

HISTORY POWER NOTES

Chapter 7: Reasons for Defeat of Japan in WWII

- Strength of USA – naval and military strength
- Weakness of Japan

Possible SEQs Questions:

1. 'The main reason why the Japanese lost the war in the Asia Pacific was US military might.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.
2. 'The main reason for Japan's defeat in WWII was American military might.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.
3. Was the entry of the US a turning point in the defeat of Japan in WWII? Explain your answer.
4. 'Japan was responsible for its own defeat in WWII.' Do you agree? Explain your answer.

Point: Allied military and naval strength

Example/Elaboration:

Doolittle Raid on Tokyo (April 1942)

- Japan thought that USA would not bomb their homeland as they thought their homeland is out of range to the Americans bombers because they would not have enough fuel to return. However, the Americans decided to land the bombers in China and use it as a base to attack Japan. This is known as the Doolittle Raid.
- The Doolittle air raids bombed Tokyo and Kobe on 18 April 1942. The air raids were a successful retaliation against the Japanese for the attack on Pearl Harbour.

Explanation:

The success of the Doolittle raid boosted the morale of the Americans and showed that the Japanese were not invulnerable to American attacks as boosted by Japanese leaders.

Example/Elaboration:

Battle of the Coral Sea (May 1942)

- Japan had planned to land troops at Port Moresby, take control of New Guinea and launch their attack on the Americans.
- However, Americans had intercepted Japanese plans and were prepared for the attack.
- This attack was halted as a victory to the Allies even though both sides suffered damage to their fleets. This is because Japan withdrew its planned attack on Port Moresby and its southward advance to Australia was stopped by the Allies.

Explanation:

The Battle of the Coral Sea was an important turning point in the Pacific War as it was the first time that the Japanese's advance was halted. This boosted the confidence of the Allied troops and paved the way for subsequent victory.

Point: Economic strength

Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest industrial producer of good in the world in the 1940s. • Able to quickly convert factories to produce military productions. • Had millions of willing workers as compared to forced labour used by Japan. 	
Explanation:	The USA was able to overtake Japan in the manufacture of essential military armaments to fight the war. The constant supply of military resources made a huge difference to the Allies. The combined resources far out matched that of Japan and enabled the Allies to sustain the war against Japan. This put pressure on Japan, leading to its defeat.

Point: Dropping of the Atomic Bombs	
Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As war became more violent and Japan showed that it would not accept unconditional surrender, Allied leaders considered using the bomb instead of sending more group troops against Japan. (don't sacrifice anymore lives) • Ideological difference and power-struggles between USA and USSR also led to the Americans wanting to gain an edge over USSR by being the first to use the atomic bomb. • On 6 August 1945, 'Little Boy' was dropped over the city of Hiroshima and one third of the city's population evaporated by incredible heat and thousands were injured. • Unconditional surrender was demanded but Japan still refused. • On 9 August 1945, USA dropped another atomic bomb, 'Fat Man', on Nagasaki. 40,000 people were killed instantly and 25,000 were burnt by the explosion. • On 15 August 1945, the Japanese emperor announced his country's unconditional surrender. • Japan's formal surrender was signed on board the American battleships on 2 September 1945, marking the end of WWII. 	
Explanation:	The extreme destruction caused by the atomic bombs also made the Japanese concede they could not win the war. Moreover, the devastating effects of the atomic bombs was the last straw and forced Japan to surrender, leading to its defeat.

Point: Ineffective defence of overextended Japanese empire

Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1942, Japan occupied the whole of SEA but a relatively small country like Japan did not have the resources and manpower to manage such a large territory. • The Japanese struggled to manage the vast area under their control while at the same time, continuing their war with China (Manchuria). • Japan's military, air force and navy were all severely damaged due to the battles with the Allies. 	
Explanation:	Japan struggled to keep up their war efforts due to over-extended empire with limited of resources and manpower. Japan soon lost the initial advantage it had against the Allies. However, the combined resources of the Allies allowed them to recover quickly with total commitment to the war. The Japanese continued to be inflicted with defeat in key military battles, leading to the defeat in WWII.

Point: Allied victory in Europe	
Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan relied a lot on continued success of Hitler' armies in Europe to distract the Allies. As long as the Allies were preoccupied in Europe, they would not be able to fight with Japan. • By 1945, the Allies had defeated Germany and Japan was alone facing the Allied powers. • The Japanese Emperor wanted to secure a peace settlement with the Allies but none of the ministers agreed to accept the terms of unconditional surrender. 	
Explanation:	With Allied victory in Europe, Japan's defeat cannot be avoided as it lost the major partner in war. It was only a matter of time when Japan would be defeated as it would not be able to win the war against the Allies, who were bent on defeating Japan.

For the factors after these, just need to know 50%.

Point: Continued bombings on mainland Japan	
Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued bombings of the Japanese mainland showed the USA's military strength and might in the later years of the war. • Through an island-hopping strategy, the Americans attacked strategic islands one by one, establishing a strong base on one island before making on the next island. • Aerial bombings of mainland Japan made possible because of the capture of strategic islands such as Iwo Jima and Philippines. • Using these areas, the Allies numbed an aircraft factory in Tokyo in November 1944. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ariel bombing campaign was intensified in March 1945 where a quarter of Tokyo was destroyed. There was widespread destruction of buildings and heavy casualties. • More than 8 million Japanese citizens fled the cities to the countryside which then had consequences for Japan's war efforts. 	
Explanation:	The sustained American bombing dealt a heavy blow to Japan. Japanese factories already suffered from insufficient resources as American submarines attacked Japanese merchant ships. The flight of workers and destruction of factories as a result of the bombings brought the Japanese economy, which was crucial to the war effort to a standstill. The US bombing campaign caused the final collapse of the Japanese economy and their ability to put on a good fight.

Point: Contribution of women to war effort	
Example/Elaboration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The USA also encouraged women to contribute to the war efforts by using propaganda. • Woman Ordinance Workers (WOW) worked in factories to produce factories, vehicles and military supplies necessary for war effort. • Some women joined the force as nurses or soldiers. 	
Explanation:	The recruitment of women in the work force provided additional boost in the Allies' war efforts, which is a contrast to Japan's emphasis in the domestic role of women. Over time, the Allies were able to overtake Japan in the manufacture of essential military materials, giving them the edge, leading to Japan's defeat.

Point: Liberation of Allied POWs	
Example/Elaboration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To manage the shortage of manpower, the Japanese relied on forced labour. The forced labourers came from occupied territories and included POWs. • They were used to build the Thai-Burma railway and worked in harsh conditions. • In addition, the police in Japan tortured the prisoners. 	
Explanation:	The atrocities committed by the Japanese towards the prisoners were highlighted in Allied propaganda and strengthened their determination of the Allied powers to end the war to liberate the POWs and the Japanese-occupied territories.

Point: Minimise Allied losses from the Kamikaze attacks
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Example/Elaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The kamikazes were Japanese suicide pilots. Blinded by their loyalty to the Japanese emperor, many Kamikaze pilots were very willing to sacrifice their lives for their 'suicide missions'. • The kamikaze attacks led to a high number of casualties when the Allies tried to gain control of the Japanese territories. 	
Explanation:	The death and destruction caused by the kamikazes motivated the Allies, especially the USA to consider a quick end to the war to minimize the losses of the Allied troops.