

U.S History: Battle of Guadalcanal

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Directions: In class today, you will have the opportunity do learn about the Battle of Guadalcanal and then teach your peers a thing or two about it. Below, are sets of links that will guide you in this exploration; while researching, answer the following questions-these types of questions will allow you to become more familiar with the topic which will enable you to be more effective when discussing it later.

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/battle-of-guadalcanal/print>

1. When and where was the Battle of Guadalcanal?

2. What was the allied objective of the battle?

3. How long was the battle?

<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/at-a-glance/guadalcanal-fact-sheet.pdf>

4. Why did the Japanese occupy man Islands in the South Pacific?

5. Was the battle of Guadalcanal one large battle or several battles making up one event?

6. What were some obstacles allied forces faced in the conflict?

7. What was the outcome of the Battle of Guadalcanal?

Name: _____

WW2: Battle Analysis

1. Describe the historical context in which this battle occurred.
 - a. Of what larger conflict was this battle a part?
 - b. What events led up to this particular battle being fought?
 - c. How did this battle fit into the larger conflict?
2. Who were the key leaders of each side in this *battle* (not the overall conflict) that made tactical decisions affecting the outcome of the battle?
3. Describe the type of men (*on both sides*) who fought this battle, in general terms:
 - a. What was the background of these men?
 - b. Were they draftees or volunteers?
 - c. What type of education did they have?
 - d. What was their level of training prior to the conflict?
 - e. Did the men have any previous combat experience?
4. Describe the types of armaments used in this battle:
 - a. Why type of weapon did the typical soldier use?
 - b. What were the larger arms used in this battle (indirect fire, etc)?
 - c. What, if any, new weapons were introduced in this battle? What effect did these have on the outcome?
5. Give an overall synopsis of the battle:
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. What happened? If a multi-day battle, describe the broad actions.
 - c. When did this battle take place?
 - d. Where was this battle fought?
6. What was the *tactical* outcome of this battle?
 - a. Who won?
 - b. What tactical victory was achieved or what tactical mission was accomplished?
7. What was the *strategic* outcome of this battle?
 - a. What effect did this battle have on the overall conflict?
 - b. How did this battle help the strategic position of the victor and degrade the strategic position of the loser?
8. What overall significance did this battle have on the outcome of the larger conflict?
 - a. What larger historical significance did this battle have?



THIS DAY IN HISTORY | AUGUST 07 ▾

1942

August 07

U.S. forces invade Guadalcanal

On this day in 1942, the U.S. 1st Marine Division begins Operation Watchtower, the first U.S. offensive of the war, by landing on Guadalcanal, one of the Solomon Islands.

On July 6, 1942, the Japanese landed on Guadalcanal Island and began constructing an airfield there. Operation Watchtower was the codename for the U.S. plan to invade Guadalcanal and the surrounding islands. During the attack, American troops landed on five islands within the Solomon chain. Although the invasion came as a complete surprise to the Japanese (bad weather had grounded their scouting aircraft), the landings on Florida, Tulagi, Gavutu and Tananbogo met much initial opposition from the Japanese defenders.

But the Americans who landed on Guadalcanal met little resistance—at least at first. More than 11,000 Marines had landed, and 24 hours had passed, before the Japanese manning the garrison there knew of the attack. The U.S. forces quickly took their main objective, the airfield, and the outnumbered Japanese troops retreated, but not for long. Reinforcements were brought in, and fierce hand-to-hand jungle fighting ensued. "I have never heard or read of this kind of fighting," wrote one American major general on the scene. "These people refuse to surrender."

The Americans were at a particular disadvantage, being assaulted from both the sea and air. But the U.S. Navy was able to reinforce its troops to a greater extent, and by February 1943, the Japanese had retreated on secret orders of their emperor (so secret, the Americans did not even know it had taken place until they began happening upon abandoned positions, empty boats, and discarded supplies). In total, the Japanese had lost more than 25,000 men, compared with a loss of 1,600 by the Americans. Each side lost 24 warships.

The first Medal of Honor given to a Marine was awarded to Sgt. John Basilone for his fighting during Operation Watchtower. According to the recommendation for his medal, he "contributed materially to the defeat and virtually the annihilation of a Japanese regiment."

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ALSO ON THIS DAY



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Battle of Guadalcanal

HISTORY.COM EDITORS

The World War II Battle of Guadalcanal was the first major offensive and a decisive victory for the Allies in the Pacific theater. With Japanese troops stationed in this section of the Solomon Islands, U.S. marines launched a surprise attack in August 1942 and took control of an air base under construction. Reinforcements were funneled to the island as a series of land and sea clashes unfolded, and both sides endured heavy losses to their warship contingents. However, the Japanese suffered a far greater toll of casualties, forcing their withdrawal from Guadalcanal by February 1943.

When Japanese troops arrived on Guadalcanal on June 8, 1942, to construct an air base, and then American marines landed two months later to take it away from them, few people outside of the South Pacific had ever heard of that 2,500-square-mile speck of jungle in the Solomon Islands. But the ensuing six-month Guadalcanal campaign proved to be the turning point of the Pacific war.

Strategically, possession of a Guadalcanal air base was important to control of the sea lines of communication between the United States and Australia. Operationally, the Battle of Guadalcanal was notable for the interrelationship of a complex series of engagements on the ground, at sea, and in the air. Tactically, what stood out was the resolve and resourcefulness of the U.S. Marines, whose tenacious defense of the air base dubbed Henderson Field enabled the Americans to secure air superiority.

By the end of the battle on February 9, 1943, the Japanese had lost two-thirds of the 31,400 army troops committed to the island, whereas the U.S. Marines and the U.S. Army had lost less than 2,000 soldiers of about 60,000 deployed. The ship losses on both sides were heavy. But by far the most significant loss for the Japanese was the decimation of their elite group of naval aviators. Japan after Guadalcanal no longer had a realistic hope of withstanding the counteroffensive of an increasingly powerful United States.

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