

# Three main catalysts that brought the u.s. into world war ii essay sample

[Countries](#), [Germany](#)



Throughout time scholars have examined human history and many events come to mind. While many of these events have good explanations or just reasons why they occurred, there are a handful of events that had no rhyme or reason, and these events will continue to baffle scholars for centuries to come. There is one event that continues to stand out when considering the events of the 1900's. The events of World War II are extremely broad and abundant, from the advances in technology and warfare to the use of genocide to gain power. However, three main catalysts that brought the U. S. into the war include Adolf Hitler, the Holocaust, and the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Many scholars believe that the events of WWII are a continuance of the Great War. Upon the end of WWI countries on all sides of the war were left bitter, tired, and disheartened with the Great War. Germans were bitter and outraged by the outcome of the war, and felt they were forced to surrender against their will by their own government. (World War II, 2009) Americans, who had no wish to go to war in the first place, felt the death tolls weighing heavily upon their souls. Many individuals believe that both of these details played a major role in the long road leading up to, the Second World War.

The first catalyst that brought the U. S. into WWII was the rise of Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler was born in Austria on April 20, 1889 and was the son of Alois Hitler, an Austrian customs official. Hitler dropped out of high school and moved to Vienna after the death of his mother in 1907. He finally settled in Munich in 1913 and joined the Bavarian Army during the start of WWI. While in the war Hitler was wounded and was awarded the Iron Cross for bravery.

While participating in WWI, Hitler's extreme nationalist fundamentals were hardened, and he therefore blamed the German defeat largely on betrayal by the Jews. Upon his return to Munich, Hitler joined many other nationalistic veterans in the German Workers' Party.

In 1920 the German Workers' Party officially changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers, or Nazi Party. In 1921 it was reorganized with Hitler as chairman. (High Beam Research, 2010). On Nov. 8, 1923, Hitler attempted the beer-hall putsch, intended to overthrow the republican government. Leading Bavarian officials (themselves discontented nationalists) were surrounded at a meeting in a Munich beer hall by the Nazi militia, and made to swear loyalty to this revolution. Upon regaining their freedom they used the Reichswehr (army) to defeat the coup. Hitler fled, but was arrested shortly after and sentenced to five years in the Landsberg fortress, of which he served only nine months. (Answers Corporation, 2010).

While in prison Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" which means "My Struggle" (Adolf Hitler, 2003). His writings became a type of bible for National Socialism. Although this made Hitler known throughout Germany, the Nazi party grew slowly until the economic depression in 1929, which inevitably brought the Nazi party greater support.

Hitler obtained his German citizenship from the state of Brunswick and ran in the presidential elections of 1932. He lost to the popular war hero Paul von Hindenburg, and did not obtain his political office until Jan 30, 1933.

Germany's new ruler, Adolf Hitler, as seen in the picture, was a master of politics; however, he was afraid of plots against him. One of Hitler's main missions was to achieve the supremacy of the so called Aryan Race, which he referred to as the "master race". Having come to power, Hitler mainly used brutality to carry out the "creeping coup", a plot to turn the state into his dictatorship. After communists had been barred, and in spite of a display of storm trooper strength, the Reichstag voted to give Hitler dictatorial powers. This was the true start of Hitler's reign over Germany.

Starting in the first days of Hitler's regime, political opponents like Von Schleicher and others were all purged. Socialists, Communists, Jews, and others were hounded, arrested, or assassinated. Hitler made government, law, and education appendages of National Socialism. After the death of Hindenburg in 1934, the chancellorship was united to the person of the Fuhrer. Hitler became the form of greeting, and a cult of Fuhrer worship was propagated. In 1938, with a carefully designed scandal, Hitler dismissed top Army Commanders, dividing their power between him and his faithful subordinates. As Hitler got ready for war, he replaced professional diplomats with Nazis. (High Beam Research, 2010). Many former disbelievers were converted by Hitler's diplomatic coups. He also played on the desire for peace and the fear of Communism with the bigger European states to achieve his expansionist goals. To stall retaliation, he claimed to be rectifying the Treaty of Versailles. Italy, in time became Germany's satellite. Hitler had Austrian chancellor Engelberg Dollfuss assassinated. (Answers Corporation, 2010).

During WWII, with his nonaggression pact with Stalin, Hitler annexed Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the USSR and attacked eastern Poland. Although Hitler honored the pact, he only did so until he found it convenient to attack the USSR in June 1941. In December 1941, he assumed personal command of war strategy. (Warlimont, 1964). It only led to disaster. In early 1943, he refused to admit defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad. He brought death to lots of German troops. As the war turned against Hitler, his horrible extermination of the Jews, was put into effect, and he gave lots of power to Heinrich Himmler and the Gestapo, the much-hated street police, and the Praetorian Guard (also referred to as the SS).

In July, 1944, the German military situation became desperate, and a group of high military and civil officials planned and executed an assassination attempt on the Fuhrer. Hitler survived and escaped a bomb explosion with very few injuries. Most of the plotters of the attack were located and executed. Even though the war was hopelessly lost by early 1945, Hitler insisted that the Germans continue to fight to the death. Along with the last German collapse in April 1945, Hitler renounced Nazi leaders who wished to negotiate, and remained in Berlin while it was stormed by the Russians.

On April 29, 1945 Hitler married mistress Eva Braun, and on April 30, they committed suicide together. They were in an underground bunker of the chancellery building, and they ordered that their bodies be burned. Hitler's reign left Germany devastated. His legacy is one memory of the most dreadful tyranny of modern times. (High Beam Research, 2010).

The second catalyst that drove the U. S. to enter WWII was directly related to the holocaust. By the end of the 1930's, there was deliberate anti-Semitism in the streets of Europe. (World War II, 2005). Jews were forced to wear yellow bands with the Star of David on their arms so they could be easily identified. Jewish stores were boycotted, and Jewish people were robbed and treated like animals. There were even ghettos set up for Jews to live, where they could be watched over closely. All of these terrible acts climaxed on November 9 1938, a night known as Krystallnacht (the night of broken glass) where there were mobs of people destroying Jewish stores and houses, and beating Jews to death on the street.

Around this time, camps were set up for Jews and other minorities, where they would go to work for the Nazi's and eventually, if not right away, be killed. The conditions in these camps, as seen in the picture above, were very poor. The camps were a place where there was no privacy, and no freedom. There were dorms, which squished in hundreds of people. Often one would have to sleep in the same bed with five or six other people with no room to move. There were group bathrooms as well. People did not have a choice but to live like this. If they spoke out, they would be killed. If they seemed weak they would be killed. If they did not fill their quota for work, they would be killed. Women were raped and beaten, others had experiments done on them by crooked doctors, such as Dr. Joseph Mengele, who tortured his patients, in an effort to use them as lab rats. There were mass exterminations, which took place in gas chambers, and many other atrocities were committed against these people. Individuals that did survive

or escape these atrocities survived with the knowledge of loved ones or friends that were not as lucky.

The survivors of these concentration camps were typically left with few possessions and no place to live. Many of them traveled to other parts of the world in an effort to start over. Many immigrated to places such as Palestine, which soon after became the land of Israel, and many chose to immigrate to North America as well. At this time both Canada and The U. S. had very strict policies on immigration and received a lot of criticism over this. Eventually decisions were made to be more lenient on these policies. America was considered the land of freedom, which projected the image that there was no anti-Semitism within the country. This projection made it so Jews and any other minority felt they could live without fear of persecution. There were many opportunities for these immigrants when seeking jobs and raising their families. The USA and Canada represented democracy and this made a great home for those who needed it.

The third catalyst that brought the U. S. into WWII was the tragic, unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor. This unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor on, December 7, 1941 left millions of Americans in awe. (Schneider & Schneider, 2003). This historic event led to many decisions regarding Americans joining in the war. It is one of the most significant and tragic moments in American history.

Pearl Harbor is located on the Oahu Island of Hawaii. It was established in 1908 as a naval base of the U. S. Pacific Fleet. Various services provided on

the naval base included a naval shipyard, a supply center, and a submarine headquarters.

During World War II, the Japanese were in desperate need of many natural resources. They decided to take control of the East Indies and Southeast Asia because those areas were very rich in raw materials. A Pacific war was obviously unavoidable. Therefore, the U. S. began to propose peace negotiations with Japan. The Prime Minister of Japan at the time was Tojo Hideki. His corresponding messages to the U. S. proposals, during late November, gave the impression that he agreed with the negotiations and that the relationship between the two nations would soon be settled.

America was deceived. The Japanese government could have cared less about the peace agreements and had secretly decided on attacking the United States without declaring war. Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku was the Commander in Chief of Japan's fleet at the time. He was one of the people that conscientiously constructed the plans for the attack on Pearl Harbor. On November 26, 1941, a Japanese fleet sailed out to a point about two hundred seventy-five miles north of Hawaii. On December 7, 1941, an estimated three hundred sixty planes were launched. At approximately 7: 55 AM that same day, the first Japanese air craft's appeared.

They included torpedo planes, bombers and fighters. An American Army private noticed the large cluster of planes approaching Pearl Harbor on a radar screen. Unfortunately he was told not to pay any attention to them because a flight of B-17's was expected. The goals of the Japanese were



easily accomplished. They had caught the U. S. unprepared and were able to approach the island without any obstacles. Since the ships that were anchored at the island were grouped all together, the Japanese had a perfect target to aim for and they did. In minutes destruction, death, and turmoil took over Pearl Harbor, as seen in the picture above. The cruel Japanese continuously bombed the naval base killing hundreds of Americans and destroying everything in sight. It wasn't until 9 o'clock that morning that the Japanese made it clear to the U. S. that there was a state of war between them.

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor was very unjust and malevolent. It deeply crippled the United States in two ways. One way was the destruction of the crafts at the naval base. This took place in a matter of thirty minutes. Numerous battleships such as the U. S. S. Nevada, Arizona, California, West Virginia, and Oklahoma were ruined. The Japanese also destroyed two hundred planes. Another thing that impaired the U. S. was the great loss of men. Over 2, 400 innocent Americans were killed. Families all across America struggled with a great pain in their hearts.

This great pain and rage felt by Americans grew and changed into something else that was more useful. The sneak attack brought a feeling of nationalism among Americans. People had a sense of unity because they felt each other's pain. People felt that the actions taken by the Japanese clearly showed that they were cowards and could not be trusted. They snuck up on the U. S. because they knew that it was the only way to harm the U. S. in a very serious and critical way. The attack on Pearl Harbor gave everyone

determination and motivated the people in the U. S. to fight back. This chaotic, heartbreaking, and frightening feeling that turned into bravery and fortitude resulted in the United States entry into World War II.

The very next day, after the tragic experience of the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Senate voted eighty-two to zero for a declaration of war on Japan and the House voted three hundred eighty-eight to one. That afternoon President Roosevelt signed the declaration. A short time later, on December 11, Germany declared war on the United States. This made it possible for the U. S. to end neutrality in the European war. After Germany, Italy declared war on the U. S. and the U. S. responded with a declaration of war also.

On December 7, 1941 President Roosevelt addressed Congress stating that this “ is a date that will live in infamy”. One cautiously and well conducted plan weakened the United States. The disastrous incident made America stronger and wiser. As a result, America does not trust other nations as quickly as it once did. Today a monument with white concrete and a steel edifice sits atop the place where the battleship Arizona sunk. It is a national monument and a memorial of this painful event. Pearl Harbor continues to serve as a naval base for the U. S. Pacific Fleet.

Scholars will continue to examine human history, and many will debate the reasons WWII came to pass. From individuals who continue to think that WWII was a continuance of WWI to individuals believing that other catalysts such as Hitler, the atrocities of the Holocaust, or the unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor launched the U. S. into the war. One issue no scholar will

debate is the unnecessary loss of lives caused by a tyrant like Adolf Hitler. The U. S. involvement in WWII had a significant effect in ending the war and saving countless lives.

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