

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

Timeline for World War II — Japan

Pre-1920:

- 1853: American Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Tokyo harbor and forced the Japanese to allow trade with U.S. merchants with threat of military action.
- 1858: Western nations forced Japan to sign the Unequal Treaties. These articles established export and import tariffs and the concept of "extraterritoriality" (i.e., Japan held no jurisdiction over foreign criminals in its land. Their trials were to be conducted by foreign judges under their own nation's laws). Japan had no power to change these terms.
- 1868: Japan, in an effort to modernize and prevent future Western dominance, ousted the Tokugawa Shogunate and adopted a new Meiji Emperor. The next few decades saw rapid and successful industrialization during the Meiji Restoration.
- 1899: With newly gained power from recent industrialization, Japan successfully renegotiated aspects of the Unequal Treaties.
- 1899–1901: The Boxer Rebellion led China to a humiliating defeat by the Eight-Nation Alliance of Western powers including the United States and Japan, ceding more territory, and dealing one of the final blows to the struggling Qing Dynasty.
- 1904–1905: The Russo-Japanese War began with a surprise attack and ended by an eventual Japanese victory over Imperial Russia. The Japanese took control of Korea.
- 1914: During World War I, Japan and other Allies seized German colonial possessions.
- 1919: Japan, as a member of the victorious Allies during World War I, gained a mandate over various Pacific islands previously part of the German colonial empire. Japan joined the League of Nations.

1920-1938:

- 1922: The Washington Naval Treaty was signed, limiting the fleets and vessels of the navies of the United States, United Kingdom, Japan, France, and Italy. Japan was limited to about two-thirds of the fleet allowed for the United States and Britain. This was seen in Japan as a denial of Japanese equality amongst European powers.
- 1928: June 4: The Republic of China and Japan engaged in the Jinan Incident and the Huanggutun Incident. In the latter, Japanese agents assassinated the Republic of China's President, Zhang Zuolin.
- 1929: March 28: Japan withdrew troops from the Republic of China and ended the Jinan Incident.
- 1929: July 24: The Kellogg-Briand Pact went into effect.
- 1929: October 29: The Great Depression began.
- 1930: April 22: The United States, Japan, Italy, and Great Britain signed the London Naval Treaty, which regulated shipbuilding and submarine warfare.
- 1931: September 18: Japanese agents blew up part of the Japanese owned South Manchurian Railroad at Mukden in northeastern China, and blamed it as an act of sabotage by the Chinese forces. Using the incident as a pretext, the Japanese invasion of Manchuria was launched. Resistance failed, and, within six months, the occupation of Manchuria was complete. The incident was known as the "9.18 Incident" thereafter in China. It was marked by the Chinese as the start of the Japanese invasion of China. "Why We Fight", a US propaganda film released in 1942, claimed that World War II started on this date, saying that "we should remember this date as well as December 7, 1941."
- 1931: September 19: The Second Sino-Japanese War began when Japan invaded the Manchuria region in the Republic of China.
- 1932: January 7: The Stimson Doctrine was proclaimed by United States Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson in response to Japan invading Manchuria.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

- 1932: January 28: The January 28 Incident occurred when fighting erupted between Chinese boycotters and Japanese troops protecting the nation's enclave in the port of Shanghai. The Japanese dispatched a naval invasion force in an attempt to capture Shanghai. The unsuccessful invasion ended in a stalemate. In subsequent days, the League of Nations recommended negotiations between China and Japan, and Japan occupied Harbin, China. By the end of February, Japan took control of Manchuria. China agreed to the League of Nations demand to stop fighting in and near Shanghai, but Japanese forces continued to attack until they left Shanghai in May. The United Kingdom and United States, which both have vast business and political interests in the city, brokered a cease-fire deal between China and Japan three months after the hostilities began. The Japanese naval forces withdrew.
- 1932: February 27: Manchukuo was announced as an independent nation, and was in reality a Japanese puppet government for the region of Manchuria. It encompassed the three northeastern Chinese provinces occupied by Japan since the "9.18 Incident." Japanese control remained direct, and Japanese owned interests gained considerable power. Additionally, the opium trade was encouraged. Manchukuo was not recognized by the League of Nations. Japan subsequently withdrew from the organization.
- 1932: March 6: China agreed to the League of Nations demand to stop fighting in and near Shanghai, but Japanese forces continued to attack Chinese positions.
- 1932: May: Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi was assassinated by a group of young officers for his support of the London Naval Treaty. The act, known as the May 15 incident, was symptomatic of a certain level of anarchy among the Japanese aristocracy.
- 1932: May 15: Japanese troops left Shanghai.
- 1933: March 4: Troops of the 139th Division of Chinese 32nd Corps repulsed a Japanese attack on the Lengkou Pass of the Great Wall. The provincial capital of Rehe Province, Chengde, however, was captured by Japanese troops without opposition.
- 1933: March 27: Japan withdrew from the League of Nations.
- 1934: March 1: Japan renamed Manchuria as Manchukuo.
- 1934: December 29: Japan renounced both the Washington Naval Treaty and the London Naval Treaty.
- 1935: December: Large-scale anti-Japanese riots took place in Peking.
- 1936: February: A coup attempt by junior officers came close to succeeding.
- 1936: May 9: Chiang Kaishek proclaimed that Japan was waging war in China without a formal declaration of war.
- 1936: October 20: Japanese-backed Mongolian troops attacked China.
- 1936: November 26: The Anti-Comintern Pact was signed by Japan and Italy. Japan joined Germany in signing the Anti-Comintern Pact, which was expected to provide a two-front threat to the Soviet Union. However, Japan was not interested in being drawn into a European war, and thus the pact was not a true alliance.
- 1936: December 1: The Chinese Civil War temporarily ended, so the two sides could prepare for a full-scale war with Japan.
- 1937: Japan again invaded Manchuria (as it had in 1931) and China proper. Under the guise of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, with slogans such as "Asia for the Asians!," the idea was to remove the Western powers influence in China and replace it with Japanese domination. Japan was determined to dominate this market of raw material and consumers.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

- 1937: July 7: The Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred, which most historians regard as the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War. Japanese forces conducting military exercises outside Yuan Peng County near Peking claimed that several Japanese soldiers participating in the exercise were not accounted for after the exercise. After the Japanese request to enter the Yuan Peng County town to conduct a search was declined by the Chinese, the Japanese launched an all-out assault towards Yuan Peng County. The Chinese government in Nanking declared its intent to resist Japan, marking the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The incident was later known as the "7.7 Incident" or the "Luokouchiao Incident" by China. Additional battles follow during the year, including the Battle of Shanghai (August 13-November 26) and Battle of Taiyuan (September 1-November 9). Japan established the puppet nation of Mengjiang in the Inner Mongolia region of the Republic of China.
- 1937: August–November: Full scale fighting erupted throughout northern China, and Japan overcame initial failures with landings and reinforcements in Shanghai.
- 1937: November: Nanking was captured and subjected to many months of rampage. The Rape of Nanking resulted in the deaths of possibly up to 300,000 Chinese civilians. Most historians believed that the atrocities against Chinese civilians by the occupying Japanese forces in Nanking were systematic actions ordered by high level officials in Tokyo to demonstrate their rage and to crush the Chinese will of continuing the resistance.
- 1937: December 8: Japan established the puppet nation of Mengjiang in the Inner Mongolia region of Republic of China.
- 1938: July 28: The Soviet-Japanese Border Wars began with the Battle of Lake Khasan. The U.S.S.R. emerged victorious in August.
- 1938: November: The "New Order for East Asia" was declared by Japan. This declaration of Japanese plans for dominance of East Asia further deteriorated their relations with western nations.

1939:

- 1939: Japan invaded the U.S.S.R. and was defeated in the Battle of Lake Khasan.
- 1939: February: Japan captured Hainan Island, which was seen to have strategic implications by the British.
- 1939: May 11: The Japanese attacked west from Manchuria into the Mongolian People's Republic, beat by Soviet units in the first major defeat of the Japanese Kwantung army.
- 1939: May–September: Japan and the Soviet Union engaged in border clashes around the Khalka River. Again, the Japanese suffered crushing defeats. As a result, the Strike South Group influenced future operations to avoid conflict against the powerful Soviet Army, preferring to confront the United States instead.
- 1939: June 14: The Tientsin Incident occurred in which the Japanese blockaded the British concession in the North China Treaty Port of Tientsin.
- 1939: July: The United States announced its withdrawal from its commercial treaty with Japan.
- 1939: September 1: The Republic of China and the Empire of Japan were involved in the early stages of the third year of armed conflict between them during the Second Sino-Japanese War. The war was in what will be known as the "Second Period." The "Second Period" started in October 1938 and ended in December 1941. This conflict was eventually swept up into WWII.
- 1939: September 4: Japan announced its neutrality in the European situation.
- 1939: September 17-19: The Imperial Japanese Army launched attacks on the Chinese city of Changsha; forces in northern Jiangxi attacked westward toward Henan. The Japanese Imperial Army attacked the Chinese National Revolutionary Army along the Sinchiang River using poison gas during the Battle of Changsha.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

- 1939: September 19: Soviet Union and its ally Mongolia won the Battle of Khalkhin Gol against Japan, ending the Soviet-Japanese Border Wars. The Soviet Union and Japan signed pacts and stayed at peace until 1945. The Soviet Union focused on her western border, but left more than 1 million troops to guard the frontier with Japan.
- 1939: October 6: Chinese army reportedly defeated the Japanese at the Battle of Changsha.

1940:

- 1940: February 1: The Japanese Diet announced a record high budget with over half its expenditures being military.
- 1940: September: Japan increased its blockade of China by seizing bases in French Indochina.
- 1940: September 22: The Japanese occupied Vietnam and established several bases in French Indochina; local French administrators became only figurehead authorities.
- 1945: September 22: The British released 1,400 French Paratroopers from Japanese internment camps around Saigon. Those French soldiers entered Saigon and went on a deadly rampage, attacking Viet Minh and killing innocent civilians including children, aided by French civilians who joined the rampage. An estimated 20,000 French civilians lived in Saigon.
- 1940: September 27: The Tripartite Pact was signed in Berlin by Germany, Italy, and Japan, promising mutual aid. An informal name, "Axis", emerged. The pact stipulated that an attack against one of the countries (by any nation except the Soviet Union) would force a nation to go to war with all three nations.

1941:

- 1941: Japan convinced the Dutch government to provide it with oil supplies from the Dutch East Indies, and the French agreed to a Japanese occupation of French Indochina.
- 1941: March 27: Japanese spy Takeo Yoshikawa arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii and began to study the United States fleet at Pearl Harbor.
- 1941 April: U.S. volunteer pilots began to arrive in China and wreak havoc upon Japanese forces; they were soon named the Flying Tigers by the Chinese because of the distinctive paintings on the nose of the aircraft.
- 1941: April 13: Japan and the U.S.S.R. signed the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact.
- 1941: July 28: Japanese troops occupied southern French Indochina. The Vichy French colonial government was allowed by the Japanese to continue to administer Vietnam. French repression continued.
- August, 1941: The United States, which at the time supplied 80% of Japanese oil imports, initiated a complete oil embargo. This threatened to cripple both the Japanese economy and military strength once the strategic reserves ran dry, unless alternative oil-sources were found. Japan considered this move an unspoken declaration of war.
- 1941: October 17: The government of Prince Fumimaro Konoye, prime minister of Japan, collapsed, leaving little hope for peace in the Pacific.
- 1941: October 18: Red Army troop reinforcements arrived in Moscow from Siberia; Stalin was assured that the Japanese would not attack the U.S.S.R. from the East.
- 1941: October 18: General Hideki Tojo became the 40th Prime Minister of Japan.
- 1941: November 17: Joseph Grew, the United States ambassador to Japan, cabled the State Department that Japan had plans to launch an attack against Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. His warning was ignored.
- 1941: November 26: Japanese attack fleet of 33 warships and auxiliary craft, including six aircraft carriers, sailed from northern Japan for the Hawaiian Islands; The Hull note ultimatum was delivered to Japan by the United States.
- 1941: December 2: Prime Minister Tojo rejected "peace feelers" from the U.S.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

- 1941: December 4: Japanese naval and army forces continued to move toward Pearl Harbor and South-east Asia.
- 1941: December 4: Bolivia declared war on all Axis powers.
- 1941: December 7: The Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Navy at Pearl Harbor. They mistakenly believed they would have a two year window to consolidate their conquests before the United States could effectively respond. Japan launched nearly simultaneous attacks on landings in Thailand, Malaya, and Hong Kong. The United States and the Republic of China formally declared war on Japan the next day.
- 1941: December 7: Japan invaded Thailand and British Malaya, before launching aerial attacks on US forces at Pearl Harbor, Guam and Wake Island; Japan declared war on the United States and the United Kingdom. Air attacks were also made on Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, and Shanghai. Canada declared war on Japan.
- 1941: December 8: The United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and New Zealand declared war on Japan.
- 1941: December 9: China and Australia officially declared war on Japan.
- 1941: December 11: Japan invaded Burma.
- 1941: December 12: India declared war on Japan.
- 1941: December 15: Japan invaded Borneo.
- 1941: December 25: Hong Kong surrendered to Japan.

1942:

- 1942: Chinese were victorious at Changsha over the Japanese.
- 1942: January 10: Japan declared war on the Netherlands.
- 1942: January 19: Japanese forces took prisoner large numbers of British troops north of Singapore.
- 1942: February 16: The Japanese committed the Banka Island Massacre in which they opened fire on Australian military nurses, killing 21.
- 1942: April: Japan and Thailand almost completely conquered Burma, Malaya, Rabaul, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies.
- 1942: April 18: Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle planned and led the first air raid by the United States to strike the Japanese Home Islands during World War II.
- 1942: May: The Philippines were captured by Japanese forces. The Japanese had numerous naval victories in the South China Sea, Java Sea, and Indian Ocean.
- 1942: May 22: Mexico declared war on Japan and the Axis powers.
- 1942: June: The U.S. broke Japanese naval codes and used this information in a decisive victory at Midway over the Imperial Japanese Navy.
- 1942: June 3-7: Japan launched air raids against Alaska in the Battle of Dutch Harbor, beginning the Aleutian Islands Campaign. Japanese forces invaded Attu and Kiska. This was the first invasion of American soil in 128 years. Japanese occupation of Attu and Japanese occupation of Kiska began.
- 1942: June 4: The Battle of Midway began; The Japanese attacked installations on the island, but only managed to detect one of the three nearby American carriers. American planes sank all four Japanese carriers present at the battle.
- 1942: June 7: The Battle of Midway came to a close; the USS Yorktown sank; four Japanese carriers and one cruiser were sunk. The battle was viewed as a turning point in the Pacific war.
- 1942: August 22: Brazil declared war on Japan and the Axis countries, partly in response to numerous riots by a populace angry at the sinking of Brazilian ships.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

1943:

- 1943: January 16: Iraq declared war on Japan and the Axis powers.
- 1943: April 7: Bolivia declared war on Germany, Japan, and Italy.
- 1943: April 18: Admiral Yamamoto, chief architect of Japanese naval strategy, was killed when his plane was shot down by American P38's over Bougainville. He was on an inspection tour.
- 1943: May 11: The Japanese killed over 30,000 in the Changjiao massacre.
- 1943: November 22: The Cairo Conference: US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and ROC leader Chiang Kai-Shek met in Cairo, Egypt, to discuss ways to defeat Japan.
- 1943: November 27: The Casablanca Conference ("Sextant") ended; Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-shek completed the Cairo Declaration, which dealt with the overall strategic plan against Japan.
- 1943: November 30: In Malaya, Japanese introduced Government Notification No. 41 to encourage families to grow their own food crops and vegetables. Families who were successful were to be awarded prizes while families who failed to comply with this notification or leave their vacant lands unplanted would be punished.
- 1943: December 28: In Burma, Chinese troops had some success against the Japanese.

1944:

- 1944: January 30: The Japanese killed 44 suspected spies in the Homfreyganj massacre.
- 1944: February 4: Kwajalein, the world's largest atoll and a major Japanese naval base, was secured.
- 1944: February 14: Anti-Japanese revolted on Java.
- 1944: March 7: Japanese began an invasion attempt on India, starting a four-month battle around Imphal.
- 1944: March 22: Japanese forces crossed the Indian border all along the Imphal front.
- 1944: September 21: San Marino declared war on Japan and the Axis powers.
- 1944: April 17: Japanese launched a major offensive in central China, aiming toward southeast China air bases, where U.S. bombers were located.
- 1944: May 31: The Japanese retreated from Imphal (India) with heavy losses; their invasion of India was over.
- 1944: July 6: The largest Banzai charge of the war occurred: 4,300 Japanese troops were slaughtered on Saipan.
- 1944: July 9: Saipan was declared secure, with the Japanese having lost over 30,000 troops; in the last stages, numerous civilians committed suicide with the encouragement of Japanese military.
- 1944: July 10: Tokyo was bombed for the first time since the Doolittle raid of April, 1942.
- 1944: July 18: General Hideki Tojo resigned as chief minister of the Japanese government as the defeats of the Japanese military forces continued to mount. Emperor Hirohito asked General Kuniaki Koiso to form a new government.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

1945:

- 1945: January 2: The Japanese increasingly used kamikaze tactics against the US naval forces nearby.
- 1945: February 23: U.S. Marines raised the American flag on Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima.
- 1945: February 24: Egypt declared war on Japan and other Axis nations.
- 1945: February 26: Syria declared war on Germany and Japan.
- 1945: March 9: Amid rumors of a possible American invasion, Japanese overthrew the Vichy French Jean Decoux Government, which had been operating independently as the colonial government of Vietnam. They proclaimed an "independent" Empire of Vietnam, with Emperor Bảo Đại as nominal ruler. Premier Trần Trọng Kim formed the first Vietnamese government.
- 1945: March 11: Nagoya, Japan was firebombed by hundreds of B-29's.
- 1945: March 16: Iwo Jima was finally secured after a month's fighting; the battle was the only time that the number of American casualties was larger than the Japanese's. Sporadic fighting continued as isolated Japanese fighters emerged from caves and tunnels.
- 1945: April 11: Spain broke diplomatic relations with Japan.
- 1945: April 18: Ernie Pyle, famed war correspondent for the GI's, was killed by a sniper on Ie Shima, a small island near Okinawa.
- 1945: May 8: In order to disarm the Japanese in Vietnam, the Allies divided the country in half at the 16th parallel. Chinese Nationalists moved in and disarmed the Japanese north of the parallel while the British moved in and did the same in the south. During the conference, representatives from France requested the return of all French pre-war colonies in Indochina. The request was granted; Vietnam once again became a French colony following the removal of the Japanese.
- 1945: June 16: The Japanese were in a general retreat in central China.
- 1945: June 17-21: Japanese Admiral Ota Minoru committed ritual suicide for failing to defend Okinawa, Japan; the defeat of the Japanese on Okinawa was now complete.
- 1945: July 6: Norway declared war on Japan.
- 1945: July 14: Italy declared war on Japan.
- 1945: July 17: The Potsdam Conference began. The Allied leaders agreed to insist upon the unconditional surrender of Japan.
- 1945: July 30: The USS Indianapolis was sunk shortly after midnight by a Japanese submarine after having delivered atomic bomb material to Tinian; because of poor communications, the ship's whereabouts were unknown for some time and many of its men drowned or were attacked by sharks in the next four days.
- 1945: August 6: Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb, "Little Boy," on Hiroshima.
- 1945: August 8: Soviet Union declared war on Japan; the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation began about an hour later which included landings on the Kurile Islands. The Japanese began evacuating in anticipation of this.
- 1945: August 9: Bockscar dropped the second atomic bomb "Fat Man" on Nagasaki. The Fat Man mushroom cloud resulting from the nuclear explosion over Nagasaki rose 18 km (60,000 ft).
- 1945: August 14: A coup was attempted by Japanese military right-wingers to overthrow the government and prevent the inevitable surrender.
- 1945: August 15: Emperor Hirohito issued a radio broadcast announcing Japan's surrender; though the surrender seemed to be "unconditional", the Emperor's status was still open for discussion.
- 1945: August 15: World-wide celebration of VJ Day occurred.
- 1945: August 16: Emperor Hirohito ordered Japanese forces to cease fire.
- 1945: August 17: Indonesia declared independence from Japan.

Unit 5: Crisis and Change
Lesson F: The Failure of Democracy and Return of War
Student Resource: Timeline for World War II — Japan

- 1945: August 19: At a spontaneous non-communist meeting in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh assumed a leading role in the movement to wrest power from the French. With the Japanese still in control of Indochina in the interim, Bảo Đại went along because he thought that the Viet Minh were still working with the American OSS and could guarantee independence for Vietnam. Later, Ho Chi Minh's guerrillas occupied Hanoi and proclaimed a provisional government.
- 1945: August 22: Japanese armies surrendered to the Red Army in Manchuria.
- 1945: August 27: Japanese armies in Burma surrendered at Rangoon ceremonies.
- 1945: August 31: General MacArthur took over command of the Japanese government in Tokyo.
- 1945: September 2: The Japanese Instrument of Surrender was signed on the deck of the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay.
- 1945: October 25: General Rikichi Andō, governor-general of Taiwan and commander-in-chief of all Japanese forces on the island, turned over Taiwan to General Chen Yi of the Kuomintang (KMT) military. Chen Yi proclaimed that day to be "Retrosession Day of Taiwan" and organized the island into the Taiwan Province. Taiwan has since been governed by the Republic of China.

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