

The World War II Foundation Multidisciplinary Integrated Curriculum

"Valor & Virtue: A World War II Journey"

Part V: Collaborative Learning

Leverage teamwork and communication to mirror the collective efforts seen on the home front and in military strategies during WWII. This enhancement not only deepens students' understanding of historical events but also cultivates essential life skills such as collaboration, empathy, and leadership. Here's an enhanced integration of Collaborative Learning, incorporating [*American St. Nick*](#) and [*Company of Heroes*](#) documentaries:

Unit 1: Cultural Bridges and Morale Building (Pages 3-5)

Objective: To examine the impact of cultural exchanges and morale-building activities between troops and civilians during WWII.

Activities:

- **[*American St. Nick*](#) Reflection:** Students watch the documentary and then, in groups, develop a project that replicates the soldiers' efforts to bring joy to the local community. This could involve organizing a charitable event or creating holiday cards for veterans, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and the impact of kindness.
- **Morale Booster Campaign:** Inspired by the documentary, students collaborate to design a morale booster campaign for today's military personnel or first responders, incorporating lessons learned from the soldiers' efforts in [*American St. Nick*](#).

Unit 2: Leadership and Team Dynamics in Combat (Pages 6-7)

Objective: Understand the intricacies of military leadership and team dynamics under the extreme conditions of WWII.

Activities:

- **Strategic Analysis of [*Company of Heroes*](#):** After viewing the documentary, student groups will analyze the leadership styles of Major Dick Winters and other military figures, discussing how these approaches influenced their units' effectiveness. This activity encourages critical thinking about the qualities of effective leadership and teamwork in high-stakes situations.
- **Simulation Exercise:** Drawing on the documentary's themes, students simulate a military strategic planning session. Each team member assumes a role within a military unit, tasked with developing a plan for a hypothetical mission. This exercise promotes understanding of the collaborative effort required in military strategy and the value of each team member's contributions.

Unit 3: Cross-Curricular Collaborative Projects (Pages 8-10)

- **Technological Innovations Exhibition:** Groups research and create exhibits on WWII technological innovations, inspired by [*Uncle Jack: Manhattan Project and Beyond*](#), focusing on the collaboration between scientists, engineers, and the military. This project spans history, science, and ethics discussions, culminating in a classroom exhibition.
- **D-Day Logistics Challenge:** Using [*D-Day: The Price of Freedom*](#), students engage in a logistics planning challenge, applying mathematics, geography, and history to understand the complexities of organizing the D-Day invasion. This activity emphasizes the importance of coordination and strategic thinking in achieving a common goal.

Unit 4: Reflective Practices and Knowledge Sharing (Pages 11-12)

- **Collaborative Reflection Sessions:** After each unit, groups share their projects and reflect on the collaboration process, discussing the challenges faced and how they

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overcame them through teamwork. This reinforces the historical content and the soft skills developed.

- **Interdisciplinary Project Portfolio:** Students compile a portfolio of their group projects, accompanied by personal reflections on what they learned about WWII and the contemporary relevance of the skills they developed. This portfolio serves as a tangible record of their collaborative learning journey.

Relevant "Front to the Films" Podcast Episode:

Ethical Reflections:

- ["Tim Gray Hosts a PBS Program with Jewish World War II Veterans"](#)

By weaving documentaries like [American St. Nick](#) and [Company of Heroes](#) into the fabric of the curriculum, "Valor & Virtue" offers students a multidimensional view of WWII, highlighting not only the historical significance but also the timeless value of cooperation, cultural respect, and leadership. This enriched curriculum ensures students are not only knowledgeable about WWII but are also equipped with the collaborative skills needed for future success.

Curriculum created by Colonel John Fenzel (USA, Ret.). CEO of The World War II Foundation from January 2024 to May 2025. All mistakes and errors are the author's own.
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Lesson Plan

Part V: Collaborative Learning

Unit 1: Cultural Bridges and Morale Building

Objective: To examine the impact of cultural exchanges and morale-building activities between troops and civilians during WWII.

Activities:

- ***American St. Nick* Reflection:**
 - **Documentary Viewing and Discussion:**
 - Watch [*American St. Nick*](#) and discuss how soldiers managed to bring joy to the community of Wiltz, Luxembourg, during the war.
 - Analyze the cultural significance of this morale-building event and how it helped foster goodwill.
 - **Group Project - Replicating Joy:**
 - In groups, develop a project that mirrors the soldiers' efforts to spread joy within the local community.
 - Examples could include organizing a charitable event or creating holiday cards for veterans, highlighting the importance of cultural sensitivity and kindness.
- **Morale Booster Campaign:**
 - **Inspired by *American St. Nick*:**
 - Collaboratively design a morale booster campaign for today's military personnel or first responders.
 - Incorporate lessons learned from the soldiers' efforts in *American St. Nick*.
 - Campaigns could include care package assembly, writing letters of encouragement, or organizing virtual appreciation events.
- ***Company of Heroes* - Military Strategy and Leadership:**
 - **Documentary Viewing and Analysis:**
 - Watch [*Company of Heroes*](#) to understand the teamwork and communication strategies employed by WWII soldiers.
 - Discuss how leadership and collaboration were crucial to overcoming challenges during military operations.
 - **Group Problem-Solving Task - Leadership in Action:**
 - Create a simulated strategic planning exercise where students must work in groups to solve hypothetical military challenges inspired by WWII operations.
 - Assign roles to each student (commander, intelligence officer, logistics officer, etc.) to foster collaboration and communication.
 - Reflect on the importance of leadership, empathy, and teamwork.
- **Community Engagement Project:**
 - **Home Front Collaboration:**
 - Research the collaborative efforts on the WWII home front, such as Victory Gardens, scrap metal drives, and war bond campaigns.



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- Organize a community event that embodies these collective efforts, like a local history exhibition or a digital museum showcasing students' research and projects.

Resources:

1. Documentaries:

- [American St. Nick](#): It was 1944 in the small Luxembourg Town of Wiltz. The war had taken a heavy toll as Wiltz had been a center of resistance and suffered brutal reprisals. People were shot in the town square and men were forced into the German army or sent to concentration camps. The German occupation lasted four years before the Germans pulled out in September 1944. After the town's liberation, Allied soldiers rotated through Wiltz for R&R (rest and recuperation). The 112th Regiment, part of the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard (known as the Keystone Division), had been sent to relieve troops battling to retake Huertgen Forest. After sustaining heavy casualties, they were sent to regroup and rest in Wiltz. The people there had very little and had not been able to celebrate Christmas or anything else during the years of occupation. A few days before Thanksgiving Corporal Harry Stutz told his buddy, Corporal Richard Brookins, "I think we should give this town a Christmas party, A St. Nicholas Day. For hundreds of years here in Wiltz, they had a celebration on the fifth of December, the eve of St. Nicholas Day. A man dressed as St. Nick paraded through the town and gave candy to the kids. Kids here haven't celebrated St. Nicholas Day for nearly five years because of the war. Some of them have never seen St. Nick at all." What followed is one of the most heart-warming stories of World War II. Narrated by Tom Kane.
 - [Company of Heroes](#): They were the "other" Band of Brothers. A Company of Heroes features interviews with many of the men not focused on in the book "Band of Brothers" by Stephen Ambrose or in the television mini-series by the same name. Never before seen video and photos are also included in this film. Narrated by Tom Kane.
2. Letters and memoirs from WWII veterans and civilians.
 3. Templates for morale campaign materials (cards, letters, posters).
 4. Online tools for collaborative project management.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the depth of reflection in the *American St. Nick* project.
- Assess creativity and collaboration in the morale booster campaign.
- Review leadership and teamwork in the strategic problem-solving task.
- Grade the final community engagement project for research quality, creativity, and historical relevance.
- Essay: What conditions and events brought the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne division so close together and both during and following World War II?
- Essay: What was it so important to the community of Wiltz, Luxembourg to continue to honor the Americans for what they did in December of 1944? What was so special about what the soldiers did?

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Implementation Timeline:

- **Weeks 1-2:** Watch [*American St. Nick*](#), start the reflection project.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Develop the morale booster campaign and watch [*Company of Heroes*](#).
- **Weeks 5-6:** Conduct the strategic problem-solving task.
- **Weeks 7-8:** Research and plan the community engagement project.
- **Week 9:** Execute and present the community project.

This unit aims to cultivate essential life skills such as collaboration, empathy, and leadership while deepening students' understanding of the cultural exchanges and morale-building activities that shaped WWII history. By engaging with these activities, students will gain a deeper appreciation of the collective efforts required to navigate challenging historical events.

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Lesson Plan

Part V: Collaborative Learning

Unit 2: Leadership and Team Dynamics in Combat

Objective:

Understand the intricacies of military leadership and team dynamics under the extreme conditions of WWII.

Activities:

Strategic Analysis of *Company of Heroes*:

- **Documentary Viewing and Discussion:**
 - Watch the documentary *Company of Heroes* to understand the challenges and triumphs of military leadership during WWII.
 - Discuss the leadership styles of Major Dick Winters and other key figures, focusing on how their approaches influenced their units' effectiveness.

Group Analysis and Presentation:

- In groups, analyze different leadership styles and team dynamics depicted in the documentary.
- Develop a presentation discussing:
 - The leadership qualities of Major Dick Winters and other military figures.
 - How effective leadership impacted teamwork and unit cohesion.
 - The importance of communication and adaptability in high-stakes situations.

Simulation Exercise - Strategic Military Planning:

Role Assignment and Mission Briefing:

- Assign roles to each student within a military unit (commander, intelligence officer, logistics officer, etc.).
- Provide a hypothetical mission briefing, giving details about terrain, enemy forces, and objectives.

Team Planning Session:

- Teams work together to develop a strategic plan for their mission, considering:
 - Resource allocation (troops, supplies, vehicles).
 - Possible enemy movements and countermeasures.
 - Communication strategies within the team and with higher command.

Execution and Reflection:

- Teams present their strategic plans and justify their decisions.
- After presentations, conduct a reflection session to discuss:
 - How leadership styles influenced the planning process.
 - The collaborative effort required in military strategy.
 - The value of each team member's contributions.

Resources:

1. Documentary: *Company of Heroes*: They were the “other” Band of Brothers. A Company of Heroes features interviews with many of the men not focused on in the book “Band of Brothers” by Stephen Ambrose or in the television mini-series by the same

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name. Never-before seen video and photos are also included in this film. Narrated by Tom Kane.

2. Memoirs and interviews with WWII military leaders and veterans.
3. Military strategy textbooks or articles.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the depth of strategic analysis and the understanding of leadership qualities in group presentations.
- Assess team planning sessions for creativity, adaptability, and communication.
- Review individual reflections on leadership styles and team dynamics for personal growth insights.
- Essay: What conditions and events brought the paratroopers of the 101st Airborne division so close together and both during and following World War II?

Implementation Timeline:

- **Weeks 1-2**: Watch [*Company of Heroes*](#), group analysis and presentation.
- **Weeks 3-4**: Mission briefing, role assignment, and team planning session.
- **Week 5**: Execution and reflection.

By exploring the leadership styles and teamwork dynamics of Major Dick Winters and other WWII leaders, students will gain critical insights into the qualities of effective leadership and the importance of collaboration in high-stakes situations. The simulation exercise provides a hands-on experience that reinforces the value of communication, adaptability, and strategic thinking.

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Part V: Collaborative Learning

Unit 3: Cross-Curricular Collaborative Projects

Objective:

Develop an interdisciplinary understanding of WWII through collaborative projects that incorporate history, science, ethics, geography, and mathematics.

Activities:

- **Technological Innovations Exhibition:**
 - **Group Research and Creation:**
 - Watch [*Uncle Jack: Manhattan Project and Beyond*](#) to gain insights into the scientific and technological collaborations during WWII.
 - In groups, research various technological innovations from WWII (e.g., radar, jet engines, cryptography, atomic energy).
 - Explore the collaboration between scientists, engineers, and the military in developing these technologies.
 - **Exhibit Design and Presentation:**
 - Design and create an exhibit showcasing the researched innovation.
 - Exhibits should include:
 - Background and historical context.
 - Explanation of the scientific principles behind the technology.
 - Ethical considerations surrounding its development and use.
 - Host a classroom exhibition where groups present their exhibits and answer questions from classmates.
- **D-Day Logistics Challenge:**
 - **Logistics Planning Exercise:**
 - Watch [*D-Day: The Price of Freedom*](#) to understand the strategic and logistical challenges of the D-Day invasion.
 - Engage in a logistics planning challenge where students are tasked with organizing the D-Day invasion.
 - **Mathematics, Geography, and History Application:**
 - Students work in teams to:
 - Use mathematical calculations to allocate resources efficiently (troops, vehicles, supplies).
 - Analyze maps to determine landing zones, terrain challenges, and key strategic points.
 - Research historical data to understand the complexities of coordinating Allied forces.
 - Develop and present a comprehensive invasion plan that includes:
 - Resource allocation strategies.
 - Logistical challenges and their proposed solutions.
 - Contingency plans for unexpected obstacles.
 - **Strategic Thinking and Coordination Reflection:**

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- After presentations, reflect on the importance of coordination, strategic thinking, and collaboration in achieving a common goal.

Resources:

- Documentaries:
 - [*Uncle Jack: Manhattan Project and Beyond*](#): The Manhattan Project was an enormous undertaking that required the efforts of many of the world's most brilliant intellectuals. Hundreds of physicists, mathematicians, and engineers were needed to design, build, and test the world's first atomic weapon and the United States government did everything in its power to lure these individuals to the Manhattan Project. One of those assigned to the project was my uncle John Edmund Gray, a University of Rhode Island graduate with a brilliant mind. Hundreds of men were assigned by the government of the United States to lend their minds to producing the first Atomic bombs, but the majority had no idea at the time what their skills were being utilized for since the project was beyond the level of "top secret". Narrated by Tim Gray.
 - [*D-Day: The Price of Freedom*](#). Five D-Day veterans returned to France decades after landing on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Each has his own unique story, and they take us to the places where they fought and where the memories remain all too vivid, even to this very day. In their journey, they visit the American cemetery in Normandy and meet up with French schoolchildren, who remind these aging men that what they did so long ago remains very important to them. An emotional tribute to the day the liberation of western Europe began. **D-Day:** On June 6, 1944, more than 160,000 Allied troops landed along a 50-mile stretch of the heavily fortified French coastline, to fight Nazi Germany on the beaches of Normandy, France. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower called the operation a crusade in which, "we will accept nothing less than full victory." More than 5,000 Ships and 13,000 aircraft supported the D-Day invasion, and by day's end, the Allies gained a foothold in Continental Europe. The cost in life on D-Day was high. More than 9,000 Allied Soldiers were killed or wounded, but their sacrifice allowed more than 100,000 Soldiers to begin the slow, hard slog across Europe, to defeat Adolf Hitler's crack troops.
- Scientific papers, historical archives, and scholarly articles on WWII innovations and logistics.
- Maps and logistical data for D-Day and other WWII operations.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the depth of research, creativity, and accuracy in the Technological Innovations Exhibition.
- Assess the strategic thinking and problem-solving demonstrated in the D-Day Logistics Challenge.
- Review individual reflections on the importance of collaboration and strategic thinking.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Weeks 1-2:** Watch [*Uncle Jack: Manhattan Project and Beyond*](#) and [*D-Day: The Price of Freedom*](#), group assignments and project planning.

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- **Weeks 3-4:** Research and creation of exhibits and logistics challenge preparation.
- **Weeks 5-6:** Exhibit presentation and logistics challenge execution.
- **Week 7:** Reflection and wrap-up.

Extension:

- **Community Outreach:** Host an open exhibition event inviting local veterans, families, and historians.
- **Global Collaboration:** Partner with international schools for cross-border discussions on technological and logistical challenges in WWII.

By working collaboratively on these projects, students will deepen their understanding of WWII's interdisciplinary complexities while developing essential teamwork, critical thinking, and presentation skills.



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Lesson Plan

Part V: Collaborative Learning

Unit 4: Reflective Practices and Knowledge Sharing

Objective:

Reinforce the historical content and soft skills developed through collaborative learning, reflection, and interdisciplinary knowledge sharing.

Activities:

Collaborative Reflection Sessions:

- **Project Sharing:**
 - After each unit, groups will share their projects with the class, highlighting the historical content and skills acquired.
- **Reflection Discussion:**
 - Facilitate a group discussion where students reflect on their collaborative process:
 - What challenges did they face?
 - How did they overcome these challenges through teamwork?
 - What historical insights did they gain from the project?
- **Peer Feedback:**
 - Encourage peers to provide constructive feedback on each group's project, promoting a culture of improvement and learning.

Interdisciplinary Project Portfolio:

- **Portfolio Compilation:**
 - Students will compile a portfolio that includes all their group projects from each unit, providing a comprehensive record of their interdisciplinary journey.
- **Personal Reflections:**
 - Accompanying each project, students will write personal reflections on:
 - What they learned about WWII through this project.
 - How the project enhanced their understanding of interdisciplinary studies.
 - The contemporary relevance of the skills and knowledge developed.
- **Portfolio Presentation:**
 - Organize a final presentation where students share their completed portfolios with peers, teachers, and, optionally, the community.

Resources:

- Documentaries: [*American St. Nick*](#), [*Company of Heroes*](#), and others used throughout the curriculum.
- Historical sources, academic articles, and project materials used in each unit.
- Portfolio templates and reflection guidelines.

Assessment:

- Assess the completeness and quality of the portfolios.
- Evaluate the depth of personal reflections on historical and contemporary relevance.

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- Review the effectiveness of collaboration and reflection in peer feedback and group discussions.

Implementation Timeline:

- **After Each Unit:** Collaborative Reflection Session.
- **End of Curriculum:** Compile the Interdisciplinary Project Portfolio.

Extension:

- **Community Portfolio Showcase:**
 - Host an event where students can showcase their portfolios to the school and community, celebrating their collaborative journey and learning achievements.
- **Inter-School Knowledge Exchange:**
 - Partner with another school to conduct a cross-school portfolio exchange, providing insights into how different students approach WWII studies.

Curriculum Integration:

By incorporating reflective practices into each unit and weaving documentaries like "American St. Nick" and "Company of Heroes" into the curriculum, "Valor & Virtue" provides a multidimensional view of WWII that emphasizes both historical significance and timeless values like cooperation, cultural respect, and leadership. Students will leave this curriculum not only knowledgeable about WWII but also equipped with the collaborative skills necessary for future success.

