

## Subject: Island Hopping in the Pacific - WWII

### Key Words:

Time Allotted: 90 minute block class.

<b>Lesson Overview</b>	This lesson will emphasize geography's impact on United States' strategy in fighting World War II in the Pacific. Students, through the use of Library of Congress resources explore geography's impact on the average soldier in the Pacific. They will also chart the progress that the armed forces made in their attempt to hop over non-strategic islands in their attempts to get ever closer to the home islands of Japan.
<b>Compelling Question</b>	How and in what ways did geography impact the scope and strategies of the War in the Pacific between 1941 and 1945?
<b>Supporting Questions</b>	Why would the United States decide, after all of the island hopping, to forgo the final "hop" onto the home islands of Japan in 1945?
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	Student will be able to critically assess the toll that the geography of the Pacific took on soldiers. They will also be able to, (based on data that they've extrapolated) make reasoned judgements as to why the decision to drop the bomb was made.
<b>C3 Standards &amp; Practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● D2.Geo.12.9-12 - Evaluate the consequences of human-made and natural catastrophes on global trade, politics, and human interaction.</li><li>● D2.His.1.9-12 - Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</li><li>● D2.His.15.9-12 - Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.</li><li>● D2.His.16.9-12 - Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.</li></ul>
<b>Materials/ Resources</b>	Story Map Link: <a href="https://arcg.is/1zbbTv">https://arcg.is/1zbbTv</a> Graphic Organizer Geo Inquiry Excel Graphing Spreadsheet
<b>Modifications/ Extensions</b>	Students could be asked to develop sophisticated graphs based on their data created on their spreadsheet.

### Contextual Essay – TPS Story Map Scott Mace – Charlottesville High School

The old English proverb, “necessity is the mother of invention” could easily be applied to the armed forces of the United States in the Pacific during WWII. This necessity was brought about due to the overarching American strategy of “Defeat Hitler first”. The reasons for this are complex and highly speculative. What we do know is that upwards of 60-70% of all wartime resources were allocated for Europe.

Given these priorities, the United States Navy and Marines were compelled to invent a new type of warfare. A warfare that was dictated by the geography of the Pacific. By April of 1942, it was clear that the Japanese had successfully captured much of the key islands in the South Pacific. Army General Douglas MacArthur and Navy Admiral Chester Nimitz along with Admiral William “Bull” Halsey devised a plan unique in the annals of military history. They would orchestrate a series of complex maneuvers that has come to be known as “island hopping”. The purpose of this plan was to attack islands that were not as strongly defended by the Japanese. Once under United States control, the island would be fortified and used as a staging area for the next attack. By skipping over heavily defended islands, allowing them to “wither on the vine”, the U.S. forces would be able to advance closer and closer to their ultimate objective. The home islands of Japan.

While ultimately successful, this warfare was costly. Guerilla warfare was new to the men who fought in the Pacific. Their enemy, enamored with the Code of Bushido, was alien as well. This code encouraged fighting to the death and not taking prisoners. Another challenge was clearly the geography. Jungle fighting on hilly terrain coupled with heat and humidity lent itself to a host of issues. Diseases such as malaria, dysentery and skin funguses plagued soldiers throughout the Pacific. As the war progressed and the American military was able to advance across the Pacific, the fighting became more vicious. The penultimate battle of the war took place in February of 1945 on the island of Iwo Jima. What made this engagement so significant was it was the first time that the United States was fighting the Japanese on ancestral Japanese soil. All the other battles had been on islands that the Japanese had conquered. Not Iwo Jima. The ferocity by which the Japanese defended this island was unlike anything the United States military had seen. Over 23,000 Japanese soldiers were ensconced on the island prior to the invasion. Over 21,000 died in its defense. These numbers would be eclipsed several months later during the largest battle of the Pacific war. Okinawa was another ancestral Japanese island. The difference was the scale. Iwo Jima was a rocky outcropping with a volcanic mountain (Mt. Suribcahi) and no civilian population. Okinawa is a very large island with a sizable population. By the time the battle had ceased, over 100,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians were killed.

The cost of the war, in terms of human life, weighed heavily President Harry Truman. When the casualty figures came in from the final two battles on Iwo Jima and Okinawa the president was stunned. Most historians point to these battles as the tipping point in convincing Truman to the wisdom of dropping the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August of 1945.

### **Teacher Preparation Instructions**

This story map is constructed in a chronological fashion. It is meant to walk the students through the War in the Pacific from its prelude through the dropping of the atomic bombs. Students will be exposed to a variety of resources designed to help them understand why the United States adopted its strategy of “island hopping.” Using geographic inquiry tools, students will gain an appreciation for time and distance as the American forces fought their way across the Pacific. They will also investigate and be able to come up with reasonable arguments as to whether this strategy was worth the enormous cost of lives that it engendered. This line of investigation will lead them into conclude whether the dropping of the atomic bombs was justified or not.

## **Instructional Procedures/Process**

1. Place students in small groups of 3-4. Given them a blank map of the Pacific Ocean and pass out note cards with the names of Pacific Islands on them. (Guadalcanal, Saipan, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Philippines, Okinawa, Peleliu, Kwajalein, Midway). Have them place these notecards next to where they think these islands are.
2. After much confusion, explain that they are going to investigate the relative location of these islands. Explain that each of these islands played a vital role in the United States strategy of “island hopping”.
3. Students will complete the student response guide as they work with the provided materials in the story map. The teacher will decide if this continues to be done as a class, small groups, partners, or as individuals.
4. The teacher will collect the student response guides to check for understanding.
5. Students will take a “HAT” assessment focusing on Japanese Internment.

## **Closure**

The teacher can start the discussion with a structured debate. As the teacher poses the statements below, students silently go to a corner of the room matching their opinion of each statement (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree).

- The United States should have left Japan alone in the Pacific.
- Was the internment of Japanese-Americans justified as a war measure?
- Island Hopping was a successful strategy in the Pacific.
- The United States should not have dropped atomic bombs on Japan

Students will have a class discussion/seminar that answers the compelling and supporting questions with information from the story map. Students will have their response guide as a resource. Then students will pose questions they have about the effectiveness of “island hopping”. This can be done as a Socratic seminar, fish bowl, Harkness discussion, or another format of the teacher’s choosing.