

Topic: Battle Plans and Turning Points in World War II

Essential Questions: “How was the tide of World War II turned toward Allied victory?”

or

“Which battles decisively turned the tide of World War II toward Allied victory?”

National Standard for United States History:

Era 8, Standard 3

The origins and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the United States role on world affairs.

Instructional Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the challenges faced with America fighting a “two front” war: one in the Atlantic, the other in the Pacific.
2. Explain how the momentum of the war changed by analyzing two major battles fought in each of these theaters of war.

Background Description/Historical Significance:

Overview: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 resulted in a Declaration of War by the United States against Japan on December 8th. The following day, Germany declared war against the U.S. and America reciprocated by declaring war against Germany and the Axis powers. In essence, this meant that the vast expanse of the Pacific as well as the Atlantic and Europe had now become a war zone. Though initially ill-prepared militarily, the United States would in, 1942, strike back in both theaters of the war. Great Britain, under the leadership of Winston Churchill, had insisted on a “Europe first” strategy which President Roosevelt had agreed to. However, the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor had made it essential for the United States to also confront Japan’s aggression in the Pacific.

There were many “turning points” in World War II. However, the purpose of this lesson plan is to analyze 4 major battles or military actions where the momentum of the war changed, i.e. where the forces allied with the United States “turned the tide” and either stopped further enemy aggression, or began the process of retaking lands controlled by the enemy. For the purposes of understanding the global military challenge faced by Americans in World War II, we have selected the Battles at Midway and Guadalcanal in the Pacific; and the Invasion of North Africa and D-Day at Normandy in the Atlantic, to illustrate how the fortunes of war “were turned” in determining the outcome of World War II.

The Pacific:

At the same time as the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese armed forces instituted coordinated assaults on several areas of the Pacific. In the Philippines, American forces were attacked and surrounded by the Japanese Army. With no capability by the United States at the time to relieve these forces, these troops were doomed and would ultimately have to surrender to the Japanese. Despite fighting a heroic retreat, the American army was defeated at Bataan and on the island of Corregidor near Manila. The Japanese also quickly defeated British forces in Hong Kong and Singapore, and successfully invaded Vietnam, Burma and what is now known as Indonesia. The air forces of Japan also bombed and destroyed port facilities in northern Australia, and its army was making plans to invade Australia.

Midway

To help stop the Japanese advance, in April 1942, the United States Navy fought the Imperial Navy of Japan in the Battle of the Coral Sea off the shores of Australia. Shortly thereafter, in June, American aircraft carriers and their planes would discover and attack a Japanese armada in the Pacific waters near Midway Island, north and west of Hawaii. This battle, which is deemed by many to be a “turning point” in the Pacific theater of the war, is memorialized at the World War II Memorial in the words of a noted American historian, Walter Lord: “ They had no right to win, yet they did, and in doing so they changed the course of a war... even against the greatest of odds, there is something in the human spirit—a magic blend of skill, faith and valor—that can lift men from certain defeat to incredible victory.” *Incredible Victory: the Battle of Midway*, Walter Lord, 1967.

Guadalcanal

Later that same year, August 7, 1942, American Marines would land at a remote island called “Guadalcanal”, several hundred miles east of Australia. Here, in a ferocious fight, which would claim hundreds of lives—sailors of the U.S. Navy, American marines and U.S. soldiers would defeat the ground, naval and air forces of Imperial Japan. The name “Guadalcanal” is etched in stone at the World War II Memorial for good reason... it would become the furthest point of Japanese aggression in the Pacific. It was a “turning point” in World War II. Many books have been written about the battle in and around Guadalcanal. Two which have good insight are: *Guadalcanal*, Edwin P. Hoyt, 1982; and a more recent book, *Neptune’s Inferno, the U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal*, James D. Hornfisher, 2011. A classic study of the Battle of Guadalcanal from the perspective of the ground forces is *Guadalcanal Diary* by Richard Tregaskis (1943).

There would be many more battles to be fought and lives to be lost before the war in the Pacific would end. But the Battles of Guadalcanal and Midway foreshadowed what lay ahead: slowly but surely American forces, fighting primarily on their own, would institute a campaign of “island hopping”, retaking territory previously occupied by Japan. The war would not end until the Japanese accepted surrender terms on August 15, 1945.

It would formally end in Tokyo harbor on the Battleship *U.S.S. Missouri*, on September 2, 1945, when a surrender document would be officially signed by the Japanese.

The Atlantic:

Soon after war was declared on Germany and the Axis powers in 1941, discussions began between President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on where Hitler's forces should be attacked. Though the Americans consistently advocated a direct assault on France (the shortest way to the German border), there was general consensus among the Allies that this effort could not be attempted at such an early stage in the war. Despite the misgivings of some of his own military advisors, President Roosevelt concluded that the allies had their best chance in 1942 of confronting German forces by invading North Africa. In a riveting description about how this decision was made and finally carried out, we would recommend reading Rick Atkinson's book, *An Army at Dawn*, 2002.

North Africa

On November 8, 1942, in a combined British and American amphibious operation, troops were landed along the Algerian coast and on the Moroccan coast, near Casablanca. There was great risk in this coordinated invasion. The troops were sent in two huge armadas: one from Great Britain and the other directly from Norfolk, Virginia. They were to arrive at specified locations and begin the invasion at the same time. It was early in the war and the logistical challenges of moving and supplying such a force was still untested. In addition, North Africa was under the control of the Vichy government of France which, at the time, was allied with Germany. The first days of fighting would actually be against Frenchmen with whom Americans had historically been friendly. It was also a time when new and untested leaders would emerge in the American military. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, stationed at the fortress rock of Gibraltar, would command all forces; and General George Patton would lead the Americans in their landings in Morocco. There would be setbacks and defeats like the German counter-attack at Kasserine Pass. However, the strategy of the allies worked. After the successful landings and with a foothold in North Africa, American and British forces were now in a position to push Germany out of Tunisia and regain some control over the Mediterranean. In a major defeat, in May, 1942, over 200,000 German soldiers surrendered their arms in North Africa. Soon after that, a new chapter in World War II would begin... the invasion of Sicily.

In describing the military actions in North Africa, Rick Atkinson, in the Prologue of his book, fittingly reminds us of what the cost of war is. Today, one of America's 14 World War II cemeteries is located near Tunis and is virtually across the street from the ruins of ancient Carthage. In Atkinson's words:

"Twenty-seven acres of headstones fill the American military cemetery at Carthage, Tunisia. There are no obelisks, no tombs, no ostentatious monuments, just 2,841 bone-

white marble markers, two feet high and arrayed in ranks as straight as gunshots. Only the chiseled names and dates of death suggest singularity. Four sets of brothers lie side by side. Some 240 stones are inscribed with thirteen of the saddest words in our language: 'Here rests in honored glory a comrade in arms known but to God.' A long limestone wall contains the names of another 3,724 men still missing, and a benediction: 'Into Thy Hands, O Lord.'"

The successful invasion of North Africa was an early "turning point" in the Atlantic theater of the war, but it came at great cost and was only the beginning of many battles yet to come.

Normandy

There is another well-known American cemetery in Europe which symbolizes by its location another "turning point" in the war against Hitler's Germany—the Normandy American Cemetery at Omaha Beach. Here, on June 6, 1944, the most massive amphibious force ever assembled, assaulted the shores of France at places that are now synonymous with American valor during the Second World War—Omaha Beach, Utah Beach and Point Du Hoc. British and Canadian forces also went ashore at beaches code-named Gold, Sword and Juno. Again, the going wasn't easy and the loss of life was especially high at Omaha Beach. However, a successful beachhead was achieved and a tremendous build-up of supplies ensued. Six weeks after the initial landings, in another very bloody and costly action, the Allies commenced a "break-out" from the beaches which would ultimately lay open an advance to the German border.

By 1944, Hitler's empire had begun to collapse. The Russians had made significant gains on the eastern front; and American and British troops were pushing north in Italy. However, France was still occupied by German troops, and it was essential to liberate France if the war were to be won. The successful landing of allied troops at Normandy thus marked a new "turning point" in the war... it was the beginning of the end of Adolph Hitler. Now, it would be only a matter of time until the war in Europe could be concluded.

There are many books that have been written and films made about D-Day and the subsequent fighting in western France. Perhaps the film "Saving Private Ryan" is most remembered by contemporary Americans, and it powerfully portrays the courage and sacrifice made by the infantrymen who fought there. The author Stephen Ambrose wrote extensively about this battle in his book: *D-Day June 6, 1944: The Climatic Battle of World War II*, (1994). Ambrose had the unique skill of being able to put himself in the shoes of the average soldier. In researching one of his books on D-Day, he even went swimming in the English Channel so that he could verify first-hand the scoured out deep holes that the infantrymen described as they struggled to get ashore on D-Day. He rightfully describes them as "youngsters" who "had been brought up in the false prosperity of the 1920's and the bitter realities of the Depression of the 1930's." They had been civilians before joining or being drafted into the military: "They wanted to be throwing baseballs, not hand grenades, shooting .22s at rabbits, not M-1s at other

young men. But when the test came, when freedom had to be fought for or abandoned, they fought. They were soldiers of democracy. They were the men of D-Day, and to them we owe our freedom.”

Stephen Ambrose also knew General Dwight D. Eisenhower and had written a biography about him. (Dwight Eisenhower’s memoir of the war, *Crusade in Europe*, (1948), is another excellent resource in understanding the D-Day landings.) Faced with wind and high seas, General Eisenhower had delayed the landings for a day. However, on the evening of June 5th, based upon a better weather report, he had made the decision to commence the attack the following morning. In his typical, abbreviated, mid-western manner he said to the Generals, Admirals and staff awaiting his decision: “OK, let’s go!” ...and that order set in motion the movement of thousands of men and hundreds of ships and aircraft waiting to carry out the mission.

In concluding his D-Day book, Stephen Ambrose went back to Eisenhower to let him have the “last word”. This time Ambrose quotes from an interview that the former General had with correspondent Walter Cronkite on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the landings in 1964. That day, as Cronkite and the former General looked out on the English Channel from the cliff heights of Omaha Beach, Eisenhower said:

“You see people out here swimming and sailing their little pleasure boats and taking advantage of the nice weather and the lovely beach, and it is almost unreal to look at it today and remember what it was.

But it’s a wonderful thing to remember what those fellows twenty years ago were fighting for and sacrificing for, what they did to preserve our way of life. Not to conquer any territory, not for any ambitions of our own. But to make sure that Hitler could not destroy freedom in the world.

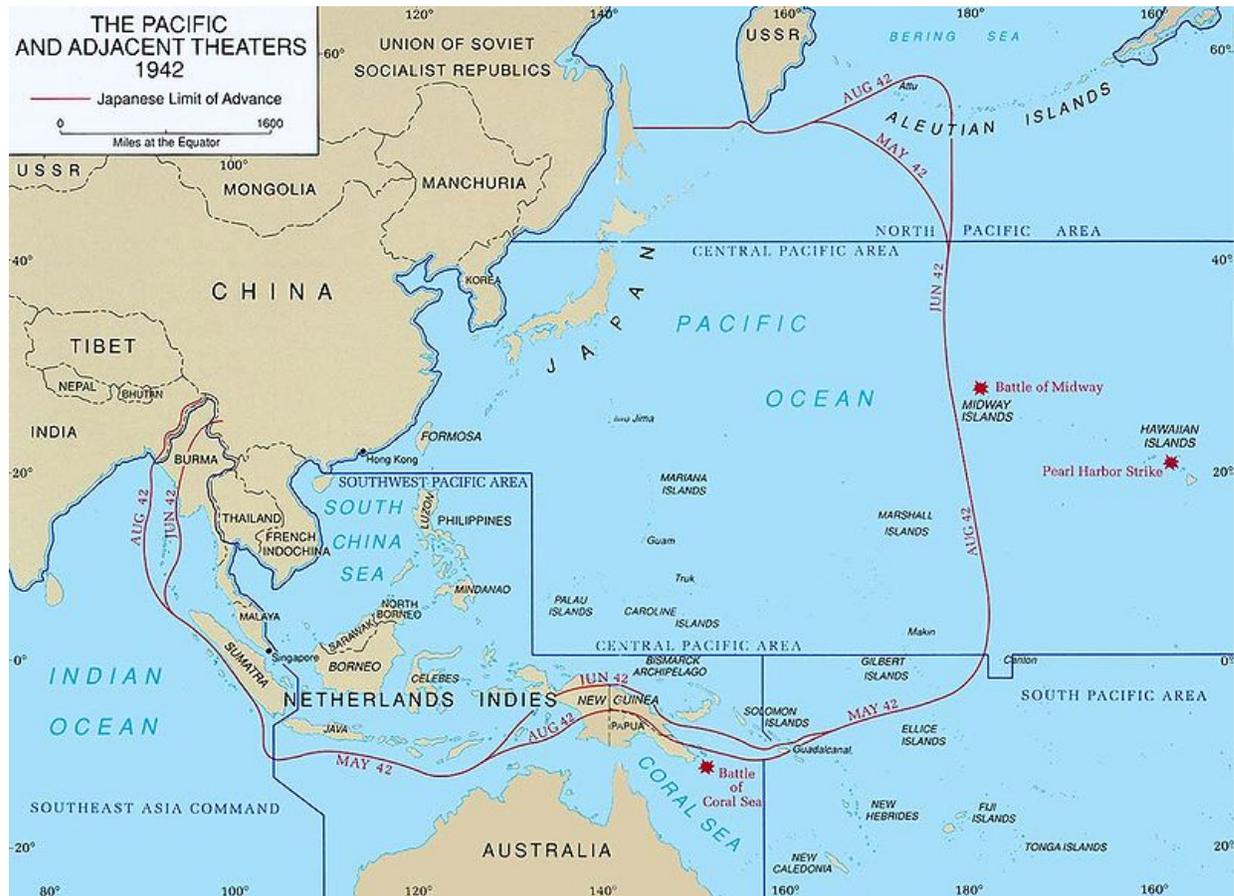
I think it’s just overwhelming. To think of the lives that were given for that principle, paying a terrible price on this beach alone, on that one day, 2,000 casualties. But they did it so that the world could be free. It just shows what free men will do rather than be slaves.”

General Eisenhower was right. In the end, the success of such major events and “turning points” rest largely upon the men and women who execute them and upon the motivations that drive them to make the necessary sacrifices to succeed. D-Day at Normandy was no exception.

Note to the Teacher:

- Students should understand that the language used in these letters, including racial epithets and unflattering references to ethnic identity reflect the sentiments of many men in the armed services at this time.
- Maps and facsimile documents in this lesson can be enlarged for projection on screens using the zoom feature on your computer.

Map 1: The Pacific Theatre 1942



Document A: Action Report by LCDR C. Wade McClusky: Battle of Midway

Enterprise Air Group commander at the Battle of Midway (4-6 June 1942), LCDR C. Wade McClusky led Scouting Six and Bombing Six in an attack resulting in the total destruction of two Japanese carriers: *Kaga* and *Akagi*. In the words of Admiral Chester Nimitz, McClusky's decision to continue the search for the enemy and his judgment as to where the enemy might be found, "decided the fate of our carrier task force and our forces at Midway..."

My orders were to make a group attack on the enemy striking force. Radio silence was to be maintained until sight contact with the enemy was made. That was the extent of my instructions. The *Hornet* group was likewise to be launched and, although the *Hornet* group commander was senior, no command relationship or co-ordination was prescribed. No information was received to indicate how the *Yorktown* group was to participate. So, with this meager information, we manned our planes.

At 0945, by flashing light signal, I was ordered to "proceed on mission assigned". No information was given as to why the torpedo planes and fighters were delayed. This meant we would be without fighter protection - a serious predicament.

Climbing to gain altitude, I led this small force on a south-westerly course and figured to intercept the enemy at about 1120. At our departure time they were believed to bear about 240 degrees, distance 155 miles and heading toward Midway at 25 knots. Our Task Force was to maintain a course of 240 degrees to close the enemy except when flight operations dictated otherwise.

Arriving at the estimated point of contact the sea was empty. Not a Jap vessel was in sight. A hurried review of my navigation convinced me that I had not erred. What was wrong?

With the clear visibility it was certain that we hadn't passed them unsighted. Allowing for their maximum advance of 25 knots, I was positive they couldn't be in my left semi-circle, that is, between my position and the island of Midway. Then they must be in the right semi-circle, had changed course easterly or westerly, or, most likely reversed course. To allow for a possible westerly change of course, I decided to fly west for 35 miles, then to turn north-west in the precise reverse of the original Japanese course. After making this decision, my next concern was just how far could we go. We had climbed, heavily loaded, to a high altitude. I knew the planes following were probably using more gas than I was. So, with another quick calculation, I decided to stay on course 315 degrees until 1200, then turn north-eastwardly before making a final decision to terminate the hunt and return to the *Enterprise*.

Call it fate, luck or what you may, because at 1155 I spied a lone Jap cruiser scurrying under full power to the north-east. Concluding that she possibly was a liaison ship between the occupation forces and the striking force, I altered my Group's course to that of the cruiser. At 1205 that decision paid dividends.

Peering through my binoculars which were practically glued to my eyes, I saw dead ahead about 35 miles distant the welcome sight of the Jap carrier striking force. They were in what appeared to be a circular disposition with four carriers in the center, well-spaced, and an outer screen of six to eight destroyers and inner support ships composed of two battleships and either four or six cruisers.

I then broke radio silence and reported the contact to the *Enterprise*. Immediately thereafter I gave attack instructions to my group. Figuring that possibly the *Hornet* group commander would make the same decision that I had, it seemed best to concentrate my two squadrons on two carriers. Any greater division of the bomb-load we had might spread out the damage, but I believed would not sink or completely put out of action more than two. Picking the two nearest carriers in the line of approach, I ordered Scouting Six to follow my section in attacking the carrier on the immediate left and Bombing Six to take the right-hand carrier. These two carriers were the largest in the formation and later were determined to be the *Kaga* and the *Akagi*. As a point for later mention, LT Dick Best, skipper of

Bombing Six, radioed that he was having oxygen trouble, had dropped to 15,000 feet and would remain at that altitude to commence the attack. One remarkable fact stood out as we approached the diving point - not a Jap fighter plane was there to molest us. We attributed this to the Japs' fear of the torpedo plane and the defeat they had sustained by that plane in the Coral Sea.

It was 1222 when I started the attack, rolling in a half-roll and coming to a steep 70 degree dive. About halfway down, anti-aircraft fire began booming around us - our approach being a complete surprise up to that point. As we neared the bomb-dropping point, another stroke of luck met our eyes. Both enemy carriers had their decks full of planes which had just returned from the attack on Midway. Later it was learned about the time we had discovered the Jap force, an enemy seaplane had detected our forces. Apparently then, the planes on deck were being refueled and rearmed for an attack on our carriers. Supposing then we, Air Group Six, had turned southward toward Midway, as the *Hornet* group did, I can still vividly imagine the *Enterprise* and *Hornet* at the bottom of the sea as the *Yorktown* was some three days later.

In the meantime, our bombs began to hit home. I leveled off at masthead height, picked the widest opening in their screen and dropped to deck level, figuring any anti-aircraft fire aimed at me would also be aimed at their own ships. All their ships' fire must have been pretty busy because I was well through the screen before I noted bursting shells creeping up behind. With the throttle practically pushed through the instrument panel, I was fortunate in avoiding a contact with death by slight changes of altitude and varying the getaway course to right and left.

It was quick work to figure the return course, and as I raised my head from the plotting board, a stream of tracer bullets started chopping the water around the plane. Almost immediately my gunner, W. G. Chochalousek, in the rear seat, opened fire. Then a Jap Zero zoomed out of range ahead of me. A hurried glance around found another Zero about 1000 feet above, to the left and astern, about to make another attack. Remaining at 20 feet above the water, I waited until the attacking plane was well in his dive, then wrapped my plane in a steep turn toward him. This not only gave him a more difficult deflection shot, but also enabled my gunner to have free room to maneuver his guns. Then ensued about a 5-minute chase, first one Zero attacking from the right, then the second from the left. Each time I would wrap up toward the attacker with Chochalousek keeping up a constant fire. Suddenly a burst from a Jap seemed to envelop the whole plane. The left side of my cockpit was shattered, and I felt my left shoulder had been hit with a sledgehammer. Naturally enough it seemed like the end, we sure were goners. After two or three seconds, I realized there was an unusual quietness except for the purring engine of the old *Dauntless*. Grasping the inner phone, I yelled to Chochalousek, but no answer. It was difficult to turn with the pain in my left shoulder and arm, but I finally managed and there was the gunner, facing aft, guns at the ready and unharmed. He had shot down one of the Zeros (probably the one that had got the big burst in on us) and the other decided to call it quits.

We found that our plane had been hit 55 times.

Citation: <http://www.cv6.org/1942/midway/default.htm>

Article provided by Arnold Olson, Public Affairs Officer, [USS Enterprise CV-6 Association](#).

Document B: Post Action Letter Home

Commander Art Burke, USN, served on the *USS Enterprise* from February 1942 to November 1943. During the Battle of Midway (June 4-6, 1942), Then Ensign Burke's General Quarters station was Officer in Charge of a battery of 20 mm anti-aircraft guns at flight deck level, on the starboard side of the ship's island. Two days after the battle he composed the following letter, "to reassure my family that contrary to the Jap reports the *Enterprise* was not sunk!"

June 8 1942

Dearest Mom & Dan, How's everything by you all? I am still alright. (Just to let you know.)

Well, the Navy gave the Japs quite a licking, eh? It sure sounds like propaganda and exaggeration for the [Navy Department] to say that all those Jap carriers, battleships, cruisers, and transports were sunk and damaged with U.S. losses only a damaged [carrier], doesn't it? But it is a very conservative communiqué. The Navy is making no false or colored statements and is being very careful not to have to take any statements back, so, incredible as it may seem, it's all true, and as he says himself all the returns aren't in yet. But I still [hate] to think what might very well have been had [our planes been a few] minutes later in their [attack, my ship] would have been [sunk]. Oh well!

Say hi to everyone for me, please.

How are you making out, Dan? In the army yet? Honest folks, I am tired so I'll end this letter right here and write more when there is a chance of getting it off again.

Citation: <http://www.cv6.org/1942/midway/default.htm>

Letter reprinted with kind permission of [CDR Art Burke \(U.S.N. Ret.\)](#).

Document C: Pacific Fleet Notice – September 15, 1942 (Excerpt)

Delivered on 15 September 1942 by Admiral Chester Nimitz - Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet - aboard *Enterprise*, the address transcribed below both honored the first heroes of the Pacific war, and spelled out Nimitz's expectations for the fleet in the critical months ahead. At the time Nimitz addressed the fleet, the situation around Guadalcanal was deteriorating rapidly. Indeed, 15 September also witnessed the loss of *Wasp* CV-7, leaving *Hornet* CV-8 as the lone US carrier operating off Guadalcanal. But rather than retreat, Nimitz insisted that his fleet "come to grips with the enemy."

A month later, as the campaign in the Solomon's continued, Nimitz reminded Vice Admiral William F. Halsey, that "Successful war against a powerful enemy cannot be waged without losses."

"This is not the first time we have assembled on this now historic deck to render honors to brave officers and men who have distinguished themselves in the service of our country. We hope and believe it will not be the last time this gallant ship with her inspiring battle record will so serve. It has been the officers and men who have given this ship her great spirit. From admiral to seaman, each has shared in her achievements which have set such a high standard for the rest of us.

Much has been accomplished since those critical opening days of the war, but much remains to be done. At this very moment our forces, in which all of the four armed services - the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Army - are represented, are stubbornly and successfully resisting the powerful efforts of the Japanese to eject us from our hard won positions in the southeastern Solomon's. Slowly but surely we are tightening our grip - not without losses - but with losses disproportionately small compared with those of our enemy.

Do not for one minute assume that we have the Japanese on the run. While we may not like many of their characteristics, we cannot deny that they are brave, skillful and resourceful fighters, who frequently prefer death to surrender. They are dangerous antagonists, but they have learned by now that we also are dangerous antagonists who are willing and know how to fight.

We have had losses and we must expect more losses before this war is won, but must not be dismayed by such prospects. Successful war against a powerful enemy cannot be waged without losses. Nor can we expect to be fully trained and ready before fighting. We will never reach that stage in our training where we will be ready to the last gaiter button. We must fight to the best of our ability with what we have when we meet the enemy. Time and not state of training is the determining factor. He who gets there 'fustest with the mostest' is still a good guide to success

We will win this war only by fighting. All the nation's productive output will be of no avail unless we are willing to come to grips with the enemy. Suitable targets present themselves only rarely to our guns, bombs and torpedoes. On those rare occasions our tactics must be such that our objectives are gunned, bombed or torpedoed to destruction. This our enemy will understand and respect. Such resolution will be rewarded. When things look bad for our side remember that the prospect may be, and probably is, even tougher and blacker to the other fellow.

You officers and men, tried in battle, know the tough job we face. The twenty-seven who are to receive awards today have earned them in a diversity of tasks symbolic to the Pacific Fleet's tremendous responsibilities. We all know that the whole Fleet would be no less ready to rise to extraordinary occasions.”

Citation: <http://www.cv6.org/ship/logs/cincpac19420918.htm>

Document D: Journal entries by Marine Pfc. James A. Donahue

“August 1942

The jungle is thick as hell. The Fifth Regiment landed first and marched to the airport. We went straight through and then cut over to block the escape of the Japs. It took three days to go six miles. Japs took off, left surplus the first day, which was done away with.

The second day was murder. All along the way were discarded packs, rifles, mess gear and everything imaginable. The second night it rained like hell and the bugs were terrific. The Second Battalion had reached the Lunga River. We had to cross four streams.

The third day we came back. The Japs had beat us in their retreat. We took up beach defense positions.

We have been bombed every day by airplanes and a submarine shells us every now and then. Our foxholes are four-ft. deep. We go out on night patrols and it's plenty rugged. We lie in the foxholes for 13 to 14 hours at a clip and keep firing at the Japs in the jungle. As yet there is no air support. The mosquitoes are very bad at night. The ants and flies bother us continually.

The planes strafed the beach today. A big naval battle ensued the second day we were here, which resulted in our ship, the Elliott, being sunk. All of our belongings were lost.

We raided a Jap village and now we are wearing Jap clothes. It is extremely hot. U.S.S. North Carolina sunk two cruisers and destroyer.

Japs are still in the hills. We have no AA but use the half-tracks against the Jap airplane. Japs landed food and ammunition by parachute. Our Lt. Col. ambushed and bayoneted.

We cleared brush from the river for an expected Jap landing. The patrols are going deeper into the jungle each night. They tried to ambush us last night. We are not allowed to fire. I dreamt that Cassie had deserted me.

Tonight two Jap cruisers shelled us. Boy, what a noise they make!”

The next day three Flying Fortresses badly damaged them. The airplanes scored a direct hit out of two bombs on one ship.

An expected invasion kept us scurrying last night. We got up at 4 a.m. to meet the attack. But during the night, the Jap convoy was blasted out of the sea. Another cruiser entered the harbor today, but the bombers got it. Our beach positions have orders not to retreat.

While we were giving the one cruiser hell, the Japs landed a battalion of men on Red Beach, but we did not know about it. The next night, 12 of us went on patrol and took up positions on our side of the Lunga River. About 3 a.m., hell broke loose and the Japs started to cross the stream. I want to forget all about it. My buddies being shot and blown apart. I can thank God for getting out safe.

A convoy of Jap ships was sighted and tonight we prepared for a landing of 10,000. Just before dusk we got 35 more planes in and the word was passed that half our fleet was waiting for the convoy. Marine flyers knocked down 19 Japs to 3 losses.

Last night we were shelled with naval gunfire. The air bombings are continuing despite the fact we have planes. Guam and Wake gunners now with 3rd Defense say this is the hottest spot of the war. The final total on the Jap landing is 1,300 Japs killed to 38 Marines.

We have had no mail as yet. When it rains here, the mud is up to our ankles. Twenty-one Jap planes came over today. They are coming over regularly. I wonder where their base is? We lose three Marines a day when not fighting. The First Battalion, Fifth, had the Japs in the hills at its mercy and they wound up ambushing us. Eighteen Marines killed.

One supply ship came, plus two destroyers, and while we were unloading the supply ship, the Jap bombers sunk the destroyer.

Dysentery has swept the battalion. It started right after the battle. The score on the dead Japs is now 1,500. I am very hard hit with dysentery, having had it now for 15 days. My rectum is the most painful thing on me. I can't get to sleep until the wee hours of morning. By the time I get to sleep, I am a nervous wreck. The Islands abound with rats and lizards, and at night they run all around you. At night the sound is multiplied hundreds of times, so you don't know whether a Jap is around or not. I get up three or four times each night.

Our battalion is up for some kind of a cross for our action in the annihilation of the Jap landing party. Johnny Rivers, no doubt, will receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. I need not fear of forgetting him for he will live in my memories.

There is some talk of us being home for Christmas. I'll trust in God.

Dogfights ensue in the air each day. What a thrill to see a Jap shot out of the air! Jap airplanes raided us and hit a destroyer. It took about four minutes for it to go down. Some say it was torpedoed at the same time.

We were bombed by air last night. I don't know how they get over us without the word getting passed. One Marine got his head blown off while messing with a Jap souvenir.

In their desperation to remedy dysentery, they are giving opium. They say the Japs are all hopped up when they attack. They say one corpsman tried to poison a Jap with morphine, but his system was too used to it. Jap soldier is an entirely different man than the worker. Their bodies are as different as night and day.

I saw a cat right in back of our camp. I wonder where in the hell he came from!

They bomb every day. Our fellows went out to the airport on a working party. When the air raid signal sounded, they went to a ravine. One of the personnel bombs landed and killed three, seriously wounded two. It was a horrible blow to us. Cameron was one of the best men in the Corps. I was going to visit him when we got home. The way our men are getting killed, I wonder if any of us will get back. Battles, one of the boys who went to hell and back with me, will be crippled. If I get home, you can be sure I will see those boys. Bombs, bombs...one goes nuts here. I wonder when we are getting relieved? The same night we got word that the Japs were going to attack. We moved guns and ammunition to the river and dug in.

The burial party for our boys dug the holes. The men were lowered in wrapped in Jap blankets. Chaplain said a few words and they were gone.

We are still waiting for the Japs to attack. Last night a plane flew over us and dropped flares on the airport. At first we thought it was gas. Fifteen minutes later, we were shelled by two cruisers at Kukum and Hell's Point. Japs landed heavy artillery during the shelling and they opened fire. Mortars were pulled out because we did not have enough range. After the guns came back, we went up again to the point to cart ammo back. Early dawn, our planes took off.

We had three air raids today, so far. Japs are using a new system. They are sending in the Zero and a little while later come the bombers.

Japs are sure to attack tonight. We heard machine-gunfire all today. They are probably moving into position.

Citation: <http://www.guadalcanaljournal.com/The-Journal.html>

Map 2: The European Theatre 1942-1945



Document E: General George C. Marshall's Order to General Dwight Eisenhower for the Invasion of North Africa.

INCOMING MESSAGE
HEADQUARTERS ETOUSA

PRIORITY PRIORITY

From AGVIAW WASHINGTON Dated OCT 052316 , 1942. Ref. No. R1577
Received OCT 060445Z 1942. Decoded by DNT . Paraphrased by
Classification: Urgency PRIORITY Security SECRET . Noted by Staff
Subject Action copy to *NH* Duty Officer
Information copy to

USFOR LONDON

REFERENCE LAST PARAGRAPH YOUR THIRTY EIGHT
FOUR DATED OCTOBER THIRD SUMMARY OF PLAN AS FOLLOWS: SEIZE AND
SECURE THE PORT OF CASABLANCA AS A BASE FOR FUTURE OPERATIONS
TO THE NORTH AND NORTHEAST PD SCHEME OF MANEUVER FOR FIRST
PHASE TO EFFECT UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS THREE SURPRISE LANDINGS
SUPPORTED AFTER DAYLIGHT BY NAVAL GUNFIRE PD TO ELIMINATE OR
CRIPPLE THE ENEMY AIR FORCE BY SURPRISE DAWN ATTACKS PD TO
SECURE BY DARK DOG DAY AT LEAST ONE AIRDROME AS A BASE FOR
SUPPORTING LAND BASED PLANES PD AT SAFI CAPTURE AND SECURE
SAFI AND INSURE THE UNLOADING OF ARMORED ELEMENTS ABOARD
SEATRAN PD SECURE CROSSINGS OVER OUED SEBOU TO INSURE
PARTICIPATION OF SAFI FORCE IN CAPTURE OF CASABLANCA AND
PREVENT ENEMY GARRISON AT KECH FROM REINFORCING GARRISON
AT CASABLANCA PD PARE SAFI INSTRUCTED AS FOLLOWS

RECEIVED
5 OCT 1942
1642

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL
COMMANDER
REGRADED
PARAPHRASED VERSIONS
REGRADED UNCLASSIFIED
ORDER SEC ARMY
SEP 15 1986

R1577

DECLASSIFIED
AUTHORITY: NND74503

(12)

PRIORITY

SECRET

THE ONLY ENEMY ACTIVITY OF WHICH YOU SHOULD TAKE COGNIZANCE IS
THAT WHICH INTERFERES WITH THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF YOUR MISSION
OF GETTING TO CASABLANCA QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WHILE
MAINTAINING YOUR LINE OF COMMUNICATIONS PD PAREN AT FEDALA
CAPTURE AND SECURE FEDALA ADD INITIATE OPERATIONS TO CAPTURE
CASABLANCA FROM THE REAR PAREN EAST PAREN AT MEHDIA CAPTURE AND
SECURE MEHDIA AND AIRPORT AT PORT LYAUTEY TO INSURE ITS USE AS
A BASE FOR OUR PLANES NOT RPT NOT LATER THAN NOON DOG DAY
SUPPORTED BY PARATROOPS PD SUBSEQUENTLY CAPTURE AND SECURE
AIRPORT AT SALE PROTECT NORTH FLANK PD PARA COPY OF DRAFT OF
FIELD ORDER AND INSTRUCTIONS TO COMMANDER AT SAFI BEING
FORWARDED BY COURIER PATTON

Recd 060743Z

MARSHALL

SECRET

The making of an exact copy of this Message is forbidden. Only such extracts as are absolutely necessary will be made and marked SECRET. This copy will be safeguarded with the greatest care and will be returned to the Adjutant General without delay.

Document F: General Omar Bradley on the North African Campaign, excerpted from, *A General's Life: An Autobiography By General of the Army Omar N. Bradley*, pp. 117-118

“The war Hitler started had now been raging for almost three and a half years. The United States had been at war with the Axis – Germany, Italy, Japan – for fourteen months. British and American leaders had agreed on a strategy of beating Germany and Italy first and then Japan, but they disagreed about how to defeat Germany and Italy. Generally, the British leaned toward what we called an “indirect” or “peripheral” strategy. They argued that while Hitler exhausted Germany in his vast land war with Russia, the United States and Britain should defeat Hitler’s U-boats, which had almost paralyzed the Allies; smash the German war production base to smithereens with massive air bombardments; and chip away at the periphery of the Axis empire in the Middle East, the Balkans and the Mediterranean – Churchill’s famous “soft underbelly” approach. American strategic planners, notably George Marshall, generally leaned to a direct approach: an early invasion across the English Channel into France and Germany, striking straight at the heart of the German empire. This underlying difference in strategic thinking would keep the American and British staffs at loggerheads for nearly three years.

The indirect strategy had led the British into a deep and costly involvement in the Mediterranean – North African theatre of war. It began in 1940, when Mussolini’s inept army in Libya launched a wobbly invasion Egypt. Determined to hold Egypt and the Middle East at any price, Churchill committed a large share of his available military forces to the area. Thereafter, the British – the “Desert Rats” – routed the Italians so completely that Hitler was forced to come to their rescue. He sent Irwin Rommel, a blitzkrieg expert and a hero of the battle of France, to Libya with a small force, the Afrika Korps. The British then had the military power to clear North Africa of all Axis forces, but Churchill unwisely stripped his desert force in a visionary scheme to help the Greeks eject Italian invaders and then create a “Balkan Army” to strike Hitler in his underbelly. Hitler responded to the threat by invaded Greece, then Crete, inflicting devastating defeats on the British in both places, while Rommel, with the slimmest resources but no lack of gall, attacked the weakened British desert army.

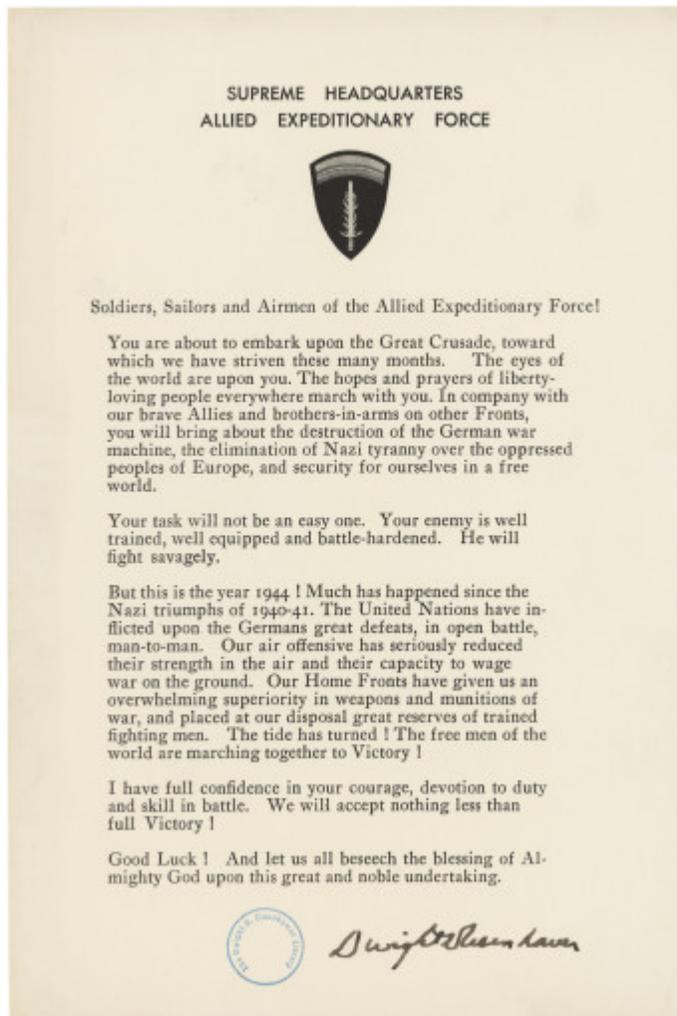
For the next year the desert war was highly romanticized in novels and films, see-sawed back and forth across Egypt and Libya. A few weeks before Pearl Harbor, the Desert Rats, reinforced and properly dignified with the title British Eighth Army, attacked Rommel in overwhelming strength and drove him back on his heels into Libya. A few weeks after Pearl Harbor, Rommel, the aptly nicknamed “Desert Fox,” unleashed a blinding series of offensives that sent the Eighth Army reeling back into Egypt, ultimately to El Alamein, where Rommel finally outran his supply lines. Concurrent with the see-saw desert battles were relentless air and sea battles in the Mediterranean, each side attempting to cut the other’s supply lines. British losses on land, in the air, and at sea were severe.

... the British had an intelligence advantage in the desert war and elsewhere. British code breakers had deciphered the Enigma machine codes utilized by the German Air Force and some other German Army and Navy codes using certain versions of the Enigma machines. The decodes were known as “Ultra,” after their high classification,

“ultra secret.” Ultra provided the British with priceless insights and information on German strategy and tactics, Rommel’s supply situation, force levels and, often, specific orders and battle plans. The British used this information to good advantage, particularly in interdicting Rommel’s sea supply lines by air and submarine attack. The British Eighth Army commander, Claude Auchinleck, expressed the opinion that without Ultra, Rommel “would certainly have got through to Cairo” imperiling the Suez Canal and the whole Middle East.”

Soon after the United States entered the war, Churchill began pressing his indirect strategy on Roosevelt. At their first wartime “Big Two” meeting in Washington in December 1941, when the British were doing well in the desert, Churchill proposed that the Allies make an amphibious landing (Operation Gymnast) somewhere in French Northwest Africa at Rommel’s rear, with the idea of trapping Rommel between those forces and the British Eighth Army, destroying the Afrika Korps once and for all. Roosevelt was intrigued because it appeared to be a relatively safe and easy way of introducing American soldiers into combat, which he was eager to do, and at the same time to satisfy Russia’s unrelenting demand for an Allied “second front.”

Document G: General Dwight Eisenhower’s Order of the Day, June 6, 1944



ANALYZING TURNING POINTS OF THE WAR WORKSHEET

Purpose of Document

- Reason to Fight____
- Conditions of War____
- Consequences of War____

Key Points

Questions Raised

1. _____
2. _____

Conclusions

Map Activities:

Provide students with copies of Map 1 and Map 2, or project map images on a screen. Have students locate on these maps the four Turning Points of World War II as addressed in this lesson.

Have students consider the following questions:

1. What might some problems have been for the United States in waging a two-front global war?
2. What role does geography play in the location of these four turning points?
3. What role do you think geography played in shaping the eventual outcomes of these turning points?

Image Activities:

The American Battle and Monuments Commission, which oversaw construction of the National WW II Memorial also administers American Military Cemeteries overseas near the places where the great battles of World War II were fought.

Image 1 – Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Philippines



Image 2: North Africa World War II Cemetery and Memorial, Carthage, Tunisia



Image 3: Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial, Normandy, France



Image 4: The Price of Freedom/Gold Star Wall of the National World War II Memorial



Image Question/ Activity:

1. How many World War II cemeteries does the United States maintain overseas in the theatres of military operations during World War II? (For more information go to www.abmc.gov).
2. Based on what you have learned in this lesson write a short paragraph that links the documents in the lesson to the four images presented here.
3. Research and then present a three to five minute oral presentation on each of the American World War II cemeteries overseas.

World War II at the Memorial:

1. The recognition of the importance of D-Day at the Memorial is found in General Eisenhower's Order of the Day etched in granite beneath the Atlantic arch. Students should review the entire text of what he said which is attached as Document G.
2. Students should review the war aims of Americans as engraved on the flag pole bases at the entrance to the Memorial. "Americans came to liberate, not to conquer, to restore freedom and to end tyranny." Are there similarities to what Gen. Eisenhower said in 1964 in his remarks at Normandy? (See above quote from Steven Ambrose?)

3. On the Pacific (south) side of the Memorial, students should review Walter Lord's quote and study the map of the Pacific in order to locate the Coral Sea and Midway. What were the distances between where these battles took place? Compare these to distances in the United States to give an understanding of the immense area of the Pacific. What was at stake had the Battle of Midway not been won?

4. Beneath the Atlantic and Pacific arches are flowing water fountains with names engraved on palates of granite describing areas of the world and specific places where battles took place. The World War II Memorial Committee responsible for choosing these places called them "names that resonate", i.e. they were names would have been in the news and that Americans would have been familiar with at the time. Students should identify which of "names that resonate" are associated with the "turning points" described in this lesson plan.

5. Several of Ray Kaskey's bronze relief sculptures depict the fighting during the war. Which ones could be identified with these "turning points" in the war?

6. The cost in human life in World War II is presented at the Memorial in the over 4000 gold stars on the freedom wall. (Each star represents 100 Americans who died in service to their country.) The use of the gold star at the Memorial was largely based upon the fact that in windows across America during the Second World War, blue stars would be hung in the windows of homes where sons and daughters were serving in the military. If one of them died or was killed, the blue star would be replaced with a gold star. For further understanding, students can research such organizations as "The Gold Star Mothers".

7. Four "turning point" battles are represented in this lesson. Would students have chosen other battles to study? If so, why? Explain.

8. Throughout World War II, America was not only fighting the war but it was supplying material and weapons to its Allies? These Allies were also engaged in the conflict and are recognized in President Truman's quote at the Memorial. Who were the primary allies of the United States in World War II? Which of the Allies suffered the greatest number of casualties?