**CW 7/e** – read and summarize each paragraph in one sentence. Do not copy sentences from the text – SUMMARIZE.

**WWII - OVERVIEW**

World War II effectively stopped the world between 1939 and1945. To this day, it remains the most geographically widespread military conflict the world has ever seen. Although the fighting reached across many parts of the globe, most countries involved shared a united effort aimed at ending the aggression of the Axis Powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan. Despite the fact that Germany and Japan were technically allies, however, they had vastly different motives and objectives, and their level of cooperation was primarily one of distracting the attention of each other’s enemies rather than of attaining any specific common goals. Therefore, most studies of the war cover the conflicts with Germany and Japan separately, dividing treatment of the war between the European and Pacific theaters of operation.

The rise of Nazi Germany and its aggression can be traced directly back to World War I. Following that war, Germany was economically devastated. The Treaty of Versailles unfairly placed the full blame for the war on Germany and demanded heavy reparations payments in return. Although Germany never paid the bulk of these reparations, the treaty humiliated the German people and obstructed the nation’s efforts to rebuild itself and move forward economically and technologically. Then, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the worldwide Great Depression took a further heavy toll on the country.

As resentment and desperation in Germany grew, radical political parties gained in popularity. They ranged from Communists to right-wing nationalists. Among the more extreme activists of the latter category was Adolf Hitler, who had founded the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (more commonly known as the Nazi Party) in 1920–1921. By the time of the depression in Germany, Hitler’s party had more than 100,000 members and was growing rapidly, and it began participating in parliamentary elections with increasing success. In 1933, Hitler pressured the German president, Paul von Hindenburg, into appointing him chancellor—a position from which he was quickly able to consolidate his power.

By 1935, Germany had ceased to recognize the Treaty of Versailles and all the restrictions that accompanied it. In particular, Hitler announced his intention to fully rebuild Germany’s military forces. In 1938, Germany began annexing the territories of neighboring countries, including all of Austria and most of Czechoslovakia. When Germany attacked Poland in September 1939, Britain and France aligned against Germany, and the war began.

Like Germany, Japan was severely affected by the Great Depression. Japan relied heavily upon imported resources and desperately needed more land for its expanding population. Japanese military leaders, who at the time had a strong influence over the civilian government, saw territorial expansion as the best solution. As a result, beginning in 1931, Japanese forces began occupying territory in the Chinese region of Manchuria. By 1937, Japan and China were officially at war. In 1940, the Japanese government announced its intention to establish a “new order in East Asia,” under which the region would be freed of Western influence and guided by Japan. In 1940, Japan signed a formal alliance with Germany and Italy, setting the country on a clear course to enter World War II.

In the meantime, the United States, disapproving of Japan’s actions, placed a heavy trade embargo on Japan, severely restricting its ability to import oil, scrap metal, and other resources vital to its war effort. Japan saw itself facing an impossible crisis, and without prompt and decisive action, total collapse was inevitable. The action Japan chose was a surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. This action brought the United States into World War II in both theaters, Europe and the Pacific.

**WWII - Summary**

**The European Theater**

**German Aggression:**

The war in Europe began in September 1939, when Germany, under Chancellor **Adolf Hitler**, invaded **Poland**. Britain and France responded by declaring war on Germany but took little action over the following months. In 1940, Germany launched its next initiative by attacking **Denmark**and **Norway**, followed shortly thereafter by attacks on **Belgium**, **the Netherlands**, and**France**. All of these nations were conquered rapidly.

**The Battle of Britain:**

Later in the summer of 1940, Germany launched a further attack on **Britain**, this time exclusively from the air. The **Battle of Britain** was Germany’s first military failure, as the German air force, the **Luftwaffe**, was never able to overcome Britain’s Royal Air Force.

**Greece and North Africa:**

As Hitler plotted his next steps, **Italy**, an ally of Germany, expanded the war even further by invading **Greece**and**North Africa**. The Greek campaign was a failure, and Germany was forced to come to Italy’s assistance in early 1941.

**The USSR:**

Later in 1941, Germany began its most ambitious action yet, by invading the **Soviet Union**. Although the Germans initially made swift progress and advanced deep into the Russian heartland, the invasion of the USSR would prove to be the downfall of Germany’s war effort. The country was just too big, and although Russia’s initial resistance was weak, the nation’s strength and determination, combined with its brutal winters, would eventually be more than the German army could overcome. In 1943, after the battles of **Stalingrad** and **Kursk**, Germany was forced into a full-scale retreat. During the course of 1944, the Germans were slowly but steadily forced completely out of Soviet territory, after which the Russians pursued them across eastern Europe and into Germany itself in 1945.

**The Normandy Invasion:**

In June 1944, British and American forces launched the **D-Day invasion**, landing in German-occupied France via the coast of **Normandy**.Soon the German army was forced into retreat from that side as well. Thus, by early 1945, Allied forces were closing in on Germany from both east and west. The Soviets were the first to reach the German capital of **Berlin**, and Germany surrendered in May 1945, shortly after the suicide of Adolf Hitler.

**The Pacific Theater**

**Pearl Harbor:**

The war in the Pacific began on December 7, 1941, when warplanes from **Japan**launched a surprise attack on the U.S. Navy base at **Pearl Harbor**, Hawaii. By this time, Japan had already been at war with **China** for several years and had seized the Chinese territory of **Manchuria**. After the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan began a massive campaign of expansion throughout the Southeast Asia–Pacific region.

**The U.S. Entrance and Battle of Midway**

Although the Pearl Harbor attack provoked a declaration of war by the **United States**on Japan the very next day, it would be several months before U.S. forces would get seriously involved militarily. In late spring of 1942, the United States and Japan engaged in a series of naval battles, climaxing in the **Battle of Midway**on June 3–6, 1942, in which Japan suffered a catastrophic defeat.

**The Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal**

For the next year, the United States engaged Japan in a protracted struggle for the **Solomon Islands**, which lay near vital Allied shipping routes. Between August 1942 and February1943, Allied forces carried out an invasion on the island of **Guadalcanal**—the beginning of a long series of Allied offensives that would eventually force the Japanese out of the Solomons and then pursue them from various other Pacific island chains that the Japanese had earlier seized. In the meantime, British and Indian forces were combating Japanese troops in **Burma**.

**The Approach to Japan**

Fighting continued throughout the Pacific in 1944 and early 1945, including major battles at **Leyte**, **Iwo Jima**, and **Okinawa**. By the late spring of 1945, most of Japan’s conquests had been liberated, and Allied forces were closing in on the Japanese home islands. As they neared Japan proper, the Allies began heavy bombing campaigns against major Japanese cities, including **Tokyo**. This process continued through the summer of 1945 until finally, in early August, the United States dropped two **atomic bombs**on the cities of **Hiroshima**and **Nagasaki**. Stunned by the unexpected devastation, Japan surrendered a few days later.