS POINTS

A for the **A**TLANTIC,
for U-Boats, a killing zone.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

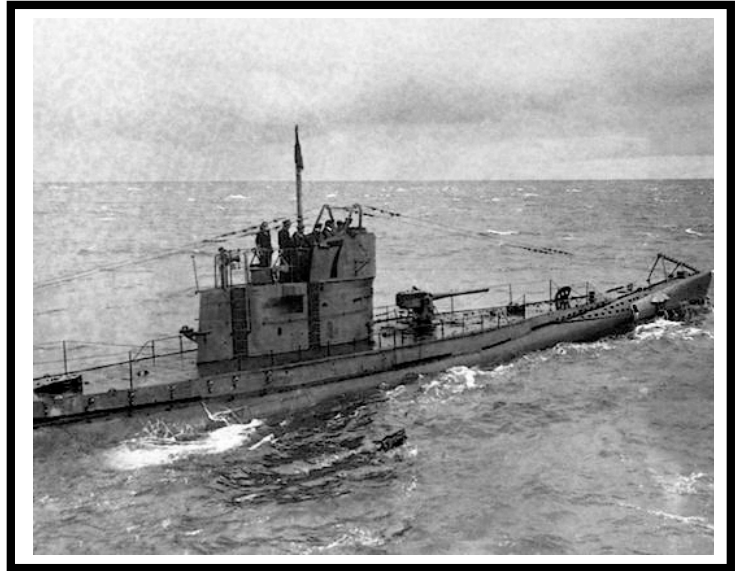
Who was the commander of the German U-Boat Fleet?

What was the aim of the U-Boat force?

Where did the U-Boats operate?

When did they make their first “kill”?

Why were they so critical to both British and German commands?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Profile a U-Boat captain and crew.
- Research and report on the significance of the U-Boat facilities in occupied France (Brittany).
- Prepare a map to locate the sites where U-Boats attacked shipping in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Provide a chart to illustrate vessel, cargo, and, where possible, date of attack.
- Profile a Canadian Corvette (U-Boat hunter).
- Research the technological development of the U-Boat from the start to the end of the war. Identify the most important developments.
- Research the casualty cost of the U-Boat war in terms of allied seamen and U-Boat crew.
- Research the Anti-Sub warfare role of Western Approaches, Liverpool, UK.

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FOCUS POINTS

B is for **BRITAIN**,
with Churchill, stood alone.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Who was Winston Churchill?

What was his role?

Where was Britain vulnerable?

What had happened to make Britain so vulnerable?

When did Britain ‘stand alone’?

Why was he so important to Britain in the early days of the war?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on Churchill’s “Fight them on the beaches...” speech to the British people.
- Research and report on the BEF evacuation from Dunkirk.
- Research and report on the impact of the U-Boats on Britain’s strategic supplies.
- Research and report on Canada’s importance at this critical stage of the war.
- Research and report on the civilian reaction to Churchill’s leadership.
- Research and report on the principal British political figures who were actively considering an armistice with Germany after Dunkirk.

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FOCUS POINTS

C is for **CANADA**,

“Once more unto the breach.”

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Who was Canada’s Prime Minister at the time of Germany’s invasion of Poland?

What was the public reaction to the outbreak of war in Europe?

Where was the decision to declare war on Germany made?

When did Canada declare war on Germany?

Why was the decision made?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on Canada’s Declaration of War.
- Research and report on Canada’s enormous commitment to the Allied War effort in all areas. Consider the economics and population of that time.
- Research and report on the Québec reaction to the Declaration of War.
- Research and report on the impact of the War on the development of Canada’s Navy.
- Research and report on the impact of War on Canada’s Japanese population in BC.
- Research and report on one of the following battles: Dieppe, Juno Beach, Ortona, and The Scheldt.
- Research and report on a Canadian Regiment such as the RHLI, the Princess Pats, Royal Winnipeg Rifles, The Vandoos.

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FOCUS POINTS

D for **D-DAY,**

Canadians storm ashore at Juno Beach.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

When was D-Day?

Who led the Canadians at Juno Beach?

Who were the regiments in the first wave?

What was the first day assignment?

Where did land they land?

When did they secure the beachhead?

Why was the Canadian role so important?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the Canadian landings on Juno Beach.
- Research and report on the commander of the Canadian forces at Juno.
- Research and report on the contributions made by the RCN to the D-Day Landings.
- Research and report on the Canadian participation in the Air coverage of the D-Day Landings.
- Research and report the Black Watch of Canada battle for Verrières Ridge, July 25th, 1944, after Dieppe, Canada's most deadly battle.
- Profile Lt. General Guy Simonds, Canada's youngest general, and his role in the decision to press on with the attack after being informed of the massive German panzer and infantry opposition.
- Research and report on the murder of Canadian prisoners by the Hitler Youth 12th Panzer SS.

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FOCUS POINTS

E for **EL ALAMEIN**,

‘Monty’ and Rommel clash in the sand.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Who was the Commander of the British force?

Who was the commander of the German Africa Korps?

Where did the two armies fight?

When did the El Alamein campaign begin?

Why was the battle such a crucial one for both the German and British?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the importance of the Battle at El Alamein to the British and German commands.
- Research and report on the composition of The German Afrika Korps and the British ‘Desert Rats’ 8th Army.
- Profile General Bernard Montgomery.
- Profile Field Marshall Erwin Rommel.
- Research and report on the Armour of both sides.
- Research and report on how the geography of the region dictated the battle.
- Research and report on the significance of supply lines to both sides.

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FOCUS POINTS

F is for **FRANCE**,
an occupied and divided land.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Who commanded the French armed forces?

When did the French surrender?

Where did the formal surrender take place?

Why was the location chosen by the Germans?

What arrangement was made with Germany?

Who led the occupied French nation?

Who refused to surrender and fought on as The Free French?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the failure of the Maginot Line.
- Research and report on the lack of communication between the British and French commands.
- Research and report on Marshal Petain and the Vichy Government.
- Research and report on general De Gaulle.
- Research and report on the French Resistance – the Maquis.
- Research and report on France's Vichy government.
- Research and report on the nature of the German occupation of Paris.

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FOCUS POINTS

G is for **GERMANY**,

Third Reich established by the Nazis.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

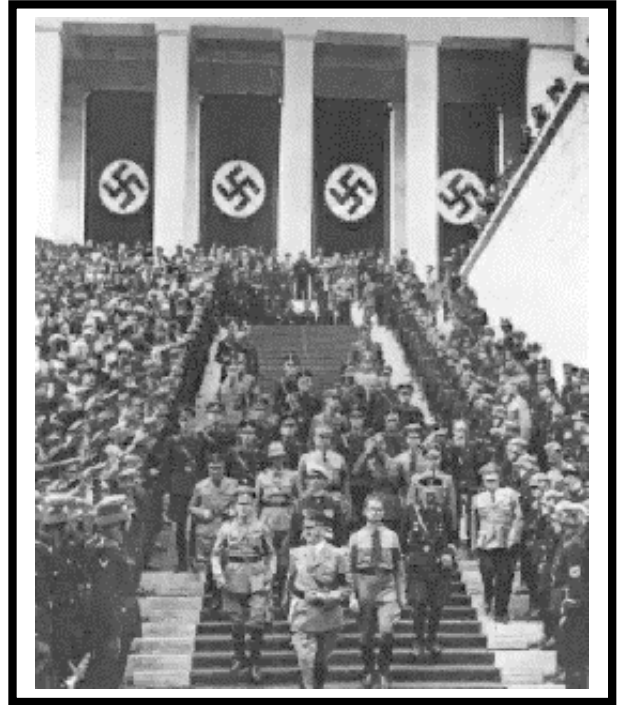
Who was the commander of the German Third Reich?

What was the official name of the Nazi party?

Where did the Nazi party establish a power base?

When did the Nazi achieve national power?

Why were they able to gain absolute power?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and prepare a time line on the rise of the Nazi party.
- Profile Adolph Hitler.
- Research and report on the role of German Industrialists in support of the Nazi party.
- Research and report on the impact of the Nazi on the Jewish population.
- Research and report on the role of the Nazi in Spain's Civil War.
- Research and report on the German Annexation of other German speaking parts of Europe.
- Research and report on the establishment of the Axis.
- Research and report on the German-Soviet Pact of 1939.

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FOCUS POINTS

H for the **H**OLOCAUST,
'Final Solution' sought at Wannsee.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

What was the 'Final Solution'?

Who were the targets of this policy?

Who was the Nazi leader in charge of implementing the 'Final Solution'?

What institutions were established to do the enable the 'Final Solution' to operate?

Where did they operate?

When were they first established?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on Kristallnacht.
- Research and report on one of the concentration camps: Auschwitz, Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau.
- Research and report on the impact the camps had on liberating allied soldiers.
- Research and report on the role of Himmler and the SS in the 'Final Solution.'
- Research and report on the reasons for Canada and the US to refuse German Jews seeking asylum.
- Research and report on the Wannsee Meeting.

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FOCUS POINTS

I for the **ITALY**,

Mussolini's fascists in control here.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was Mussolini?

What was the name of his political party?

Where did the party originate?

When did the party take control of Italy?

Why did Mussolini join with Nazis Germany?

What was Mussolini's title?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the evolution of the Italian Fascist Party.
- Profile Benito Mussolini, Il Duce.
- Research and report on the Italian campaign in North Africa.
- Research and report on the Canadian forces in the Italian campaign.
- Research and report on the Canadian/German Battle of Ortona.
- Research and report on the surrender of Italy to the Allies.
- Research and report on the German response to the Italian surrender.

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FOCUS POINTS

J for **JAPAN**,

imposing its Co-prosperity sphere.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

What was the aim of the Japanese co-prosperity sphere?

Why did the Japanese feel they needed to impose this policy?

When did they take their first action?

Who was in charge of the Japanese government?

Where was the 'policy' implemented?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the Canadian surrender to Japanese forces in Hong Kong.
- Research and report on the development of the Alaska Highway.
- Research and Time Line the Japanese invasions and expansion from 1937 to 1945.
- Research and report on the economic factors that influenced the Japanese aggression.
- Profile Hideki Tojo.
- Profile Emperor Hirohito.
- Research and report on the Japanese aggression in China and why it is still a major issue in China.

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FOCUS POINTS

K is for **KURSK**,
greatest tank battle of the war.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was the commander of the German Tank force?

Who was the commander of the Russian Tank force?

Where did battle take place?

When did it take place?

Why was it such an important battle?

What was the German code name for the battle?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the Battle of Kursk.
- Profile German Von Manstein.
- Profile Russian Marshal Zhukov.
- Compare the Tanks Mark III and IV vs T-34.
- Prepare a statistical profile of the Battle.
- Research and report on the significance of the battle to the Russians and to the Germans.

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FOCUS POINTS

L for the **LEADERS**,

Roosevelt, Churchill, and King to the fore.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who were the leaders of the Western Allies?

What was their overall aim?

When did they meet to discuss war strategy?

Why was their unity so important?

Where did they meet?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Profile Canada's Mackenzie King.
- Profile Britain's Winston Churchill.
- Profile America's Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Profile Britain's Clement Attlee.
- Profile America's Harry S. Truman.
- Research and report on the Atlantic Charter 1941.

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FOCUS POINTS

M is for **MIDWAY**,

US carriers engage those of Japan.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was the commander of the US carrier fleet at Midway?

Who commanded the Japanese fleet?

What was the aim of the Japanese force?

Where did battle occur?

When did battle occur?

Why was Midway so important to the Americans?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the false code used by the Americans to determine the target of the Japanese.
- Research and report on the strengths of both naval forces.
- Profile US Admiral Nimitz.
- Profile Japanese Admiral Yamamoto.
- Research and report on the significance of the Battle of Midway.
- Research and report on the timing and tactic changes of the Japanese carriers.
- Research and report on the US torpedo bombers used at Midway.

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FOCUS POINTS

N is for **NUCLEAR**,

Manhattan Project, Little Boy, Fat Man.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who headed the American A-bomb program?

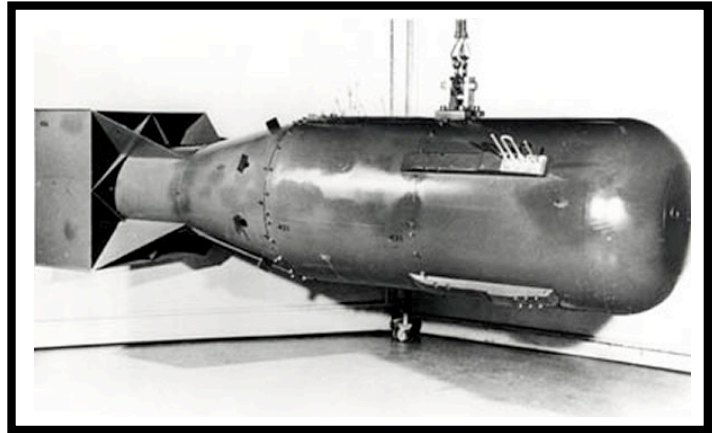
What was the code name of the program?

What was the difference between Little Boy and Fat Man?

Where was the program undertaken?

When was the A-bomb successfully tested?

Why was the development considered top secret?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the Manhattan Project.
- Profile Robert Oppenheimer or General Leslie Groves.
- Research and report on Los Alamos, New Mexico.
- Research and report on Brig. Gen. Paul Tibbets USAAF and Enola Gay.
- Research and report on Maj. Charles Sweeney, USAAF.
- Research the two bombs: Fat Man and Little Boy.

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FOCUS POINTS

O for the **O**CEANS,

Fleets carry battle to sea.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who were the commanders of the Canadian Fleets?

What oceans were of strategic importance to Canada?

Where did the Canadian fleets operate?

When did they make their first “kill”?

Why was the Canadian Navy so important to the war effort?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the growth of the RCN from 1939 -1945.
- Research and report on the special role of the RCN in the Atlantic.
- Research and report on the role of the Carrier in the Pacific.
- Research and report on the role of the Battleship.
- Research and report on the relative strengths of the US vs Japanese Navies or the British and Canadian vs German Navies.
- On a world map locate the sites of major naval engagements in the Pacific and Atlantic theatres of operation.
- Research and profile one major naval commander.

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FOCUS POINTS

P for **PEARL HARBOR**,
Japan's "Day of Infamy."

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Where is Pearl Harbor?

What was the importance of Pearl Harbor?

Who led the Japanese attack?

When did they make their attack?

Why were they so successful?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the military status of Pearl Harbor on Sunday, December 7th, 1941.
- Report on the status of the Japanese fleet on December 7, 1941.
- Profile Japanese Admiral Nagumo.
- Profile American Admiral Kimmel.
- Research and prepare a statistical report on the Pearl Harbor attack.
- Research and report on the communications 'breakdown' at Pearl Harbor.
- Research and report on the role of the Japanese consulate and indigenous Japanese population of Hawaii in the preparation of the attack.
- Research and report on the results of the attack on Pearl Harbor. What aspect of the attack was regretted by the Japanese and assisted the US quick recovery?

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FOCUS POINTS

Q is for **QUISLING**,
name given to traitors inside.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was Vidkun Quisling?

Where did he live?

What did he do when the Germans invaded?

When did he take up his role?

Why did he support the Germans?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the German invasion of Norway and the role that Vidkun Quisling played in their success.
- The term 'Quisling' has become a synonym for traitor. Research and report on the other 'Quislings' in German occupied countries: France, Belgium, and Holland.
- Research and report on the Fascist parties in other European countries such as Belgium, Holland, France, and Finland. Who were their leaders and what was their role once the Germans conquered their country?
- Research and report on the British Fascists under Sir Oswald Moseley. What support did he receive from the British aristocrats?
- Research and report: The British Prince of Wales was an admirer of Hitler. Did Churchill consider him a potential 'Quisling'?

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FOCUS POINTS

R is for **RUSSIA**,
in the tens of millions they died.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

When did the Germans invade Russia?

What was the name given by the
Germans
to the invasion?

Who was the supreme commander of
The Russian forces?

What were the casualty figures for the
Russian military and civilians?

Why were the figures so great on the
Eastern Front?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the German-Soviet non-aggression pact of 1939. Why did Stalin ignore warnings of the invasion plans?
- Research and report on the aim and objective of Operation Barbarossa. Consider Hitler's call for *Lebensraum*.
- Research and report on the initial successes of the Germans in the first phase from June to December 1941.
- Research and report on how Hitler's definition of the Slavic races as *untermensch* determined the way the Russian population was treated.
- Research and report on the estimated Russian military and civilian casualties of WWII. How many cities, towns and villages were destroyed. Compare to the population of Canada. Compare those statistics to the losses of the Allies.

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FOCUS POINTS

S is for **STALINGRAD**,

Russia turns the tide on the Germans.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was the commander of the German 6th Army?

What was the German code name of the Operation?

Where did most fighting take place?

When did the Germans make their first attack?

Why was Stalingrad so important to Hitler?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the significance of Stalingrad from the German and Russian perspectives.
- Prepare a map time line to show the Stalingrad from August 1942 – February 1943.
- Profile the German 6th Army Commander Von Paulus.
- Profile the Russian Commander Zhukov.
- Research and report on the other Fascist army groups supporting the Germans at Stalingrad.
- Research and report on the total casualty count for all participants in this battle.
- Research and report on why the battle of Stalingrad is considered to be the turning point of the war in Europe.

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FOCUS POINTS

T for the **TANKS**,

Tigers, T-34s and Shermans.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

What was the role of the tank?

Where did the tank operate most effectively?

When did they first show their effectiveness?

Who were the proponents of tank warfare?

Why were they of less importance in the war against Japan?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the role played by the Panzer units in the success of the initial German invasions of Poland, France and Russia.
- Research and report on one of the following Tank Battles: El Alamein, Kursk, and Caen.
- Research and prepare a report on one of the following “Tank Generals” - Guderian, Montgomery, Patton, Rommel, Rokossovskiy, Zhukov.
- Research and report on the strengths and weaknesses of the following tanks: T-34, Mark IV, and Sherman.
- Research and report on the Tank ‘Funnies’ used in the D-Day landings.
- Research and report on the types of tanks built by other belligerents of WWII – France, Japan, and Italy.

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FOCUS POINTS

U for **UNITED STATES**,

‘Arsenal of Democracy,’ comes through.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was the president at the outbreak of war?

What was meant by the ‘Arsenal of Democracy?’

Where was American support needed?

When America make its first economic commitment?

Why was American industry so needed?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the impact of the start of War on the American manufacturing sector.
- Research and report on the American development and production of war munitions from 1941 through 1945.
- Research and report on the contribution made to the war effort by one of the following companies: Ford, General Motors, Boeing, and Kaiser Industries.
- Prepare a graph to illustrate the output of aircraft, tanks, and warships from 1941 – 1945.
- Profile the “Jeep.”
- Research and report on the ability of the United States to fight on two major Theaters, on two oceans and supply Britain and Russia with food and armaments.

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FOCUS POINTS

V is for **V**ENGEANCE,

Hitler's secret weapons, V1 and V2.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was German scientist in charge of the rocket programme?

What were the targets of the rockets?

Where did the testing take place?

When was the first use the V Rockets?

Why was it so critical to the British and Allies to destroy them on site?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the advanced guidance system of the V2.
- Research and report on the V-1 and V2 attacks on London.
- Research and report on the allied efforts to destroy the Peenemunde research station.
- Research and report on the V1 sites in Northern France on D-Day.
- Research and report on the race by the Allies and Russians to capture the German Rocket scientists and their rockets.
- Profile Werner Von Braun.
- Research and report on other German 'Wonder Weapons.'

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FOCUS POINTS

W is for **WEHRMACHT**,
to battle on too many fronts it will go.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was the supreme commander of the German Wehrmacht?

What was the maximum manpower strength reached by the Wehrmacht?

Where was it operational during WWII?

When did the Wehrmacht first enjoy success?

Why was there conflict between the Wehrmacht and the SS?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the population of Germany in 1939, the size of each of the branches of its armed forces.
- Research and report on the number of countries invaded by the German Wehrmacht, and the geographic range. Consider the logistics and the need to control and subdue the populations.
- Research and report on the strength and composition of the Wehrmacht from January 1944 – May 1945. How does it compare to its structure at the start of the war?
- Research and report on the impact of Hitler's control over the deployment of the Wehrmacht, and his strategic decisions.

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FOCUS POINTS

X for **CAMP X**,

secret warriors train in Ontario.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who was instrumental in founding Camp X?

What was the type of training given at Camp X?

Where did was Camp X located?

When was it established?

Why was it established in Ontario?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the Secret War training at Camp X in Ontario.
- Research and report on Canadian Sir William Stephenson.
- Research and report on Bletchley Park, England.
- Research and report on the breaking of the German Enigma Machine.
- Research and report Purple Code breaking success of the Americans.
- Research and report on the German spy chief Canaris.
- Research and report on the success of the Russian spy ring Lucy.
- Research and report on the establishment of the OSS.
- Research and report on female spy, Violette Szabo.

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FOCUS POINTS

Y is for **YALTA**,

Discussions about to Post-War world.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

Who were the leaders at the Yalta meeting?

What was the aim of the meeting?

Where is Yalta located?

When did they meet?

Why was the meeting so important?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the aims and objectives of the Yalta Conference.
- Report on the differences of the British/American vs. Russian objectives.
- Research and report on the Soviets; where they really allies of the US, Canada and Britain? Qualify your answer.
- Prepare a map of pre-war Europe and compare to a map of the post-war configuration. How many nations became part of the Soviet Empire?
- Report on the term “Sphere of influence” and prepare a map of Europe to illustrate those ‘spheres’.
- Report on the relative military, political and economic strengths of the participants of the Yalta Conference. Why was Britain the junior partner?

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FOCUS POINTS

Z for the **ZERO**

Japan's Mitsubishi fighter unfurled.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING

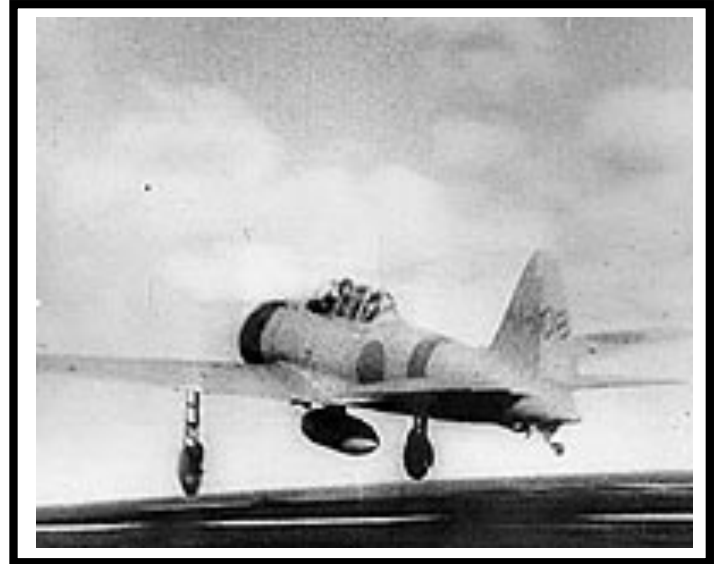
Who were the principal designers of the Zero?

What was the basic role of the Zero?

Where was it manufactured?

When did Zero make its first combat appearance?

Why was the Zero so effective in the early years of WWII?



RESEARCH TOPICS

Choose one topic.

- Research and report on the early military successes of the Zero fighter.
- Prepare a technological analysis and diagram of the Zero fighter.
- Research and report on the technological advantages the Zero enjoyed in the first stages of WWII.
- Compare the Zero to the Grumman F4F Wildcat.
- Profile a Zero fighter pilot.
- Research and report on the Zero as a Kamikaze weapon.