

Lesson 8: Battle of the Bulge Dec-Jan, 1944-45



Essential Questions:

- What was the German strategy at the Battle of the Bulge? Was the strategy sound? Was it effective?
- How did Allied commanders respond to the German offensive in the Battle of the Bulge?

Overview: The Battle of the Bulge was a major turning point in World War II and was fought from December 1944 to January 1945. In a surprise attack launched by Nazi Germany against the Allied powers in an attempt to split the Allied forces and capture the Belgian port of Antwerp. The battle resulted in heavy casualties for both sides and ultimately ended in defeat for Nazi Germany. It played a significant role in the outcome of the war and the defeat of the Axis powers.

Materials:

Reader Boards

Sherman Jumbo Tank

Jagdpanzer 38 (Hetzer)

101st Airborne Uniform

Procedure:



Begin by explaining that the Battle of the Bulge was a major turning point in World War II. It was a surprise attack launched by Nazi Germany against the Allied powers in December 1944.

Reader Boards

Have the students read the reader boards to get further details of the battle. Ask the students what the Germans hoped to achieve by this attack and discuss their answers.

M4A3E2 Sherman “Jumbo” Tank

Discuss the role of tanks in World War II and how they were used in warfare. The main role of the Sherman tank is known as an infantry support role, meaning it goes along with the infantry to assist them with strong defensive positions like enemy bunkers and pill boxes.

Explain that the Sherman “Jumbo” tank was designed specifically to take on German tanks, which were considered some of the best in the world at the time. This particular artifact has seen combat as evidenced by the distressing scars underneath the bow gun.

Ask the students how the upgrades might have changed the role of this tank from its original design. Discuss their answers regarding the upgrades with better defense against anti-tank weapons and German heavier tanks.

Jagdpanzer 38 (Hetzer)

Explain that the Jagdpanzer 38 was developed by the Germans in the latter part of World War II as a replacement for their earlier tank destroyers, which had been found to be inadequate in the face of increasingly formidable enemy tanks.

Have the students read the reader board to discover the pros and cons of this artifact. Then have them compare the Hetzer vs the Jumbo Sherman. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both.

101st Airborne Uniform

The 101st Airborne Division, also known as the “Screaming Eagles,” played a crucial role in the Battle of Bastogne during World War II. In December 1944, the German army launched a surprise attack in the Ardennes region of Belgium, trapping the 101st and other Allied units in the town of Bastogne. Despite being vastly outnumbered and facing severe shortages of food, ammunition, and medical supplies, the 101st, led by Major General Anthony McAuliffe, held out against the German assault for nearly a week until they were relieved by Allied forces. The bravery and tenacity of the 101st Airborne at Bastogne became an important symbol of resistance during the war and helped turn the tide in favor of the Allies.

Have the students look at the map on the Battle of Bulge story board. Discuss their position in the town of Bastogne and being surrounded. Explain the significance of Bastogne as a strategic location and the role it played in the battle.

Describe the conditions faced by the soldiers, including the cold weather and lack of supplies. Ask students to consider the challenges faced by the soldiers and the impact of the battle on the outcome of the war. Have students present their thoughts to the class.