

## “THEIR SACRIFICE, OUR FREEDOM”

### WORLD WAR II IN EUROPE

#### War in Europe Lesson Plans

Recommended Level: **Middle School**

Time Required: **2 Days**

#### Introduction

This unit covers the European Theater. Preceding these lessons, the students have covered the rise of dictators and identified Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin; U.S. neutrality policies, and how U.S. policies responded to aggression in Europe. These lessons begin with Hitler’s seizure of territories and end with V-E Day in Europe, and takes two days.

Part 1 of the video gives an excellent introduction or review of the steps leading to World War II. The video begins with the end of World War I and the Great Depression. It proceeds through the 1930’s and how the depression affected Germany giving rise to Hitler and his party. Hitler’s aggression that leads to the start of the war is covered, and U.S. involvement through the Allied invasion of Africa and Sicily. Part 2 covers from D-Day to V-E Day and may also be used as an introduction or review. In this lesson, it is used as an introduction of U.S. troops fighting in Europe. Eyewitness accounts and commentaries are presented by our veterans giving the added value of thoughts and details on what it was like to be there at that time and place.

#### Materials

- Video – “*Their Sacrifice, Our Freedom: World War II in Europe*” (Part 1 – 17 minutes; Part 2 – 20 minutes)
- Internet resources
- Map of European Theater

#### Unit Goals

After completing these lessons, students will be able to:

1. Describe terms and effects of Russian German Non-aggression Pact.
2. Label and identify Allied and Axis powers.
3. Have an understanding of Allied strategy to defeat Germany set-up at Casablanca.
4. Identify Allied and German military leaders.
5. Describe major battles in European Theater.
6. Hear eyewitness accounts of our veterans’ experiences during the war.

## Day 1

### Aim:

1. Define and describe the Russian-German Non-aggression Pact and its effect on German policy.
2. Using map, trace Hitler's invasion of Poland, Western Europe, and Russia.
3. Locate and describe Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and its effect on the U.S.
4. Describe decision at Casablanca to attack Germans in Africa and Italians in Sicily.
5. Introduce video stressing value of eyewitness accounts and commentaries as primary sources.
6. Present focus questions for video – Part 1, and show video (17 minutes)
7. Discuss with class.

### Procedure:

The students will:

1. Read to find out in their texts the term of the Russian German Non-aggression Pact and its effect on Germany: green light to attack Poland.
2. On map, trace Hitler's attack beginning with Poland through Western Europe and finally the Soviet Union. Discuss problems of two front war.
3. Locate Pearl Harbor. Discuss effect of attack on American public and our neutrality. (An in-depth study of Pearl Harbor would be included in lesson plans on the Pacific Front which would be the next unit.)
4. Locate Allied landing in West Africa and Sicily on map.
4. Read focus questions before watching video. Watch video.
5. Do focus questions in paired partners.
6. Discuss answers with class with emphasis on attitudes of veterans.

### Assessment:

List five questions you would like to ask our veterans after watching the video.

### Other Activities:

Write letters to our veterans thanking them for their sacrifices.

Using Map of Europe, 1940, label countries of Europe. Color the countries as follows:  
Nazi dominated countries - red; neutral countries – white; Allied countries – green

On Map of Europe, 1940, identify countries by drawing flags of each country on map. Color  
Nazi controlled countries - grey; and Allied controlled countries - green

## Day 2

### Aim:

1. Using Map of Europe, 1940, set scene for Part 2 of video.
2. Locate three major battles: D-Day, Operation Market Garden, and Battle of the Bulge.
3. Provide topics from video for further research.

### Procedure:

The students will:

1. Using Map of Europe, 1940, trace Allied advances towards Germany locating;
  - a. Normandy beaches
  - b. Netherlands – Operation Market Garden
  - c. Ardennes, Belgium – Battle of the Bulge
  - d. Advance of Soviet Union from East
2. Fill in K-W-L chart about battles.
3. View Part 2 of video. Present focus questions for Part 2 of video (20 minutes).
4. Complete K-W-L chart.

### Assessment:

Complete focus questions in paired partners.

### Other Activity:

#### World War II Newspaper Assignment

Using the storyline titles below from the video, students will work in pairs or alone to write a concise 2 to 4 paragraph news story about the event or topic. Be sure to include a creative title for your article, date and a picture.

Omaha Beach

Dragon Wagons

LST's and Higgins boats

Bridge at Remagen, Germany

Red Ball Express

General Patton's drive for Berlin

Battle for Bastogne

VE Day

German account of the first day of the Battle of the Bulge

American account of the first day of the Battle of the Bulge

## Student Handout #1

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Focus Questions – Part 1

1. How did the Great Depression affect Germany? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Describe examples of Hitler's use of propaganda. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe the comments of our veterans about the war. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why didn't Britain and France do something to stop German aggression? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the U.S. policy toward the war in Europe? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How did our veterans feel about the army's preparation of our forces for fighting in North Africa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What problems did our troops face in Africa? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. How do you think our country reacted to the attack on Pearl Harbor? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. What Allied leaders participated in the Casablanca Conference? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Contrast fighting in Africa and Italy: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Define the following terms: warmonger, renegade, Lend-Lease, Flying Fortress, Fuhrer

Identify the following people: Hitler, Mussolini, Eisenhower, Churchill, Stalin

**Answers:**

1. Inflation, unemployment, poverty
2. Parades, flags, huge rallies, speeches
3. Not fun; never going to get killed, chaos, desire to serve; scared but do what you have to do; buddy doing the same; Lord watching over us; lucky
4. Hitler's seizure of territories didn't affect them, lost a whole generation in World War I
5. Isolationism, neutrality; not our problem; stay out of it
6. Our troops were well trained.
7. Desert warfare; Germany so well armed with better machine guns and tanks; German tanks have better armor than ours
8. Answers will vary
9. Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin
10. Africa: desert fighting, sand, heat, effect on men and weapons

Italy: mud and mountains; Germans have high terrain (Monte Casino); effect on men and weapons.

## Student Handout #2

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Focus Questions – Part 2

1. What happened on D-Day, June 6, 1944? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What are some of our veteran paratroopers' memories of the day? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Identify General Eisenhower and his role that day \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are some of our veterans' memories of crossing the English Channel on D-Day? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the job of the Dragon Wagon? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What was the job of the Red Ball Express? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was the purpose of the English-led Operation Market Garden? Was it a success? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Describe Hitler's goal in the Battle of the Bulge: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How did the weather affect our troops in the Battle of the Bulge? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What are some of the messages our veterans want you to remember? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What is the advantage of being able to hear our veterans' eye-witness accounts and commentaries?
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Answers:

1. Allied invasion of Normandy, France
2. Traveling on troop ships; practical training; praying and laughing on the way over to D-Day; seeing officers shot down; landing out of their zone; bullets going through plane; being outnumbered.
3. American General who had commanded invasion of Africa; now Allied Commander in Chief.
4. Rope ladders going off the ships; almost drowned; getting to beach without helmet or gun; heavy gear (51 lbs.) weighed them down
5. Get disabled tanks and bring them back to base to be repaired.
6. Trucks brought supplies to troops on the front line (175,000 tons per day).
7. Take bridges in the Netherlands before the Germans could destroy them. Hold them until Allies got there. Failure – Germans got the plan.
8. German troops effort to stop Allies from moving into Germany by cutting through the center of Allied lines and coming from behind to attack other troops on the line..
9. Freezing cold caused our soldiers to suffer frost bite; supplies could not be brought in due to snow storm; planes could not fly support for our troops. Weapons froze. Troops did not have cold weather uniform.
10. Possible answers: War is hell. Freedom isn't free. Sacrifices of our troops brought our freedom. Many didn't come home – still there.

**Less than one million World War II veterans are left today. They helped to save our world.**

11. Answers will vary. Some might include – They were eyewitnesses. Hear their emotion in their voices.

## MAP OF EUROPE, 1940







## National Standards

### History

- 5-12 Evaluate American responses to German, Italian, and Japanese aggression in Europe, Africa, and Asia from 1935 to 1941. (Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.)
- 5-12 Explain the major turning points of the war and contrast military campaigns in the European and Pacific Theaters. (Draw upon data in historical maps.)
- 9-12 Evaluate the wartime aims and strategies hammered out at conferences among the Allied powers. (Hypothesize the influence of the past.)
- 7-12 Describe military experiences and explain how they fostered American identity and interactions among people of diverse backgrounds. (Utilize literary sources including oral testimony.)

### English Language Arts

- 7. Students conduct research on issues and issues by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
- 8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

## Pennsylvania Standards

Reading, Writing, and Listening - 1.1.8.A, D, G; 1.2.8.A, B; 1.4.8.B; 1.6.8.F; 1.6.8.E, F; 1.8.8.A, B, C

Social Studies Standards – 8.3.8.A, B, D; 8.1.8.B, C, D