World War 2 Turning Points

Grade 10 history · 1939 – 1945

Name: Date: Score: / 26

What makes an event a turning point

Historians call an event a **turning point** when the likely outcome of a war changed because of it. That is a harder test than being large or famous. A battle can kill hundreds of thousands and change nothing strategic; a decision taken in a week can decide everything that follows.

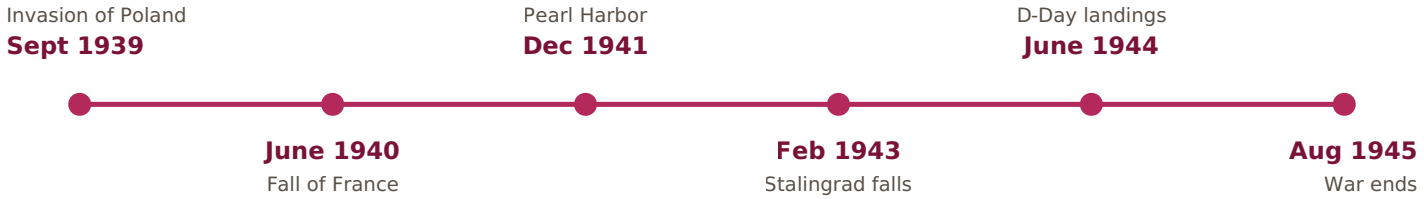
Second World War turning points are usually argued over two questions. Did the event change which side held the initiative? And did it cost one side something it could not replace — an army, a fleet, an oil supply, a year of production?

That second question is why industrial capacity appears in almost every answer. By 1944 the Allies were building more aircraft than the Axis could destroy and more ships than its submarines could sink. Once that gap opened, individual battles mattered less than the arithmetic behind them.

Part A — Vocabulary match each term to its meaning (8 marks)

1. Turning point	_____	A. An event after which the likely outcome of a conflict changed
2. Blitzkrieg	_____	B. Surrender with no terms offered to the defeated side
3. Attrition	_____	C. A fast attack using tanks, aircraft and infantry together
4. Two-front war	_____	D. Wearing an enemy down by steady losses rather than one battle
5. Total war	_____	E. A war in which a state directs its whole economy and population to the effort
6. Encirclement	_____	F. A foothold on a defended coast held long enough to land more troops
7. Beachhead	_____	G. Fighting major campaigns in two directions at once
8. Unconditional surrender	_____	H. Surrounding an enemy force so it cannot be supplied or withdraw

Part B — Timeline use the timeline above to answer (4 marks)



1. How many years passed between the invasion of Poland and the D-Day landings?

2. Name the two events on the timeline that brought a new major power into the war.

Part C — Fill in the blanks (6 marks)

1. A fast combined attack by tanks, aircraft and infantry was called _____.

2. Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union created a _____-front war.

3. Surrounding an enemy so it cannot be supplied is called _____.

4. A foothold held on a defended coast is a _____.

5. Wearing an enemy down through steady losses is a war of _____.

6. The Allies demanded _____ surrender rather than negotiated terms.

Part D — Why it mattered give the strategic consequence (5 marks)

Event	Why it was a turning point
Pearl Harbor, December 1941	
Operation Barbarossa, June 1941	
Stalingrad, winter 1942–43	
Midway, June 1942	
D-Day, June 1944	

Part E — Source (3 marks)

SOURCE A

We shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be.

— Winston Churchill, speech to the House of Commons, June 1940

1. This speech was made days after the fall of France. What was it trying to achieve, and who was the intended audience beyond the room?

World War 2 Turning Points — Answer Key

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Part A — Vocabulary

1. **Turning point** → A
2. **Blitzkrieg** → C
3. **Attrition** → D
4. **Two-front war** → G
5. **Total war** → E
6. **Encirclement** → H
7. **Beachhead** → F
8. **Unconditional surrender** → B

Part B — Timeline

1. **Four years and nine months**
   September 1939 to June 1944. Accept "about five years".
2. **Pearl Harbor (the United States) and, if students have it, the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union.**
   Only Pearl Harbor is on the timeline, so accept Pearl Harbor plus any reasoned second choice.

Part C — Fill in the blanks

1. **blitzkrieg**
2. **two**
3. **encirclement**
4. **beachhead**
5. **attrition**
6. **unconditional**

Part D — Why it mattered

1. Pearl Harbor, December 1941 → **Brought the United States in, adding an industrial base the Axis could not match**
2. Operation Barbarossa, June 1941 → **Opened a second front that consumed most of Germany’s army for four years**
3. Stalingrad, winter 1942–43 → **Destroyed an entire German army and ended the advance in the east for good**
4. Midway, June 1942 → **Cost Japan four carriers it could not replace, ending its naval initiative**
5. D-Day, June 1944 → **Established a western front, forcing Germany to defend in three directions**

Part E — Source

1. **To refuse any suggestion of negotiating, and to be heard in Washington as much as in Britain.**
   France had just fallen and some in government wanted terms. The speech closes that option publicly. The repeated "we shall fight" also signals to a neutral United States that Britain intends to hold on long enough to be worth supporting. Credit any answer that identifies both the domestic purpose and an audience outside the country.