

## INTRODUCTION


# The World at War

**World War II** involved all the world's major countries. From **1939 to 1945**, Germany, Japan, and Italy, known as the **Axis** powers, fought Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union, among others, known as the **Allied** powers.

**Adolf Hitler**, the leader of Germany, wanted to make his country more powerful by expanding its territory. As the German army

invaded other countries, the **Allied powers** tried to stop it. **Hitler and his supporters were called Nazis**, and they imprisoned anyone who opposed them. They wanted to rid Germany of people they believed were inferior, especially Jewish people. Hitler's campaign resulted in the death of **6 million Jews**. This horrific chapter in history is now known as **the Holocaust**.

Bombers were a common type of aircraft used during World War II. They could carry heavy loads and fly long distances.



The country of Japan also wanted to expand its empire and control the Pacific Ocean. **In 1941, Japan attacked the United States at the port of Pearl Harbor** in Hawaii, killing over 2,000 American servicemen and **civilians**. In response, **the U.S. declared war on Japan and joined the Allies to defeat the Axis powers.**

The war was long, deadly, and affected nearly every country around the world.

In **May 1945, Germany surrendered** after losing several big battles in Europe. **The war finally ended in August** after Japan surrendered.

Everyone in the United States contributed in some way to the war effort. **Women especially stepped into roles that they had not traditionally held.**

They built airplanes, drove ambulances, and took over jobs that men left behind when they went to war. **These jobs created new opportunities and new expectations for women around the country.**

More than 2,000 Americans lost their lives during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Female nurses cared for many of the injured soldiers.



About 350,000 U.S. women  
joined the military during  
World War II.

Members of the Women's Army Corps traveled overseas to help the Allies win the war. Traveling by ship from America to France took about a week.

CHAPTER



# Women Join Forces

Between 1941 and 1944, hundreds of thousands of women voluntarily joined the war effort. Although women were not allowed in **combat**, they were able to join the **military** in other ways. With men on the front lines, women were needed to fill important jobs in each of the five main branches of the military: the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard.