



## Turning Points

### Springboard:

Students should read “The Battle of Midway” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to identify and describe the turning points of the war in Europe and the Pacific.

**Materials:** The Battle of Midway (Springboard handout)  
Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower (optional transparency)  
General Eisenhower Speaks (teacher reading)  
Operation Overlord (packet of 4 handouts)

**Terms to know:** **intelligence** - the gathering of secret information, as of military or political significance  
**Operation Overlord** - Allied plan for the invasion of Europe in W.W.II  
**amphibious** - capable of operating on water or land  
**V-E Day** - (Victory in Europe) end of W.W.II in Europe

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that as in the Pacific, the war in Europe also had one significant turning point, the Allied invasion on the coast of Normandy, France: D-Day. The invasion was arguably the most well-planned and organized operation in military history. Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will act as military commanders attending a last-minute meeting with Supreme Commander General Dwight Eisenhower in Great Britain to learn “firsthand” about the planning, deception, and skill involved in this massive offensive.
- NOTE:** This activity is a simulation in which you play Eisenhower and student(s) pretend to be military leaders preparing for the invasion. (F.Y.I. Though there is no record that any such meeting ever took place, all of the facts in this simulated speech are true, as is Eisenhower’s message to be delivered to the troops.) In order to prevent it from “feeling” like a lecture, you should rehearse the speech to make it sound very serious and create the appropriate level of drama. You could also darken the room somewhat and display the optional transparency of Eisenhower as you speak. (If you are uncomfortable about role-playing, allow a student with dramatic skills to play the part of Eisenhower instead.) **For individualized instruction** the student can read the speech.
- Once the “meeting” or reading is complete, have the student(s) share the notes they took and discuss. (*Specific notes may vary, though the main points of the operation should be highlighted.*) During the discussion note that D-Day actually was delayed one day and took place on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944, when the Allies succeeded in taking back the beaches. From that point on the Allies took the offensive in the war, driving the Germans back on both the eastern and western fronts until Germany surrendered on V-E Day, May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945, ending W.W.II in Europe.

# **The Battle of Midway**

The Battle of Midway is considered the major turning point of the war in the Pacific. Prior to this battle Japan had been expanding its empire throughout Asia and the Pacific. By attacking the central Pacific island of Midway, the Japanese planned to capture the island for a military base and entrap and destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Due to U.S. intelligence, however, the United States was able to surprise the Japanese forces and win a key victory. After Midway the Americans and their Allies took the offensive in the Pacific.

Since the 1930's Japan had been building its Pacific empire and by 1942 it controlled Manchuria, Korea, parts of China, French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, etc.), Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and more. Certain that Japan intended further expansion, U.S. intelligence was closely monitoring radio communication in the region. Successful decoding of intercepted messages allowed the U.S. Pacific Fleet to be fully prepared for the battle, which lasted from June 4<sup>th</sup> to June 7<sup>th</sup> of 1942, and to inflict a smashing defeat.

In this decisive American victory the Japanese lost four large aircraft carriers while the U.S. lost only one. More importantly, the Japanese lost over one hundred trained pilots who could not be replaced. The Japanese offensive in the Pacific was derailed and the balance of power in the Pacific shifted. Soon after the Midway victory the U.S. and its Allies took the offensive in the Pacific, eventually winning the war.

Which sentence **BEST** states the main idea of the passage?

- A. The Battle of Midway is considered the major turning point of the war in the Pacific.
- B. Japan had planned to entrap and destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet and establish a military base on Midway.
- C. Successful decoding of messages allowed the U.S. to be fully prepared and to inflict a smashing defeat.
- D. Soon after the Midway victory, the U.S. and its Allies took the offensive in the Pacific, eventually winning the war.

the Philippines : Japan :: Midway :

- A. United States
- B. French Indochina
- C. central Pacific
- D. Japanese defeat

The United States was \_\_\_\_ at Midway because of its \_\_\_\_.

- A. successful ... Allies
- B. expanding ... military
- C. victorious ... intelligence
- D. offensive ... aircraft carriers

# The Battle of Midway

## Answers & Explanations

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Which sentence **BEST** states the main idea of the passage?

- A. The Battle of Midway is considered the major turning point of the war in the Pacific. \*
- B. Japan had planned to entrap and destroy the U.S. Pacific Fleet and establish a military base on Midway.
- C. Successful decoding of messages allowed the U.S. to be fully prepared and to inflict a smashing defeat.
- D. Soon after the Midway victory, the U.S. and other Allies took the offensive in the Pacific, eventually winning the war.

*(The whole passage explains how and why Midway turned the tide in the Pacific war. Students should understand, though, that A is NOT correct simply because it is the first sentence of the passage.)*

the Philippines : Japan :: Midway :

- A. United States \*
- B. French Indochina
- C. central Pacific
- D. Japanese defeat

*(Japan won a victory in the Philippines, as the U.S. won at Midway. A few students may argue that C could be correct based on capitalization, but such trivial factors should not be considered.)*

The United States was \_\_\_\_ at Midway because of its \_\_\_\_.

- A. successful ... Allies
- B. expanding ... military
- C. victorious ... intelligence \*
- D. offensive ... aircraft carriers

*(A key point in the passage was the importance of U.S. intelligence in intercepting and decoding Japanese messages.)*

# Supreme Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower



From [www.nato.int/multi/photos/1950/m501219a.htm](http://www.nato.int/multi/photos/1950/m501219a.htm)



# General Eisenhower Speaks



Gentlemen,

I want to begin by thanking you all for coming here this evening. As you are well aware, we are about to embark on what is probably the most critical military operation in the history of mankind. Until now each of you has been working to prepare for this invasion, being told only what was necessary for your specific role. I asked you here tonight because I feel I owe it to you to explain the scope of the mission. I believe that before I ask you to risk your lives and those of your men, you, the officers in the field, should have some understanding of the overall operation. Since secrecy has been and remains crucial to Operation Overlord, as it is code-named, I wanted to speak to you in person rather than risk the possibility of the enemy decoding any portion of what I have to say. I am certain you understand.

I have taken the liberty of preparing a small packet of information (*hand out packets*) to outline the topics I will be discussing. There is ample room provided where you should take notes and write any comments you may have. Remember that this document is for your eyes only. Now, if you will please open the booklet to the first page, we can begin.

Up to this year of 1944, Hitler and his Axis have built a vast empire. While the Allies have enjoyed successes in North Africa, Germany still controls most of Europe. Since Hitler's invasion in 1941, the Soviet Union has been fighting the Germans on the eastern front and has urgently requested that the other Allied nations attack Germany from the west to split its forces. Establishing a western front, however, has been difficult and has required years to plan since Germany occupies France and has the coastline extremely well defended.

What has come to be known as the Atlantic Wall is perhaps the most fortified military position of all time. The Atlantic Wall is a massive trench system with concrete barriers, thousands of miles of barbed wire, machine gun nests, and more than six million planted mines, with even more in the surrounding waters, which are also filled with steel obstacles and poles that will rip the hull of any passing boat. I think you get the picture. The coast where we must land is heavily protected, indeed, but the situation is not hopeless.

Fortunately, the Germans have a number of weaknesses which should serve to our advantage. While, as I've said, the Atlantic Wall is well defended, we have learned that a number of the soldiers stationed there are Russian and Polish. These men were captured and are being forced to serve Germany under threat of death by officers with guns to their backs. We are confident these prisoner-soldiers will surrender to the Allies at the first opportunity.

Another major weakness of the German military is its organizational structure. Our intelligence tells us that there are numerous commanders of equal rank and that it is sometimes difficult for the troops to know who is in charge. It's like the saying: "Too many cooks can spoil the broth." This weakness has been factored into our planning, which has been extensive.

The planning of Operation Overlord began in 1942 with the appointments of British and American officers to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, or SHAEF, of which I am commander. This most capable staff has worked tirelessly to oversee every detail of the operation in order to insure its success. Among the most difficult and important decisions SHAEF has made are where and when the invasion is to occur.

After much debate we decided that the landing sites for D-Day would be along the beaches of Normandy -- a map is included in your packet on the next page. The most logical site for an invasion would have been to the northeast at Pas de Calais, which you can see in the map insert. This region would have required the shortest distance for transporting troops across the English Channel and it is close to key airfields and seaports. However, since the Germans also consider this the most likely site for an Allied attack, it is the most heavily defended region. That is why we decided on Normandy instead.

In addition to the location of the invasion, deciding on its timing was equally important. After examining many factors including the weather, the moon, tides, and training, we targeted several possible dates: June 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, or 20<sup>th</sup>. As of today unless there are reasons for last-minute changes, H-Hour is set for 0630 on the morning of June 5<sup>th</sup>. Should we need to postpone our attack, H-Hour will be delayed until the 6<sup>th</sup>, then the 7<sup>th</sup>, and so forth.

With the invasion only a week away, I can assure you that all Allied forces are ready. Their training has been long, hard, and realistic. As many of you know, large areas in Great Britain were restricted for military use so that our armies could practice climbing cliffs, landing on beaches, and fighting in forests. To make certain everyone is as prepared as possible, all training was done with live ammunition, the actual equipment that will be used on D-Day, and every exercise was conducted as if it were the real thing.

Some of the weapons and machinery we are using were developed specifically for this invasion. The flat-bottomed Higgins boat, for example, was designed for landing on the treacherous beaches. Several amphibious tanks will also be used in battle for the first time. Some of these are equipped with multiple rocket launchers for knocking out German defenses and we also have minesweepers to clear the waters and beaches. As you can see this mission has required great ingenuity.

Perhaps the best examples of the creative efforts in this campaign have been the deceptions we have devised to prevent Germany from adequately preparing for the attack. First we have conducted a complex radio operation to provide the Germans with inaccurate intelligence information. We have employed numerous spies working within the German military in order to obtain the most updated information about their troop movements. I'd have to say, though, that our most brilliant strategy was the construction of massive encampments in England. Using real equipment, wooden structures, and even rubber Hollywood props, we have led the enemy to believe the invasion will take place at Pas de Calais.

The actual Normandy invasion, D-Day, will involve land, sea, and air forces. Both British and American flyers have already begun dropping some 200,000 tons of bombs on railroads, airfields, radar centers, and military bases over a wide area. In the

pre-dawn hours of D-Day we will drop more than 20,000 paratroopers behind enemy lines to take control of key objectives and then, just before dawn, thousands of boatloads of soldiers will land on Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches. These fighters will brave dangerous waters, German machine-gun fire, steep cliffs, mines, and misery, but they will prevail.

Gentlemen, I cannot express to you more clearly the importance of victory in this mission. It MUST succeed! It WILL succeed! It is up to us and to our men to defeat the Germans and take back the European continent for peace-loving people throughout the world.

I can tell you that these next few days before the attack will be some of the most difficult any of us has ever lived through. Your men are prepared, but they are afraid as they have every right to be. Thousands will not return and they know this. It is, therefore, up to you to lift the morale of those in your command in these final days.

Before you embark on your mission, I am asking that you do two things. One, I would like you to give a special talk to your men. Tell them they are the best, tell them they are prepared, and tell them they can and will triumph. Second, I would like you to read the following message to them from me:

*"Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!*

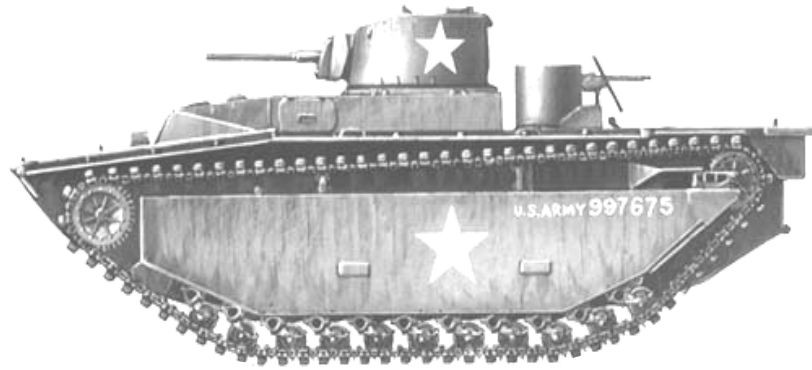
*You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.*

*Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The united nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!*

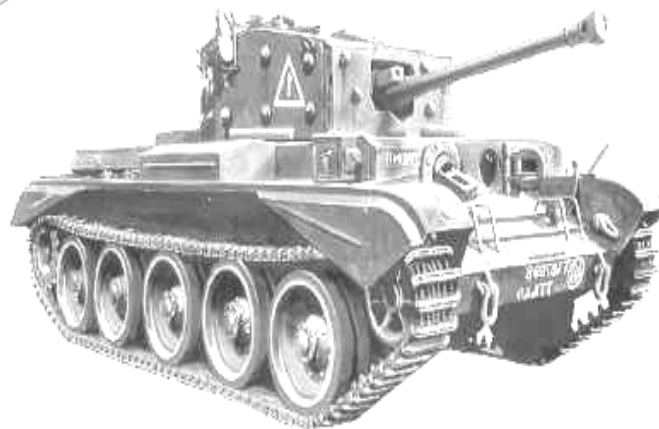
*I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty, and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."*

(From [www.museumofworldwarII.com/TourText/Area14\\_Dday.htm](http://www.museumofworldwarII.com/TourText/Area14_Dday.htm))

You have a vital job to do and I have the greatest of confidence that you will do it well. Thank you again, gentlemen, for coming this evening. God bless all of you here tonight, and God bless America and the world.



# OPERATION OVERLORD



**IMPORTANT: INFORMATION ON THESE PAGES  
TO BE VIEWED BY SELECTED OFFICERS ONLY!**

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## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**THE GERMAN EMPIRE:**

**GERMANY'S DEFENSES:**

**GERMANY'S WEAKNESSES:**

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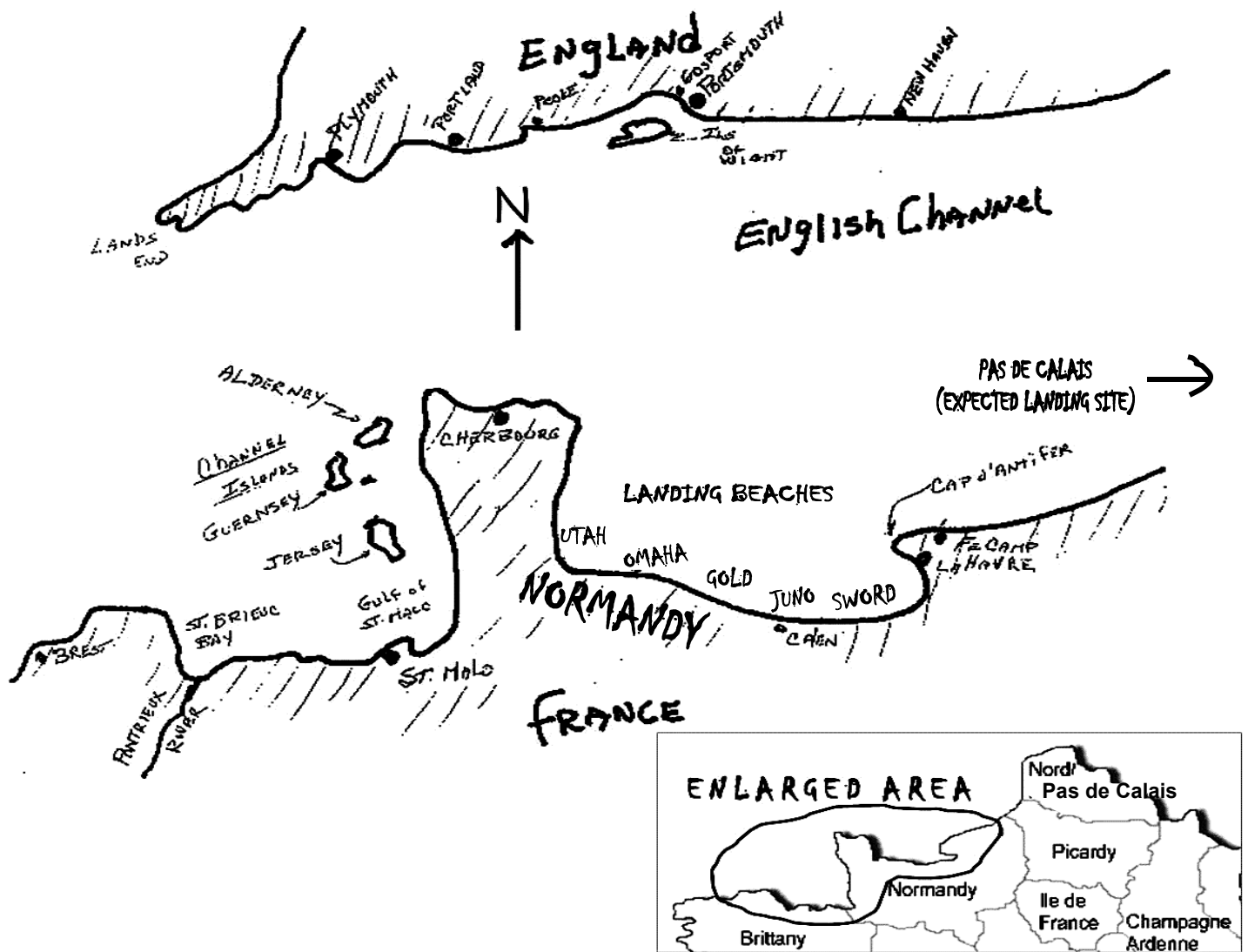


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## **ALLIED PREPARATION**

**LEADERSHIP:**

**LANDING SITE:**



**TIMING:**

**TRAINING:**

**DECEPTION:**



## **D-DAY**

**EVENTS:**

**LAST-MINUTE PREPARATIONS:**

**IMPORTANCE OF VICTORY:**