



## INTRODUCTION

On June 6, 1944, more than 175,000 Allied troops stormed the beaches of Normandy, France, in what became the largest amphibious military invasion in history. Countless military and political officials spent years planning for this operation, and yet the decision to finally launch the attack rested with Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower. On the morning of D-Day, he issued an “order of the day” to all Allied personnel involved in the operation. He made numerous edits to the text before approving it in its final form, a testament to the importance he attached to this document and the invasion it described. In this activity, students will analyze Eisenhower’s Order of the Day message along with a secondary source about the Normandy invasion to compare and contrast how historians and historical actors use facts and language to explain historical events.

## OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze both a primary source and a secondary source about the 1944 Normandy invasion to understand how historical actors and historians alike use facts and language to develop historical narratives.

## GRADE LEVEL





7–12

## TIME REQUIREMENT

1–2 class periods

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[ww2classroom.org](http://ww2classroom.org)

-  [D-Day Invasion Video](#)
-  [Roland Chaisson Oral History](#)
-  [Breakout from Normandy Map](#)
-  [Eisenhower's Order of the Day](#)

## STANDARDS

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6](#)

Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (for example, loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.8](#)

Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9](#)

Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5](#)

Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2](#)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

#### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5](#)

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

### NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

#### [HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3A](#)

The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

#### [HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 2](#)

The student is able to identify the central question(s) the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

The student is able to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations but acknowledge that the two are related; that the facts the historian reports are selected and reflect therefore the historian's judgment of what is most significant about the past.

The student is able to read historical narratives imaginatively, taking into account what the narrative reveals of the humanity of the individuals and groups involved—their probable values, outlook, motives, hopes, fears, strengths, and weaknesses.

#### [HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 5](#)

The student is able to identify issues and problems in the past and analyze the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the situation.

## PROCEDURES

1. Have students read the **Normandy Invasion Overview Essay** either silently or aloud as a whole class, underlining the most important statements of fact and circling the most important statements of opinion or interpretation. Explain that the essay presents one explanation of the Normandy invasion, reminding them that historians choose to include or exclude facts and to stress or downplay certain points based on what they think is most important to share about the past.
2. To help students grasp the challenges of the Allied invasion in spatial terms, you may want to show them the **Normandy Invasion Map**.
3. Use the discussion guide to check students' understanding of the essay and the difference between facts and opinion/interpretation.
4. Introduce **Eisenhower's Order of the Day** as a primary source that can help us understand how the Normandy invasion was viewed by the Allied leadership at the time, as well as how they wanted their troops to understand the mission. Explain that the students will be viewing two versions of this message—the finished product as well as a working draft. Explain that during the process of writing a message like this, leaders make very conscious decisions about what to include, what to leave out, and how to present information.
5. Distribute copies of **Eisenhower's Order of the Day**, both the final version and the working draft. Have students read the final version first, underlining the most important statements of fact and circling the most important statements of opinion or interpretation. Then, have students compare the working draft of Eisenhower's message to the final version, taking note of places where Eisenhower added, removed, or relocated words and phrases. Use the discussion guide to check students' understanding of the essay and the difference between facts and opinion/interpretation. The guide will also help you get students thinking about the significance of Eisenhower's edits to his message.
6. Distribute copies of the **Student Worksheet** to students and have them use this sheet to compare the insight they have gained from both Eisenhower's message and the **Normandy Invasion Overview Essay**. You may want to discuss the students' answers as a class once they have finished.

## ASSESSMENT

You will be able to assess students' understanding of the relevant standards based on how well they articulate, compare, and contrast the ideas contained in the readings. Their understanding will be evident in the notations on their copies of the readings, the **Student Worksheet**, and the class discussion.

## EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

- Have students write their own messages as though they were tasked with encouraging the troops and explaining the importance of their mission. Remind students that some of the details in the **Overview Essay** could not have been known to Eisenhower or anyone else prior to D-Day.
- Have students listen to the oral history of Ronald Chaisson and create a new Venn diagram similar to the one on the **Student Worksheet** incorporating the information they have learned from listening to Chaisson’s story.

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR THE OVERVIEW ESSAY

- What is one statement of fact you underlined? Why do you think this is important?

*Possible answers: “Eisenhower was supreme commander of the operation, which ultimately involved the coordinated efforts of 12 nations”; “At the Tehran Conference in August 1943, Allied leaders scheduled Overlord to take place on or about May 1, 1944”; “By nightfall, about 175,000 Allied troops and 50,000 vehicles were ashore.”*

- Name one statement of opinion or interpretation you circled. Why do you think that statement is important?

*Possible answers: “It was one of the gutsiest decisions of the war”; “The fiercest fighting was on Omaha Beach”; “The delay was unnerving for soldiers, sailors, and airmen.”*

- According to the essay, what were the toughest challenges the Allies faced in preparing for and executing the invasion of Normandy?

*Possible answers include: unpredictable weather in the English Channel, keeping the plan a secret, getting such a large invasion force across the channel all at one time, facing Hitler’s Atlantic Wall obstacles.*

- According to the essay, why was the Normandy invasion such a significant milestone in the war in Europe?

*Students may respond by pointing out that such an invasion was necessary to directly assault Hitler’s home territory, or that it was the culmination of a lengthy planning process, or that it represented the success of an Allied strategy that involved significant risk.*

- Based on what you have read in the essay, why do you think delaying the invasion even by a day or two was such a significant problem for the Allies?

*Students may suggest that a delay might have decreased the element of surprise, or that the resulting confusion would have bogged down such a carefully orchestrated plan.*

## DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR EISENHOWER'S ORDER OF THE DAY

- What is one statement of fact you underlined? Why do you think this is important?

*Possible answers: "The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats"; "Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war"; "I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle."*

- Name one statement of opinion or interpretation you circled. Why do you think that statement is important?

*Possible answers: "The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you"; "Your task will not be an easy one"; "The tide has turned!"*

- What is the purpose of Eisenhower's message?

*Possible answers: To boost morale among the troops; to express the importance of the mission; to reassure the troops that the invasion had been well prepared.*

- Notice where Eisenhower changed "Home Front" in the third paragraph to read "Home Fronts." Why do you think he made this change?

*Students may observe that multiple nations participated in the Normandy invasion and that Eisenhower may have wanted to give proper credit to their contributions, as he does in other parts of the message.*

- Name one other edit in the message that stands out to you, and explain why you think it is significant.

*Possible answers: Eisenhower moved the phrase "The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you" to the top of the message, possibly to state at the outset how much depended on this mission; "We and our Allies" became "the United Nations," likely because this message wasn't meant for "we" (the Americans) but rather for the combined forces of the Allies, namely the United Nations; "You may expect him to fight savagely" becomes "He will fight savagely," possibly as a way to prepare the troops for the fierce opposition they would face in France.*

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Forces! You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. ~~By it, we shall bring about,~~ <sup>you will be bringing about</sup> In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, ~~the destruction of the German war machine, the overthrow of Nazi tyranny, and the liberation of the~~ <sup>overthrow</sup> ~~oppressed~~ <sup>peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.</sup>

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. ~~You may expect him to~~ <sup>He will</sup> fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~their~~ <sup>Nazi</sup> triumphs of 1940-41. ~~We and our Allies~~ <sup>The United Nations</sup> have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. ~~We shall do it again.~~ Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Front <sup>has</sup> ~~has~~ given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching <sup>together</sup> to Victory!

The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere ~~go~~ <sup>will</sup> ~~with you.~~ <sup>be with you.</sup> ~~You will not fail them.~~

I have full confidence in your courage, <sup>devotion to duty,</sup> ~~hardihood~~ and skill in battle. We ~~can, and we will win.~~ <sup>will accept nothing less than full victory!</sup>

Good Luck! And <sup>let us all</sup> ~~may~~ the blessing of Almighty God rest upon ~~us~~ <sup>this great and noble undertaking.</sup>



DECLASSIFIED  
Authority *Guidelines for Classified*  
By *JH* NLE DATE *11/24/72*  
NARS

*Final*  
*Bring back to me*  
*82*

**CONFIDENTIAL****713**

(Image: Eisenhower Presidential Library.)

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

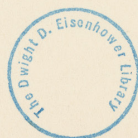
You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944 ! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned ! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory !

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory !

Good Luck ! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.



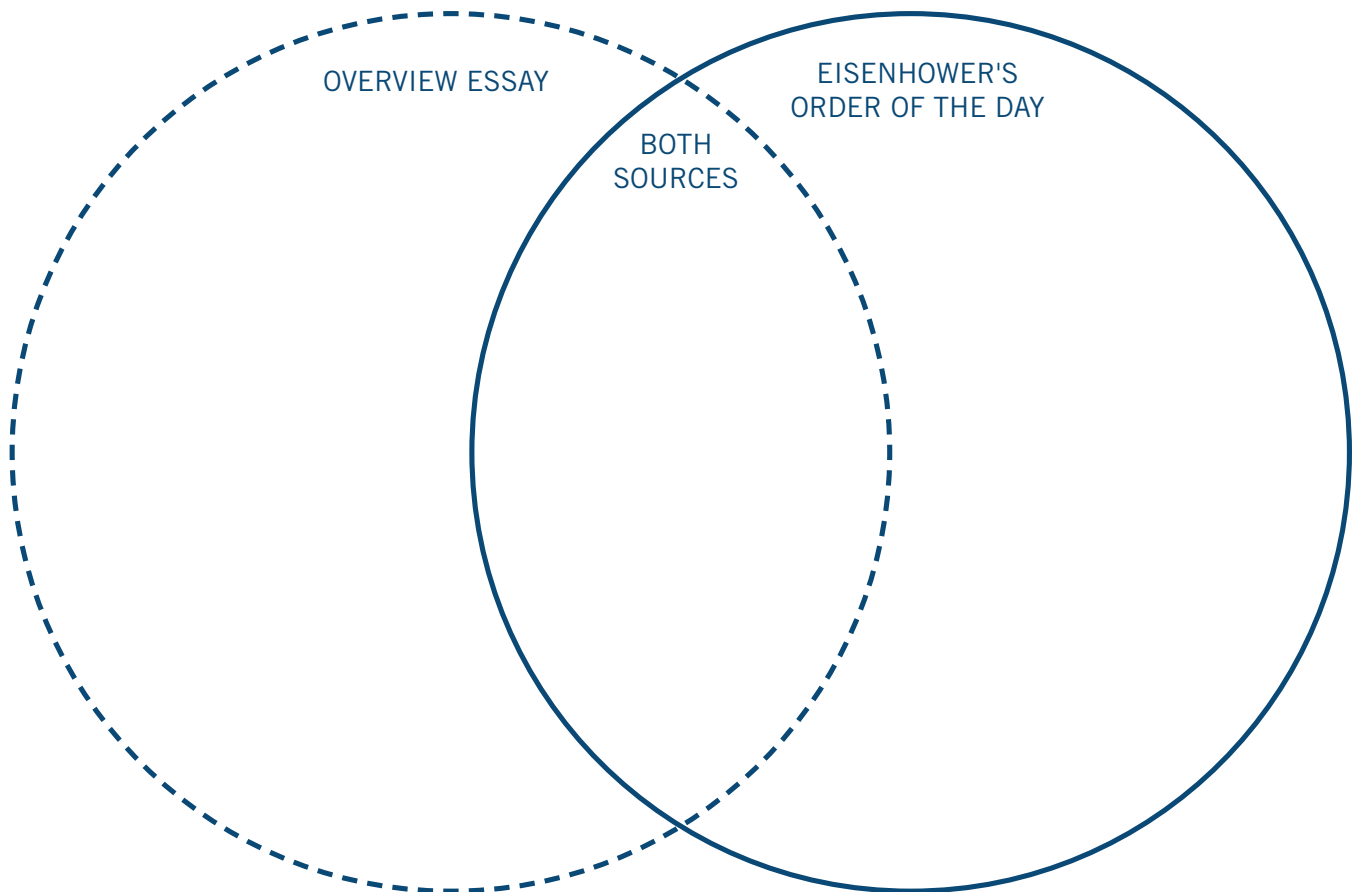
*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

(Image: Eisenhower Presidential Library.)

NAME:

DATE:

**DIRECTIONS:** Venn diagrams are useful tools for comparing and contrasting the information contained in two historical sources. In the blank diagram below, record the key details appearing only in the Overview Essay in the outer portion of the circle on the left. Record the key details occurring only in Eisenhower's Order of the Day in the outer portion of the circle on the right. Use the space where the circles overlap to record key details that appear in both sources. After filling out these circles, answer the questions below and be prepared to discuss your ideas.



1. Describe two key differences between the kinds of information in the Overview Essay and the kinds of information in Eisenhower's Order of the Day.
2. If you were the teacher and could only assign one of these sources to your students, which one would you choose? Why would you choose this source?