

The Century: Peter Jennings Civilians at War: World War II

1. What was the Blitz? Describe the results.

Blitz is short for Blitzkrieg which translated means, lightning war, it was during this period that for weeks German bombers attacked British cities killing thousands of people. It was meant to help pave the way for a German invasion of Britain but it didn't work out quite as Hitler had hoped; the RAF, Royal Air Force, battled the German planes in the skies above Britain and soon the German air force was almost completely destroyed so the Germans had to call off the attacks. In the end over 42,000 people were killed and 2 million were made homeless.

2. What is total war?

Total war is often the term used to describe a conflict where the enemy did not simply target soldiers and military installations but they targeted civilians as well. Of the 60 million casualties of WW2 half of them would be civilians.

3. Why did Hitler take over most of Europe? What were his goals?

Hitler wanted to fulfill his promise to the Nazis where he would lead them build a new German empire that would last for 1,000 years. He didn't simply want Europe Hitler wanted the entire world to belong to Germany.

4. How were Poland's Jews treated? Where were they taken?

Polish Jews were torn from their homes and sent to live in ghetto's at first life was bearable but things soon got worse. It reached a point where everyday three of four people were dying of hunger and thousands of children were orphaned.

5. Why is Russia so attractive to Hitler?

There were three reasons why Hitler wanted to conquer Russia the first reason is for territory since Russia was so massive if the Germans forced it to surrender then they would control more land than they would know what to do with. the Second reason is to wipe out communism since Russia is the only communist nation in the world and finally to capture the largest concentration of Jews in the world which was in Russia.

6. What happened at Leningrad?

The German army that attacked Leningrad was ordered to wipe the city and its three million people from the face of the Earth no surrender would be accepted from the city. The people of Leningrad not only had to deal with German bombers and artillery fire but they had to try to survive the coldest winter in 30 years.

7. Who moved in behind the German army and what was their job?

After the German army conquered an area specially trained killing squads were sent in to kill soviet officials and all Jews. It was these events that made the Russian hatred of Germany so strong.

8. What was the final solution?

The final solution was where German killing squads would gather up any and all Jews and shoot them; men, women, and children were shot in the heads but soon the execution were taking their toll on the Germans minds and morale.

9. What was the Warsaw ghetto and describe the scene inside?

The ghetto was a squalling starving slum where thousands died of hunger. Despite everything they were forced to endure many Jewish people refused to let their spirits be broken but some were not as fortunate as others.

10. How do the Nazi's get the Jews to the camps? Describe the journey.

They would gather up the Jewish people and put them in train box cars and more often than not it was incredibly cramped and hard to move. Finally they would arrive at the camps but not just to work and build materials for the Germans many were sent there to be murdered.

11. Describe Auschwitz and the experience of the people brought there.

Auschwitz was truly hell on earth and the Germans were monsters to subject other humans to such torment. Basically people were sent there to work until they died which was very often it was a living nightmare.

12. How did the Germans decide who was to live and die? How did they do the killing?

If a prisoner was too old, young, or weak to work then they would be killed it was horrid. Instead of simply using ammunition the unfit were sent to gas chambers to be turned to ash in seconds.

13. What were the Japanese people told about their race and their emperor?

The people of Japan were taught much like the Germans they were told that they were superior and deserved to enslave all other races. The emperor was meant to be portrayed as a god who the people of Japan would do anything for.

14. How did the Japanese treat the Chinese in WW2? Describe the "Rape on Nanjing".

The Japanese treated the Chinese much like the Germans treated Jews and Russians they would kill them swiftly and without mercy. The "Rape of Nanjing" was an atrocity that will not be soon forgotten the Japanese raped and murdered thousands of women and young girls and killed any men and boys they found.

15. How were Americans portrayed in Japan during WW2?

The Japanese were told that Americans were savage barbarians that wanted to enslave and destroy Japan. The Pacific campaign was a slaughter for Japan because they believed in death or dishonor which led to charging enemy forces with swords and bayonets. While this tactic worked to crush Chinese opposition American factories outputted much better weapons and more supplies than any other country.

16. What happens on Saipan and how is it portrayed by the Japanese government?

During the battle of Saipan Japanese forces were ordered to fight to the death rather than surrender and the army ordered the civilian population to commit suicide rather than surrender. The Japanese government praised the Japanese soldiers and civilians that died as heroes.

17. What was a kamikaze? How was suicide glorified by the Japanese & why?

Kamikaze is simply a result of the Japanese ideology of death or dishonor so now young Japanese pilots would fly bomb filled planes into American ships and this method proved to be very effective. It was their death or dishonor belief that cost Japan so many lives during the war.

18. What were the Japanese told the Americans would do to them?
Japanese civilians were told that the Americans would rape and kill them and this led to great fear of America and simply fed the Japanese desire to die rather than surrender. Even when it was clear that Japan would lose the war the government told the populous that they were winning.

19. Who was asked to defend Japan on the home front at the very end. Women and children were going to be the last line of defense for Japan after all the men would die fighting. Women were mainly taught how to fight with bamboo spears this was a clear sign of how far an ideology can take a people.

20. What were the British & Americans doing to Germany & Japan most nights by 1943? Who was the target?
British and American pilots began bombing German cities and towns at night to avoid losses and thousands of civilians were killed in the bombings. It's often seen as ironic that while the German bombing of London was seen as barbaric it didn't take long for the Allies to do the same to the Axis.

21. What is firebombing?
Firebombing was a method where incendiary bombs were used to set entire cities on fire leaving nothing for the Germans to use. This was also meant to crush German morale so they would simply give up sooner.

22. Who is tried at Nuremberg? Why? What was the result?
Many former Nazi leaders were put on trial for their involvement in the Holocaust for the first time in history leaders were put on trial for their aggression. The trials were held because the victors demanded that someone needs to pay for the suffering of the Jewish people. In the end 12 men that were trialled at Nuremberg were sentenced to death by hanging sadly even the trials and the punishments could not make amends for the millions that died at the hands of the Germans and the Japanese.