

Section 2

The Early Battles

Guide to Reading

Big Ideas

Individual Action Several key people made decisions that changed the course of the war.

Content Vocabulary

- periphery (p. 497)
- convoy system (p. 499)

Academic Vocabulary

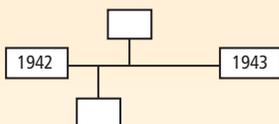
- code (p. 496)
- target (p. 498)

People and Events to Identify

- Chester Nimitz (p. 494)
- Douglas MacArthur (p. 494)
- Bataan Death March (p. 495)
- Corregidor (p. 495)
- James Doolittle (p. 495)

Reading Strategy

Organizing Complete a time line similar to the one below to record the major battles discussed and the victor in each.



The early battles of the war on both fronts required changes in strategy from all sides. In the Pacific, the Battle of Midway was a major turning point against the Japanese, while the Battle of the Atlantic and the Battle of Stalingrad made it clear that Germany would not win the war.

Holding the Line Against Japan

MAIN Idea The Japanese continued to win victories in the Pacific until the Battle of Midway.

HISTORY AND YOU Have you ever continued toward a goal even though the odds were against you? Read on to learn about the early battles in the Pacific.

Admiral **Chester Nimitz**, the commander of the United States Navy in the Pacific, began planning operations against the Japanese Navy. Although the Japanese had badly damaged the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, the American aircraft carriers, which were on a mission at sea, were safe. The United States had several carriers in the Pacific, and Nimitz was determined to use them. In the days just after Pearl Harbor, however, he could do little to stop Japan's advance into Southeast Asia.

The Fall of the Philippines

A few hours after bombing Pearl Harbor, the Japanese attacked American airfields in the Philippines. Two days later, they landed troops. The American and Filipino forces defending the Philippines were badly outnumbered. Their commander, General **Douglas MacArthur**, retreated to the Bataan Peninsula. Using the peninsula's rugged terrain, the troops held out for more than three months.

By March, in desperation, the troops ate cavalry horses and mules. The lack of food and supplies, along with diseases such as malaria, scurvy, and dysentery, took their toll. The women of the Army Nurse Corps worked on Bataan in primitive conditions. Patients slept in the open air. One nurse, Rose Meier, reported, "If we needed more room, we got our axes and chopped some bamboo trees down."

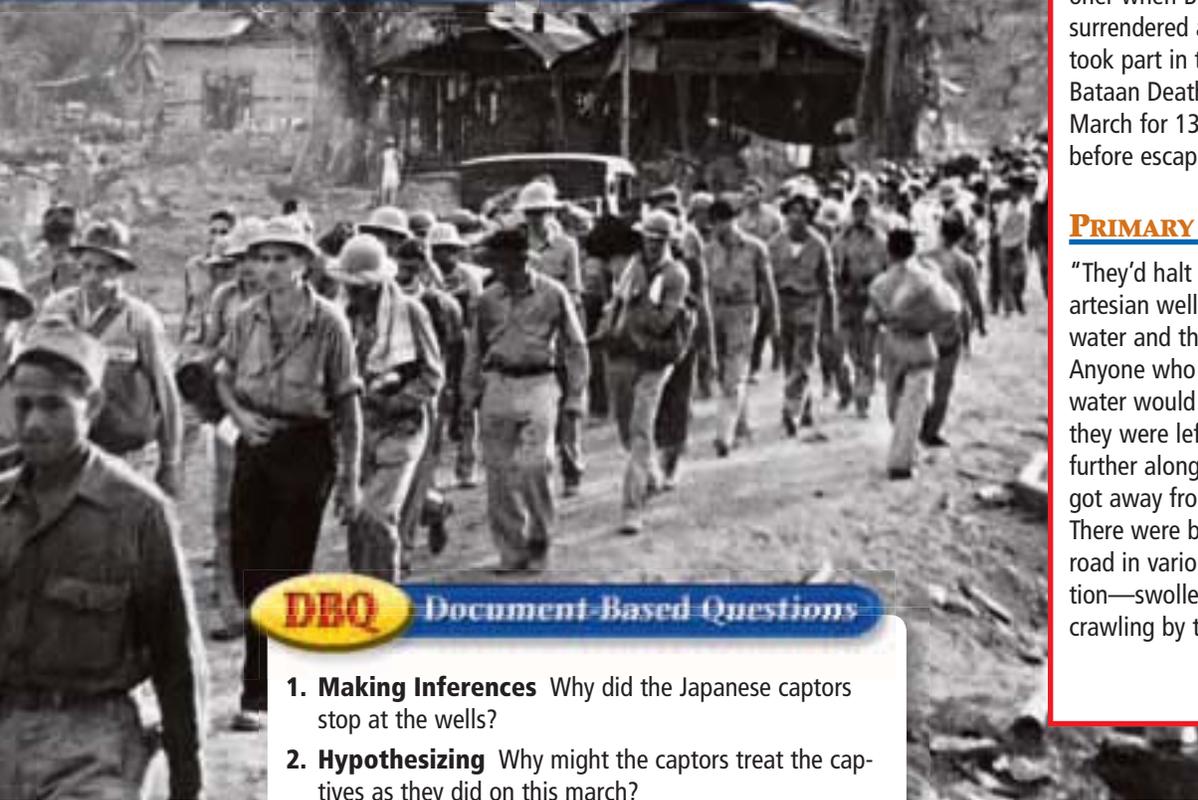
Realizing MacArthur's capture would demoralize the American people, President Roosevelt ordered the general to evacuate to Australia. MacArthur promised, "I came through, and I shall return."

On April 9, 1942, the weary defenders of the Bataan Peninsula finally surrendered. Nearly 78,000 prisoners of war were forced



PRIMARY SOURCE

The Bataan Death March, April 1942



Private Leon Beck was taken prisoner when Bataan surrendered and took part in the Bataan Death March for 13 days before escaping:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"They'd halt us in front of these big artesian wells . . . so we could see the water and they wouldn't let us have any. Anyone who would make a break for water would be shot or bayoneted. Then they were left there. Finally, it got so bad further along the road that you never got away from the stench of death. There were bodies laying all along the road in various degrees of decomposition—swollen, burst open, maggots crawling by the thousands. . . ."

—from *Death March: The Survivors of Bataan*

DBQ Document-Based Questions

- 1. Making Inferences** Why did the Japanese captors stop at the wells?
- 2. Hypothesizing** Why might the captors treat the captives as they did on this march?

to march—sick, exhausted, and starving—65 miles (105 km) to a Japanese prison camp. Almost ten thousand troops died on this march, which was later called the **Bataan Death March**. Sixty-six women nurses were also captured and sent to the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. They remained there—with 11 navy nurses and some 3,000 Allied civilians—until early in 1945.

Although the troops in the Bataan Peninsula surrendered, a small force held out on the island of **Corregidor** in Manila Bay. Finally, in May 1942, Corregidor surrendered. The Philippines had fallen to the Japanese.

The Doolittle Raid on Tokyo

Even before the Philippines fell, President Roosevelt was searching for a way to raise the morale of the American people. He wanted to bomb Tokyo, but American planes could reach Tokyo only if an aircraft carrier brought them close enough. Unfortunately, Japanese ships in the North Pacific prevented carriers from getting near Japan.

In early 1942, a military planner suggested replacing the carrier's usual short-range bombers with long-range B-25 bombers that could attack from farther away. The only problem was that, although B-25s could take off from a carrier, the bombers could not land on its short deck. After attacking Japan, they would have to land in China.

President Roosevelt put Lieutenant Colonel **James Doolittle** in command of the mission to bomb Tokyo. At the end of March, a crane loaded sixteen B-25s onto the aircraft carrier *Hornet*. The next day, the *Hornet* headed west across the Pacific. On April 18, American bombs fell on Japan for the first time.

Japan Changes Strategy

While Americans rejoiced in the air force's success, Japanese leaders were aghast at the raid. Those bombs could have killed the emperor, who was revered as a god. The Doolittle raid convinced Japanese leaders to change their strategy.



Before the raid, the Japanese navy had disagreed about the next step. The officers in charge of the navy's planning wanted to cut American supply lines to Australia by capturing the south coast of New Guinea. The commander of the fleet, Admiral Yamamoto, wanted to attack Midway Island—the last American base in the North Pacific west of Hawaii. Yamamoto believed that attacking Midway would lure the American fleet into battle and enable his fleet to destroy it.

After Doolittle's raid, the Japanese war planners dropped their opposition to Yamamoto's idea. The American fleet had to be destroyed to protect Tokyo from bombing. The attack on New Guinea would still go ahead, but only three aircraft carriers were assigned to the mission. All of the other carriers were ordered to assault Midway.

The Battle of the Coral Sea

The Japanese believed that they could safely proceed with two attacks at once because they thought their operations were secret. What the Japanese did not know was that an American

team of code breakers based in Hawaii had already broken the Japanese navy's secret **code** for conducting operations.

In March 1942, decoded Japanese messages alerted the United States to the Japanese attack on New Guinea. In response, Admiral Nimitz sent two carriers, the *Yorktown* and the *Lexington*, to intercept the Japanese in the Coral Sea. There, in early May, carriers from both sides launched all-out airstrikes against each other. Although the Japanese sank the *Lexington* and badly damaged the *Yorktown*, the American attacks prevented the Japanese from landing on New Guinea's south coast and kept the supply lines to Australia open.

The Battle of Midway

Back at Pearl Harbor, the code-breaking team now learned of the plan to attack Midway. With so many ships at sea, Admiral Yamamoto transmitted the plans for the Midway attack by radio, using the same code the Americans had already cracked.

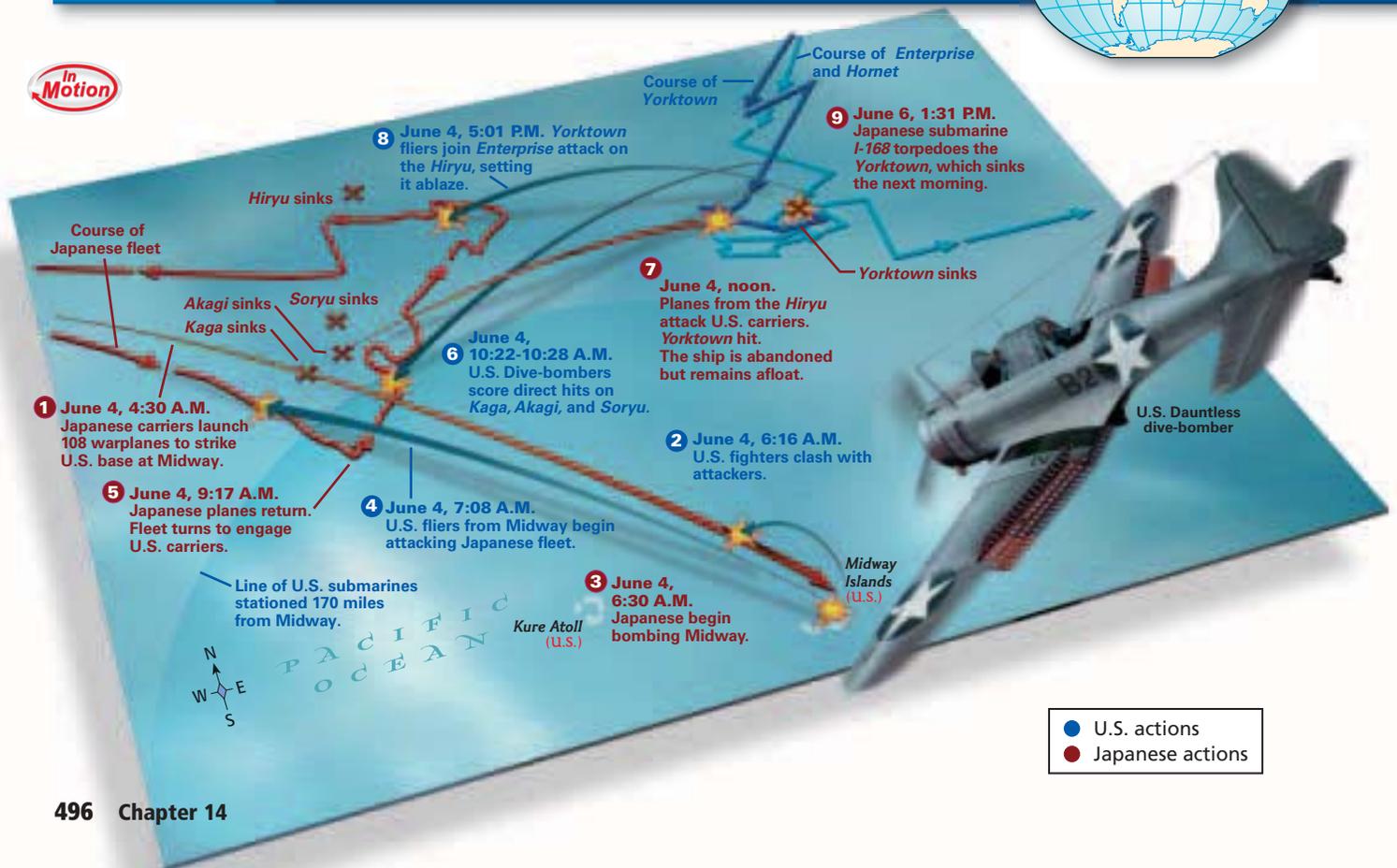
Admiral Nimitz had been waiting for the opportunity to ambush the Japanese fleet. He



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

The Battle of Midway, 1942

In Motion



immediately ordered carriers to take up positions near Midway. Unaware that they were heading into an ambush, the Japanese launched their aircraft against Midway on June 4, 1942. The Americans were ready. The Japanese ran into a blizzard of antiaircraft fire, and 38 planes were shot down.

As the Japanese prepared a second wave to attack Midway, aircraft from the American carriers *Hornet*, *Yorktown*, and *Enterprise* launched a counterattack. The American planes caught the Japanese carriers with fuel, bombs, and aircraft exposed on their flight decks. Within minutes, three Japanese carriers were reduced to burning wrecks. A fourth was sunk a few hours later, and Admiral Yamamoto ordered his remaining ships to retreat.

The Battle of Midway was a turning point in the war. The Japanese navy lost four large carriers—the heart of its fleet. Just six months after Pearl Harbor, the United States had stopped the Japanese advance. The victory was not without cost, however. The battle killed 362 Americans and 3,057 Japanese.

Reading Check Explaining Why was the United States able to ambush the Japanese at Midway?



▼ Japanese aircraft bomb the USS Yorktown near Midway, June 1942.

Analyzing VISUALS

- 1. Interpreting** When did Japan launch the attack on Midway?
- 2. Drawing Conclusions** Why were aircraft carriers so vital to the war in the Pacific?



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Stopping the Germans

MAIN Idea The Allies defeated Germany in Africa and in the Battle of the Atlantic. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad was a turning point of the war.

HISTORY AND YOU Have you ever tried something simple before attempting a more challenging problem? Read on to learn about the Allied strategy for attacking the Germans.

In 1942 Allied forces began to win victories in Europe as well. Almost from the moment the United States entered the war, Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union, urged President Roosevelt to open a second front in Europe. Stalin appreciated the lend-lease supplies that the United States had sent, but the Soviets were doing most of the fighting. If British and American troops opened a second front by attacking Germany from the west, it would take pressure off the Soviet Union.

Roosevelt wanted to get American troops into battle in Europe, but Prime Minister Churchill urged caution. He did not believe the United States and Great Britain were ready to launch a full-scale invasion of Europe. Instead, Churchill wanted to attack the **periphery**, or edges, of the German empire. Roosevelt agreed, and in July 1942, he ordered the invasion of Morocco and Algeria—two French territories indirectly under German control.

The Struggle for North Africa

Roosevelt decided to invade Morocco and Algeria for two reasons. First, the invasion would give the army some experience without requiring a lot of troops. More important, once American troops were in North Africa, they would be able to help the British troops fight the Germans in Egypt.

Great Britain needed Egypt because the Suez Canal was located there. Most of Britain's empire, including India, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, and Australia, sent supplies to Britain through the canal. General Erwin Rommel—a brilliant leader whose success earned him the nickname "Desert Fox"—commanded the German forces in the area, known as the "Afrika Korps."

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El Alamein and Stalingrad, November 1942

Just as the Battle of Midway was a turning point in the war in the Pacific, so too were the battles of El Alamein in North Africa and Stalingrad in Europe. The British victory over German General Rommel at El Alamein secured the Suez Canal and kept the Germans away from the oil resources of the Middle East. Germany's defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad was a major turning point by ending Hitler's plans to dominate Europe.



◀ A British tank successfully navigates a wide ditch outside a town in North Africa.

▲ A Soviet gun crew fights against Nazi forces in Stalingrad. Only one day after the Nazis publicly boasted that the city would fall to them, the Red Army turned the tide of battle.

Analyzing VISUALS

- Assessing** How do you think the environment made combat at El Alamein and Stalingrad challenging?
- Evaluating** Why were the battles shown so important to the Allies?

Although the British forced Rommel to retreat in November 1942, after a 12-day battle against the coastal city of El Alamein near the Suez Canal, German forces remained a serious threat. Later that month, Americans under General Dwight D. Eisenhower's command invaded North Africa. He planned to trap Rommel between two Allied forces. The American forces in Morocco, led by General George Patton, quickly captured the city of Casablanca, while those in Algeria seized the cities of Oran and Algiers. The Americans then headed east into Tunisia, while British forces headed west into Libya.

When the American troops advanced into the mountains of western Tunisia, they had to fight the German army for the first time. They did not do well. At the Battle of Kasserine Pass, the Americans were outmaneuvered and out-fought. They suffered roughly 7,000 casualties and lost nearly 200 tanks. Eisenhower fired the

general who led the attack and put Patton in command. Together, the American and British forces finally pushed the Germans back. On May 13, 1943, the last German troops in North Africa surrendered.

The Battle of the Atlantic

As American and British troops fought the German army in North Africa, the war against German submarines in the Atlantic Ocean intensified. After Germany declared war on the United States, German submarines entered American coastal waters. American cargo ships were easy **targets**, especially at night when the glow from the cities in the night sky silhouetted the vessels. To protect the ships, cities on the East Coast dimmed their lights every evening. People also put up special "blackout curtains" and, if they had to drive at night, did so with their headlights off.



By August 1942, German submarines had sunk about 360 American ships along the East Coast. So many oil tankers were sunk that gasoline and fuel oil had to be rationed. To keep oil flowing, the government built the first long-distance oil pipeline, stretching some 1,250 miles (2,010 km) from Texas to Pennsylvania.

The loss of so many ships convinced the U.S. Navy to set up a **convoy system**. Under this system, cargo ships traveled in groups escorted by navy warships. The convoy system improved the situation dramatically. It made it much more difficult for a submarine to torpedo a cargo ship and escape without being attacked.

The spring of 1942 marked the high point of the German submarine campaign. In May and June alone, over 1.2 million tons of shipping were sunk. Yet in those same two months, American and British shipyards built more than 1.1 million tons of new shipping. From July 1942 onward, American shipyards produced more ships than German submarines managed to sink. At the same time, American airplanes and warships began to use new technology, including radar, sonar, and depth charges, to locate and attack submarines. As the new technology began to take its toll on German submarines, the Battle of the Atlantic turned in favor of the Allies.

The Battle of Stalingrad

In the spring of 1942, before the Battle of the Atlantic turned against Germany, Adolf Hitler was very confident that he would win the war. The German army was ready to launch a new offensive to knock the Soviets out of the war.

Hitler was convinced that only by destroying the Soviet economy could he defeat the Soviet Union. In May 1942, he ordered his army to capture strategic oil fields, factories, and farmlands in southern Russia and Ukraine. The city of Stalingrad, which controlled the Volga River and was a major railroad junction, was the key to the attack. If the German army captured Stalingrad, they would cut off the Soviets from the resources they needed to stay in the war.

When German troops entered Stalingrad in mid-September, Stalin ordered his troops to hold the city at all costs. Retreat was forbidden. The Germans were forced to fight from house to house, losing thousands of soldiers in the process. They were not equipped to fight in the bitter cold, but Soviet troops had quilted undersuits, felt boots, fur hats, and white camouflaged oversuits.

On November 23, Soviet reinforcements arrived and surrounded Stalingrad, trapping almost 250,000 German troops. When the battle ended in February 1943, some 91,000 Germans had surrendered, although only 5,000 of them survived the Soviet prison camps and returned home after the war. Both sides lost nearly half a million soldiers each. The Battle of Stalingrad was a major turning point in the war. Just as the Battle of Midway put the Japanese on the defensive for the rest of the war, the Battle of Stalingrad put the Germans on the defensive as well.

 **Describing** How did the United States begin winning the Battle of the Atlantic?

Section 2 REVIEW

Vocabulary

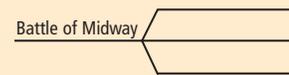
1. Explain the significance of: Chester Nimitz, Douglas MacArthur, Bataan Death March, Corregidor, James Doolittle, periphery, convoy system.

Main Ideas

- 2. Explaining** Briefly explain the causes and effects of the effort to defeat the Japanese in 1942.
- 3. Analyzing** Why did Churchill want to defeat the Germans in Africa before staging a European invasion?

Critical Thinking

- 4. Big Ideas** Explain the significance of one person whose actions made a difference in the war.
- 5. Organizing** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list the reasons that the Battle of Midway is considered a turning point of the war.



- 6. Analyzing Visuals** Look again at the map on page 496. How long did the Battle of Midway last?

Writing About History

- 7. Expository Writing** Much of the course of wars is determined by the need for supply lines to remain open. Write a brief essay explaining how this need shaped early battles in which the United States was involved.



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