World War II (WWII) was a global conflict that started in 1939 and ended in 1945, involving the majority of the world's nations. It emerged as a sequel to World War I, fueled by unresolved geopolitical tensions, territorial disputes, and the rise of totalitarian regimes. The war is typically divided into the Allies, led primarily by the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and China, and the Axis powers, spearheaded by Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy.

The war's origins can be traced back to Adolf Hitler's aggressive expansionist policies, which led to the invasion of Poland by Germany on September 1, 1939. In response, Britain and France declared war on Germany, marking the beginning of hostilities. The conflict escalated with Germany's rapid conquest of much of Europe, Japan's expansion in the Pacific, and the Axis powers' collaboration. The war witnessed major battles and campaigns across multiple theaters, from the European and Pacific fronts to the Eastern Front, North Africa, and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Holocaust, a systematic genocide perpetrated by the Nazis, was one of the most horrific aspects of WWII, resulting in the mass extermination of six million Jews and millions of others deemed undesirable by the regime. The war also saw the development and deployment of devastating new technologies, including the atomic bomb, which was used by the United States against Japan in 1945.

World War II had profound and lasting effects on the world. It led to the emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers, the establishment of the United Nations to promote international cooperation, and the beginning of the Cold War. The war's impact on societies and individuals was immense, reshaping political, economic, and social landscapes across the globe. The lessons learned from the horrors of WWII continue to shape international relations and serve as a reminder of the importance of preventing such conflicts in the future.