

READING CHECK

What was the “island-hopping” campaign?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *objective* mean in the underlined sentence? Say the sentence aloud and omit *objective*. Think about other words that might complete the sentence. Use this strategy to help you figure out the meaning of *objective*.

READING SKILL

Recognize Sequence Create a timeline of the events that took place in Japan from August 6 to August 10, 1945.

In Europe, World War II officially ended on May 8, 1945, or V-E Day. The Allies were able to defeat the Axis powers for many reasons. Because of their location, the Axis powers had to fight on several fronts at the same time. Hitler also made some poor military decisions. For example, he underestimated the Soviet Union’s ability to fight. The huge productive capacity of the United States was another factor. At the same time, Allied bombing hindered German production and caused oil to become scarce. This nearly grounded the Luftwaffe.

Although Germany was defeated, the Allies still had to defeat the Japanese in the Pacific. By May 1942, the Japanese had gained control of the Philippines, killing thousands during the **Bataan Death March**. However, after the battles of Midway and the Coral Sea, the United States took the offensive. General Douglas MacArthur began an “island-hopping” campaign to recapture islands from the Japanese. The captured islands served as stepping-stones to the next objective—Japan. The Americans gradually moved north and were able to blockade Japan. Bombers pounded Japanese cities and industries. At the same time, the British pushed Japanese forces back into the jungles of Burma and Malaya.

In early 1945, bloody battles on Iwo Jima and Okinawa showed that the Japanese would fight to the death rather than surrender. Some young Japanese became **kamikaze** pilots who flew their planes purposefully into U.S. ships. While Allied military leaders planned to invade, scientists offered another way to end the war. They had conducted research, code-named the **Manhattan Project**, that led to the building of an atomic bomb for the United States. The new U.S. president, Harry Truman, decided that dropping the bomb would save American lives. The Allies first issued a warning to the Japanese to surrender or face “utter and complete destruction,” but the warning was ignored. On August 6, 1945, a U.S. plane dropped an atomic bomb on the city of **Hiroshima**, instantly killing more than 70,000 people. Many more died from radiation sickness. When the Japanese did not surrender, another bomb was dropped on **Nagasaki** on August 9. The next day, Japan finally surrendered, ending World War II.

Review Questions

1. What were two reasons why the Allies were able to defeat the Axis powers?

2. Why did Truman decide to drop the atomic bomb on Japan?
