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Top News Stories by Decade: All Decades

1940s

Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor
December 7, 1941
The Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on the U.S. Navy Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on Oahu Island, Hawaii. The Japanese...

D-Day Invasion
June 6, 1944
U.S., British and Canadian forces launched the largest amphibious assault in history, as part of an effort to expel German forces from the beaches of...

Auschwitz Liberation
January 27, 1945
On January 27, 1945, Soviet forces liberated Nazi Germany’s labor and death-camp complex near the Polish town of Oswiecim, better known by the...

Yalta Conference
February 4-11, 1945
The leaders of the three chief Allied powers during World War II – President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the U.S., Prime Minister Winston Churchill of...

Dropping of Atomic Bombs
August 6-9, 1945
World War II, the most horrific conflict in world history, came to a catastrophic end. In August 1945, atomic bombs dropped by the United States ended the war in Asia.
Top News Stories by Decade: 1980s

First Reported Cases of AIDS
June 5, 1981
In the early 1980s a new and deadly disease emerged in the U.S. and other parts of the world. In 1981, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control began...

Iran-Contra Affair
August 20, 1985—March 4, 1991
Ronald Reagan's second term as president became engulfed in controversy beginning in late 1985 stemming from the covert sale of arms to Iran and...

Challenger: Space Shuttle Explodes
January 28, 1986
The U.S. space program suffered a tragic loss with the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. The Challenger blew up shortly after takeoff from...

Chernobyl Explosion
April 26, 1986
The world's worst nuclear accident occurred in April 1986 when an aging nuclear reactor at the Chernobyl plant in the then-Soviet republic of...

Palestinian Uprising
December 7, 1987—September 13, 1993
Between 1987 and 1993, Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip carried out a guerrilla campaign...

Tiananmen Square Demonstrations and Massacre
April 15, 1989—June 4, 1989
Surging economic growth in China in the late 1980s brought with it a stronger desire for political freedoms. For a few weeks in the spring of 1989...

Berlin Wall Falls
November 9, 1989
Travel restrictions between East Germany and West Germany were ended on...
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