



# D-DAY

Untold stories of the Normandy Landings inspired by 20 real-life people.

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\$17.99 US/\$23.99 CAN

48 pages, color illustrations

Hardcover, 11.81 x 11.81 x in.

## Essential Questions in This Unit:

- Why were the Normandy Landings, also called D-Day?
- What did the world look like at the time of D-Day?
- Who were on the different sides of this operation, and how did they contribute?
- What war strategies and tactics were used during D-Day? How was the art of deception used?
- It's important to recognize that most combatants, especially on the western Allied side, survived D-Day, fought on to the end of the war and led postwar lives.
- What ultimately happened to those who survived?
- What lessons can be derived from these people's experiences?

**Learning Objective:** *D-Day* teaches children about the Normandy Landings, one of World War II's most significant operations that altered the war's timeline of events and decided its outcome. Told through the eyes of 20 real people on both the Allied and Axis sides, the book features first-person narratives of who they are and for which combat or non-combat unit they work, descriptions of how they view the Normandy Landings, and additional factual information. Through this fascinating presentation, students are challenged to learn about a historic event that changed the world stage from people who actually lived through it, learn about military and wartime tactics especially in the first half of the 20th Century, and draw conclusions about the experience of working in a war.

## Classroom Discussion Topics:

1. Discuss D-Day specifically with the class, including the timeline of events during the operation, why it happened at that particular time, and the reasoning behind the launch on France's coast. Then discuss the two fighting sides and the people in the book who fought on each side. Do the students know other figures from either the Allied or Axis side that aren't mentioned in the book?
2. Talk with students about takeaway lessons from D-Day. Why was it so important during World War II? Why do they think the author decided to write a whole book about this operation? Then discuss how one battle can turn around an event to lead to a different outcome. What other courses of history changed because of one event? You might mention World War I and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Boston Tea Party that triggered the American Revolution, Martin Luther's publishing of 95 Theses that led to the Reformation, the detonation of atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or even the September 11th World Trade Center bombings.
3. Using the book as an example, look at how perspective in books can lead to more interesting storytelling and narratives. Why do students think the author decided to tell the D-Day story through a first-person point of view? Have students read any other books in first-person? Discuss second and third person points of view as well. Why is D-Day effective by telling people's stories through personal perspectives? What is the breadth of D-Day's 'reach,' and why is it important that the Normandy Landings story is told from both points of view?
4. Another fascinating lesson from the book is the "art" of military warfare and battles of the early 20th Century. Take a look at some of the figures from the book, including pilot Dave Shannon and General Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. What military tactics can students learn from the book? Why do students think these tactics are important to one side trying to win the war? How do they think these tactics affect the opposing side or regular civilians?
5. Discuss with students World War II and how it can still affects today's world, potentially bringing up hate crimes, far-right movements that resurrect Nazi symbols, and/or larger societal implications. Then talk about racism that occurred during World War II, such as Japanese-American internment camps as well as discrimination against German-Americans and Italian-Americans during the early 1940s. What do students see today in the news or public life that connect them to World War II? Some examples might be the annual Righteous Among the Nations award presented by the State of Israel; Remembrance Day in the UK; the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California; or the Human Rights Convention, created by the Council of Europe started by Winston Churchill.
6. Use the book *D-Day* as a springboard to talk about war in general: What wars are happening in our world today? Be sure to discuss both sides to the conflicts – how do students think these wars got started? What conflicts in society do they think might lead to upcoming wars? Are students themselves contributing to these conflicts, or if not, what perspectives are they taking, and why?

## Student Activities:

1. Ask students to choose their three favorite people in the book. Host a classroom discussion to talk about why they liked their choices, or challenge them to write a report. Are there other figures not mentioned in the book that they'd like to write about? Consider taking a field trip to a museum to learn more about World War II, such as the Churchill War Rooms in London; the D-Day Story in Portsmouth, England; or the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana.
2. After talking about perspectives in society or war, get students to write a report told from two different perspectives about their topic of choice, trying to be fair to both sides. It might be historical (e.g., Vietnam War), political (e.g., Brexit vs. non-Brexit), or social.
3. Take a poll in class to see if students have older people around them who might have lived then, or even know of people who knew others who did live during World War II. What was it like during that time, how did the war change their lives? Ask students to give oral reports on these people, with historical facts and figures included. Challenge them to find out more about D-Day itself from online websites, including the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, or the History section of the BBC website.

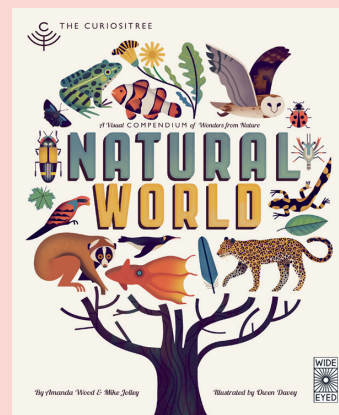
4. An important takeaway lesson from World War II is tolerance and how hatred can lead to atrocious acts. What intolerance do kids see around them today? How can they stop it? Think about examples at school or in the larger community, such as racism, bullying, or making fun of others. Then have a classroom discussion about intolerance, asking students to do a project from research. If you are close to a physical museum or memorial, consider taking a field trip to visit it, or encourage students to visit online – some important places might be the Simon Wiesenthal Center or the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam.
5. Ask students about other non-obvious societal implications that were an outcome of World War II, asking them to choose one or more and write a report to present in class. Some products or outcomes from the war were the mass production of medicine like penicillin, the rise of mass weaponry like nuclear bombs, MIT's large scale computer invented in 1942, and the creation of plastics and frozen foods. Then discuss the cultural impacts of World War II, such as music, food, or other aspects. How was World War II portrayed in the media or society? Consider showing old newsreels from the time period or playing music that was popular at the time.

## Further Reading:

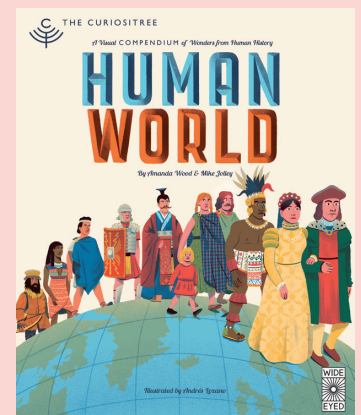


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