

THE LOCKE SOCIETY

LIFE, LIBERTY & EDUCATION



Unit

Topic

World War II

D-Day

Lesson Plan

Aim

To empathize with the magnitude of D-Day by analyzing Eisenhower's speech and letters from soldiers.

Rationale

Making an emotional connection to people and events in history helps students understand it better. In this lesson, students will learn about the enormity of the undertaking of D-Day including its purpose, risks, sacrifices, and success. Students will read letters from soldiers who participated in the D-Day operation to hear about it first-hand from those who were there. After an initial reading of the letter to make an acquaintance with the soldier, students will analyze the letter for details that were shared and missing, and make a personal connection to the day by thinking about what they would want to know more. The scope of D-Day is nearly impossible to teach, but a lesson that brings emotion into it will help students get closer to recognizing the magnitude of the bravery and sacrifice of American soldiers and our allies.

Student Learning Objectives

Students will be able to connect with the soldiers who served in D-Day by analyzing primary sources.

Civics Connection

- How does this history influence the present?
- How do the values of a nation unite its citizens?

*See the *Civics Connection Through Questioning* guide in *Civics* for more ideas.

Vocabulary

D-Day (June 6, 1944)	Eisenhower
Operation Overlord	Omaha Beach
Normandy	



Materials and Resources

1. Text: D-Day photograph [from the National Archives (for 'do now')
<https://museum.archives.gov/featured-document-display-75th-anniversary-d-day>]
2. Resource Text: Eisenhower's Speech (printed) and Audio from
<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwighteisenhowerorderofdday.htm>
3. Text: Selected Letters from Soldiers [from *The Guardian*
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/may/28/secondworldwar.features111>]
4. Handout: Letter Analysis Worksheet [Questions from
https://herb.ashp.cuny.edu/files/original/letter-analysis-worksheet_47f03a730d.pdf]

Suggested Resource:

History of D-Day Museum Tour <https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/what-was-d-day>

Procedure

Do Now:

Make a list of the challenges posed to these men in this photograph. [Display or distribute image]



National Archives

Lesson:

What was D-Day? Students will learn about the purpose and history of D-Day by exploring the features of the Museum Tour from the Imperial War Museum. (Teachers may also create a pre-made note page for students if necessary.) Students will then listen and read along to Eisenhower's speech delivered on June 6, 1944. (Use the following link: <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/dwighteisenhowerorderofdday.htm>) After listening to and reading the speech, students will answer the following questions to identify key focal points:

1. How does Eisenhower describe the invasion?
2. How does Eisenhower describe the troops?
3. How does Eisenhower describe the enemy?
4. How does Eisenhower describe his role in the invasion?

Collaborative/Independent Work:

The teacher will distribute the letters from the soldiers to each group (suggested groups of 4 students). Students will divide the letters between their group members (each member should have a different letter). Students should complete the "Letter Analysis Worksheet". Students should share their letters by referencing their letter analysis with their group members.

Share:



The class will discuss the following question: What did your letter reveal about the experience of D-Day? (Students should discuss their own feelings and reactions with empathy.)

Close:

The teacher will show images of WWII memorials including the WWII memorial in Washington D.C. and the memorial at Omaha Beach, Normandy. Students should respond to the question: How will you ensure the memory of those who sacrificed their lives on D-Day will never be forgotten?

Modifications

- The teacher may give students notes with key points about D-Day.
- The teacher may give each group one soldier's letter to analyze together.

Extension

Time Warp Activity: Students should write a response letter to the soldier whose letter they read. Students should consider what questions they would ask the soldier and what they would want them to know.

Notes

**Use discretion for activities according to what is appropriate for your class.*



Tracy A Sugarman US navy lieutenant, reached Utah beach on D-Day at 3.30pm. He spent the next six months based there on an offshore liberty ship.

June 13

My own darling Janie,

Golly, honey - how I've missed you today. All of a sudden there comes this two-day break with almost nothing to do but unlash and stretch out. A week ago today was D-day - and these past seven days have been filled with sights and sounds I'll probably recall always. Most of it was pretty exciting, a lot of it pretty nasty, none of it enjoyable. For the greatest part we haven't been close enough to catch the impact of the business being done. The glimpses we've had have been enough. Through it all and leading up to our coming there must have been - looking back now - a certain growing tension in all of us. There was nothing spectacular or dramatic about it that I can recall. You were hardly aware of it. But there must have been a great deal of self-searching. For myself I found I was completely set for anything. There was a completeness and reason in my living up to that point that was answer in itself. I thought a lot about you, Janie dear - and I was as grateful to you and for you that it seemed to encompass my entire feelings. Above all else I prayed that I live to make you happy. That alone was yet to be done. I wanted to live, darling - living has always been like a new toy for me - and I wanted to live for you and with you. The promise of our tomorrows stretched ahead and were delicious just to contemplate. For these things I love you, darling - every hope and prayer for the future is ours - every agony and desperation of the now is for us. Twice as hard, twice as easy, a million times as wonderful as anything that's ever been on this earth. Hold tight to our faith, Janie - call on our love - live for us. Honey, I love you somethin wonderful - all I want is a chance to show it. G'night my angel wife. 'n how about you? Stay well, - for me 'n for us.

I love you, darlin',

Always your Teddy



W Cutler Able seaman on HMS Largo, to his fiancée

June 13

Connie My Dearest,

Hello darling, here I am with a few more lines hoping they find you in the best of health, as it leaves me at present. Before I start my letter I just want to say I love you so very much. Well today I think I can make this letter a little more interesting than usual, as we have been given permission to let you know something of what is happening.

Well, here I am just off the coast of Normandy taking part in the invasion of Europe. We are doing remarkable well, especially when you take into consideration the opposition we are up against. When we set sail the weather was very poor, in fact it was a little too rough for comfort, but needless to say everything got across OK. There was an incident of note and that was we narrowly escaped being hit by a torpedo. The tin-fish was launched from shore and it was by some chance and good fortune sighted. We went full astern and the torpedo slipped harmlessly across our bows, missing us by 10ft - it might just as well have been 10 miles. That was the only incident of note, so we did well. I can honestly say it was a marvelous achievement to get the whole of the force across, which by the way is the 3 Division, with no losses. Of course, I don't want you to think it was just like eating pie, because it was far from that. Well the troops were landed and then there was one continued stream of reinforcements and stores pouring in.

We saw a sight during the first evening that was unbelievable. The airborne came over and it is utterly impossible for me to describe our feelings when we saw them. From one horizon to the other that is as far as the eye can see, the sky was blacked out by transports and gliders, there were hundreds besides the fighter cover that accompanied them. Never had anyone seen anything like it.



US Capt George Montgomery of the 82nd Airborne, to his fiancée

June 25

Arline, my dearest

Today is our 20th day in action, yet it seems like years. What has happened to me and my battalion would be scoffed at, even in a 10c novel, as being impossible. Why the few of us left alive - are alive - is something to figure out in church. I've seen as many of my very best friends killed beside me. I just can't believe it is all really happening. I never in my wildest dreams knew such terror could grip your very soul. The business of landing deep in enemy territory and trying to hold a position assaulted and shelled from four sides until friendly troops break through is something I hope they never ask me to do again.

The night we jumped, D-day-six hours, was the pay-off night. The Jerries knew our plans down to the last detail and were waiting for us with everything they had. My chute was on fire from tracer bullets when I landed - right in front of a machine-gun emplacement. I cut out of my harness and crawled for a couple of hours with bullets whistling past my ears coming from seemingly every direction. I can't tell you what else went on - but the story gets good from here. I hope it won't be too long before I can tell you personally all that has happened. Anyway - God alone brought me safely through this far - of that I'm sure.

My darling, I love you more than life itself - I've realised that many times these last three weeks when I thought I was going to be killed and always the regret of missing seeing and marrying you was topmost in my mind at the time. I think I can say my love for you has been pretty well tested.

Goodbye for a while,

George



Lieutenant H T Bone of the 2nd Battalion, East Yorkshire Regiment, to his mother

July 4

Apart from our ordinary equipment, we were loaded down with heavy packs, a pick or shovel each, 24 hours' rations, ammunition and maps. Under our armpits were the large bulges of the inflated Mae-Wests [lifejackets]. In the mess decks we blacked our faces with black Palm Olive cream and listened to the naval orders over the loud hailer. Most of us had taken communion on the Sunday, but the ship's padre had a few words to say to us. Then the actual loading into craft - the swinging on davits - the boat lowering and finally, "Away boats".

Promptly at H-hour, I began listening on my wireless sets for the first news. It was a very dull morning and the land was obscured by mist and smoke so that except for the flotilla leader and the CO, no one actually saw the land till the metal doors opened in front and the ramp was down, but very soon after H-hour, crystal clear over my sets, came messages from the assaulting companies: "Heavy opposition, pushing on" and "Heavy casualties, pushing on", from each of the two assaulting companies. By now we could hear the tach-a-tach-a-tach of enemy machine guns and the strident explosions of enemy mortars on the beach and its approaches.

Now was the moment - we clutched our weapons and wireless sets, all carefully waterproofed. Suddenly there was a jarring bump on the left and looking up from our boards we saw some of the beach obstacles about two feet above our left gunwale with a large mine on top of it, just as photographs had shown us; the mine just the same as those we had practised disarming. Again a bump on the right, but still we had not grounded.

The colonel and the flotilla leader were piloting us in, and for a few brief minutes nothing happened except the music of the guns and the whang of occasional bullets overhead, with the sporadic explosions of mortar bombs and the background of our own heavy gun fire. The doors opened as we grounded and the colonel was out. The sea was choppy and the boat swung a good bit as one by one we followed him. Several fell in and got soaked through. I was lucky. I stopped for a few seconds to help my men with their heavy wireless sets and to ensure they kept them dry.

As we staggered ashore, we dispersed and lay down above the water's edge. Stuff was falling pretty close to us and although I did not see it happen, quite a



number of the people from my own boat were hit. Instinctively, where we lay we hacked holes with our shovels. I began to recognise wounded men of the assault companies. Some were dead, others struggling to crawl out of the water because the tide was rising very rapidly. We could not help them since our job was to push on, but I saw one of my signal corporals with a wound in his leg and I took his codes with me promising to send a man back for his set before he was evacuated.

Getting just off the beach among some ruined buildings we began to collect the HQ. The other boat party was mostly missing, also three-quarters of my sets. The colonel was getting a grip on the battle and I was sent back on the beach to collect the rest of us. I did not feel afraid, but rather elated and full of beans. There was some horrible sights there and not a few men calling out for help. I wanted to pull a body out of the waves, but he looked to be dead and I had no time or duty there - the beach medical people would gradually get round to them all.

Under the sides of a tank that had been hit I saw a bunch of my people and I bawled at them to get up and get moving since they were doing no good there and could quite safely get along to HQ. I felt a little callous when I found that nearly all of them had been hit and some were dead. But sorting them out I made up half of a wireless team and then went in search of some more.

Further on were the adjutant and the padre with their party, also taking cover. I told them where we were and took them back with me. By persuading a couple of blokes with shrapnel in their legs and feet that they were good for a few hours yet, I got my wireless lifted and we got back to HQ. It was just moving off further inland. Later I discovered that Jimmy Laurie and Major Barber, one of my signallers and numerous others, had been killed on the beach landing at the same time as myself, and I felt I had been very fortunate.



Letter Analysis Worksheet

1. When was the letter written?

2. Who wrote the letter?

3. Who was the intended recipient?

4. List three parts of the letter that you think are the most significant:

5. What was the purpose of writing this letter? What evidence helps you know this?

6. What does this letter tell you about this soldier's experience?

7. How might the writer's language and descriptions have been influenced by the letter's recipient? What may have been changed if for a different recipient?

8. Write a question to the author that you are left wondering.

