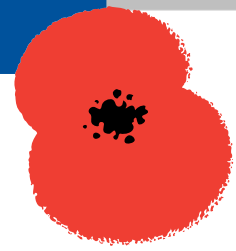


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ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Stand-alone Assembly (Key Stage 3 and above)

- Notes: adjust the date if you are presenting this assembly earlier in the week. If you want to use visual materials for this assembly then go to the website The Royal British Legion has set up (www.dday65.org.uk) and use the pictures of the veterans or images of Remembrance.

Assembly

Today is June 5th and tomorrow will be June 6th, a day known to many as the anniversary of D-Day.

D-Day was one of the turning points of the Second World War – something that seems very far away now but actually still has importance for today.

The Second World War was a global conflict with fighting taking place in many countries and continents. It had started in Europe 1939 with Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland and then Western Europe, Soviet Russia, and through the Balkans. The collapse of the countries in Western Europe had also resulted in Nazi Germany and the Axis powers such as Italy and Japan moving into Africa and Asia.

By the end of 1940, the only European country not occupied but still fighting Germany was Britain. For the next three and a half years, Britain, the Empire and the Commonwealth fought with Germany around the globe - in North Africa, South East Asia and many other places. However, they needed time, technology and large military numbers to launch a major attack into mainland Europe.

In December 1941, the United States entered the war on the side of Britain and her Allies after it was attacked by Japanese forces. Together the two nations led the planning for the invasion and liberation of Europe.

In preparation, smaller scale invasions were launched into Italy at the start of 1944. However to really bring the Germans to the point of defeat, the Allies needed to attack into Western Europe – specifically France. The big problems were:

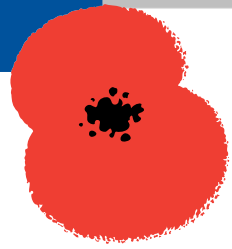
- Creating a large element of surprise
- Logistically getting the troops and resources needed to an invasion place
- Dealing with German defences and then a counter-attack

After months of planning and development, the following solutions were found:

- Months of subterfuge with false information leaked to the Germans so that the Germans would think the wrong things about a forthcoming Allied invasion.
- A site of attack was chosen that was neither typical nor ideal as it did not have a useful harbour for unloading follow-up troops and supplies. They overcame this by inventing and then building floating harbours!

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- Choosing Normandy meant that the German defences were not at their strongest. By meticulous planning, the Allies dropped parachute regiments in strategic places, just before the main invasion, to help destroy German positions and preserve routes for Allied troops once in France.

In the end, the Allies attacked a 30 mile stretch of Normandy coast. All parts of the Armed Forces took part – the Navy fired at the German positions defending the beaches and brought troops and supplies across, the Air Force bombed positions and flew in some of the parachute regiments and the Allied Armies launched their attacks on the beaches and as parachutists. The task was still huge and many were killed or injured - on D-Day, the Allies landed around 156,000 troops in Normandy.

These men were there:

Charles Allan

Army, Royal Artillery, Gold Beach – anti-tank gunner who engaged with enemy tanks.

During the war Charles Allen was a gun layer in the 17lb Anti-Tank Gun Crew. Coming off the boat he wondered what was going to happen when the front door went down. The noise on the beaches was deafening and it took them 20 minutes to get off the beach and get the waterproofing off the tank and gun.

Arriving on the beaches, Mr Allen said they were presented with a chaotic scene: “The Navy were having a go, bombers were having a go... when I saw the bodies on the beach I wondered what I was doing there... but we did the job.”

Charles Jackson

Army, Lincolnshire Regiment, Sword Beach – a Bren gunner, one of the 3-inch mortar crew.

D-Day veteran Mr C W Jackson will never forget the horrors of D-Day. The shrapnel that has remained in his body since 1944 is a constant reminder of his participation in WW2. Private Jackson was part of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment on D-Day and as a Bren gunner, it was his job to cover the soldiers as they poured on to the Normandy beaches.

“I try not to think about the D-Day landings too much,” he goes on to say. “There were so many terrible sights; soldiers drowning and dying as they went up on to the beach.”

D-Day the 6th June 1944 was the largest amphibious (sea to land) invasion in the history of warfare. No Armed Force has launched any operation as ambitious either before or since. In the months that followed D-Day, the Allies became bogged down in battles and German counter-attacks, but they were never forced back in to the sea or removed from Normandy, making D-Day and the invasion of Normandy a huge success.

The human cost of D-Day and the battle for Normandy was enormous. There are now 27 war cemeteries in the area containing the remains of over 110,000 dead from both sides: 77,866 German, 9386 American, 17,769 British, 5002 Canadian and 650 Poles.

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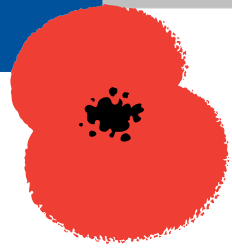
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Moment of Reflection:

Let us remember the huge amount of effort, dedication, invention and lives that went into the attack that led to the liberation of Europe. Those men and women who were asked by their countries to fight in the Second World War, will always be remembered because they fought so that we would know the value of peace.

“When you go home, tell them of us and say,
for their tomorrow, we gave our today”

Kohima Epitaph



Ranville War Cemetery, Normandy

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Poem or prayer:

At the British War Cemetery, Bayeux by Charles Causley (1917 – 2003)

I walked where in their talking graves
And shirts of earth five thousand lay,
When history with ten feasts of fire
Had eaten the red air away.

'I am Christ's boy,' I cried. 'I bear
In iron hands the bread, the fishes.
I hang with honey and with rose
This tidy wreck of all your wishes.

'On your geometry of sleep
The chestnut and the fir-tree fly,
And lavender and marguerite
Forge with their flowers an English sky.

'Turn now towards the belling town
Your jigsaws of impossible bone,
And rising read your rank of snow
Accurate as death upon the stone.'

About your easy heads my prayers
I said with syllables of clay.
'What gift,' I asked, 'shall I bring now
Before I weep and walk away?'

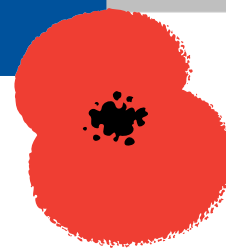
Take, they replied, the oak and laurel.
Take our fortune of tears and live
Like a spendthrift lover. All we ask
Is the one gift you cannot give.



Bayeux Memorial, CWGC Cemetery

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The steps that led to D-Day

After the defeat of most West European countries in 1940, only Britain remained fighting against Nazi Germany and its allies in Europe. Standing against the Nazi empire was one thing, being able to defeat her was another. Victory would only come if the Western Allies and the USSR fought in Europe itself. To do that, Britain, its Empire and Commonwealth and the US would have to cross the sea and land back into West Europe whilst the Soviet forces battled in Eastern Europe. The build up for that invasion took time.

1941

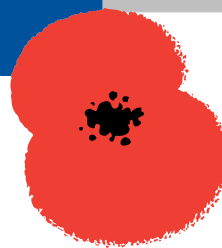


Japan attacks Pearl Harbour, Dec 1941
(photo IWM OEM 21469)

| | |
|------------|--|
| 27 March | Britain and the US agree to cooperate in strategic planning in the event the US enters the War. It was also agreed in principle that the defeat of Germany would be the first priority. This was followed on the 9-12th August by the signing of the 'Atlantic Charter' by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt. The charter set out common wartime principles and emphasised the strength of an Anglo-American alliance, despite US neutrality. |
| 22 June | Germany attacks the Soviet Union - Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of Russia. |
| 6 June | Stalin calls for the creation of a 'second front' in Europe to relieve pressure on the Russian forces battling the German army. |
| 7 December | Japan attacks the United States naval fleet at Pearl Harbour. The Japanese were an ally of Nazi Germany and the attack meant that the Axis Powers of Germany and Italy effectively declared war on the US. In response, the US declares war on Japan, and then Germany and Italy. |

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1942



United States Navy crews at Londonderry Naval Base, 1942 (photo IWM HU 54537)

| | |
|-------------|---|
| 26 January | The first US Army unit arrives in Britain - elements of the 34th Division land at Belfast (Northern Ireland). |
| 9-14 April | British and US military commanders discuss the build-up of US forces in the UK for an eventual invasion of German-occupied Europe. The build-up phase was codenamed Bolero. |
| 25-27 June | Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Washington DC. They agree to attack German forces in North Africa before launching the invasion of mainland Europe. |
| 1 July | The First Battle of El Alamein (North Africa) begins. |
| 22 October | Conscription age in Britain is reduced to 18. |
| 22 November | Churchill speaks: "This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." |

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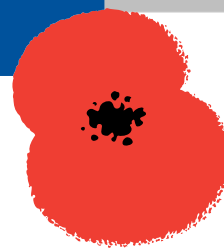
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1943

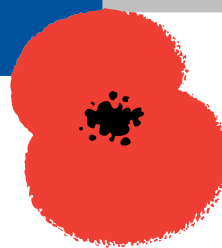


Stalin, Roosevelt & Churchill meet in Teheran 1943
(photo IWM HU 54537)

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 14-24 January | Churchill and Roosevelt meet at Casablanca, Morocco to discuss next phase of war. They decide to attack Sicily and Italy to divert German military resources. |
| 30 January | The German forces fighting at Stalingrad, Russia, surrender, the first major defeat of Hitler's armies. |
| 1 April | Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate), or COSSAC, formally established to provide planning group for cross-Channel invasion (code-named Operation Overlord) |
| by mid year | British code-breakers based at Bletchley Park had broken the complicated codes sent by the German Military. The information learned helped to counter the German U-boat threat to Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic, allowing more resources to arrive into Britain, and supplied important information about German movements and abilities. |
| 3 September | Allies invade mainland Italy |
| 28 November - 1 December | Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin meet in Teheran, Iran, where they discuss the planned 1944 cross-Channel invasion. |
| 4-6 December | Churchill and Roosevelt meet in Cairo, Egypt, and agree that the US General, General Eisenhower will command Allied Forces for the planned invasion of Europe. |

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1944



Sherman tanks driving ashore from landing craft during Exercise 'Fabius', 6 May 1944. (photo IWM H 38270)

| | |
|------------|--|
| 31st March | US D-Day beach landing training exercise (Operation Beaver) at Slapton Sands, Devon, demonstrates a dangerous lack of coordination between units. |
| 15th April | Up to 10,000 RAF and USAAF aircraft begin training to support the Overlord landings. The Transportation Plan involves attacking rail and road targets throughout northern France and Belgium in a bid to prevent German reinforcements reaching the coastal areas once the invasion had begun. |
| 28th April | 750 US army and navy personnel killed, and another 300 wounded when a convoy of landing craft training for the Overlord landings was attacked by German E-boats off Slapton Sands, Devon. |
| 3-9th May | Operation Fabius, the final rehearsal before the Overlord landings, is held along the English Channel coast between Littlehampton in Sussex and Slapton Sands in Devon. Fabius is judged a success and the invasion given the go ahead. |
| 5 Jun | D-Day for Overlord postponed 24 hours because of poor weather. |

D-Day 6th June 1944

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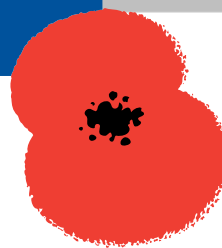
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20 things you need to know about D-Day.

1. D-Day is a term traditionally used by the Armed Forces for when an operation, such as an attack begins. The 'D' just stands for day - the day before D-Day was known as "D-1", and the day after D-Day was "D+1". Prior to June 1944, there would have been lots of D-Days. Now it is generally just used to refer to the allied attack in Normandy on 6th June 1944 and the start of Operation Overlord.
2. Operation Overlord was the codename given to the whole invasion of North West Europe. Governments and Armed Forces use code words to describe plans and operations to try and keep them secret or to stop different plans from being confused. Included in Operation Overlord was Operation Neptune which was the main part of the attack lasting from 6th June to 30th June 1944.
3. D-day was originally planned for 5th June but the weather was too bad, with high winds and rain. The invasion was planned according to certain weather conditions and tides.
4. All along the west European coast, the Germans had built fortifications. Some of the defences were built as early as 1940, in particular in the Pas de Calais which was strongly fortified because it was the area closest to Britain. After the Battle of Britain (summer 1940) many of the key ports along the western coast of Europe were protected by batteries with long range guns. From 1942 the Germans began to construct the Atlantic Wall, which was to be an unbreakable line of defence stretching from Norway to Spain.
5. Plans for an allied attack into France had been developing for years, however the detailed preparation for D-Day started in 1943 after the meeting in Tehran between the allied leaders Winston Churchill, F D Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin.
6. Normandy was viewed by the Germans as the most unlikely point for an attack. To make a successful attack from the sea, the attacking army and its equipment would need to get swiftly onto land. The equipment would be needed not just for the attack but for the days and weeks afterwards. Fresh military equipment would be needed as soon as an attack began because the equipment the landing forces brought would be quickly used up. They would also need new medical supplies and new stocks of food. That meant the best place to attack would have been a port - the most likely place for an attack was considered to be Pas de Calais. This was because it was a huge port and the shortest distance from Britain. Normandy had one of the furthest crossing times and the port of Caen was considered too far in for an attack.
7. Normandy was chosen because it was the most unlikely spot. Although there were German beach defences there, they were not as strong as those at other areas. To get round the problem of attacking via a port, the Allies invented and then built temporary harbours – called Mulberry Harbours.
8. The Mulberry Harbour was actually two artificial harbours. They were towed from the south coast of England and put together off the coast of Normandy. One, known as Mulberry A, was put together at Omaha Beach and the other, known as Mulberry B (nicknamed 'Port Winston'), was put together off Arromanches at Gold Beach. The construction was like a jigsaw puzzle. The Mulberry Harbours were made up of flexible steel that floated on steel or concrete pontoons (supports). They were capable of moving 7,000 tons of vehicles and goods each day.
9. The Germans knew an invasion was planned because their spy plans were able to see activity on the south coast in Britain. Operation Fortitude was the Allies plan to deceive the Germans about where an Allied invasion would take place. Fortitude North was designed to confuse the Germans about an allied attack on Norway and operation Fortitude South

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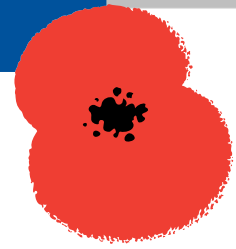
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was to confuse them about when and where the Allies would attack in France. The Allies leaked faked plans, set up fake camps and carried fake coded messages across the radio as part of Operation Fortitude. Confusing the German enemy, to make sure they were not prepared for Normandy, was crucial. One of the most important parts of the deception was for the Germans to believe that the attack in Normandy was not the real attack so that they would not send huge amounts of German reinforcements, even when the attack began. Overall Operation Fortitude was a huge success.

10. In Britain, in the build-up to D-Day (code named Bolero), the whole of the south of England resembled one large army camp. Civilian travel was restricted in some areas, as was diplomatic travel. Journalists were monitored and most troops were under constant training.
11. Diversion and blocking tactics continued right up to and throughout the invasion – planes were sent to bomb Calais the night of the 5th June and on the morning of the 6th, to continue the idea that the attack would be there and not in Normandy. The French resistance set about cutting all the telephone lines and communication systems to stop news of the actual invasion reaching the Germans and the German High Command.
12. The first part of the attack was not on beaches but by air – British and American Airborne divisions. Army units, trained to parachute from aircraft to take specific targets, landed behind German lines in Normandy. The men of D Company, 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry who were part of the 6th British Airborne Division, landed at Ranville-Benouville in Normandy, arriving by glider. They captured the Caen Canal Bridge, later renamed Pegasus Bridge in honour of the cap badge (a winged horse – Pegasus) of the 6th Airborne Division. The bridge was vital to allow passage of allied supplies and to stop German reinforcements.
13. “H-Hour” is the term used for the time during the day for a military operation to begin. For D-Day the key H-hour was at 6.30 am when the attacks on the beaches began.
14. The Allied Forces landed troops along the Normandy coast, stretching approximately 25 to 30 miles in length. The area was divided up into 5 sections and given the codes of Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. The US troops landed at Utah and Omaha, the British at Gold and Sword and the Canadians at Juno.
15. On D-Day, the Allies landed around 156,000 troops in Normandy. The Americans landed approximately 73,000 (23,250 on Utah Beach, 34,250 on Omaha Beach, and 15,500 airborne troops). On the British and Canadian beaches, 83,115 troops were landed (61,715 of them British): 24,970 on Gold Beach, 21,400 on Juno Beach, 28,845 on Sword Beach, and 7900 airborne troops. Other Allied troops also took part on the day and in the days and weeks that followed as part of the Battle for Normandy, these included forces from Australia, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Poland.
16. The Americans invented specialist landing craft for the troops to be carried on (LCVP standing for Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel but often simply called the Higgins boat). These crafts each had a ramp that dropped down into the sea so that troops would not have to clamber over the side of a boat before getting to the beach.
17. Throughout the first hours of D-Day, Allied ships bombarded the French coast to try and destroy the German guns and defences of the Atlantic Wall. Allied troops were also assisted in their attack by amphibious tanks that were landed to destroy German resistance.

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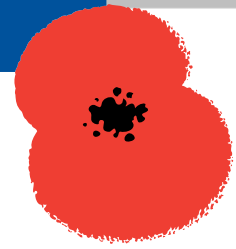
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18. Anne Frank wrote about D-Day in her diary on 6th June 1944 after hearing the news on a secret radio.

“This is D-Day, came the announcement over the British radio. The invasion has begun! According to the German news, British parachute troops have landed on the French coast. British landing craft are in battle with the German Navy, says the BBC.

Great commotion in the ‘Secret Annexe’! Would the long-awaited liberation that has been talked of so much but which still seems too wonderful, too much like a fairy-tale, ever come true? Could we be granted victory this year, 1944? We don’t know yet, but hope is revived within us; it gives us fresh courage, and makes us strong again.”

19. The human cost of D-Day and the Battle for Normandy was enormous. There are now 27 war cemeteries in the area containing the remains of over 110,000 dead from both sides: 77,866 German, 9386 American, 17,769 British, 5002 Canadian and 650 Poles.
20. D-Day the 6th June 1944 was the largest amphibious (sea to land) invasion in the history of warfare. There hasn’t been any operation as ambitious either before or since. In the months that followed D-Day, the Allies became bogged down in battles and German counter-attacks, but they were never forced back into the sea or removed from Normandy, making D-Day and the invasion of Normandy a huge success.