The War in the Pacific

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US History
Post-Pearl Harbor Japanese Success

- The Japanese took many of the islands in the Pacific quickly after Pearl Harbor
  - Hong Kong
  - Malaysia
  - New Guinea
  - Guam and Wake

- Posed a great risk to Australia
Battle of the Coral Sea

• Took place just north of Australia in May 1942
• Introduced a new type of naval warfare based off of aircraft carriers
  – First time naval ships fought a battle without ever seeing each other
• Weather complicated things (Japanese planes actually landed on an American aircraft carrier)
• Losses were relatively even with each side losing 1 carrier
Naval Aircraft

- The American fighter planes were slower and less maneuverable but had a lot of armor.
- The Japanese “Zero” was fast and maneuverable with almost no armor.
- Result: the Japanese ran out of good pilots as the war dragged on.
Battle of Midway

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• Japanese staged a major invasion, but America intercepted their codes and avoided falling for a fake invasion of Alaska
Battle of Midway

- American aircraft carriers ambushed the Japanese
- America had 1 carrier severely damaged, and 4 Japanese carriers were sunk (of Japan’s total 6)
- Was the turning point of the War in the Pacific as the Americans got the upper hand
Island Hopping

• The Japanese controlled hundreds of tiny islands in the Pacific Ocean
• The American strategy in the Pacific became known as “island hopping”
  – Attacking only a few strategic islands and leaving the Japanese on other islands stranded
• Resulted in things like this...
Guadalcanal

- Probably the most famous battle for the US Marine Corps
- 6-month brutal battle that forced the Japanese to devote much of their naval and air force assets to defend
- Marines finally won the victory
The Philippines

• Hours after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese attacked the Philippines (1941-1942)
  – They quickly won
• General Douglas MacArthur was the highest ranking American in the Pacific Theater
• When he was forced to leave the Philippines for the safety of Australia, he famously said, “I shall return.”
The Philippines

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  – The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines and proceed from Corregidor to Australia for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing the American offensive against Japan, a primary objective of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return.
The Philippines

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- General MacArthur hatched a plan to take the Philippines back in 1944...
The Philippines

• With the Japanese military depleted, the Battle of Leyte Gulf in the Philippines in 1944 was the largest (and most decisive) battles in the Pacific Theater
  – Saw the first usage of kamikazes
• America soon reconquered the Philippines
Iwo Jima

• A tiny island that saw 70,000 Marines face off against 22,060 Japanese defenders
• It was practically one solid network of tunnels, bunkers, and machine guns
  – 6812 Marines KIA, 19219 Marines WIA/MIA
  – 21844 Japanese KIA, 216 Japanese captured
• Though many debate the value of the operation, the Marines celebrate it as one of their great victories
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• The flag raising picture became the most iconic of the war
Okinawa

- Okinawa is a small island that is actually part of Japan but 400 miles south of the largest island
  - Roughly ¼ the size of Rhode Island
- The United States wanted airbases close to Japan but also to see what an invasion of Japan would look like
  - It turned out to be the bloodiest battle in the Pacific Theater
Okinawa

- 183,000 Americans faced 117,000 Japanese military for 20 days
  - 45,609 Americans KIA and 38,916 Americans WIA
  - 95,000+ Japanese military KIA, 10,755 Japanese military captured, and 150,000 Japanese civilians KIA

- The Japanese military often shielded themselves in civilians areas and whole cities of Japanese civilians committed suicide to avoid capture by the Americans
  - This led, in part, to the decision to use the atom bomb on the Japanese rather than invade
Key Ideas

• Japanese fighting to the death
  – Kamikazes: deliberately crashing planes into American ships
  – Samurai code required Japanese to fight to the death for their ruler
  – Thus, there was no surrender for Japanese soldiers
• Brutal treatment of prisoners and locals by the Japanese
• Defeating Japan would be extremely costly