

Lesson 6: June 6, 1944 D-day / Normandy Landings



Essential Questions:

- What was the allied strategy behind the D-Day landings?
- Why was the D-Day invasion important to the outcome of WW2?

Overview: There were over a hundred of D-Days during WW2 to determine the date in which an operation was to take place. However, June 6th, 1944, is synonymous with D-Day. The day Operation Overlord was put into action. The Normandy landings were to create a large-scale lodgment on the continent and establish a toehold in Hitler's "Fortress Europe". The coordination of the Allies airborne, infantry, naval and French resistance forces to accomplish the task and then to be able to supply them were feats in and of themselves. The success of the D-day now meant Germany had to fight two fronts in Europe. Less than a year later Germany surrendered.

Materials:

Reader Boards

Higgins Boat (PA45-18)

Churchill Crocodile

Universal (Bren) Carrier

Procedures:

Readers Boards



Higgins Boat



Crocodile



Bren Carrier

Direct the students the reader boards around the D-Day exhibit to get a further understanding of the size and scale of the operation as well as the days and weeks following the invasion. For a Massachusetts connection direct students to the "Dutch" from Chelsea led the way reader board.

Ask students if they have seen movies such as Saving Private Ryan or The Longest Day. Discuss their thoughts on what landing would have like especially for American troops that landed on Utah or Omaha beaches.

Ask the students to describe what bravery means to them and how it would relate to the soldiers and what they faced that day.

Higgins Boat (PA45-18)



Explain to the students that there approximately 1,500 Higgins boats used to deliver men and equipment during the D-Day invasion. Each landing craft could accommodate either 36 men or 8 men and a jeep. This artifact is a D-Day veteran that was used to bring American soldiers of the 1st Division onto Utah beach.

Discuss with them what they think it would have been like to be aboard this boat as it approached the landing zone, what would they see when the ramp door was lowered and what about the 4-man crew that delivered the troops that would have to go back, get more soldiers and must go back again. Doing this several times that day while the Germans are trying to stop you.

Churchill Crocodile (Churchill Mk VII)



The preceding years prior to the invasion of Normandy, the German military had plenty of time to secure and fortify its occupied territories with concrete bunkers and pill boxes. To overcome these strong defenses the Allies needed something devastating both physically and psychologically to the German defenders. One of the solutions was Churchill Crocodile, a flame-throwing tank. It could shoot flames over 120 yards.

Ask students to observe inside the tank and discuss what it must have been like for a crew member inside. As a side note British tankers were privileged with a small water heater in their tanks so could brew up their tea without having to leave the vehicle.

Discuss what the effects of flame thrower might have had on Germans in bunkers and pill boxes. Ask the students what they might have done if faced with a flame-throwing tank.

Universal (Bren Gun) Carrier



The Universal Carrier, aka Bren Gun Carrier, lived up to its name for being universal. Amongst transporting troops or carrying a variety of weapon platforms it was also used to convey supplies and ammunition to the front lines as well as could be outfitted with stretchers to bring wounded back to the medical areas. Because of its versatility it was one the most produced vehicles of the war.

Lead a discussion that now that the Allies have successfully a toehold in Europe and the goal is to keep pushing the Germans back, they need to keep their soldiers supplied with food, material and ammunition.

Ask students to compare pros and cons of the Universal Carrier versus the more conventional trucks.