

## **Texas Education Knowledge and Skills**

Students will examine segments of the Paul McGilvra oral history that are applicable to Texas Education Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Specific TEKS that apply to this study are listed below.

- ◆ The student will explain the significance of the following dates: 1898, 1914-1918, 1929, 1941-1945, and 1957.
- ◆ The student will analyze major issues and events of World War II such as fighting the war on multiple fronts, the internment of Japanese-Americans, the Holocaust, the battle of Midway, the invasion of Normandy, and the development of and Harry Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb.
- ◆ The student will explain and apply different methods that historians use to interpret the past including the use of primary and secondary sources, points of view, frames of reference, and historical context.
- ◆ The student will use the process of historical inquiry to research, interpret, and use multiple sources of evidence.
- ◆ The student will evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author.
- ◆ The student will identify bias, in written, oral, and visual material.
- ◆ The student will use social studies terminology correctly.
- ◆ The student will use standard grammar, sentence structure, and punctuation.
- ◆ The student will create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

- ◆ The student will identify reasons for U.S. involvement in World War II, including the growth of dictatorships and the attack on Pearl Harbor.
- ◆ The student will describe the economic effects of World War II on the home front, including rationing, female employment, and the end of the Great Depression.
- ◆ The student will analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors on major events.

### **The Pacific Theater of World War II**

As a result of gains from the Spanish-American War in 1898, specifically gaining control over Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippine Islands, the United States became a Pacific power in the early 1900s. As the United States was rising to power, the Japanese were also working to establish a dominant presence in the Pacific. As the two countries continued to grow in the Pacific region of the world, the United States and Japan began a forty-year journey that would eventually end in war on December 7, 1941.<sup>1</sup> Relations between these two countries became strained after the Russo-Japanese War ended in 1905. Japanese countrymen felt slighted because Japanese leadership had implied that the country would reap enormous economic benefits from the war with Russia. The younger generation of Japan argued that the United States did not gain enough concessions from the Soviet Union for the Japanese despite the fact that President Roosevelt would receive a Nobel Peace prize for his role in these negotiations,<sup>2</sup> Also in the late 1800s, Japan was very competitive in the Pacific trade market which began to fuel tension in the U.S. because American businessmen felt foreign trade was being threatened by Japan. Because

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard C. Nalty, ed., *Pearl Harbor and the War in the Pacific: The Story of the Bitter Struggle in the Pacific Theater of World War II* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1991), 8.

of these business concerns and racial prejudice, many people in the U.S., particularly in California, began to call for bans on Japanese immigration.<sup>3</sup> Hostility became so intense in America in the late 1800s toward Japan that U.S. military leaders developed a plan, called the Orange Plan, to defeat the Japanese should war breakout between the United States and Japan.<sup>4</sup> Tensions continued to grow during World War I when Japan sent a large army into Russia to diffuse the Russian Revolution that occurred in 1917. American leaders were wary that the Japanese were becoming too imperialistic. After World War I ended in 1945, both the U.S. and Japan worked in earnest to further develop their respective naval fleets in the Pacific in order to be prepared for any potential U.S.-Japanese conflict.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1920s, efforts were made to restore harmony between Japan and the United States. Unfortunately, these efforts were to no avail. Japan's war with China and its subsequent conquest of Indo-China led the United States to impose trade embargoes on Japan. These trade embargoes were damaging to Japan because it depended on the United States for many resources. Despite these restrictions on trade, the Japanese still sought to negotiate with the United States to produce an amicable relationship. These negotiations produced no substantial results. Thus, it became clear by July of 1941 that Japan would wage war on the United States but negotiations continued until late November 1941.

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<sup>3</sup> According to historians Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, one such Japanese immigration law was called the Gentleman's Act of 1908. This law put restrictions on the number of Japanese from the working class that could enter the United States. Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 14.

<sup>4</sup> Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 15. For more details on the Orange Plan see Harry A. Gailey's, *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995) 45-7.

<sup>5</sup> See also Harry A. Gailey's *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 1-27 for more information Japanese-U.S. relations prior to World War II.

Many movies and films along with various political leaders through the years have said that the attack on Pearl Harbor came as a complete surprise to the United States. In the years since the attack on Pearl Harbor, this theory has come into question because many of the U.S. military leaders and political leaders at the time seem to have known that war with Japan was imminent. Special agents working for the U.S. government had successfully cracked the secret telegraph codes for Japanese transmission. As a result of this break through, the U.S. had learned that Japan would no longer negotiate with the U.S. concerning diplomatic relations after November 29, 1941. Once the U.S. discovered the Japanese intentions, it began to make preparations for war with Japan. In fact, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was sure that an attack would come around December 2, 1941 because the U.S. had discovered that the Japanese had changed its naval radio call designations twice within the previous month. This suggested that the Japanese were trying to camouflage communications so that the U.S. would not gather information about the Japanese intentions—which led Roosevelt to believe that war was imminent.<sup>6</sup>

As December 2 came and went, no Japanese attack occurred. Roosevelt and other leaders such as Secretary of War Henry Stimson continued to believe that war with Japan was on the immediate horizon. On December 6, the United States intercepted a Japanese telegram to Japanese diplomats in Washington. It contained thirteen of fourteen points that the Japanese would stress to U.S. officials on the following day through Japanese diplomats in Washington. These thirteen points led Roosevelt to believe that the fourteenth point would be that the Japanese would no longer negotiate with the U.S. On the morning of December 7, 1941, the fourteenth point did arrive and it did state that

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<sup>6</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 39.

negotiations with the U.S. were useless and it ordered the Japanese diplomats “to destroy all remaining codes, ciphers, and confidential documents.”<sup>7</sup> U.S. military officials understood that the Japanese would attack U.S. forces in the Pacific; hence, army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall alerted American military personnel in Panama, San Francisco, and the Philippines, but the message was not delivered to American officials at Pearl Harbor because of poor atmospheric conditions. Despite not having an official warning from their superiors in Washington, officials at Pearl Harbor were presented with warning signs that an attack was forthcoming. One early sign of coming Japanese aggression was an attack on the U.S. destroyer *Ward* by a Japanese submarine. When reports of this attack reached the fourteenth naval district at Pearl Harbor, it was met with skepticism. By the time that Navy Admiral Husband Kimmel received the report at naval headquarters, war was already at hand. Additionally, radar picked up the incoming Japanese planes on radar but officials at Pearl Harbor dismissed the radar as routine because a flight of U.S B-17 aircraft was due in that morning. Four thousand Americans were killed, two battleships were damaged, three were destroyed, and one capsized in this attack.<sup>8</sup> Despite the substantial losses that the U.S. suffered at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were only partially successful because they failed to destroy U.S. maintenance shops and supply stations that would be used to rebuild the U.S. naval fleet that was damaged in the attack. Moreover, most of the U.S. naval aircraft carriers were out at sea during the attack and remained unscathed from the attacks. The end result was that the attack awoke the United States from an isolationist attitude toward entering World War.<sup>9</sup> England, and

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<sup>7</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 62-63.

<sup>9</sup> For detailed account of the events of Pearl Harbor see John Costello's, *The Pacific War* (New York: Rawson-Wade Publishers, 1981), 81-141.

later the Soviet Union, were delighted that the Americans were finally drawn into the war because both England and the Soviet Union would have pressing needs in the war.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was the not the end of the United States' woes in the Pacific conflict. The United States suffered defeats in the Wake Islands, Guam, and the Philippines from late 1941 to mid 1942. The primary reasons for these defeats were lack of U.S. resources provided to these areas and incompetent leadership. According to historians Roehrs and Renzi, "the American garrison of 250 marines and 100 civilian volunteers on Wake Island was forced to stage a futile defense against a far superior Japanese force from December 11 to 23."<sup>10</sup> Although U.S. troops were able to hold their own against the first invasion on the Wake Islands, the Americans eventually succumbed to the Japanese. The Japanese were successful in the second invasion because it was supported by battleship carriers and aircraft. Guam also fell to the Japanese on December 12, 1941 because it was not supplied with sufficient troops or supplies and it was over six thousand miles away from mainland United States. The fall of the Philippines came about as a result of both superior Japanese forces and the negligence of United States General Douglas MacArthur. Although MacArthur had more men than the Japanese did due to the help of the Philippine people, the Japanese forces were far superior in ability and experience.<sup>11</sup> Of the 115,000 troops that MacArthur had under his command, only 15,000 were trained U.S. troops. In addition to lack of trained troops, MacArthur failed to authorize a request by Army Air Corps General Lewis Brereton for an air strike against

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<sup>10</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 71.

<sup>11</sup> The Japanese had a combined force of 43,000 men. Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 75.

the Japanese airfields on Formosa.<sup>12</sup> Because MacArthur failed to authorize this attack, the Japanese were able to destroy most of U.S Air Force at Clark Field on December 8, 1941.<sup>13</sup> MacArthur also made another poor strategic decision when he failed to follow War Plan Orange.<sup>14</sup> Instead of following the plan, MacArthur chose to defend the coastlines which enabled the Japanese to sneak in behind the Americans at Manila. Despite MacArthur's poor decision, U.S. forces were spared total destruction when the Japanese General, Homma Masaharu, broke off his pursuit and instead focused on capturing Manila. This allowed MacArthur's troops to escape to the Bataan peninsula and to the island of Corregidor by January of 1942.

On February 23, 1942, MacArthur was sent to Australia by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Major General Jonathan Wainwright took over the United States's forces in the Philippines when MacArthur left. By May 5, 1942 Wainwright was forced to surrender because the American forces were overwhelmed when the Japanese sent more troops to the Bataan peninsula and the island of Corregidor. The end result of these early victories was that the Japanese was establishing a foothold in the western Pacific that allowed it to continue its plan to establish dominance in the region.

The Battle of Coral Sea, which was fought between May 3, 1942 and May 7, 1942, was both advantageous and disadvantageous for the United States. The battle was

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<sup>12</sup> At this time, December 8, 1941, MacArthur was aware of the events at Pearl Harbor. Moreover, he understood that the Japanese in all likelihood would soon launch an attack on the Philippines. See Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 75.

<sup>13</sup> Clark Field was north of Manila. The air force lost eighteen B-17s and fifty-three P-40s. See Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 68.

<sup>14</sup> War Plan Orange was the United States's plan to defeat the Japanese in World War I. In the Philippines, War Plan Orange called for American troops to retreat from Manila and Luzon to the Bataan peninsula and the island of Corregidor. See Mark D. Roehrs and William Renzi, *World War II in the Pacific* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 68. For more details on War plan Orange, or the Orange Plan as some historians refer to it, see Harry A. Gailey's *The War in the Pacific: From Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1995), 45-7.

disadvantageous for the U.S. because it lost an important air-craft carrier in the battle. On the other hand, the U.S. was able to prevent the Japanese from taking Port Moresby. The significance of not taking Port Moresby on the island of New Guinea was that it prevented the Japanese from taking the island. The island would have served as a Japanese blockade to U.S. forces in Australia because of the island's close proximity to the continent.<sup>15</sup>

The next major battle that the U.S. and Japan fought in the Pacific War was the Battle of Midway—which was the turning point in the Pacific Theater. Up until the Battle of Midway, the Japanese had consistently taken ground from the United States. At the Battle of Midway, the Japanese leader Admiral Yamamoto Isoroko developed a poor strategy that largely contributed to the Japanese defeat. Yamamoto's strategy was to rely totally on surprise and attack. The element of surprise was supposed to buy time for the Japanese because U.S. aircraft were supposed to be still docked at Pearl Harbor at the time of the naval attack in late May of 1942. Unfortunately, for the Japanese, U.S. intelligence had decoded Japanese signal transmissions, and the U.S. learned that the Japanese were planning an attack on Midway. Consequently, the U.S. moved its carrier fleet out towards Midway. Moreover, the Japanese failed to get a reconnaissance plane to fly over Pearl Harbor and make sure that the U.S. aircraft carriers were still in harbor. Even further complicating matters was the fact that Yamamoto Isoroko divided his forces once he arrived at Midway. Yamamoto decided to send part of his force to the Aleutian Islands as a diversionary force and keep the remaining part of his force at Midway. This failed for two reasons. One, the U.S. already knew about Yamamoto's diversionary plan before he enacted it. Two, the diversionary tactic depleted Yamamoto's force for the

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<sup>15</sup> Alan Levine, *The Pacific War: Japan Versus the Allies* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 61-62.

main battle at Midway. As a result, the United States routed the Japanese by destroying four carriers, killing five-thousand men, and destroying three hundred and twenty-two planes.<sup>16</sup>

After the victory at Midway the United States began to move methodically toward Japan by “island hopping” in the Pacific. “Island hopping” simply meant that the U.S. would move from island to island in an effort to thwart Japanese forces. Taking these rather small islands were important because both the U.S forces and Japanese forces were in desperate need of airfields in which air attacks could be launched. Although the islands that the U.S. and Japan fought over did not always have significant airfields, any airfield that could be found was useful. In July of 1942, an Allied reconnaissance aircraft found an airfield under construction by the Japanese on Guadalcanal Island. U.S. forces immediately began to make preparations to take the island. On August 7, 1942, nineteen thousand marines under the direction of Major General Alexander Vandergrift landed on Guadalcanal and these marines were able to quickly establish control of the island because the only Japanese that were on the island were workers. This period of no conflict was short-lived however. On August 9, 1942, launched an attack against U.S. forces in which the Japanese killed 1,270 U.S. troops and destroyed four Allied cruisers.<sup>17</sup> Despite these accomplishments, the Japanese were not completely successful in their mission at Guadalcanal because they failed to achieve their objective of destroying Allied transport and supply vessel because Japanese commander Rear Admiral Mikawa Gunichi withdrew his forces due to a fear of being hit by strikes from American

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<sup>16</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 102. See Charles Bateson’s *War with Japan: A Concise History* for a more detailed discussion of the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway. Charles Bateson, *The War with Japan: A Concise History* (East Lansing, MI: State University Press, 144-182), 1968.

<sup>17</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 110.

carrier planes. American and Japanese forces would continue to fight on Guadalcanal and surrounding islands, such as Salvo Island until November of 1942 until the two countries fought the Battle of Tassafaranga Point. After suffering significant losses in this naval battle, the Japanese political leaders determined that Guadalcanal was not worth risking anymore Japanese pilots and planes. The ground battle, however, would continue on until February of 1943 when the Japanese began withdrawing troops from the island.

In March of 1943, the United States initiated Operation Cartwheel.<sup>18</sup> The goal of this operation was to isolate the main Japanese air base at Rabaul by capturing Japanese forces on small islands surrounding Rabaul.<sup>19</sup> It was during this operation that the U.S. seized an opportunity to eliminate one of Japan's top military leaders—Admiral Yamamoto Isoroko. This opportunity came about as a result of the U.S. intercepting a Japanese transmission stating that Yamamoto was going to Bougainville on April 18, 1943. When this day arrived, the U.S. Air Force dispatched a squadron of planes that caught up to Yamamoto and shot down his plane which resulted in his death. The death of Yamamoto depleted Japanese morale and struck at the core of Japanese leadership in the Pacific. By the end of 1943, the U.S. had taken control of the islands surrounding Rabaul and they had taken control of the Gilbert Island chain in Operation Galvanic.

By 1944, it was becoming clear that the Japanese had little chance to inflict enough damage on Allied forces to compel them to negotiate with Japan. As a result, Japanese leaders, such as Premier Hideki Tojo, determined that the only way that Japan could succeed was to make the war such a nuisance to the Allies that they would agree to

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<sup>18</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Operation Cartwheel see Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 220-251.

<sup>19</sup> Rabaul was located on the island of New Britain and the Japanese forces that the U.S. forces were contending with were located on islands near the Bismarck Archipelago.

negotiate a peace settlement. In the Allied camp, the plan was to take the Mariana Islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in 1944. All of these islands were valuable for different reasons. Saipan was an island that contained a number of Japanese citizens. If the Allies could take this island, the Japanese citizens would certainly begin to realize that Japan was going to lose the war. Saipan contained airfields that would allow the B-29 bombers of the United States to reach Tokyo. Needless to say this island became a top priority for Allied planners. Guam was particularly valuable to the U.S. because it had been acquired during the Spanish-American War; thus, most of the country contained U.S. citizens.<sup>20</sup> The fight for these islands began on April 1, 1944 and lasted until July 1944. Although the Allies eventually took control of the islands, many Allied soldiers lost their lives due to intense fighting that often took the form of hand to hand combat. The end result of the Mariana Campaign demonstrated to Japanese leadership that there was no longer any hope of winning the war in the Pacific.<sup>21</sup>

In the fall of 1944, MacArthur had convinced President Franklin D. Roosevelt that the next move by the Allies should be to retake the Philippines. On October 20, 1944, the U.S. Army landed in the Philippines at Leyte Gulf. In this battle, the Japanese attempted a two-pronged attack with forces coming from the north and the south of the Leyte Gulf. The battle started rather auspiciously for the Japanese as U.S. submarines torpedoed several Japanese submarines and U.S. airmen sank the Japanese battleship *Musahi*. The battle would only get worse for the Japanese as they lost over 500 planes and 10,000 men in the battle. The end result of the battle was that it destroyed Japanese naval strength and the battle paved the way for a full-scale invasion of the Philippines by

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<sup>20</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 132.

<sup>21</sup> See John Costello's, *The Pacific War* (New York: Rawson-Wade Publishers, 1981), 301-337 for more information on the Mariana Campaign.

the Allies. In fact by December 1944, the Philippine Island of Leyte had been liberated by Allied forces. In January of 1945, U.S. forces landed in Lingayen Gulf of the Luzon Islands. It took two months of intense fighting for U.S. forces to liberate Luzon Island from the Japanese. Finally, in March of 1945, MacArthur declared that Luzon's capital city, Manila, was secure.<sup>22</sup>

As the war continued to progress throughout 1945, U.S. forces found themselves on the doorsteps of Japan itself. Japan refused to surrender despite the fact that defeat was inevitable at this point. The first important step in reaching Japan was to conquer the island of Iwo Jima. This would be no easy task because of the volcanic activity that frequently occurred on the island. In fact when the U.S. Fifth Amphibious Corps under the command of Major General Harry Schmidt landed on the Iwo Jima's beaches in February of 1945, the Corps was forced to wade through ankle deep ash. Although the United States lost 6800 men in this battle, the cost of victory proved worthwhile because the island served as a rendezvous point for B-29 pilots returning to the Mariana Islands from bombing the home islands of Japan.<sup>23</sup>

The Battle of Okinawa was one of the most dramatic and horrific battles that took place in the Pacific War. The intensity of this battle was created by the desperate tactics that the Japanese used to defend the island. It was here at Okinawa that the Kamikazes were used extensively.<sup>24</sup> During this one battle alone, Kamikazes flew three thousand sorties and sunk twenty-one Allied ships. In addition to the Kamikazes, the Japanese used

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<sup>22</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 146-8.

<sup>23</sup> Some historians believe that having Iwo Jima as a rendezvous point may have saved the lives of 24,761 Allied flyers.

<sup>24</sup> Kamikazes were pilots that purposely flew their planes into Allied ships in order to inflict as much damage as possible.

flame-throwers to hold off Allied soldiers attempting to gain control of the Island. Despite these tremendous acts of violence, the Allies believed that the Island of Okinawa was essential to any future invasion of the Japanese home islands because Okinawa would serve as a staging area for Allied supplies. When the Allies landed on the beaches of Okinawa on April 1, 1945, they face little opposition because the Japanese had conceded the beachheads so that they could better defend the interior part of the island. Allied forces that went north on the island faced little opposition. Allied forces that went south, however, faced a very defiant Japanese army. Japanese soldiers in southern Okinawa hid out in caves and launched surprise attacks when the Allied troops advanced. In this fighting, the Allies engaged in hand to hand combat that claimed many lives. By the time the Battle of Okinawa ended in late June of 1945, over 12,000 Allied soldiers were killed and more than 120, 000 Japanese were killed.<sup>25</sup>

After the Battle of Okinawa ended, American military leaders began to decide what the next move would be. Some leaders, such as General MacArthur, favored an all-out invasion of the Japanese home islands. Other leaders favored a plan that would force the Japanese to surrender through attrition. Developments in July of 1945, however, changed the whole scope of the discussion. On July 16, 1945, the United States detonated an atomic bomb in New Mexico. The question now arose as to whether dropping the atomic bomb would cost less lives than a full-scale invasion. In the end, Harry S. Truman decided that dropping the atomic bomb would save lives and that it would quickly bring the war to an end. Thus, on August 6, 1945, the crew of the *Enola Gay* dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Three days later on August 9, 1945, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. In recent years, historians have debated the necessity of

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<sup>25</sup> Roehrs and Renzi, 209.

dropping the atomic bomb.<sup>26</sup> Evidence exists that the number of lives that could be by dropping the bomb were exaggerated. Moreover, there is further evidence to suggest that the Japanese were on the verge of surrender anyway due to poor conditions in Japan and the imminent entry of the Soviet Union into the war. Nonetheless, one will never know what would have happened because the United States did drop the atomic bomb and the Japanese formally surrendered on September 2, 1945.

The Japanese surrender marked the end of World War II. The Pacific portion of the war had lasted for nearly four years and resulted in the deaths of millions of people. The war in the Pacific started out when Japan launched an aerial attack on Pearl Harbor that aroused the anger of the United States and the war ended with the dropping of the atomic bombs in Japan that has created controversy in recent years. Despite all of the people killed and the atrocities committed, many people in the United States today talk about the war with fondness because it was one of the few military success stories that the U.S. have enjoyed the past sixty-two years.

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<sup>26</sup> See Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) for more information on the controversy surrounding the decision to drop the atomic bomb.