

D-Day Abbreviations and Vocabulary

A.E.A.F – Allied Expeditionary Air Force

amphibious maneuver – An attack that moves from water to land.

bangalore torpedoes – Metal tubing filled with explosives used to blow gaps in barbed wire.

BAR – Browning Automatic Rifle

billets – Lodging or quarters for service members.

BLT – Battalion Landing Team

bluffs – A topographic land feature consisting of high flat front cliffs. At Normandy these gave the Germans a decided advantage because of the angle they had to fire on attacking troops.

Bn – Battalion

casualty – A service member who is killed, wounded, or missing in action.

censorship (soldier's mail)– The U.S. Army censored or suppressed some of the mail sent by soldiers in order to protect classified information, such as locations or movement of specific divisions

CO – Commanding Officer

concertina wire – Cylindrical portable barbed wire.

DD – Double Drive amphibious tank

D-Day – Code word for the first day of a military operation.

Defilade – Concealment and physical protection from the enemy by natural or manmade obstacles.

D-rations – An emergency ration, it was an enriched chocolate bar that would provide the soldier with 600 calories.

DUKW – 2-½ Ton amphibious truck

hedgehogs – Portable obstacle, made of three crossed beams placed in the channel to disrupt an invasion.

hedgerows – Thick and high rows of hedges, shrubbery, used as natural fences throughout Normandy. As Allied forces moved inland these provided a strategic advantage to the Germans.

H-Hour – Code word for the hour a military operation is set to begin.

jerries – A slang term for Germans.

KIA – Killed in Action

K-rations – Rations that could be eaten by soldiers in the field, which would provide the nutrients necessary to keep them healthy.

LCA – Landing Craft, Assault

LCI – Landing Craft, Infantry

LCM – Landing Craft, Mechanized

LCT – Landing Craft, Tank

LSI – Landing Ship, Infantry

LST – Landing Ship, Tank

LCVP – Landing Craft Vehicle and Personnel, a flat bottom boat that carried the soldiers to shore during the allied attack at Normandy, carried approximately 30 men or 1 jeep.

MG – Machine Gun

mines – Explosive devices usually buried underground or placed underwater that could explode through a trigger, i.e. stepped on or hit, set to detonate at a specific time, or through a controlled detonation.

NSFCP – Naval Shore Fire Control Party

pill box – Concrete or steel embankment used to house a machine gunner or artillery.

RCT – Regimental Combat Team

SCAEF – Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force

SHAEF – Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force

teller mines – German anti-tank mines.

tetrahedra – Pyramid-shaped anti-tank obstacles.

V-Mail – Victory Mail

WIA – Wounded in Action

D-Day Strategy Lesson Plan

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to locate and identify the different groups attacking the different sectors during the D-Day invasion.
2. Students will be able to analyze the German defenses in Normandy, both manmade and natural, and their effect on planning the invasion.
3. Students will be able to identify the 1st Infantry Division's role in the D-Day attack.

Materials:

Maps
Photographs
Oral Histories and Memoirs
Newspaper articles
Col. Mason's Letter to Adm. Hall
Primary Resources Handout

Instructions:

1. Have students study copies of the invasion maps. Have them identify who is attacking where.
2. Have students analyze the geographic terrain using maps and photographs. What made the attack so difficult? What equipment was necessary to make the attack successful? What natural geographic advantages did the Germans hold? What else did the Germans do to fortify their positions?
3. Looking at these advantages, what did the Allies have to overcome. From the photographs, newspaper articles, and the oral histories, try to infer how the allies overcame these difficulties. Why did the Allies choose to attack at the beaches in Normandy? Why was this invasion so important to turning the tide of the war? See background information included.

D-Day Soldiers' Stories

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to empathize with soldiers by reading their stories and memories.
2. Students will be able to analyze what information was printed in the newspaper and letters written home by soldiers.
3. Students will be able to synthesize this information into their own accounts. Either a letter home or a newspaper article

Materials:

- Oral Histories
- Joe Dawson's Letter
- Newspaper Articles
- Pictures
- Primary Resources Handout

Instructions:

1. Have the students read both the personal accounts and newspaper articles and look at photographs of the landings.
2. Using information from the different accounts have the students try and piece together an account of what it was like to be on the beaches that day.
3. Have the students use this information and synthesize it into a letter home or a newspaper article.

Government Censorship

Objectives

1. Students will be able to analyze what information was considered sensitive by the military.
2. Students will be able to apply this to their own letters or newspaper articles.

Materials

Student written letters home or articles from previous lesson
Chicago Daily Tribune articles
Oral Histories
Captain Joseph Dawson's letter

Instructions

*Note: This lesson is designed as a follow-up activity for Soldiers' Stories.

1. Have the students review the packet materials they used to write their own letters home or newspaper articles.
2. Ask the students to think about what the articles might have excluded that the oral histories included.
3. Have them think about what information the military would have wanted to censor in case the letters or newspapers fell into the enemy's possession.
4. Have the students exchange letters or articles and have them censor each other's work.
5. Discuss how this is different from current journalistic practices.

Background information

As the United States entered World War II, the government had to decide how it would handle a free press in democratic society during a time of war with regard to sensitive information. It was decided that on the home front censorship would be voluntary. While the Office of Censorship was created and guidelines created, they were not enforceable in a traditional sense. If a journalist violated the code, his or her name and their newspaper or radio station would be published as non-compliant. The code was essentially enforced through peer pressure.

In the combat zones the military handled censorship issues. They controlled what information was released. Also, censors reviewed field journalist's articles before they could be sent home in order to prevent information learned through unauthorized channels from being published. The military's biggest concern was protecting vital military intelligence such as troop deployments and movements. The government feared that information published or reported in the United States could fall into enemy hands and prove useful against the Allied forces.

In both cases censorship was done to prevent enemies from gaining strategic information.

Questions For Use With Documents

Item

1 “Tribune Writer Tells on Scene of Invasion Eve.”

What does Thompson’s account tell us about the invasion? What were the Allies expecting? How did they prepare for the invasion?

The introduction paragraph states that censors held the article until after H-Hour, why would the censors not want the article published prior to the beginning of the invasion? How is this different from today’s coverage of military events?

2 “Doughboys Get The Glory For Allies Success.”

What did the Allies do to improve the odds for success on the beaches? Under what conditions did the 1st Division land? What role did engineers play on the beaches? Why was it left for the doughboys to open up the beaches? The colonel quoted in the articles said, “If anything can go wrong in battle, it will go more wrong in an amphibious landing, which is the toughest military offensive operation.” Why do you think it is the toughest? What went right and what went wrong on Omaha Beach? Could any of the problems been prevented? How?

3 “Tribune Writer Watches Yanks Win a Village”

Where are the Allied troops now? What do we learn about their landings? What advantages do the Allies now have being further inland? What advantage did the Germans retain despite the Allies taking the beaches?

Looking at all three articles, what can you learn about the Allied landings and their successes and failures? Could anything have been done to make the landings easier?

4 Eisenhower’s letter

What is the state of affairs in Europe? What does Eisenhower list as keys to turning the tide of the war? Who are the brothers in arms? What are the other fronts?

Eisenhower calls for “nothing less than full Victory!” Why do you think he stresses this? Why would he not want a negotiated peace?

5. Oral History Lt. John Spaulding

What obstacles did Lt. Spaulding’s platoon encounter on D-Day? What did the Allies do to help the soldiers avoid some of them? Describe the soldiers’ experience in battle?

Lt. Spaulding’s radio is destroyed early in the day, what are the possible consequences of this loss?

6. Oral History Captain Joseph Dawson

Where did the Germans place many of their defenses? How was this a strategic advantage? Dawson knocks out a gun emplacement, how does that open the beaches?

Dawson loses his flight control officer from the Navy early in the invasion, what are the ramifications of this and what does this tell you about the importance of communication in amphibious assaults?

7 Oral History Sergeant Ed Ireland

What were some of the risks for tanks landing on D-Day? How did this differ from the experience of the infantry? What difficulties did the tanks experience when they moved inland?

How do you think the hedgerows affected the fighting in Normandy, not just for tank units?

#8 Staff Sergeant Walter Ehlers

Ehlers came ashore in a later group, what does his description of the beaches tell you about the length of time it took for the beaches to open up? How did the hedgerows affect the progress of Ehler's platoon?

Why do you think he did not want to use his bayonet?

#9 I and R Platoon diary

What was the I and R platoon's mission on D-Day? Under what conditions did they land?

How does the account compare with the other accounts?

#10 Letter from Captain Joseph Dawson to his family

What does Dawson tell us about the beaches? What do you think Dawson avoids saying about his experiences?

Why would Dawson have to censor a letter to his family?

#11 Letter from Colonel S.B. Mason to Admiral Hall

What does Mason believe was the key factor in Allied troops getting ashore?

Do you think the outcome on Omaha beach would have been drastically different without the naval guns? How and why?

Reading the different accounts of battle, use your own words to describe the overall picture of the battle and the soldiers in it.

Using Primary Sources

Primary sources can be considered history in the raw. They have not been interpreted and put into an account such as a book. Historians use these sources to create and tell their stories. When historians use a primary source they need to evaluate it for its historical value. When they do this they ask many questions about the source to determine if it is accurate and worthwhile. They need to see what valuable information they can learn from a source. Not all primary sources are created equal.

Read through the primary source your teacher has given you and try to answer as many of the questions below as possible. Not all questions will apply to every source.

When you are looking at primary sources ask yourself the following questions. Types of resources often include, diaries, letters memoirs, and oral histories. Further questioning will be necessary according to the type of source.

What is the primary source? Who or what institution created it?

When was the source created? What use do you think it originally served?

What information can you gain from it?

How reliable is the information? Can it be verified with another source? What source?

What specifics can you learn from it?

If you determine you are looking at personal accounts such as diaries, letters, and some memoirs you need to ask some additional questions. Remember, during World War II, many letters and newspaper accounts were censored to protect military intelligence.

For whom was the account written? Who is the intended audience?

How does this affect the reliability of the information?

If a letter is being sent home, will the author give graphic details? Will they try to avoid causing worry at home?

If you are looking at oral history accounts of events there are some other questions that need to be addressed. Keep in my oral histories are based on people's memories of what happened, sometimes given after much time has passed. When possible facts should be verified in some manner.

When was the account given?

What is the relationship of the person being interviewed to the event?

How much can be verified through other accounts?

Are they seeing the big picture or a microcosm of the event?

When reading newspaper articles from a given time period, you need to ask certain questions.

Who is the author?

What is their relation to the events?

Where did they get their information?

When did they write the article in relation to the event?

Photographs need to be looked at very closely. There are many things that can be learned by studying a photograph. Here are some questions to ask yourself.

Who took the pictures?

For whom were they taken?

Why were they taken?

When were they taken?

Can you identify an approximate time period?

Where were they taken?

Can you identify a location?

Were they for personal or business use?

What is written on the picture?

Is it a staged picture?

Are there people in the picture?

Are they identifiable?

What do the people appear to be doing?

What structures are there?

What are they?

What might their use be?

Suggested Activities

Research Projects - create presentations, films, or mini exhibits on various aspects of World War II.

Possible Topics

Omaha Beach, Utah, Gold, Sword, or Juno Beaches

Operation Fortitude - The Plan to deceive Hitler

Amphibious assaults of the war, both Pacific and European

Major American Campaigns and Battles in Europe - Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes- Alsace, Rhineland, The Battle of the Bulge, Central Europe...

The Home Front

Minorities in the armed forces, i.e. the 320th Barrage Balloon Battalion

Women in the armed force, i.e. WACS, ANC, WAVES

Liberation of the concentration camps

World War II leaders - Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley

The British or Canadian Role in the European Theater

Classroom Activities

Read an oral history from the packet and then using the maps and articles, try and trace the soldier's path on D-Day.

Watch parts of films such as *The Longest Day* or *Saving Private Ryan*.

Create a diary page for 6 June 1944.

Create an illustration of the invasion.

Borrow a history trunk from the First Division Museum to show students authentic World War II uniforms.

Other Activities

Plan a trip to the First Division Museum at Cantigny as a class or offer extra credit for students who visit and complete an assignment. Call the Education Department for a teachers guide containing pre visit, on-site, and post visit activities.

Visit the Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center at the First Division Museum to introduce students to a variety of primary resources. An appointment is necessary.

Interview a veteran. American Legions and VFWs can be good places to locate veterans.

Read Bill Mauldin's book *Up Front* for a cartoonist's look at the life of the infantry soldier.

Sources

Books

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From the Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center

Dawson, Joseph T. Letter to his family, 16 June 1944. The Joseph T. Dawson Collection.

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Chicago Daily Tribune Articles - Courtesy of the *Chicago Tribune*.

Thompson, John. "Doughboys Get The Glory for Allies Success." 9 June 1944. World War II Scrapbooks. The John Thompson Collection. Tribune Company Archives.

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_____. "Tribune Writer Watches Yanks Win A Village." 10 June 1944. World War II Scrapbooks. The John Thompson Collection. Tribune Company Archives.

The First Division Museum Oral History Program

Joseph T. Dawson, 1991.

Walter D. Ehlers, 1996.

Oral History, Lt. John Spaulding, 1945, Courtesy of the National Archives. The Colonel Robert R. McCormick Research Center.

Photographs – U.S. Army Signal Corps and U.S. Navy Photographs.

Collections

U.S. Signal Corps Photograph Collection 1

The Thomas E. Bennett Collection 2,4-6, 8-10

The Theodore Dobil Collection 3

The Edward Raymond Collection 7

Maps

1,2 Cantigny First Division Foundation

3-7 Courtesy of *Omaha Beachhead*