

Ken Ludwig's *Dear Jack, Dear Louise*
Dramaturg's Notes

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1. Author Bio:

Ken Ludwig is an American dramatist, director, and screenwriter. Ludwig has had 34 plays produced across the world, including on Broadway and London's West End. Ludwig is probably most famous for his comedies/farces and musicals. He was born in York, PA, and studied Shakespeare, music, and law at various top tier US and UK universities.

2. Brief Production History:

- An initial staged reading at the Folger Theatre (Washington, DC) took place 27 Mar. 2018.
- The play premiered 21 Nov. 2019 at Arena Stage (Washington, DC). Jackie Maxwell directed, with Jake Epstein as Jack and Amelia Pedlow as Louise.
- In 2020, the play won the Helen Hayes Award for Best New Play.

3. Historical Contexts:

- **Timeline of major WWII events:**
 - 29 Oct. 1922: Fascist leader Benito Mussolini becomes Prime Minister of Italy
 - 18 Sept. 1931: Japanese Imperial army invades Manchuria, sometimes regarded as the unofficial beginning of WWII
 - 30 Jan. 1933: Nazi leader Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany

- 4 Mar. 1933: Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) becomes President of the USA
- 20 Mar. 1933: Nazi Germany's first concentration camp, Dachau, is completed
- 1934-1941: anti-Jewish laws, anti-LGBT laws, anti-Romani laws, etc. are passed in Germany
- 1 Sept. 1939: Germany invades Poland without provocation
- 3 Sept. 1939: Britain and France declare war on Germany
- 10 May 1940: Winston Churchill becomes British Prime Minister, pursuing a more vigorous campaign than his predecessor
- 1940-1941: Nazis conquer multiple European countries; Battle of Britain occurs between the British Royal Airforce and the German Luftwaffe, London and many British cities are heavily bombed
- 22 June 1941: Germany invades the Soviet Union, bringing the massive population and resources of the USSR into the war on the side of the Allies
- 7 Dec. 1941: Japan attacks US naval base at Pearl Harbor, HI
- 8 Dec. 1941: FDR delivers his "Day of Infamy" speech; the US (and other nations) declare war on Japan
- 11 Dec. 1941: Germany declares war on the US
- 20 Jan. 1942: Nazi officials approve plans for the Final Solution (a.k.a. the Holocaust or Shoah)
- 19 Feb. 1942: FDR issues Executive Order 9066, allowing Japanese Americans to be interned without trial
- July-Sept. 1943: Allies invade Sicily, then mainland Italy, culminating in Fascist Italy's surrender on 3 Sept. 1943
- 6 June 1944: D-Day invasion of Normandy, France, launched by US, British, and Canadian forces, coordinating with French resistance
- 25 Aug. 1944: Paris is liberated from Nazi control
- Mar. 1945: Allied forces cross the Rhine river into Germany
- Apr. 1945: the Soviet Red Army takes Berlin
- 28 Apr. 1945: Mussolini is shot and his corpse displayed in Milan
- 30 Apr. 1945: Hitler shoots himself in a bunker under Berlin
- 7 May 1945: Germany surrenders
- 8 May 1945: VE (Victory in Europe) Day
- 6 Aug. 1945: US drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan
- 9 Aug. 1945: US drops atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan
- 14 Aug. 1945: Japan surrenders

- **VE Day and VJ Day:** These two dates commemorate the end of the war in the two major theatres—Europe and the Pacific.
 - VE Day (8 May 1945)
 - VJ Day (2 Sept. in the US, 15 Aug. in Japan and the UK), also called VP Day
 - On 8 May 1945, now known as Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), Germany surrendered to allied forces after the Soviet Red Army took the German capital in Berlin and the death by suicide of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler and his wife Eva Braun. This day is primarily regarded by European nations like the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and Russia as the end of the war. Although the liberation of Nazi concentration camps had begun during the war, it continued after the surrender, as did efforts to support survivors, identify those killed, and document the events of the Holocaust.
 - Japan's surrender was announced 15 Aug. 1945, which is why Victory in Japan Day (VJ Day) or Victory in the Pacific Day (VP Day) is celebrated on that date in some countries, but the formal surrender documents weren't signed until 2 Sept. 1945, which is why VJ Day is celebrated on that date in other countries, including the US. The US military, particularly the Navy and Marines, were central to the war against Japan, with the US taking a lead role in that theatre longer than it was active in Europe. Japan surrendered following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima (6 Aug. 1945) and Nagasaki (9 Aug. 1945) by the US. The Japanese surrender marked the functional end of World War II.
- **US Popular Sentiment During WWII:**
 - *Pre-7 Dec. 1941:* Before 7 Dec. 1941, popular sentiment in the US was divided about WWII, fascism, Imperial Japan, and what the US' role should be. Throughout the 1920s into the 1930s, the US had generally embraced isolationist policies—particularly following the stock market crash of 1929, when US government attention largely focused on trying to solve domestic economic problems. However, when war broke out in Europe, the US began manufacturing and selling arms to its European allies.
 - Many Americans were opposed to the US entering the war itself.
 - Many opposed Fascism/Nazism and Japanese imperialism. This included American Jews (like popular gossip columnist Walter Winchell) and leftists/communists (like folk singer Woody Guthrie), who used their public platforms to denounce Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito.

- Some Americans accepted or even supported fascism, particularly German Americans, Italian Americans, and Japanese Americans. Some, like aviation pioneer Charles Lindbergh, actually promoted support for Nazism through his America First movement.
- *Post-7 Dec. 1941:* Following the Japanese attack on the US military base at Pearl Harbor, HI, and especially following US President Roosevelt's famous "Day of Infamy" speech, popular sentiment in the US turned sharply toward support for the war and against the Axis powers. Many Americans who had supported isolationism or even supported the Axis powers shifted to support the US war effort.
 - Along with pro-war sentiment, popular sentiment turned against Japanese Americans (and, to a lesser extent, German and Italian Americans), who were viewed with suspicion. This lead to the internment of large numbers of Japanese Americans in concentration camps, authorized by Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

- **WWII Background and Mini-Histories:**

- *Background on the US from WWI-1945:* Following the end of World War I in 1919, the US largely decided that it shouldn't engage in international politics (even though President Woodrow Wilson had proposed the League of Nations), and so turned inwards. The focus was on domestic politics, and the US stock market went through a boom period, even as working and living conditions stagnated for the majority of people. The "Roaring Twenties" came to an abrupt end in October 1929, when stock values rapidly crashed, gutting the US economy and driving unemployment up to 25% by 1933. Franklin Delano Roosevelt decisively won the 1932 election, and his government quickly moved to create the New Deal economic reforms, aimed at helping the impoverished and struggling regain their economic footing. The Great Depression was psychologically devastating for many Americans, both because of the material deprivations involved and because it profoundly undermined confidence in the country. The US maintained a largely domestic focus throughout this period as it struggled to rebuild the economy.

With the rise of fascism in Italy and then Germany, the US position on Europe remained largely distant, though Roosevelt developed a close relationship with Winston Churchill when he was elected British Prime Minister in 1940. Support for the US actively entering the war remained relatively low, but the US economy gained a boost from selling arms to the Allies in Europe and Asia.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, US sentiment shifted and the US enthusiastically entered the war on the side of the Allies. The US mobilization was relatively comprehensive, with the government seizing control of many industries and pressing many more into war production. Initially, the US military was primarily active in the Pacific theatre as the Japanese attacked US Naval bases in the Pacific throughout 1942. In late 1942, US forces began fighting the Germans and Italians in North Africa, subsequently invading Italy in July 1943 and participating in the D-Day Invasion of France in June 1944 before fighting across France and Belgium and into Germany itself. In the Pacific, US forces engaged in a process of "island hopping," in which they moved from island to island dislodging entrenched Japanese positions, often with great resistance.

The US military intelligence and research services developed numerous new technologies during WWII, including the atomic bomb discovered by the Manhattan Project. This was part of a generalized race for super-weapons that could bring the war to a quick end. Following the death of Roosevelt on 12 Apr. 1945, President Harry Truman decided to deploy two atomic bombs against Japan in Aug. 1945, an act intended to forestall the need for a costly invasion of the Japanese mainland, which would likely see high casualties and massive numbers of civilian deaths.

Following VE and VJ Days, the US played a central role in occupying Japan and what would become West Germany and West Berlin.

- *Background on Japan and East Asia from 1868 to 1945:* In 1868, the Meiji Imperial family regained control over Japan, defeating the Tokugawa shogunate. The Meiji's immediately began a process of modernization, centralizing the government and focusing on strengthening Japan's military with the most up-to-date weapons and training, and using that military to build a European-inspired empire in East Asia. By the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War, Japan was powerful enough to defeat Russia, which was a major European power, thereby securing its place among the global powers. In 1910, Japan began a long occupation of Korea, the first of its major imperial conquests, though this was followed up by further occupations and invasions through the 1920s and 30s as Japanese militarism, imperialism, and devotion to the emperor increased. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, on the border between China and Russai, which is sometimes regarded as the unofficial start to WWII. Throughout the early phases of the war,

Japan focused principally on conquering islands in the Pacific and conquering East and Southeast Asia. They proved incredibly successful, occupying and fortifying numerous islands and taking large portions of China, French Indochina (today Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), and British Burma (today Myanmar). Japanese imperial control was often brutal, with high rates of violence against civilians, sexual violence/coercion, mistreatment of POWs, etc., often driven by a belief in Japanese racial superiority. In Dec. 1941, the Japanese attacked the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor, HI, which brought the US into the war and completely shifted the balance of power between the Axis and the Allies. Although the Japanese quickly conquered several US territories in the Pacific, a drawn out campaign of "island hopping," in which US and allied forces took island after island, undercut Japanese supply lines across the Pacific. That, combined with dwindling resources at home and anti-Japanese sentiment unifying often opposing groups in countries like China and Korea, made it increasingly difficult for the Japanese to fight the war and supply their troops. By Aug. 1945, the Japanese war was all but lost—though they did not surrender until after their Nazi allies in Europe—but they retained a high degree of loyalty among the mainland Japanese population, and the imperial government planned to arm the populace as much as possible in preparation for a US and allied invasion. However, on 6 and 9 Aug. 1945, the US deployed atomic bombs against the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which led to the Japanese surrender shortly after. Following the war, Japan was occupied by Allied forces.

- *Background on Europe from 1871 to 1945:* 1871 was a landmark year in European history, with three major events occurring that changed the balance of power that had existed since Napoleon's final defeat in 1815. Prussia defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War and both Italy and Germany organized as unified nation-states. This undercut French power in Europe, while strengthening German (and Italian, to a lesser extent) power. Throughout the late nineteenth century up to WWI (1914-1919), European nations emphasized nationalism and imperialism, trying to build their own power and self-image, often at the expense of their national rivals. These tensions eventually erupted in WWI, which pitted France, the United Kingdom, and Russia (the Triple Entente) against the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the

Ottoman Empire (with smaller countries on each side, and some, like Italy, switching allegiances during the war). In 1919, the Entente defeated the Triple Alliance, and Britain and France pushed for a treaty that would punish and humiliate Germany. The Treaty of Versailles formally blamed Germany for the war (even though it began with Serbia and Austria-Hungary) and imposed reparation payments that devastated the already ruined German economy. Weimar Germany—the period between 1918 and 1933—saw super-inflation and a sense of defeat and shame in Germany. Italy, although it ended the war on the winning side, got virtually nothing in the Treaty, which created resentment in Italians. These economic problems and feelings of humiliation opened the door to Italian Fascism and German Nazism, extreme right-wing ideologies that promised to reclaim historical greatness by attacking the rights of out-groups. In 1922, Benito Mussolini gained control of Italy, and by 1933 Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany and immediately gathered all governmental power into his own hands. Mussolini and Hitler abolished civil liberties, oppressed their political and cultural opponents, strengthened their militaries, and began moving to annex or conquer other areas. Prior to the formal start of the war in Europe, Germany annexed Austria and portions of Czechoslovakia in the name of reclaiming areas occupied by Germans.

WWII formally began 1 Sept. 1939, when Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and others invaded Poland. In response to this, France and the UK declared war on Germany and Italy. Early on, Germany was incredibly successful, conquering much of Europe using blitzkrieg tactics (fast, overwhelming force directed at destroying enemy resistance and conquering territory as quickly as possible).

Germany's war effort stalled after June 1941, when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. The Soviet Red Army managed to slow and then reverse Nazi incursions into Eastern Europe, eventually pushing all the way into Germany to conquer Berlin in April 1945. In Western Europe, the Allies (the US, Britain, the Free French Army, and others) invaded the Italian mainland in 1943, opening up another European front and relieving some pressure on the Soviet Union. Allied troops subsequently invaded France on D-Day (6 June 1944), pushing German forces out of France and Belgium and back towards Germany itself. In 1943, Mussolini fell from power as the Allies conquered Italy, and on 28 Apr. 1945 he was executed in northern Italy. Mussolini's body was publicly displayed in Milan,

where it was attacked by crowds. Hitler, rather than surrender, killed himself in a bunker in Berlin on 30 Apr. 1945.

Alongside the events of the war itself, Nazi Germany carried out the Holocaust (also called Shoah by Jews or the Final Solution by the Nazis), which was the systematic attempt to murder all Jews. Between 1941 and 1945, the Nazis killed roughly six million European Jews, and six-eight million non-Jews, including Romani people, people with disabilities, LGBT people, Communists/Socialist, and Slavs. Some of the violence was carried out by mass shootings, but much of the Holocaust involved organized death camps in which prisoners were forced to do hard labor, undergo inhumane medical experiments, and eventually killed en masse using gas chambers.

4. Line Notes and References:

- P. 1
 - June 1, 1942.: throughout May 1942, the war has not been going well for the Allies. The British have been driven out of Burma (modern day Myanmar), the Japanese have conquered several islands in the Pacific, the Soviets sustain heavy casualties trying to push the Germans out of western Russia and Ukraine; US aircraft carriers are badly damaged in battle with Japanese carriers. Allied morale is low.
 - "Army base in Medford, Oregon": [Camp White](#) was a training base and prisoner of war (POW) camp.
- P. 2
 - Soda fountain: essentially a diner offering affordable food like burgers, hot dogs, French fries, and fountain sodas, often with ice cream. A staple of American culture, particularly in smaller towns.
 - Root beer floats: vanilla ice cream served with root beer.
- P. 4
 - [Anything Goes](#) by [Cole Porter](#): a popular musical comedy in which a young man named Billy Crocker pursues his beloved Hope Harcourt on an ocean liner, trying to win her affections. The play launched numerous jazz hits, including "[Anything Goes](#)," "[You're the Top](#)," and "[I Get A Kick Out of You](#)."
 - "[Blow Gabriel Blow](#)": an evangelical song from *Anything Goes*, sung by Reno Sweeney, played by Ethel Merman in the 1934 Broadway production.
 - [Ethel Merman](#): a Broadway and Hollywood leading lady from the 1930s-1960s, famous for her work in musical theatre and film.

- Ginger Rogers: one of the most famous stars of 1930s Hollywood (though her career stretched into the 1980s. Rogers was probably most famous for co-starring as the dance partner of Fred Astaire.
- Katherine Hepburn: Hepburn's career as a movie and stage star spanned decades from the 1920s-1990s, during which time she became famous for her independence and refusal to conform to patriarchal Hollywood norms.
- Rosalind Russell: famous for playing comic roles and women in professional positions, Russell gained fame in the 1930s and continued acting into the 1970s.
- NYU: New York University. A school famous for its arts and performance programs.
- The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht: a 1928 musical adaptation of John Gay's The Beggar's Opera. Brecht, a committed Marxist, used the show to critique capitalism and begin developing his theory of the verfremdungseffekt or distancing effect.
- P. 5
 - "an emergency and they needed doctors to go out to sea": impossible to pin down exactly without a specific date or more details, but likely the Battle of Midway, fought from 4-7 June 1942. This was a decisive US naval victory over the Japanese navy.
- P. 6
 - Oklahoma!: a musical by Rodgers and Hammerstein, telling the story of a farm girl in Oklahoma pursued by different suitors.
 - Celeste Holm: a stage and screen actress from the 1930s-1990s, who played Ado Annie in the original staging of Oklahoma!
 - "I'm Just a Girl Who Cain't Say No": properly titled "I Cain't Say No," this is Ado Annie's song about her flirtatious nature in Oklahoma!
- P. 7
 - Army Air Force Training Command: facilities dedicated to the training of pilots for the Army Air Forces, predecessor of the US Air Force.
 - Four-day pass: military personnel require(d) permission to leave their bases for any non-official travel. Leaving a base without a pass was called AWOL (Absent Without Leave).
 - Colonel Ramsey: I have not found a clear reference to Colonel Ramsey of Camp White. It's unlikely to be Col. Edwin Ramsey, who was a Lieutenant serving in the Philippines around this time.
- P. 8

- Cynthia Monroe: I have not found a clear reference to Cynthia Monroe.
- *Arsenic and Old Lace*: a 1941 black comedy by Joseph Kesselring, telling the story of a homicidal family and the son/brother who wants to marry a sane, non-murderous neighbor. A film version was directed by Frank Capra in 1944. This reference is anachronistic, because the film was not available in 1942, when this letter purports to have been written.
- Cary Grant: one of Hollywood's most successful and beloved actors from the 1920s-1980s. Grant has often been thought of as synonymous with old Hollywood glamor.
- P. 9
 - Strindberg: August Strindberg was a Swedish playwright and artist whose plays developed expressionist and surrealist theatre. Famous for dark themes and avant-garde styles that challenged late nineteenth century theatrical conventions.
 - Ziegfeld Follies: an up-market series of variety shows, comic performances, tableau vivant, vaudeville acts, and chorus line performances.
- P. 10
 - Howard Lindsay: an actor, playwright, and producer who worked with Russell Crouse. Lindsay performed as "Father" in his play *Life with Father* alongside his wife Dorothy Stickney.
 - Russell Crouse: a playwright and librettist, famous as collaborator with Howard Lindsay, with whom he co-wrote *Life with Father*.
 - *Life with Father*: a 1939 play by Lindsay and Crouse, based on the humorous autobiography of author and cartoonist Clarence Day.
- P. 11
 - CANDLE IN THE ITALIAN OPERA: likely *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini. The opera tells the story of the doomed love affair between Rodolfo, a poet, and Mimi, a seamstress who ultimately dies of tuberculosis. They are introduced to one another when her candle blows out in a drafty hallway in the building where the both live.
 - December 14, 1942: throughout early December 1942, Allied forces fought German and Italian troops in North Africa, and the Japanese continued their attacks on US and Allied positions in the Pacific.
- P. 12
 - Macy's: a prominent department store, originating from its first store in Manhattan. The Manhattan store in particular is regarded as an icon of American consumer culture.
 - Eleanor Roosevelt's column: As First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote the column *My Day*, which was published in local

newspapers. Writing about issues like the war, civil rights, women's rights, and worker's rights, Roosevelt helped create/convey to Americans that FDR's administration cared about the issues impacting average Americans. The quoted passage is from the [9 May 1940 edition](#).

- January 15, 1943: one day after the [Casablanca Conference](#), in which Allied leaders discussed war plans, particularly for the upcoming invasions of Sicily and Italy. Combat continued in North Africa and the Pacific.
- P. 13
 - [Manischewitz](#): a brand of [kosher](#) foods, perhaps most famous for their [kosher wine](#), which is commonly consumed by Jews for Passover, Shabbat, and other rituals, as well as for more general drinking.
 - [Norman Rockwell](#): one of the most beloved American painters of the early-mid-twentieth century, Rockwell was famous for his wholesome paintings, Americana, and [Saturday Evening Post](#) images.
- P. 14
 - [GI](#): a popular term for an enlisted US soldier. The explanation for the letters varies, including "government issue," "general issue," "garrison issue," or "general infantry."
 - February 10, 1943: one day earlier, the US successfully captured [Guadalcanal](#), a major offensive and the first significant US victory in the Pacific. A few days earlier, the Allies successfully gained control of Libya in North Africa, opening the way for an invasion of Sicily and mainland Italy from the south.
- P. 20
 - April 21, 1943: just two days earlier, the [Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#) began, in which Jews confined by the Nazis within Warsaw, [Poland](#), revolted in an attempt to prevent the Ghetto being emptied and the residents transported to concentration or death camps.
- P. 21
 - [Aga Khan](#): [imam](#) (religious leader) who heads the [Ismailist](#) branch of [Shia Islam](#). In the 1940s, the Aga Khan was [Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah](#), who held the position from 1885-1957. Shah was a progressive leader who encouraged his followers to embrace modernity, women's rights, and tolerance for other religions' followers.
 - [Noel Coward](#) called [Blithe Spirit](#): Coward was a massively successful playwright, primarily writing farces, comedies of manners, satires, and other forms of comedy. Known for his wit and personal style, Coward was famous both for his own personality and for his writing. *Blithe Spirit* premiered in

1941, running for a then record-breaking 1,997 performances. The play focuses on Charles Condomine's struggles with the spirit of his first wife Elvira, who haunts his relationship with his new wife Ruth.

- P. 23
 - USO: United Service Organizations, founded in 1941, provides free entertainment to US servicepeople abroad, often presenting music, comedy, and appearances by celebrities to increase morale.
 - Betty Grable: a prolific actress and model who appeared in 42 films during the 1930s and 40s and was one of the highest earning female stars of all time.
 - Rita Hayworth: one of the most glamourous and admired stars of 1940s Hollywood, and the most popular pin-up girls among WWII servicemen.
 - Hedy Lamar: an actress who began her career in Eastern Europe, but became famous for her work in Hollywood with Louis B. Mayer. Lamar also helped invent a torpedo guidance system that was harder for the Axis to jam.
- P. 24
 - "a major battle in the Pacific": unclear based on the general date of early-to-mid June 1943. Possibly something associated with Operation I-Go, a Japanese, or Operation Cartwheel, an Allied attempt to destroy a major Japanese base. However, I-Go ended in mid-Apr., and Cartwheel wouldn't begin until the end of June.
 - Guam: an island in Micronesia, occupied by the Japanese from Dec. 1941 until mid-1944. Because this letter is ostensibly from 1943, it's anachronistic for US casualties to be sent to Guam, which was in Japanese hands at the time.
- P. 27
 - August 1, 1943: in the two weeks before this date, Allied bombing hit Rome, Italy and Hamburg, Germany for the first time, and Mussolini was dismissed as head of the Italian government
- P. 28-29
 - "a second front in Europe, either in France or Belgium": referring to the D-Day invasions of Normandy, which would not end up occurring until 6 June 1944. For roughly a year before D-Day, there were rumors of an invasion, which indicated both Allied attempts to obscure their actual battle plan and difficulties in organizing the logistics.
- P. 30
 - Hellzapoppin: a musical revue show written by Olsen and Johnson, which was the then longest-running Broadway show,

with over 1,400 performances between 1938-1941, before some touring productions.

- "I'll Never Smile Again": a 1940 chart-topping hit written by Ruth Lowe, originally performed by Tommy Dorsey.
- "It Had to be You": a popular 1924 song with lyrics by Gus Khan and music by Isham Jones.
- "White Christmas": a 1942 hit by Irving Berlin, originally and probably most famously sung by Bing Crosby. This is one of the most beloved songs of WWII.
- "Chattanooga Choo Choo": a 1941 song written by Mack Gordon and composed by Harry Warren, originally performed by Glenn Miller and His Orchestra.
- "For Me and My Gal": a 1917 song by George Meyer with lyrics by Edgar Leslie and E. Ray Goetz. The song was re-popularized with a 1942 film version directed by Busby Berkeley, in which Judy Garland and Gene Kelly performed the song together.
- "Jeepers Creepers": a 1938 popular jazz song, written by Harry Warren with lyrics by Johnny Mercer.
- Western Union Telegram: Western Union is a financial services company, which was the dominant US telegraphy company from the late 1850s-1980s.
- August 15, 1943: shortly before this, Allied forces drove the German and Italian defenders out of Sicily, opening the way for an invasion of the Italian mainland.
- P. 33
- My Early Life by Winston Churchill: Churchill was the British Prime Minister throughout most of WWII, becoming an icon of resistance to the Nazis and associated with the bulldog (a symbol of British culture) for his tenacity. His book My Early Life was one of Churchill's autobiographies, focusing on his life from boyhood through his service in the Second Boer War.
- The Boer War: a war between the British Empire and the Boer Republics for control of the gold fields of South Africa. The British ultimately won, but it increased tensions between Britain and Germany because the Dutch-descended Boers appealed to Germany as fellow-Germanics. The British also pioneered the concentration camp during the Boer War, detaining large numbers of Boer civilians in camps.
- B-24: the B-24 Liberator was a heavy bomber plane, which could fly long distances at a good speed, but was harder to fly and less resilient than other bombers available at the time.
- Lord Moran: Moran is a baronage in Wiltshire, England. The baronage was created in 1943 for Charles Wilson, Churchill's personal physician during WWII.
- P. 34

- Fort Sam Houston: a major military base in San Antonio, TX, Fort Sam (as it's known) serves as headquarters for multiple military commands.
- P. 35
 - October 2, 1943: in the weeks leading up to this date, fighting continues in the Mediterranean, particularly Italy and the islands of Greece; in the Pacific, particularly in New Guinea; and on the Eastern Front, particularly around Smolensk
- P. 37
 - October 31, 1943: Halloween; in the weeks before this date fighting continued around the world; Allied leaders met in Moscow and issued the Moscow Declarations, which stated Allied unity, established that Fascism in Italy must be totally destroyed, annulled the German annexation of Austria, and recognized the Holocaust and mass executions as atrocities
- P. 38
 - German air raids: although The Blitz—the largest series of German air raids on Britain—ended in 1941, air raids continued throughout the war, particularly targeting areas with military production capacities; the village referred to here may be on the outskirts of a major industrial city like London, Manchester, or Coventry, all of which were bombed during the war
 - Dominican nuns: Catholic female devotees of the Dominican order, whose members take vows of poverty, charity, and preaching
- P. 39
 - March 1, 1944: leading up to this date, Allied campaigns in Germany and the Pacific advance with bombing of German cities and continued island hopping in the Pacific.
- P. 42
 - June 12, 1944: six days earlier, US, British, and Canadian troops land on the beaches of Normandy in Northern France, opening a major new front in Europe and setting the stage for the liberation of France.
- P. 43
 - D-Day: the Normandy invasion saw thousands of US, British, and Canadian troops attack German defenses along five beaches in Northern France. This was a major turning point in the war in Europe because it opened up a new front and eventually led to the liberation of France.
 - "buildup on the Eastern Front: in May and June of 1944, Soviet troops were pushing the Germans out of Ukrainian territory, including the strategically important Crimean

region; they also invaded Finland and moved to attack the White Russians in modern day Belarus.

- P. 44
 - Stage Door Canteen: a club and entertainment venue for US servicemembers in Broadway in New York City
 - Red Cross: now known as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, but still popularly referred to in the West as the Red Cross. The Red Cross is a humanitarian organization dedicated to providing medical services, food supplies, and basic comfort to soldiers, people in war zones, and POWs.
 - Paris liberated: Allied troops drove German troops out of Paris, France, between 19-25 Aug. 1944. Freeing the city from Nazi occupation was a major morale boost for the Allies in general and the French Resistance in particular.
- P. 45
 - "They say they were forced into it by their superior officers": now known as the "Nuremberg defense" because it was used by Nazi defendants in the Nuremberg trials for crimes against humanity in 1945-46. At the Nuremberg trials, it was determined that following orders did not allow defendants to escape culpability for crimes.
 - Sending Jews to concentration camps: from 1933-1945, the Nazis operated concentration camps (and later extermination/death camps) to hold and extort labor from Jews, Communists/socialists, Romani people, LGBT people, people with disabilities, Slavs, and others they considered sub-human. When the Nazis conquered a country/region, they would round up anyone deemed undesirable and transport them to a concentration camp or other detention facility.
 - German offensive to retake Belgium and the Netherlands: a Germany push from mid-Dec. 1944 to late Jan. 1945, which pushed Allied forces back from the front established in the months after D-Day. It was a massive counteroffensive, which was eventually contained by Allied forces, who drove the Germans back with heavy losses on both sides. The amount of troops and resources the Germans committed and lost severely hampered their fighting abilities for the remainder of the war.
- P. 46
 - Lana Turner: one of MGM's biggest stars and a pin-up model during the 1940s and 50s, known for her glamor and beauty. Turner was one of the highest earning stars of the day.
 - Paulette Goddard: a prominent star and socialite of 1930s and 40s Hollywood.
- P. 48

- Dorothy Lamour: a singer and actress most famous for the Road To... movies with Bing Crosby and Bob Hope, also famous comedians of the time.
- Bette Davis: an actress famous for playing a wide range of characters, including unsympathetic characters. She received numerous awards, including being the first person to receive ten Academy Award nominations.
- Bob Hope: a comedian and actor who became famous partially through his extensive USO tours from WWII through the first Gulf War from 1990-91.
- Ann Miller: a dancer and actress well known for her work with the Marx Brothers and Frank Capra.
- Jimmy Stewart: an actor famous for his wholesome roles (like in Mr. Smith Goes to Washington or It's A Wonderful Life) and everyman persona.
- April 10, 1945: on this date the Buchenwald concentration camp was liberated; in the week before this, Allied forces continued to advance through Eastern Europe, Okinawa, the Philippines, Italy, and elsewhere.
- P. 50
 - Times Square: a major Manhattan, NY, intersection famous as a cite of celebrations, including VE and VJ Days.
 - VE Day: 8 May, the day when Allied forces accepted Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender in 1945.
- P. 51
 - "then they kiss": this is likely a reference to Alfred Eisenstaedt's famous photo "V-J Day in Times Square," which is one of the most iconic images from WWII. The photo depicts a sailor kissing a nurse (apparently without consent) in celebration of VJ Day.