

CHAPTER
32

Section 2

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: MOVEMENT

The Fall of Singapore

Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the maps carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

In February 1942, the Japanese army inflicted the most embarrassing defeat suffered by the British Empire during the Second World War. The British lost Singapore, a tiny island at the southern tip of Malaya, a peninsula in Southeast Asia.

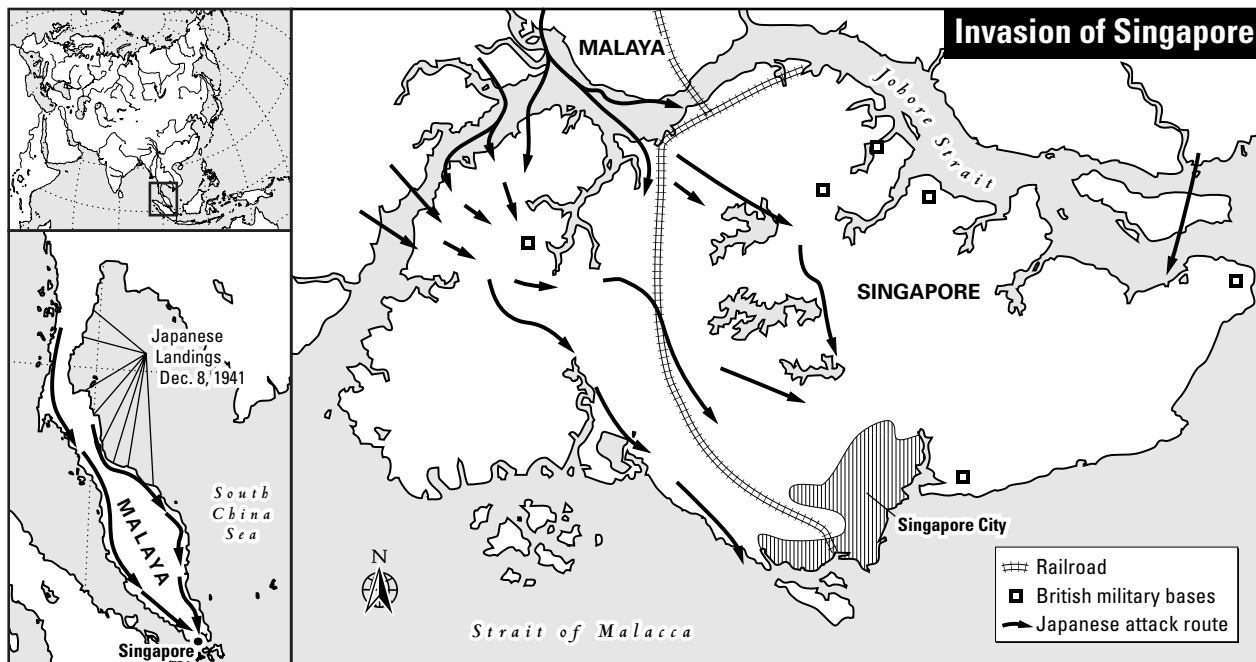
Singapore was an extremely important location during the war. The British used it as a base to protect India to the west and Australia to the south. In addition, Singapore lay along the prime shipping route from Europe to China.

The British thought Singapore impossible for the Japanese to capture. First, to the north across the Johore Strait the intense heat and dense jungle of Malaya provided a barrier to invasion. Second, the south end of the island faced the Strait of Malacca. There the British placed batteries of huge fifteen-inch cannons that could blast any enemy ships.

However, the defenses contained one major defect. The British had not bothered to fortify the

northern end of the island. They had assumed that even if the Japanese attempted to come down the peninsula, it would take them at least a year. Nevertheless, the Japanese decided to invade Singapore in this way. The Japanese, concealed by the dense jungle, were not spotted by British aircraft. By the time the British became aware of the Japanese, it was too late to mount an effective defense of the island. The British, who were prepared for an assault by sea, were not able to turn their guns around to the north in time to halt the Japanese advance. It took the Japanese 68 days to storm Malaya, cross the Johore Strait, and take Singapore.

The British surrendered Singapore on February 15, 1942. Adding to the humiliation of the defeat was the fact that British forces actually outnumbered the invading Japanese army. In the end, 130,000 British troops surrendered to 50,000 Japanese soldiers.



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. Where is the island of Singapore located? _____

2. Why do you think the British did not expect the Japanese to attack Singapore by land? _____

3. In how many places did the Japanese land troops on December 8, 1941? _____

4. On which part of Singapore did most of the Japanese army invade? _____

5. How many British military bases were located on Singapore? _____

On which part of the island were most of them located? _____

6. Why do you think the Japanese were able to capture Singapore even though the British had a great advantage in number of soldiers? _____

7. What do you think made Singapore an important military target for the Japanese?
