

The World War II Foundation Multidisciplinary Integrated Curriculum
"Valor & Virtue: A World War II Journey"

Part VI: Critical Thinking and Reflection

Unit 1: Multidisciplinary Team Projects (Pages 3-4)

- **Objective:** Engage students in creating projects that necessitate inputs from various disciplines, mirroring the multifaceted approach needed in the war effort.
- **Example Project:** Designing a naval operation plan inspired by [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#), requiring historical research, mathematical calculations for logistics, creative design for presentation, and persuasive speaking for justifying their strategies.

Unit 2: Role-Playing and Simulation Activities (Pages 5-6)

- **Objective:** Simulate WWII decision-making processes through role-playing, reflecting the need for strategic collaboration.
- **Example Activity:** A medical triage simulation based on [*Eagles of Mercy*](#), where students must prioritize care under resource constraints, fostering teamwork and ethical decision-making.

Unit 3: Collaborative Learning Strategies (Pages 7-8)

Peer Teaching:

Implementation: After viewing [*Eagles of Mercy*](#), students form expert groups to delve into aspects of medical challenges during D-Day, teaching their findings to classmates, thus fostering a collaborative learning atmosphere.

Unit 4: Group Discussions and Debates (Pages 9-11)

Implementation: Conduct debates on the strategic decisions behind the D-Day landings, as shown in [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#), encouraging students to explore different viewpoints and collaboratively construct an understanding of the event's complexities.

Unit 5: Collaborative Learning Activities (Pages 12-13)

Collaborative Research Projects:

Activity: Assign topics related to the documentaries, such as the role of medics in combat zones or the logistics of naval support during landings, for group research and presentations. This not only deepens subject matter comprehension but also enhances teamwork and communication skills.

Interactive Workshops:

Activity: Workshops where students collaboratively engage in creating a strategic plan for a D-Day-style operation, reflecting on the coordination seen in [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#). These could include planning logistics, troop movements, and support services, integrating knowledge from geography, mathematics, and history.

Community Engagement Projects:

Activity: Projects connecting WWII history to the community, such as a veterans' interview project inspired by the personal stories in [*Eagles of Mercy*](#). This encourages teamwork in project planning, execution, and presentation to the public.

Assessment and Reflection:

- **Group Reflections:** Post-project discussions on teamwork dynamics, challenges faced, and solutions found, inspired by the collaborative efforts documented in the chosen films.
- **Peer and Self-Assessment:** Evaluation of each member's contribution to the group's work, fostering a reflective and self-improving learning environment.

Integration with Curriculum Goals:



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By embedding these documentaries into the Collaborative Learning section, the curriculum not only provides a comprehensive understanding of World War II's complexities but also emphasizes the development of critical skills necessary for students' future success. This method ensures that learners grasp the significance of teamwork, both historically and in their personal development, preparing them for academic and real-world challenges ahead.

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 VI: Critical Thinking and Reflection

Unit 1: Multidisciplinary Team Projects

Objective:

Engage students in creating projects that necessitate inputs from various disciplines, mirroring the multifaceted approach needed in the WWII war effort.

Activities:

- **Example Project: Designing a Naval Operation Plan**
 - **Inspiration:** Watch [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#) to understand the strategic challenges faced during the D-Day landings and the role of naval operations.
 - **Historical Research:**
 - Students will conduct research into the historical context of the Normandy invasion, focusing on the naval strategies and challenges.
 - Investigate the key figures, ships, and operations that were instrumental in the D-Day success.
 - **Mathematical Calculations for Logistics:**
 - Teams will calculate the logistics of transporting troops and supplies across the English Channel.
 - Consider factors like ship capacity, fuel requirements, and the coordination of multiple naval units.
 - **Creative Design for Presentation:**
 - Design a comprehensive naval operation plan, including maps, diagrams, and strategic justifications.
 - Utilize creative storytelling techniques to present the operation plan visually and engagingly.
 - **Persuasive Speaking for Strategy Justification:**
 - Each team will justify their naval operation plan through a presentation that addresses:
 - The historical context and importance of the operation.
 - The logistical calculations and strategic decision-making involved.
 - How their plan addresses potential challenges and risks.
- **Reflective Practices:**
 - **Group Reflection Session:** After completing the project, students will participate in a group reflection session to discuss:
 - The collaborative process and how they managed challenges as a team.
 - How their multidisciplinary approach enhanced the quality of their project.
 - Insights gained about WWII naval operations and the war effort.
 - **Individual Reflection Essay:** Each student will write a reflection essay on their personal learning journey, covering:
 - What they learned about WWII through this project.
 - How the project helped develop critical thinking, collaboration, and persuasive speaking skills.
 - The contemporary relevance of these skills.



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Resources:

- Documentary: [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#). Chronicles the building and dedication of the first-ever United States Navy monument in Normandy, France. Dozens of interviews with Navy D-Day veterans are included. New England region Emmy Awards for writing and photography. Narrated by Dug Joy.
- Historical archives, scholarly articles, and memoirs of WWII naval operations.
- Templates and software for presentation design and logistics calculations.

Assessment:

- Evaluate historical accuracy and quality of research.
- Assess mathematical proficiency in logistical problem-solving.
- Review creativity and storytelling in presentation design.
- Grade the reflection essays for depth of insight and personal growth.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Weeks 1-2:** Watch [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#), historical research, and project planning.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Mathematical calculations and logistical problem-solving.
- **Weeks 5-6:** Presentation design and persuasive speaking preparation.
- **Week 7:** Group presentations and reflection session.
- **Week 8:** Individual reflection essays submission.

Extension:

- **Community Outreach:** Invite local veterans, historians, and families to attend the final presentations and provide feedback.
- **Cross-School Collaboration:** Partner with another school to exchange and critique each other's naval operation plans.

This unit provides students with a comprehensive multidisciplinary experience that emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and strategic thinking while reinforcing their understanding of WWII naval operations.



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Unit 2: Role-Playing and Simulation Activities

Objective:

Simulate WWII decision-making processes through role-playing, reflecting the need for strategic collaboration.

Activities:

- **Example Activity: Medical Triage Simulation based on *Eagles of Mercy***
 - **Inspiration:** Watch "[Eagles of Mercy](#)" to understand the challenges faced by medics and the critical role of prioritizing care during WWII.
 - **Role Assignment:**
 - Assign students roles within a medical team (triage officer, nurses, stretcher-bearers, etc.) and provide a brief on their responsibilities.
 - **Simulation Scenario:**
 - Present a scenario where a field hospital must handle an influx of wounded soldiers under resource constraints.
 - Students must:
 - Set up a triage station and prioritize patients based on the severity of their injuries.
 - Make difficult ethical decisions regarding care under limited resources.
 - Collaborate effectively to ensure the highest level of care possible within the constraints.
 - **Debrief and Reflection:**
 - After the simulation, conduct a debriefing session to discuss:
 - How the team worked together to handle the challenges.
 - The ethical dilemmas faced in prioritizing care.
 - Lessons learned about teamwork, communication, and strategic thinking.

Role-Playing Scenarios for Strategic Collaboration

- **Military Planning Exercise:**
 - Create a scenario where students take on military roles to plan and execute a strategic mission.
 - Roles include commanders, intelligence officers, logistics coordinators, and radio operators.
 - Teams must work together to:
 - Gather intelligence and analyze enemy movements.
 - Plan logistics and allocate resources for the mission.
 - Coordinate communication strategies for seamless execution.
- **Ethical Decision-Making Roundtable:**
 - Role-play an ethical decision-making roundtable, where students represent different stakeholders (government officials, military leaders, civilians, etc.).
 - Present a WWII scenario involving ethical dilemmas (e.g., bombing civilian areas, espionage) and facilitate a debate on the best course of action.
 - Reflect on how different roles influence perspectives and priorities.



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Resources:

- Documentary: [Eagles of Mercy](#). Two American 101st Airborne (Screaming Eagles) medics caught in a church in Normandy, France during the opening hours of D-Day. Outside a savage battle raged all around them. The church changed hands several times with American and German forces over-running the village of Angoville-au-Plain. Inside the small church, the wounded wore both Allied and Axis uniforms and civilian clothing. The American medics, Robert Wright and Kenneth Moore of the 2nd battalion, 501st PIR, treated all who were brought into the 12th century Norman church, no matter whether they were friend or foe. Narrated by Tom Kane.
- Historical sources, medical journals, and ethical frameworks.
- Templates for role assignments and triage prioritization.

Assessment:

- Evaluate strategic thinking and problem-solving in the triage simulation.
- Assess the ability to collaborate and communicate effectively in military planning exercises.
- Review ethical reasoning and persuasive speaking skills in decision-making roundtables.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Weeks 1-2:** Watch [Eagles of Mercy](#), role assignment, and simulation preparation.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Conduct the medical triage simulation and military planning exercise.
- **Weeks 5-6:** Ethical decision-making roundtable and debrief.

Extension:

- **Guest Speakers:** Invite veterans or military strategists to discuss their experiences with strategic collaboration.
- **Field Trip:** Visit a local military or medical museum to see historical artifacts and gain deeper insights into WWII decision-making processes.

Curriculum Integration:

These role-playing and simulation activities not only enhance students' critical thinking and teamwork skills but also provide them with a realistic perspective of the challenges and ethical dilemmas faced during WWII. The activities reinforce historical content while fostering strategic collaboration, ethical reasoning, and effective communication.



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Lesson Plan

Part VI: Collaborative Learning

Unit 3: Collaborative Learning Strategies

Peer Teaching

Objective:

Foster a collaborative learning atmosphere by having students take ownership of their learning and teach their peers.

Implementation:

- **Expert Groups Formation:**
 - After viewing "[Eagles of Mercy](#)," students form expert groups, each focusing on a specific aspect of the medical challenges during D-Day, such as:
 - Triage and prioritization of care.
 - Treatment of different types of injuries (burns, fractures, shock).
 - Logistics and supply chain for medical resources.
 - Psychological support and dealing with trauma.
- **In-Depth Research and Preparation:**
 - Each expert group conducts thorough research on their chosen topic, gathering information from:
 - The documentary "[Eagles of Mercy](#)."
 - Medical journals, historical archives, and memoirs of WWII medics.
 - Contemporary resources on emergency medical care and triage.
- **Peer Teaching Sessions:**
 - Each expert group prepares a short lesson to teach their classmates about their specific aspect of medical challenges during D-Day.
 - The lesson should include:
 - An engaging introduction to the topic.
 - Visual aids like diagrams, charts, or short videos.
 - Interactive activities such as quizzes or group discussions to reinforce learning.
- **Collaborative Reflection and Feedback:**
 - After the peer teaching sessions, facilitate a reflection discussion where students share their thoughts on:
 - The effectiveness of the peer teaching method.
 - Insights gained from each expert group's lesson.
 - How collaboration and peer learning enhanced their understanding.
 - Encourage students to provide constructive feedback to their peers, promoting continuous improvement.
 - Essay: Why did the American Medics decide to help both United States AND German paratroopers on D-Day? What rules did they set forth for both sides during the fight around the church in Angoville?

Resources:

1. Documentary: [Eagles of Mercy](#).
2. Medical journals, historical archives, and memoirs of WWII medics.
3. Templates for lesson planning and visual aids.



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Assessment:

- Evaluate the accuracy and depth of research conducted by each expert group.
- Assess the clarity, engagement, and creativity of their peer teaching sessions.
- Review the reflection discussions for insights into collaboration and peer learning.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Week 1:** Watch [Eagles of Mercy](#), form expert groups, and choose topics.
- **Weeks 2-3:** Conduct research and prepare peer teaching lessons.
- **Week 4:** Peer teaching sessions and reflection discussion.

Extension:

- **Community Outreach:**
 - Host a "Medical Challenges During D-Day" event where students teach their lessons to the community.
- **Cross-School Peer Teaching Exchange:**
 - Partner with another school to exchange peer teaching sessions, providing insights into different approaches to WWII medical challenges.

By implementing peer teaching after viewing "Eagles of Mercy," students not only deepen their understanding of the medical challenges faced during D-Day but also develop their teaching, collaboration, and critical thinking skills. This collaborative learning strategy empowers students to take ownership of their education and fosters a supportive learning environment.



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Lesson Plan

Part VI: Critical Thinking and Reflection

Unit 4: Group Discussions and Debates

Objective:

Conduct debates on strategic decisions made during the D-Day landings, encouraging students to explore different viewpoints and collaboratively construct an understanding of the event's complexities.

Implementation:

- **Preparation Phase:**
 - **Documentary Viewing:**
 - Watch [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#) to understand the strategic decisions made during the D-Day landings.
 - **Research and Assign Roles:**
 - Assign students to research the viewpoints of key figures involved in the decision-making process, such as:
 - Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay (Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief).
 - General Dwight D. Eisenhower (Supreme Allied Commander).
 - German commanders responsible for the defense (e.g., Erwin Rommel).
 - Logistics and intelligence officers.
 - Each student assumes the role of their assigned figure.
- **Group Discussions and Strategic Analysis:**
 - **Initial Group Discussions:**
 - In groups, students discuss the strategic importance of the D-Day landings and identify key challenges:
 - Geography and choice of landing beaches.
 - Naval and air support.
 - Logistics and supply chain management.
 - **Strategic Analysis Papers:**
 - Each group prepares a strategic analysis paper from their assigned roles' perspective, including:
 - The rationale behind the strategic decisions.
 - Anticipated challenges and proposed solutions.
 - An assessment of the risks involved.
- **Debate Preparation:**
 - **Formulate Arguments:**
 - Each group formulates arguments based on their strategic analysis papers.
 - Develop rebuttal strategies to counter opposing viewpoints.
 - **Mock Debate Sessions:**
 - Conduct mock debate sessions to refine arguments and improve speaking skills.
- **Debate Execution:**

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- Conduct a formal debate on the strategic decisions behind the D-Day landings.
- Topics could include:
 - Should the landings have focused on a different beach?
 - Was the naval support sufficient, or should more resources have been allocated?
 - Were the intelligence reports adequate for strategic planning?
- **Reflection and Feedback:**
 - After the debate, facilitate a reflection session:
 - Discuss the different viewpoints and complexities of the D-Day landings.
 - Reflect on how group discussions and debates enhanced their understanding.
 - Provide constructive feedback on arguments presented, teamwork, and research depth.

Resources:

1. Documentary: [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#).
2. Historical archives, memoirs, and strategic analyses of D-Day.
3. Debate preparation templates and guidelines.

Assessment:

- Assess the quality and depth of strategic analysis papers.
- Evaluate clarity, accuracy, and persuasiveness of debate arguments.
- Review reflection discussions for insights into strategic collaboration and critical thinking.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Week 1:** Watch "[*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#)," role assignment, and research.
- **Week 2:** Group discussions and strategic analysis papers.
- **Week 3:** Debate preparation and mock debate sessions.
- **Week 4:** Formal debate and reflection.

Extension:

- **Guest Judges:** Invite veterans, historians, or debate coaches to judge the debates and provide feedback.
- **Cross-School Debate Exchange:** Partner with another school to conduct a cross-school debate on WWII strategic decisions.

By conducting group discussions and debates on the strategic decisions behind the D-Day landings, students gain a deeper understanding of the complexities involved and develop their critical thinking, persuasive speaking, and collaborative learning skills.

Extra Credit:

View: [*Rommel: The Soldier, The Son and Hitler*](#)

THE FILM: Narrated by Greg Kinnear.

Germany's most famous commander of World War II, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, had one fatal flaw: He always spoke his mind to Adolf Hitler. Rommel would pay for voicing the truth to his Fuhrer with his life.



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An earlier hero of World War I, Erwin Rommel was many things. A career soldier, a loyal German, one of the most successful generals of World War II on either side of the conflict and above all, a caring father to his son Manfred and loving husband to wife, Lucie.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel was also a realist. Highly decorated and one of Hitler's favorite commanders in the early years of World War II, the "Desert Fox" as his British adversaries labeled him, was somewhat of an enigma. Never a member of the Nazi party, Rommel detested the blending of politics and war.

He would discover quickly both were always in play in Hitler's Germany.

Rommel was somewhat naïve to the ways of Hitler until the latter days of the Afrika Korps defeat in North Africa in 1943. By then, Rommel started to surmise that Germany's fate was sealed.

Put in charge of the famed and flawed Atlantic Wall in western Europe in late 1943, Rommel tried his best to prepare France for the coming Allied invasion. In the end, it would not be enough. D-Day's success only reinforced Rommel's belief that Adolf Hitler should sue for peace in the west. Something Hitler found treasonous.

Was Rommel in on the plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler in 1944? If not, why did Germany's Fuhrer force his top general to commit suicide?

In a rare interview with the World War II Foundation, Erwin Rommel's late son Manfred lends his personal thoughts to his father's military story, revealing what happens when an honest career soldier confronts a Dictator named Adolf Hitler. Manfred was there and saw it all play out.

Essay Question:

Describe in detail the complex relationship between Field Marshal Erwin Rommel and Adolf Hitler. Why didn't more of Hitler's generals speak up about the consequences of the war and that Germany was losing the fight?



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Lesson Plan

Part VI: Collaborative Learning

Unit 5: Collaborative Learning Activities

Collaborative Research Projects

Activity: Group Research and Presentations

Objective:

Deepen subject matter comprehension while enhancing teamwork and communication skills.

Implementation:

Topic Assignment and Group Formation:

- **Documentary Inspiration:**
 - Choose topics inspired by the documentaries, such as:
 - [Eagles of Mercy](#) - The role of medics in combat zones.
 - [Navy Heroes of Normandy](#) - The logistics of naval support during landings.
 - [Company of Heroes](#) - The teamwork and leadership dynamics in military units.
- **Group Formation:**
 - Divide students into groups based on their interests, ensuring balanced skills and diverse perspectives.

Research and Analysis Phase:

- **Research Guidelines:**
 - Provide guidelines to structure the research process, including:
 - Identifying credible sources (historical archives, memoirs, scholarly articles).
 - Creating research questions to guide analysis.
 - Collaborating effectively within the group.
- **Research and Data Collection:**
 - Groups collect data on their assigned topics, analyze it, and identify key insights.
 - Cross-reference multiple sources to ensure the accuracy and reliability of findings.

Presentation Preparation:

- **Presentation Design:**
 - Create visually engaging presentations that include:
 - Background and historical context of the topic.
 - Key findings and analysis.
 - Visual aids like maps, charts, diagrams, and short video clips.
- **Practice and Peer Feedback:**
 - Conduct practice sessions within the group, providing peer feedback to refine the presentation.

Group Presentations:

- Groups present their research to the class, sharing their insights on topics like:
- The challenges medics faced in combat zones and how they adapted.
- How logistics officers coordinated naval support for landings.
- The strategies military units used to foster teamwork and effective leadership.

Reflection and Feedback:

- **Group Reflection:**



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- Facilitate a group reflection session after all presentations are complete:
- What challenges did groups face during research and collaboration?
- How did teamwork contribute to the project's success?
- What insights did they gain about WWII through their research?
- **Instructor Feedback:**
 - Provide constructive feedback on the depth of research, clarity of presentation, and group collaboration.

Activity Integration:

- **Strategic Analysis of *Eagles of Mercy*:** After viewing the documentary, student groups analyze the leadership qualities of the two medics, discussing how their courage and humanity influenced the events at Angoville-au-Plain. This encourages critical thinking about the values of effective leadership and teamwork in high-stakes situations.
- **Simulation Exercise:** Students can simulate a medical triage session based on the documentary's themes. Each team member assumes a role, either as a medic, a German officer, or a wounded soldier, to understand the collaborative effort required in war conditions.

Resources:

1. Documentaries: [*Eagles of Mercy*](#), [*Navy Heroes of Normandy*](#), [*Company of Heroes*](#).
2. Historical archives, scholarly articles, and memoirs.
3. Presentation templates and guidelines.

Assessment:

- Evaluate the quality and accuracy of research.
- Assess the creativity and clarity of group presentations.
- Review reflections for insights into collaboration and historical understanding.

Implementation Timeline:

- **Week 1:** Assign topics and form groups.
- **Weeks 2-3:** Research and analysis phase.
- **Week 4:** Presentation preparation and practice.
- **Week 5:** Group presentations and reflection.

Extension:

- **Cross-School Presentation Exchange:**
 - Partner with another school to exchange and critique presentations, providing insights into different approaches to WWII research.
- **Historical Society Collaboration:**
- Collaborate with a local historical society to host a public exhibition of the student presentations.

By engaging in collaborative research projects inspired by WWII documentaries, students will develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of war while honing their teamwork, communication, and research skills.

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Lesson Plan

D-Day at Pointe-du-Hoc

Unit 6: War in Europe: The Tactical and Human Elements of D-Day

Topic: D-Day at Pointe-du-Hoc - Courage and Strategy in Action

Grade Level: High School (Grades 9-12)

Duration: 2 Class Periods (Approximately 90 minutes each)

Objectives:

1. Analyze the strategic significance of the Pointe-du-Hoc mission on D-Day.
2. Understand the challenges faced by the U.S. Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion during the operation.
3. Reflect on the qualities of leadership and courage displayed by Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder and his Rangers.
4. Evaluate the impact of unexpected challenges in military operations and their resolutions.

Materials:

- Documentary: [*D-Day at Pointe-du-Hoc*](#)
- Classroom resources including quizzes and essay questions.
- Maps of D-Day operations
- Excerpts from military reports and soldiers' diaries
- Multimedia presentation tools
- Suggested classroom activities for use with the World War II Foundation documentary, [*D-Day at Pointe-du-Hoc*](#).

Lesson Outline:

Day 1: Viewing and Initial Discussion

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Introduce the documentary with a brief overview of D-Day and the specific role of the Pointe-du-Hoc mission.
- Discuss the strategic importance of the location between Omaha and Utah beaches.

Documentary Viewing (40 minutes):

- Watch [*D-Day at Pointe-du-Hoc*](#), narrated by David McCallum.
- Students should take notes on key points, focusing on the mission's objectives, challenges, and the Rangers' responses to the missing guns.

Post-Viewing Discussion (20 minutes):

- Open a discussion on the initial reactions to the documentary.
- Key points to discuss:
- The planning and execution of the mission.
- The reaction of the Rangers upon finding the guns missing.
- The leadership qualities exhibited by Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder.

Homework Assignment:

- Students prepare for a deeper analysis by researching the backgrounds of the U.S. Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion and Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder.
- Students should also prepare questions about the military strategies used during D-Day, to be addressed in the next class.

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Day 2: Analysis and Application

Review and Analysis (30 minutes):

- Begin with a brief review of the homework.
- Dive deeper into the documentary's content, discussing the tactical decisions and the Rangers' adaptive tactics in response to unexpected challenges.

Strategic Map Exercise (20 minutes):

- Use maps of the Normandy coast to analyze the geographical significance of Pointe-du-Hoc.
- Students identify and discuss how the topography influenced the military strategy and the mission's initial objectives.

Group Activity: Role-Playing Scenario (25 minutes):

- Students are divided into groups to role-play decision-making scenarios based on the mission's challenges.
- Scenarios include: finding the guns missing, handling counterattacks, and making quick strategic decisions.
- Each group discusses their strategies and outcomes, reflecting on the impact of leadership and teamwork.

Reflective Essays or Quizzes (15 minutes):

- Conclude the lesson with a reflective essay or a quiz based on the documentary and the discussions.
- Essay prompt: Reflect on the importance of adaptability in leadership as demonstrated by the Rangers during the Pointe-du-Hoc mission.
- Alternatively, administer a quiz focusing on the key factual elements and strategic insights discussed during the lesson.

Assessment:

- Evaluate students based on participation in discussions and role-playing.
- Assess reflective essays or quizzes for comprehension and depth of analysis.
- Provide feedback on group activity participation and the rationale behind their strategic decisions.

Extension Activities:

- Encourage students to interview a family member or community member about their experiences during WWII or their understanding of D-Day.
- Organize a class project to create a documentary or a digital presentation about lesser-known D-Day stories or local WWII veterans.

Resources:

- Maps, historical accounts, and diaries for use during the strategic map exercise.
- Access to archives or online resources for student research on the 2nd Ranger Battalion.

Talking Points:

D-Day at Pointe Du Hoc, narrated by David McCallum. This documentary describes the harrowing mission of our Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion during the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944.



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Our film focuses on the assault at Pointe Du Hoc, where 225 brave men, under the command of Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder, faced the extraordinary task of climbing 100-foot cliffs under direct enemy fire. Their mission was to neutralize six German 155mm cannons that posed a significant threat to the success of the entire mission—Operation Overlord. These guns, positioned to fire upon the American landing beaches of Omaha and Utah, could have drastically altered the course of the invasion and the war itself.

What makes this story remarkable is not just the perilous climb or the fierce combat that followed, but the unexpected turn of events when the Rangers discovered that the guns were not in their emplacements. Instead, they found themselves in a race against time to locate and destroy these weapons before they could be used against the Allied forces.

The film you are about to watch captures the essence of courage, the unpredictability of war, and the incredible resilience of the American spirit. It's a testament to the bravery of those who climbed into uncertainty to ensure the liberation of Europe.

After the film, I look forward to telling you more about the incredible feats of our Rangers, the strategic importance of their mission, and answering any questions you might have. So, without further ado, let's now watch and remember the extraordinary sacrifices made by those who fought at Pointe Du Hoc. Thank you.

Post Screening:

Quite a film, wasn't it? It tells us about a day long ago – June 6, 1944 – when 225 men from the U.S. Army's 2nd Ranger Battalion did something most of us couldn't even dream of. They climbed a 100-foot cliff under heavy fire to take out German guns that could have sunk the whole D-Day invasion.

Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder, that man had nerves of steel, leading his Rangers up those cliffs. You've got to wonder, how do you get up in the morning, eat whatever it was they ate, and then say, 'Well, today I'm going to climb a cliff with people shooting at me'? But they did it, and because they did, the Allies got a foothold in Europe, which eventually turned the tide of the war. Now, sitting here after watching that film, we're not just moviegoers; we're keepers of their story. It's something, isn't it? How a piece of history on film can make us feel like we were right there. And you've got to admit, it's a little uncomfortable. We sit in a comfy, air-conditioned room while these guys did the unimaginable.

So, as we talk about what we've seen, let's remember that these were real men with families, hopes, and fears, not just characters on a screen. Their bravery and sacrifice mean something profound about the spirit of those who fight for freedom. It's our job to remember and respect their story.

You know, it's interesting to think about the big picture of D-Day, which we've just seen depicted so vividly in "D-Day at Pointe Du Hoc." Operation Overlord, it was called. Sounds grand, doesn't it? The largest air, land, and sea invasion in human history. Just imagine coordinating 5,000 ships, 11,000 airplanes, and over 155,000 troops. Makes you wonder how anyone kept it all straight.

And then there's Pointe Du Hoc, right there between Omaha and Utah beaches. Strategic? Absolutely. It's like holding the high card in a tense game of poker. From those cliffs, German



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guns had a clear shot to both beaches. If the Rangers hadn't scaled those cliffs and taken out the guns—well, let's just say it's a good thing they did, isn't it?

When we think about all those young men, many not even 20 years old, who looked up at those cliffs and went up them anyway. That's something, isn't it? Not just the courage but the sheer physical effort of climbing a 100-foot cliff under fire. Makes complaining about a stiff back seem a bit trivial, doesn't it?

And yet, in the grand scheme, this was just one piece of a massive puzzle spread across Normandy. Each piece, vital; each piece, a story of grit and determination. Makes you appreciate the whole picture a bit more when you think about it like that.

You know, when we talk about Pointe Du Hoc, we're not just talking about a scenic cliff in France. That cliff was a fortress, piled high with natural and man-made defenses. Imagine giant, jagged rocks, steep slopes, and at the top, you've got the Germans waiting with machine guns, mortars, and artillery.

And these weren't just any old defenses. The Germans had fortified this area with concrete casemates and gun pits. It was like trying to storm a castle with nothing but ropes and ladders. You have to wonder about the kind of nerve it took to even attempt it.

Now, fast forward to today, and those cliffs are not what they used to be. Erosion—a slow but relentless force—is gnawing away at Pointe Du Hoc. Sections of that historical battleground are literally crumbling into the English Channel. It's a stark reminder that even the toughest landscapes can't stand forever against the tide.

It's fascinating, isn't it? You have this place, steeped in history, slowly being reclaimed by nature. It makes you think about the permanence of things, or rather, the lack of it. One day, we might not even have Pointe Du Hoc to visit, just stories of what once was and a sea view where brave men climbed towards an uncertain fate.

You've seen the film, so you know about Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder. Now, there's a man who didn't just lead from the back; he was right there on the cliffs with his Rangers. That kind of leadership, where you're doing the same dangerous climbing and facing the same bullets as your men, that's rare. It inspires bravery, doesn't it? Makes you think about the kind of person you'd follow up a cliff.

And then there were Rangers like First Sergeant Leonard Lomell and Staff Sergeant Jack Kuhn. These weren't just soldiers; they were problem solvers in the heat of battle. When they found the German guns weren't where they were supposed to be, did they give up? No, they adapted. They pushed forward, found the guns hidden in an orchard, and took them out. That's not just doing your duty; that's understanding the stakes and taking initiative that goes beyond the call.

What's remarkable is how these stories of heroism don't just fade away. Take Len Lomell, for example. His friendship with Tom Brokaw speaks volumes about the lasting impact of what happened at Pointe Du Hoc. Here's a bond formed over stories of courage, a reminder that these tales of bravery resonate through generations. They inspire books, films, and great friendships. When you think about the resilience and initiative these Rangers showed, it's pretty astounding. Climbing those cliffs, facing seemingly insurmountable odds, and then, finding the strength not just to fight but to strategize and adapt under such extreme conditions. It makes you wonder, doesn't it? About the depth of strength and courage humans can find within themselves when they're really tested.



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What they achieved at Pointe Du Hoc was just the beginning of their journey. After D-Day, they didn't just pack up and go home. No, they kept fighting, moving through France and Germany, involved in some of the toughest battles of World War II. It makes you think about the stamina and the spirit it takes to keep going like that, battle after battle. About their character and their values.

Now, here's another thought that gives you pause: none of the 2nd Rangers who climbed those cliffs on D-Day are with us today. They've all passed on, taking their firsthand stories with them. It puts a bit of pressure on us, doesn't it? To keep their memories alive, to make sure their heroism isn't just a footnote in a history book.

That's why films like the one we've just watched are so crucial. They bring these stories to life, make the bravery, the strategy, the sheer human effort feel real to us now. It's more than just preserving history; it's about keeping the essence of these men alive—what they did, what they sacrificed, and what they achieved.

Imagine if we didn't have these stories. How much poorer would our understanding of history be? How much less inspired might we be? That's why we talk about them, write about them, make films about them. Because as long as we keep telling these stories, the 2nd Rangers are never really gone. They live on, as examples of courage and resilience that we can all learn from, no matter how much time passes.

When you think about the assault on Pointe Du Hoc, it's kind of like putting together a really complicated puzzle, but you're doing it under fire, and the pieces don't always fit where they're supposed to. The plan was multi-layered, involving naval and air bombardment followed by the Rangers' climb up those sheer cliffs.

First, the naval bombardment was supposed to soften up the German defenses, make it a bit easier for the Rangers. Big ships like the USS Texas pounded the cliffs with their guns, trying to knock out the German fortifications. Then, the air force dropped bombs. The idea was to shake up the Germans so much they wouldn't be able to put up much of a fight when the Rangers arrived.

But here's the thing—the bombing wasn't as accurate as it needed to be. It created craters and chaos, sure, but many of the German defenses were still intact. So when the Rangers started their climb, they were going up into a storm of bullets and grenades. Imagine that—climbing a 100-foot cliff with all your gear, while someone's shooting at you from above.

Now, the climbing itself was something out of an adventure story. These guys used ropes and ladders, grappling hooks fired from mortars to haul themselves up those cliffs. It's one thing to climb; it's another to do it when you're being shot at.

And then, there's the twist—when the Rangers finally got to the top, expecting to find and destroy those big German guns, the guns weren't there. They'd been moved. Now, in a situation like that, it's easy to think you've come all this way for nothing. But that's not what the Rangers did. They didn't freeze up or give up—they adapted. They spread out, searched, and, thanks to their persistence and sharp thinking, found the guns hidden in an orchard nearby. They used thermite grenades to disable them, ensuring those guns wouldn't rain down on the troops landing on Omaha and Utah beaches.

This part of the story really shows how the Rangers combined sheer physical bravery with quick tactical thinking. They overcame confusion, adapted to the unexpected, and completed their



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mission. It's a powerful reminder of how flexibility and resilience are just as important in battle as the original plan.

The assault on Pointe Du Hoc was more than just a daring military operation; it was a pivotal moment in the broader context of D-Day and ultimately, the Allied victory in Europe. Let's talk about the immediate results first. By disabling the German artillery at Pointe Du Hoc, the Rangers removed a significant threat to the Allied forces landing on Omaha and Utah beaches. Those guns, if operational, could have caused devastating losses among the troops coming ashore, potentially altering the outcome of D-Day itself. The success of the Rangers ensured that the larger invasion could proceed with one less hazard, contributing directly to the overall success of Operation Overlord.

Now, looking at the broader implications, the victory at Pointe Du Hoc had a ripple effect throughout the entire campaign to liberate Europe. D-Day marked the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany. It was the opening of a second major front in Europe, which significantly weakened the Nazis by forcing them to fight a two-front war—something they had desperately hoped to avoid since the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941.

Moreover, the success of operations like the one at Pointe Du Hoc helped to bolster Allied morale and proved the effectiveness of Allied planning and execution under pressure. It demonstrated to the world, and importantly, to the soldiers themselves, that the Allied forces could undertake complex, high-risk operations successfully.

The liberation of France, which began on D-Day, would continue over the following months, culminating in the liberation of Paris and then moving onward towards Germany. Each step along the way was built on the successes of operations like Pointe Du Hoc, where the courage and determination of a few impacted the many.

In a broader historical context, these victories were not just about reclaiming territory but were crucial in dismantling the oppressive Nazi regime, restoring freedom to occupied countries, and reshaping the political landscape of Europe post-war. This set the stage for the establishment of a new world order under the United Nations, aiming for a lasting peace—a peace shaped by the courage displayed on cliffs and beaches across Normandy.

VII. Reflections on War and Memory

- Reflect on the importance of remembering the sacrifices made during such critical missions.
- How films like *D-Day at Pointe Du Hoc* serve as educational tools and methods of preserving history.
- Mention that Bud Rudder, symbol of that day's heroism, is still alive and resides in College Station, Texas.

VIII. Question and Answer Session

- Open the floor to the audience for questions to deepen the understanding of the film's content and the historical events it portrays.

Conclusion

We've covered quite a lot today.

Learning from our critical past helps us appreciate these costs and informs how we approach the challenges of our own time. It's not just about honoring the past but about applying these lessons to ensure a more peaceful, thoughtful future.

