Prelude to War

What was the purpose of the film?
War Begins - 1939

Signing of The Pact - August 1939
War Begins

- September 1, 1939, Hitler sent his armies into Poland. Two days later, Great Britain & France declared war on Germany & WWII began.

Sep. 1 → Germany invades Poland

Sep. 3 → Allies declare war on Germany
The War Expands

- British & French forces settled along the Maginot Line - a line of steel & concrete bunkers along the German border from Belgium to Switzerland.
• Hitler attacked **Denmark & Norway**, and then tried to invade the Netherlands & Belgium. They both asked for help from the **Allies** (Great Britain & France). Eventually both the Netherlands & Belgium surrendered to Germany.

• When **Belgium** collapsed, Allied troops retreated to the port of **Dunkirk** on the French coast of **the English Channel** (May). They were trapped! Heroically, more than **800 ships** - warships, ferries, and fishing boats began rescuing the troops. More than **300,000** troops crossed safely!
The Fall of France

- BBC - History - World Wars: Animated Map: The Fall of France (Dunkirk)
The beach at Dunkirk was on a shallow slope so no large boat could get near to the actual beaches where the men were. Therefore, smaller boats were needed to take on board men who would then be transferred to a larger boat based further off shore. 800 of these legendary "little ships" were used. It is thought that the smallest boat to make the journey across the Channel was the Tamzine - an 18 feet open topped fishing boat now on display at the Imperial War Museum, London.
• In June, the Germans crossed the Somme River and moved further into France. Italy joined with the Germans and attacked France from the Southeast. They formed the Axis Powers (later Japan joins them).

Germany + Italy (+ Japan) = AXIS POWERS
On June 14, 1940, German troops marched into Paris. After a blitzkrieg, the French surrendered a week later.
The only thing stopping Hitler’s domination of Western Europe was **Great Britain**. In August 1940, The Germans bombed British **shipyards**, industries, and cities; killing many **civilians** in **London**. The British endured because they were inspired by **Winston Churchill**.
Winston Churchill:

“We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”
Battle of Britain

- The **Battle of Britain** continued until October, but the Germans never controlled the skies. The British **Royal Air Force** (RAF) destroyed many German planes. Hitler finally called off the invasion of Britain.

- **RADAR** (Radio Detection and Ranging) was a big contributor to Britain’s win over Germany.
RADAR

• Without radar the RAF would be seriously hampered in terms of early warning and the destruction of operation rooms would cut off communications between fighter bases and those at the heart of the battle controlling the movement of fighter planes.
As prime minister of Britain during World War II, Churchill roused the British to stand against Nazi Germany. The sight of Churchill, with his cigar and two fingers raised in a “V for victory” salute, inspired Britains to rise to what he called “their finest hour.”

The Bombing of Great Britain
Propaganda poster used by Great Britain.

Is this poster promoting nationalism or fear?
Hitler’s first defeat

• Hitler focused his attention on another country – the **Soviet Union**. Ignoring the pact, Hitler launched an attack on the Soviets in **June 1941**. They moved into Soviet territory within months. The Soviet Union joined the Allies in their fight against the Axis Powers.