**Benito Mussolini**

Benito Mussolini founded Fascism and ruled Italy as a dictator for more than 21 years. He dreamed of making Italy into a great empire. He banned all other parties and took control of industry, schools, the police and the media. Il Duce joined an alliance with German dictator Adolf Hitler. Both countries sent soldiers to Spain to support General Franco in the Spanish Civil War. In 1943 Mussolini was arrested but soon later rescued by German commandoes. In 1945 Italians who were against fascism captured Mussolini as he wanted to escape to Switzerland. The next day he was shot to death.

**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

FDR, as he was also called, was the only president elected four times. He served for more than 12 years, longer than any other person. Roosevelt became president during the Great Depression, which was a hard time for American economy. One out of four workers had lost their jobs and many families had no money to buy food or clothes. President Roosevelt created a programme called the New Deal in which the government helped poor people, gave them work and paid for food and shelter. President Roosevelt tried to keep America out of World War II, but when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour the United States entered the war. Roosevelt was a strong leader throughout the war. He died shortly before the war ended in 1945.

**Winston Churchill**

Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister of Great Britain during the Second World War. He was a strong leader and a talented speaker, writer and painter. Churchill held speeches that gave the British people hope and courage during the horrible years of the war. After Germany’s surrender in 1945 Churchill lost his job as Prime Minister but returned in 1951. In 1953 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Joseph Stalin**

Joseph Stalin was the dictator of the USSR from 1929 until 1953. During his rule, the Soviet Union became one of the world’s greatest powers. In the late 1800s Stalin joined a group of Marxist revolutionaries. Although Stalin had not played a big role during the Russian Revolution he started gaining power. When Lenin died Stalin took control. He was a ruthless dictator, in many ways like Hitler, and had millions of people killed or exiled because they threatened his power or opposed his plans. After World War II the Soviet army stayed in the eastern part of Europe and Stalin set up communist governments there.

**Harry Truman**

Harry Truman became president in the spring of 1945, shortly before the war in Europe ended. In August of the same year Truman decided to use the atomic bomb to end the war against Japan.
Dwight D. Eisenhower
Eisenhower became the leader of the Allied forces in Europe. He planned the invasion that led to the end of the war. After the war “Ike” became a very popular figure in the US and was elected president in 1952.

Heinrich Himmler
Himmler was one of the most loyal followers of Adolf Hitler. As the head of the German police he ordered the deaths of millions of people. He committed suicide in May 1945 after the Allied troops had captured him.

Joseph Goebbels
Goebbels was Nazi Germany’s propaganda minister. He tried to persuade the Germans and the outside world to believe in Hitler’s regime. Goebbels controlled newspapers, radio programmes, motion pictures and the arts in Germany. At the end of the war Goebbels and his wife poisoned their six children and then he asked a Nazi soldier to kill them both.

Charles de Gaulle
General Charles de Gaulle was the most outstanding French patriot, soldier and statesman of the 20th century. He led the French resistance against Nazi Germany and restored order in France after World War II. He was the architect of a new constitution and became president in 1958.
Key Figures of World War II

WORDS

- **alliance** = when two or more countries agree to work together
- **Allied** = belonging to the countries that fought against Germany and Japan in World War II
- **although** = while
- **arrest** = to take a person to the police station because they have done something against the law
- **art** = paintings and drawings that show the ideas of a painter
- **attack** = to start using guns or bombs against an enemy in a war
- **ban** = to forbid
- **capture** = to arrest someone or take a person prisoner
- **civil war** = war between two groups of the same country
- **commando** = a soldier who is trained to make special attacks
- **commit suicide** = to kill yourself
- **constitution** = the laws that a country has
- **courage** = to be brave and show that you are not afraid in a dangerous situation
- **economy** = the system of buying and selling goods in a country
- **elect** = to choose someone for an official position
- **empire** = a group of countries that is controlled by a ruler or a king
- **escape** = to get away from
- **exile** = if a person leaves their own country and goes to another country for political reasons
- **Fascism** = a system in which people's lives are completely controlled by the state; no other opinions are allowed
- **follower** = someone who supports the ideas of a leader
- **found** = create, make
- **gain** = grow, increase, get
- **government** = the people who rule a country
- **Great Depression** = the economic crisis after the stock market crash in the United States; in the early 1930s millions of people lost their jobs and banks and companies had to close
- **loyal** = if you always help your friends
- **media** = radio, television and newspapers
- **motion picture** = movie, film
- **Nobel Prize** = a prize that is given to a person for special things they have done.
- **oppose** = to be against
- **outstanding** = great, excellent, something special
- **persuade** = convince; to make someone believe you
- **poison** = something that can hurt you or lead to death if you drink or eat it
- **popular** = liked by a lot of people
- **regime** = a government of a country; mostly one that was not elected in a fair way
- **rescue** = save, set free
- **resistance** = group that fought secretly against the Nazis in World War II
- **restore order** = to stop crime and make people live in a peaceful way again
- **revolutionary** = rebel
- **rule** = govern
- **ruthless** = very cruel, brutal
- **serve** = here: to be President
- **shelter** = a place to live and sleep
- **statesman** = a leader who is respected in his country and in other countries
- **support** = help
- **surrender** = give up
- **threaten** = to say that you will hurt someone if they do not do what you say
- **throughout** = in all of