

WHII.T4  
WWII North Africa 1940-1943



Essential Questions:

- Why are the Americans fighting the Germans/Italians in North Africa after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?
- Why is this region so important?

Overview: Towards the end of the First World War, advancements in technology and science would have a profound impact on the future of armed conflicts. Their militaries were becoming more mechanized and with this mechanization the need for oil and other resources were needed to keep their forces on the move. Most of the world's oil and natural resources were in the Middle East and Asia and to get it to Europe quickly required passage thru the Suez Canal under British and Egyptian control. Germany's Hitler and Italy's Mussolini were determined to change that by not only capturing the Suez Canal but dominating the entire Mediterranean Sea to protect the underbelly of Europe for the Axis powers.

The story board and artifacts in this gallery reflect the strategic importance of the region and why both sides wanted to control it.

**Materials:**

**Story Board**

**Mark II Matilda**

**M3 Lee**

**Procedure:**

Story Board: Direct students to read the story board and tell them to be prepared to answer questions. Focus the students on the map and ask students why the Mediterranean Sea, North Africa and Egypt were important to control for both the Allies and the Axis?



Read Churchill quote on Allied victory at El Alamein; Now this is not the end. This is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning. Ask the students what they think he means by that quote.

**Allied tank observation:**

Mark II "Matilda" – Examining this vehicle ask the students what they notice about this tank compared to the others in the gallery? Focusing on the heavy armor that also covers most of its treads it can be seen why the British called it the Queen of the Desert. It often outclassed most of the early war German tanks they developed bigger vehicles and anti-tank guns



M3 Lee – Have the students examine the M3 Lee tank. Ask the students to compare what they observe on the British Mark II “Matilda” vs the US M3. Some notable differences of discussion. The M3 is a much taller and obviously more armament. The 75mm main gun was the big advantage for the allies in the early stages of the campaign. Germany’s production of heavier tanks negated that advantage later.



S.d Kfz. 222 – Have students to read the 222’s placard and ask what they find interesting about this vehicle. The most common responses to discuss are. a) This is the only fully restored operational S.d. Kfz. 222 in the world, b) The vehicle has a lot of modern features for an 80-year-old vehicle such as independent suspension and all-wheel drive, c) As a reconnaissance vehicle 3 men often lived inside at times, d) This 222 was captured in North Africa