

Name _____

D-Day

Two days after the liberation of Rome, the long-awaited invasion of German-occupied Europe began. In the early morning hours of June 6, 1944, three Allied airborne divisions parachuted behind enemy lines in northwestern France to cut vital communications and seize control of important roads, bridges, and airfields. Then, six hours later, a combined force of American, British, and Canadian troops under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower landed on the coast of France at Normandy.

The initial invasion force of 175,000 troops had been ferried across the English Channel overnight in more than 2,700 ships. Besides troops, the ships carried tons of supplies and thousands of vehicles. Several thousand planes also participated in the assault, either transporting paratroopers, towing gliders, or dropping bombs on enemy positions.

The Allied attack at Normandy was spread over five beaches, code-named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. Only light resistance was encountered at several beaches, but German fire at Omaha Beach was particularly heavy. Germans firing from cliffs high above the beach inflicted heavy casualties on American troops that landed there. Even so, 250,000 Allied soldiers succeeded in going ashore in the first twenty-four hours of the invasion.

From the beaches of Normandy, the Allies slowly fought their way inland. They liberated Paris on August 19, and by September they had cleared France of German troops. This was the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany.

Solve the following word problems to learn more about the Normandy Invasion.

1. The Allies landed 175,000 troops at Normandy the first night. About 10,700 were killed or wounded. What percent of these Allied soldiers were killed or wounded?

2. The Allies had assembled nearly three million men in Great Britain for the invasion of Europe. By the middle of September, about 73% of these had gone ashore in France. How many soldiers had gone ashore?

3. During the first twenty-four hours of the invasion, 250,000 Allied troops went ashore in Normandy. What percent of the three million soldiers assembled in Great Britain went ashore in Normandy in the first twenty-four hours?

4. What factors do you think helped make the invasion at Normandy so successful?

Name _____

The Battle of the Bulge

One great battle remained to be fought in Europe before Nazi Germany was defeated. That was the Battle of the Bulge.

By the end of 1944, Allied armies had swept through France and Belgium and were at the borders of Germany. They were ready for the final drive they hoped would end the war in Europe. But Adolf Hitler had other ideas. Along an 80-mile front in the Ardennes Forest of Belgium, the Nazi leader had amassed an army of 250,000 men and tanks. This huge buildup of German power had gone undetected because intense fog and snow had kept Allied planes grounded.

On December 16, 1944, Hitler's troops attacked, taking American forces in the Ardennes completely by surprise. The Germans drove a 60-mile "bulge" through the American lines, advancing almost to the English Channel. If the Germans had reached the Channel, they might have cut the Allied forces in two and driven them from France. But the Americans held and closed the gap along the line. The Germans were driven back and once more put in full retreat. By the third week in January, 1945, the battle was over.

The Battle of the Bulge was a gamble on Hitler's part. When it failed, he no longer had an army strong enough to prevent the Allies from crossing the German border. American and British troops raced into Germany from the west while the Russians moved in from the east. What was left of Germany's fighting forces was slowly squeezed between them.

The Battle of the Bulge was a costly victory for the American army. It suffered almost 80,000 casualties. German casualties numbered more than 100,000.

Answer each of the questions below about the Battle of the Bulge.

1. Where was the Battle of the Bulge fought?

2. Why didn't the Allies notice the buildup of German troops in the Ardennes?

3. Why was the German defeat at the Battle of the Bulge so significant?

4. Why is this German offensive referred to as the Battle of the Bulge?

5. How might history have changed if the German forces in the Battle of the Bulge had been able to reach the English Channel?

