



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT
STANDARD 10.8.6**

The Human Costs of World War II

Specific Objective: Discuss the human costs of war, with particular attention to the civilian and military losses in Russia, Germany, Britain, the United States, China, and Japan.

Read the summary to answer questions on the next page.

World War I was once considered so shattering that it was called “the war to end all wars.” But less than 30 years later, the death toll of World War II made it the most destructive war in history.

World War II Military Deaths	
Nation	Estimated Military Losses
Russia	7,000,000
Germany	3,500,000
China	2,200,000
Japan	1,300,000
Britain	350,000
United States	300,000

Civilian Losses

A civilian is a person who is not on active military duty. The total number of civilian losses during the war may have exceeded the nearly 20 million total military losses.

- Millions of civilians were killed in the Nazi mass exterminations of Jews, Poles, and other persecuted groups.
- The civilian death toll was a reason for postwar trials for **war crimes**—acts that violate the customs of war, including civilian murder and other crimes against humanity. The most famous were the **Nuremberg trials** of Nazi war criminals.

Wounded

In addition to military and civilian deaths, there were more than 13 million military wounded and more than 6 million civilian wounded.

- The death toll might have been twice as great were it not for **penicillin** and other medical advances in treating the wounded.

Total losses—from military and civilian deaths during the war, as well as death from starvation and disease following the war—have been estimated as high as 40 million.



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Directions: Choose the letter of the *best* answer.

Use the chart to answer questions 1 and 2.

People Killed by the Nazis*	
Jews	6,000,000
Romani (Gypsies)	400,000
Polish Catholics	3,000,000
Ukrainians and Belorussians	1,000,000
Soviet Prisoners of War	3,500,000
Others (included religious and political opponents; the seriously ill; and those whom the Nazis considered socially undesirable)	1,500,000

*Figures are approximate.

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| <p>1 What was the <i>second largest</i> group of civilians killed by the Nazis?</p> <p>A Gypsies
 B Polish Catholics
 C Soviet prisoners of war
 D Ukrainians and Belorussians</p> | <p>3 It is estimated that millions of lives were saved during World War II because of the discovery of</p> <p>A aspirin.
 B contagion theory.
 C the polio vaccine.
 D penicillin.</p> |
| <p>2 Which group, killed in Nazi genocide, included Germans?</p> <p>A Jews
 B Polish Catholics
 C Soviet prisoners of war
 D Ukrainians and Belorussians</p> | <p>4 Which event or condition would be <i>most significant</i> in a war crimes trial?</p> <p>A Rebel groups took up arms against the government.
 B An estimated 200,000 people fled into a neighboring country.
 C The government allowed the mass murder of civilians.
 D The government on trial is one of the world's poorest.</p> |