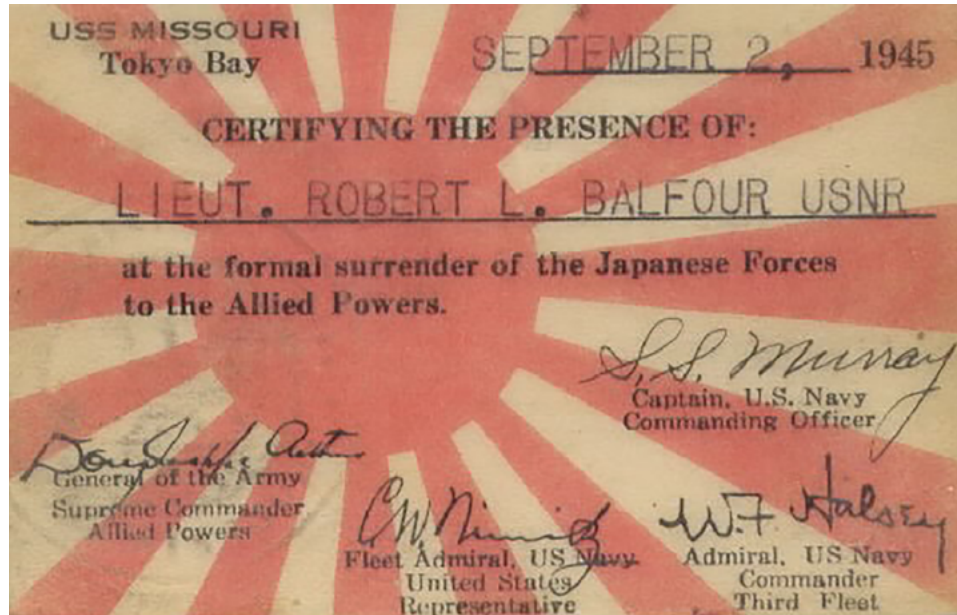




NAVAL HISTORY *and* HERITAGE COMMAND

The German and Japanese Surrender Ceremonies, 1945: Student Packet



Wallet card souvenir of the occasion, issued to Lieutenant Robert L. Balfour, USNR, for the September 2, 1945, surrender ceremony aboard USS *Missouri*. These cards were designed by Chief Shipfitter Donald G. Drodgy and produced by *Missouri's* printshop. The cards show the facsimile signatures of Captain Stuart S. Murray, the ship's commanding officer; General of the Army Douglas MacArthur; Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz; and Admiral William F. Halsey (NH 100856-KN).

Essential Question

- ✿ Why were the German and Japanese surrender ceremonies at the end of World War II different?

Student Packet:

The German and Japanese Surrender Ceremonies, 1945

Context

World War II

World War II ended in 1945, when the Germans and Japanese surrendered to the Allies, including the United States.

In Asia, the war had begun with the Japanese invasion of China in 1937. The war in Europe began in 1939, when the Germans invaded Poland. That event transformed a series of unrelated conflicts into a global war involving Germany's allies, including Japan, and Poland's allies, including France, Britain, and those countries' overseas empires. In June 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union, pulling Russia and the other Soviet republics into what became the most destructive war in modern history. The United States remained neutral, however, while nonetheless pursuing a foreign policy that would hurt German and Japanese chances of victory.

U.S. neutrality came to an end on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, gravely damaging the Pacific Fleet and killing thousands of Americans. The following day, Congress declared war on Japan. Germany and Italy, in keeping with promises their leaders had made to Japan, declared war on the United States in turn.

For the next three and a half years, the United States and its allies fought a multifront war in the Pacific, North Africa, and eventually Europe. These battles culminated in the defeat of Germany and Italy in spring 1945. German military leaders surrendered at two separate ceremonies—one led by the Americans at Reims, France, and the other by the Soviets at Berlin, Germany's former capital. On the other side of the world, the Japanese fought on.

The nature of Japan's defeat was less straightforward than that of Germany, with historians still debating the relative importance of the factors—factors that include the atomic bombs dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Japan surrendered on September 2, 1945, in a ceremony on board the battleship USS *Missouri* at Tokyo Bay.

Surrender Ceremonies

Surrender ceremonies developed in different cultures and contexts over the course of thousands of years of recorded history. What began as the need to organize the steps whereby two warring parties came together to conclude the legal agreement of peace developed into a complex set of rituals and expectations: Who stands, who sits, who signs, who speaks? Surrender ceremonies, worked out in advance and often at the sole discretion of the winning side of the war, ensured an orderly transition from war to peace and also protected the dignity of both sides.

With the advent of mass media, these surrender ceremonies gained public attention. People wanted to see images of the ceremonies in newspapers and on cinema screens; they wanted to read the eyewitness testimony in magazines and books. Military officials therefore took pains to craft surrender ceremonies that would be meaningful to broad audiences in 1945 and afterward. The German and Japanese surrender ceremonies of 1945 reflect the new publicity of surrender ceremonies more generally as well as the particular messages U.S. and Allied officials were trying to convey to the people back home.

Relevant Dates in 1945

The German and Japanese Surrender Ceremonies, 1945

May 7, 1945	Germany surrenders in a U.S.-led ceremony at Reims, France.
May 9, 1945	Germany surrenders again in a Soviet-led ceremony at Berlin.
July 26, 1945	The Allies communicate to Japan the "Potsdam Declaration," which insists on Japan's unconditional surrender as the only way to stop the war.
August 6, 1945	The United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.
August 9, 1945	The United States drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan.
August 9, 1945	The Soviet Union invades Manchuria, the Japanese-held territory closest to the Japanese Home Islands.
August 12, 1945	Emperor Hirohito of Japan tells that country's military and civilian leaders that he prefers to surrender rather than continue the war.
August 15, 1945	Emperor Hirohito addresses his people over the radio and tells them that the war is lost.
August 19, 1945	Japanese officials fly to Manila to be briefed by the Americans on their plans for the occupation of Japan.
August 28, 1945	The United States commences its occupation of Japan.
September 2, 1945	Japan surrenders in a formal ceremony on board USS <i>Missouri</i> .

Source 1. Photographs of the German Surrender at Reims, May 1945

About This Source

<i>Who took these photographs?</i>	U.S. military photographers
<i>What are they?</i>	photographs of the German surrender ceremony
<i>Where were they taken?</i>	the Ecole Professionnelle, a school in Reims, France
<i>When were they taken?</i>	May 7, 1945
<i>Why were they taken?</i>	to document and publicize the German surrender to the Allies

The press arrived at the Ecole Professionnelle, a school in Reims, France, after midnight on May 7, 1945. They waited in the school's courtyard for the arrival of the German delegation, who would sign the instrument of surrender ending Germany's war against the Allies.

Eventually, around 2 a.m., a motorcade arrived in the school driveway, and the Germans and others entered the building, followed by members of the press.

The proceedings took place in the so-called "War Room" of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF). Battle maps and casualty figures were affixed to the walls. The maps showed the Germans' swift retreat, and the casualty figures indicated the cost in Allied lives of the effort to push the German army back to Berlin. Military photographers were positioned at various points in the brightly lit room to get the clearest shots of what was about to happen. Allied representatives checked over the documents one last time (*below, left*), and an aide brought in the pens (*below, right*).



An L-shaped table stood in the middle of the room and was surrounded by 13 chairs. Just before 2:30 a.m., the Allied representatives came in and moved toward their places. After several more minutes, General Walter Bedell Smith, SHAEF Chief of Staff, gave some sort of signal for the Germans, waiting outside, to be admitted to the room.

Escorted by Major General K. W. D. Strong, they entered in absolute silence: Colonel General Alfred Jodl, chief of the Wehrmacht; Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg, commander of the German navy; and Major Wilhelm Oxenius, an aide. An American journalist present described Jodl's face as "stiff, frozen, inscrutable," whereas Friedeburg "looked more relaxed," and Oxenius, "ill at ease, like a schoolboy confronting the Board of Education."¹

An Allied officer showed the Germans where to sit, directly across from the principal Allied officers. Facing each other, the parties stood at attention, bowed, and then took their seats.

Smith spoke, explaining that there would be four copies of the instrument of surrender to sign, as Strong placed the documents within reach of the German officers. Strong then translated Smith's explanation—that these documents would officialize Germany's unconditional surrender to the Allies, and were the German delegates prepared to sign? Jodl nodded yes, and the signings commenced.

After each copy received its German signatures, it was passed across the table to receive Allied countersignatures.



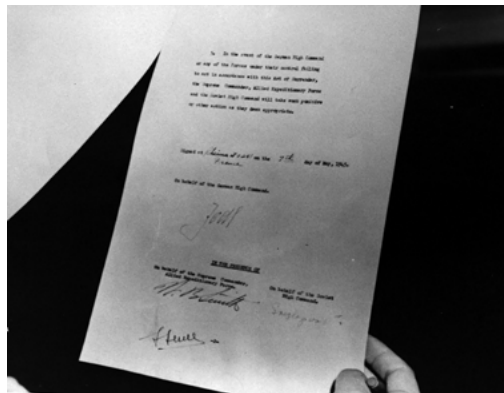
1. Relman Morin, "In a Schoolhouse at Rheims, Four Copies Were Signed," in *World War II: Unforgettable Stories and Photographs* by Correspondents of the Associated Press (New York: Rosetta Books, 2005), 179–80.



When the signing was over, Jodl stood and addressed the room, his eyes cast down toward the table: “General: With this signature, the German people and German armed forces are, for better or worse, delivered into the victor’s hands. In this war, which has lasted more than five years, both have achieved and suffered perhaps more than any other people in the world. In this hour I can only express the hope that the victor will treat them with generosity.”² There was no response.

Jodl, Friedeburg, and Oxenius were then escorted out of the room and down a corridor, to the office of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, SHAEF’s commander, where he and his deputy, Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, were waiting. Eisenhower asked the men whether they understood what they had just signed—the terms of the unconditional surrender—and whether they would really do as those terms required: lay down all arms and surrender all territory to the Allies without protest or further negotiation. On all counts, the answer was Yes, and then, after a silence, the three Germans left the room and were escorted out of the building.

The Allied leaders stayed in the building and posed for photographs, Eisenhower holding the now historic set of fountain pens and everyone smiling for the cameras.³



2. Quoted in Forrest C. Pogue, *United States Army in World War II: The European Theater of Operations; The Supreme Command* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), 488. It is unclear from the sources whether Jodl made this statement in English or German. If the latter, it would have been translated on the spot by Smith.

3. Photographs are from the collections of the National Archives and the Library of Congress, available online and for download at <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/museums/nmusn/explore/photography/wwii/wwii-europe/german-surrender/signing-instrument.html>. Explanatory text by Adam Bisno, PhD, NHHC Communication and Outreach Division.

Glossary

instrument of surrender

a legal document that bound the Germans to accept defeat and end the fight against the Allies

Allies: the large group of nations fighting Germany and its allies (the Axis Powers) in World War II

Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, the Soviet Union, Syria, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia.

Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF)

The headquarters of the General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander, Allied forces in northwest Europe

Wehrmacht

The armed forces of Nazi Germany, including the army (*Heer*), the navy (*Kriegsmarine*), and the air force (*Luftwaffe*)

Unconditional surrender

Whereas some surrender agreements come with certain promises made by the victors to the vanquished, unconditional surrender agreements contain no such promises. A country that surrenders unconditionally, as Germany did on May 7, 1945, can expect an end to self-government and the imposition of military occupation by the victors. The former nation-states known as Germany and Austria, as well as their capitals (Berlin and Vienna), were divided into four zones of occupation in 1945—Soviet, American, British, and French. This arrangement lasted well into the 1950s, and a U.S. military presence persists down to the present day, a direct result of the unconditional surrender of 1945.

Delivered into the victor's hands

at the mercy of the Allies

Source 2. Firsthand Account of the Japanese Surrender Ceremony of September 2, 1945

About This Source

Who created this?	Stuart S. Murray, the commanding officer of USS <i>Missouri</i> at the time of the Japanese surrender of September 2, 1945, who was being interviewed by Etta-Belle Kitchen, also a Navy officer
What is it?	an oral history interview
Where was it written?	Santa Barbara, California
When was it written?	1970–71
Why was it written?	to record Murray's experience of these historic events for future generations, especially historians, students, and Sailors

Our instructions had been that the Japanese delegation, which would be headed by [Mamoru] Shigemitsu, would consist of 11 Japanese. Shigemitsu was [Foreign Minister] and representing the emperor of all the armed forces of the Japanese Empire. Then there would be three representatives of the civilian government of Japan, three from the Imperial Army and three from the Imperial Navy. So it would be a total of 11 Japanese.

We also found out from what we had already known that Shigemitsu had a wooden leg; his leg had been blown off in Shanghai several years before. That presented a problem. General MacArthur had said that he didn't want the Japanese aboard the *Missouri* on its weather deck more than five seconds, and he didn't want them to be even a fraction of a second late in getting up there. Well, it's kind of hard to try to run something within five seconds. Walking up a gangway, then across a deck, and then up another deck, and about 20 feet more to get into position, so the only way we figured we could do it was two parties. So we took young Sailors and took a swab handle and put it down their trousers' legs so they couldn't bend their legs, strap it on them, and they'd get in a small boat just exactly like the one that the delegation would come over in, and there would be Shigemitsu.

Well, we practiced this about twenty times—how long it took them to get them out of the boat from sitting in it, get up on the bottom platform of the forward gangway, come up the gangway then onto the ship, across the quarter deck to the ladder up to the verandah deck, where the surrender would be signed, in front of my cabin. These Sailors were pretty good. The slowest time in about 20 attempts was one and a half minutes. I figured these Sailors were more ambitious than the Japanese would be—Shigemitsu's heart's not going to be in it—so I doubled the time and figured that three minutes was the minimum time we had to allow. We can't allow much more than that or they'll get there too soon. We thought we had that all set.

On board *Missouri*, we fixed up a platform just forward of the surrender deck, as we got to calling it, [for] about 12 or 15 photographers, so they would be right there, in good position. We put another one, but smaller, to hold about 8 or 10, on the starboard side of it. Then we fixed up [an additional] platform. We could get about 6 or 8 more in there. The rest of the photographers were placed around in places above.

We had anchored in Tokyo Bay, off Yokosuka, [at] the same spot where Perry had been in 1853. A flag which Commodore Perry had flown on his ship out in that same location 82 years before: It was flown out in its glass case from

the Naval Academy Museum. An officer messenger brought it out. We put it on the surrender deck so that everyone there could see it. It was facing the Japanese. This was a 31-star flag. That's all the states we had in 1853. I imagine that the Japanese looked at that when they came up. Since I was behind them, I can't be sure.

While we were getting ready, someone, I don't know who, suggested that it would be awfully nice to have a card certifying attendance aboard the *Missouri* for the ceremony. So a very nice card was made up. It read, on the Rising Sun background: "This certifies that *blank* was aboard the USS *Missouri* at the time the surrender was signed by the Japanese. Tokyo Bay, September 2, 1945." We made these cards up so that there would be only one for each person who was physically aboard the *Missouri* at that time, and that included the whole crew.

The newspaper correspondents and the photographers arrived at about 7:30. They were told to show their assignment to the escorts and were taken directly to their places and told to stay there. The escorts stayed all during the ceremony, so there wouldn't be any correspondents wandering around, as we knew they would want to do. The photographers, the same thing: They were taken to their places.

The Japanese were allowed to have a newsreel photographer. My recollection is that there was only one newsreel photographer (but there might have been two), and he was assigned a position on a gun platform some distance away from everyone else. I thought there was a possibility he might try to pull a fancy trick with his camera or something, or be a hero or a kamikaze by taking with him some of the central people. So I had two Marines keep a hand on the leg of the Jap, put him in his place, and tell him to stay there. And each Marine, with one hand on the Jap's leg, since the Marines were down about three or four feet lower, had his other hand on the butt of his Colt .45. There was no question that the Jap got the word, and it was clear that he didn't trust those Marines at all, because he was really shivering. He was in his place, but he was shaking, so I don't know how good his pictures would have been. There was no question he was kept well under control.

When the Japanese arrived, I was standing at the gangway. I could see where they were. I thought Shigemitsu would never get moving out of that boat; he must have sat there and wiggled for a full 30 seconds before he made any motion, it seemed, of getting out. But finally he started up and really and truly just crept out of that boat and up the gangway and across the deck with the other 10 in the delegation following him, of course, as he was the emperor's direct representative.

The Japanese proceeded on up and took their positions in line. General MacArthur came out and down and took his position near the surrender table. He made a few remarks about hoping this would usher in permanent peace and so forth. Then he turned to the Japanese and asked them please to come forward. He said, "The Japanese emissaries will now come forward and sign the surrender documents." Shigemitsu, who was accompanied by one of his civilian representatives, sat in the big chair, or got into it rather awkwardly.

He seemed to have quite a bit of trouble due to confusion, which, I supposed, under the circumstances, isn't surprising, as to where he was to sign. He was kind of fumbling around, and finally, General MacArthur, after what I suppose seemed like an hour and was probably 5 or 10 seconds, said, "Sutherland, show him where to sign." So General Sutherland, MacArthur's chief of staff, came over from where he had been standing and pointed out the place to sign.

Shigemitsu signed. Then he signed the other document, since one copy was for the Allies and the other was to be taken back by the Japanese as their official copy.

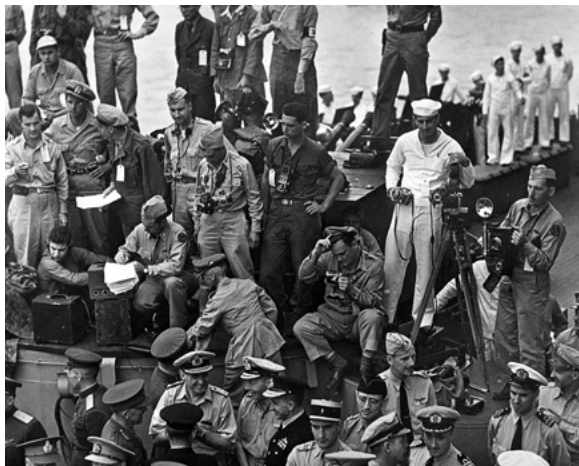
Just as the ceremony was over, when the Japanese were on their way back to land, there was a fly-by of U.S. planes overhead. It was really quite a sight to see them flying by.⁴



Japanese representatives during the surrender ceremony, September 2, 1945. Standing in front: Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu (*left*) and General Yoshijiru Umezu, of the Japanese army (*right*). Behind them are three representatives each from the Foreign Ministry, the army, and the navy (USA-C-2719).



Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signs the Instrument of Surrender, September 2, 1945, with Foreign Ministry representative Toshikazu Kase assisting. Lieutenant General Richard K. Sutherland, USA, watches from the opposite side of the table (SC 213700).



Photographers, journalists, and Allied personnel aboard *Missouri* for the Japanese surrender ceremony, September 2, 1945 (NH 2015.30.01).



Navy carrier planes fly in formation over the U.S. and British fleets in Tokyo Bay during the Japanese surrender ceremony, September 2, 1945. *Left*, USS *Missouri* (BB-63), where the ceremonies took place (80-G-421130).

4. Source: Stewart S. Murray, interview with Etta-Belle Kitchen, courtesy of the U.S. Naval Institute, recorded from May 1970 through May 1971, issued in 1974, available in the Navy Department Library (Washington, DC) and courtesy of U.S. Naval Institute.

Glossary

Colt .45

a small firearm

got the word

understood the message

Jap

a shortened form of "Japanese," derogatory, in normal usage during and after World War II

kamikaze

a Japanese airplane full of explosives, crashed by its pilot deliberately into a target; a suicide attacker

Marines

members of the U.S. Marine Corps, troops trained to fight at sea and on land, especially the shores

newsreel photographer

a cameraman (motion pictures) Delivered into the victor's hands

swab handle

the long handle of a mop

Name

Date

Worksheet (Formative Assessment)

Directions: Write your answers in complete sentences.

1. Make a list of the main events recorded in **Source 1**.
2. Why do you think the Allies insisted on photographing the German surrender?
3. What about the photographs and narrative of the German surrender tells you that the people involved knew that this was a historic event?
4. Why do you think it was so important to rehearse the arrival of the Japanese delegation (**Source 2**)?

-
5. What might Murray mean by the statement, “I figured these sailors were more ambitious than the Japanese would be,” and what might he be assuming about the Japanese delegation (**Source 2**)?
 6. What can you infer about the meaning of the surrender ceremony for the U.S. Navy Sailors who attended? In your answer, use at least two specific points from **Source 2**.
 7. Why do you think the U.S. Navy allowed Japanese newsreel photographers (cameramen) on board (**Source 2**)?
 8. What were the assumptions Murray makes about the Japanese cameraman and why (**Source 2**)?
 9. Use **Sources 1 and 2** to list the main differences between the surrender ceremony on May 7, 1945, in France, and the surrender ceremony on September 2, 1945, in Japan.

Homework (Summative Assessment)

Why were the German and Japanese surrender ceremonies different?

Directions:

Step 1: Read the table below and rank each set of facts from most to least plausible as explanations for the differences between the two surrender ceremonies. Do so by writing 1 (most plausible), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8 (least plausible) in each space.

Step 2: Write a paragraph explaining your top choice. The paragraph should contain a topic sentence, at least one example from Source 1, and at least two examples from Source 2.

Step 3: Write a paragraph explaining your second choice. The paragraph should contain a topic sentence, at least two examples from source 1, and at least one example from Source 2.

Step 1. Rank the Facts

Facts Related to the Surrender Ceremonies of Germany and Japan in 1945

Rank	Topic	The German Facts	The Japanese Facts
	<i>Circumstances of the U.S. entry into World War II in 1941</i>	German leaders were reluctant to go to war against the United States and did so only after Japan attacked the United States on December 7, 1941.	Japan attacked a U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941.
	<i>Circumstances of the U.S. victory over Germany and Japan in 1945</i>	The Soviet Union fought the largest, most destructive parts of the land war against Germany, with assistance from the United States and other Allied countries.	The United States fought the largest, most destructive parts of the naval war against Japan, with assistance from the United Kingdom and other Allied nations.
	<i>Conventional bombing of German and Japanese cities during World War II</i>	The United States participated in the British-led campaign to destroy Germany's cities through aerial bombardment.	The United States led its own campaign to destroy Japan's cities through aerial bombardment.
	<i>Atomic bombing of cities</i>	The United States did not drop an atomic bomb on Germany.	The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan.
	<i>Racism against people of German or Japanese descent before and during World War II</i>	The United States did not have a history of racism against people of German descent, and race played no role in anti-German propaganda during World War II.	The United States had a long history of racism against people of East Asian descent, including Japanese people, and race played a large role in anti-Japanese propaganda during World War II.
	<i>Policies toward Americans of German or Japanese descent during World War II</i>	The United States did not pursue the imprisonment of Americans of German ancestry.	The United States imprisoned Americans of Japanese ancestry for much of the war.
	<i>Timing of each surrender ceremony</i>	The German ceremony at Reims (May 7) happened about one week after Germany's leaders began to communicate their intention to surrender.	The Japanese ceremony happened about three weeks after Japan's leaders began to communicate their intention to surrender.
	<i>The nature of the future occupations of Germany and Japan</i>	According to an agreement among the Allies, Germany would be divided into four zones of occupation, with the Soviet Union taking a large part of the northeastern part of the country.	According to an agreement among the Allies, the United States would be the main occupying power, and the Soviet Union would have no role.

Step 2. Write the paragraph about your top choice.

Step 3. Write the paragraph about your second choice.

Extension Exercise

Why were the German and Japanese surrender ceremonies different?

Directions:

Write a five-paragraph essay answering the question above. You may incorporate the two paragraphs you wrote for homework.

Be sure to support your argument by using examples from the sources above and examples from your textbook and/or other assigned readings that touch on U.S. and world history in the first half of the 20th century.

Limit your response to three pages, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12.