

★★★★★ LESSON PLAN: SEABEES & ISLAND HOPPING ★★★★★

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, students will explore the crucial role of the Seabees (The Naval Construction Force) in World War II's Pacific theater, focusing on their contributions to the island-hopping strategy. The Seabees, officially established in 1942, were a unique force of skilled construction workers who built vital infrastructure under combat conditions. Students will learn how these “construction battalions” transformed remote Pacific islands into strategic military bases, enabling Allied forces to advance towards Japan. Through a combination of historical analysis and creative activity, students will gain insight into the Seabees' impact on the war's outcome and develop a deeper understanding of the logistical challenges in the Pacific campaign

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the role of Seabees in WWII's Pacific theater
- Analyze the impact of the island hopping strategy on the war's outcome
- Create a movie poster highlighting the Seabees' contributions

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did the Seabees contribute to the success of the island-hopping strategy in the Pacific during World War II?
- How did the rapid construction of infrastructure by the Seabees impact the pace and effectiveness of military operations in the Pacific?
- What role did technological innovations, such as the Quonset hut and pontoon bridges, play in the Seabees' ability to support military operations?
- How did the formation and deployment of the Seabees reflect the changing nature of warfare in World War II?
- How can visual media, such as movie posters, be used to convey historical information?

GRADE LEVEL

8-11

TIME REQUIREMENT

One class period (45-50 minutes)

TEKS STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Social Studies, Grade 8: 8.29B, 8.30A
- World History Studies: WH.12C WH.29F, WH.31B
- United States History Studies Since 1877: US.7C, US.29F, US.31B

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NATIONAL STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical Comprehension
- Historical Thinking Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation
- U.S. History Content Standards for Grades 5-12, Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

MATERIALS

- Handout on Seabees and island hopping
- Timeline of key WWII Pacific events
- Movie poster proposal form
- Art supplies for movie posters
- Movie poster examples

RELEVANT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Students should have a basic understanding of:

- World War II's major events and participants
- The concept of theaters of war
- Basic geography of the Pacific region

VOCABULARY

- Seabees
- Island hopping
- Naval Construction Battalions (CBs)
- Forward Operating Base (FOB)
- Amphibious operations
- Infrastructure
- Pontoon Barges
- Quonset Hut

LESSON INSTRUCTION

Part One: Introduction and background

1. The Pacific Theater

In the years leading up to World War II, Japan sought to expand its power and influence across Asia and the Pacific. At its peak, the Japanese Empire stretched from Alaska's Aleutian Islands in the north and the tropical jungles of Southeast Asia in the south to the central Pacific islands and the borders of India.

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Japan's goal was to create what they called the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," essentially replacing European colonial rule with Japanese dominance. However, this expansion came at a terrible cost, with millions of civilians suffering under harsh Japanese occupation.

Opposing Japan's aggression were the Allied Powers, including the United States, Great Britain, China, and other nations like the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand. Although initially caught off guard by Japan's sudden attacks, including the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the Allies gradually regrouped and began to push back.

The Pacific Theater of World War II would become a vast battlefield, spanning thousands of miles of ocean and countless islands. It would require new strategies, technologies, and unprecedented cooperation among the Allied nations to ultimately defeat Japan and bring peace to the region.

2. Island Hopping

Island hopping was a key military strategy used by the United States and its allies in the Pacific Theater of World War II. This approach involved capturing strategic islands while bypassing heavily fortified Japanese strongholds. The goal was to establish a series of air and naval bases that would bring Allied forces closer to Japan, ultimately allowing for an invasion of the Japanese home islands.

The island-hopping campaign marked a turning point in the Pacific War, shifting the Allies from a defensive stance to an offensive one. After the initial Japanese advances in 1941 and early 1942, the Allies began to push back, starting with the Battle of Midway in June 1942. From there, they began systematically capturing islands across the Pacific, including Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Saipan, Guam, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa.

This strategy had several advantages:

- It allowed the Allies to bypass heavily defended Japanese positions, saving time and lives.
- Each captured island became a stepping stone, providing bases for air and naval operations closer to Japan.
- It stretched Japanese forces thin, making it difficult for them to defend their vast territory.

However, island hopping presented significant logistical challenges. The Allies needed to quickly establish functional bases on newly captured islands, often in remote and undeveloped locations. This is where the U.S. Navy Seabees played a crucial role. These skilled construction battalions were responsible for rapidly building airfields, ports, roads, and other essential infrastructure that made the island-hopping strategy possible, often in remote and undeveloped locations.

- Supplemental Video:
 - Have students watch this video this video on Island Hopping. Afterwards, encourage a class discussion on the map they viewed and the vastness of the Pacific Ocean.

SCAN ME!



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3. Seabees

The Seabees were a unique and vital component of the U.S. Navy during World War II. Officially known as Naval Construction Battalions (CBs), they were created in early 1942 in response to the urgent need for skilled construction workers who could also defend themselves in combat zones. The Seabees were primarily composed of experienced civilian construction workers, with an average age of 37, who were recruited for their expertise in various trades such as carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, and heavy equipment operation. Their name "Seabees" came from the initials "CB" for Construction Battalion.

In the Pacific Theater, the Seabees played a crucial role in supporting the island-hopping strategy. Their significance stemmed from their ability to rapidly construct and repair essential infrastructure under challenging and often hostile conditions. They built airfields, roads, bridges, and port facilities that were vital for advancing Allied forces across the vast Pacific.

The Seabees' motto, "We Build, We Fight," encapsulated their dual role as both builders and combatants. Their ability to work efficiently while under fire and in harsh environments made them indispensable to the success of many Pacific campaigns. By providing the necessary infrastructure for each newly captured island, the Seabees enabled the Allies to maintain their momentum and continue their advance towards Japan.

- Supplemental Video:
 - Show the students clips of the Naval History and Heritage Command's video, "Seabees of World War II." As they watch, encourage them to imagine how they'd create a film about the Seabees.



Part Two: Activity

1. Review the timeline and key figures with the class.
2. The class has now become movie directors producing a film on island hopping and the Seabees in the Pacific War. This task can be done as individual work or group work.
 - a. Students will create a movie poster promoting their film, including
 - i. A dramatic title for the film and tagline
 - ii. Four images from the "film" depicting key events
 - iii. Captions under each screenshot describing the events
 - iv. A cast list
 - v. Movie quotes from dramatic scenes
 - vi. Merchandise relevant to the topic
3. Distribute and review the proposal form with the class.

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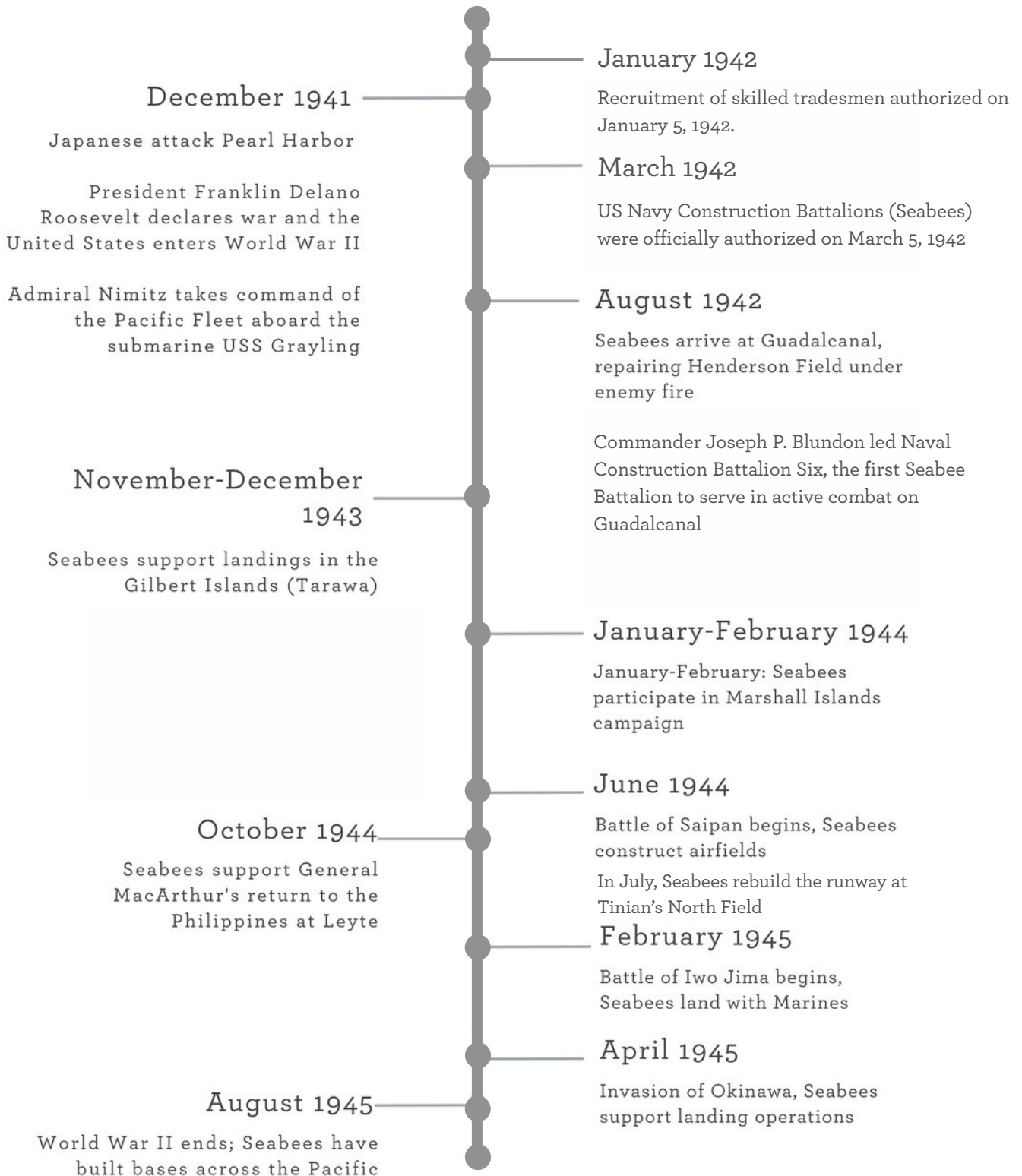
TIMELINE & KEY FIGURES

QUESTION	ANSWER	EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER
What will the title and tagline be for your film?		
What four events will you choose to focus on for your images? (Aim for different moods: drama, suspense, humor, ect.)		
What captions will you have under your images?		
Choose 3 people from the timeline for your cast. Which famous actors would you use to place each of those characters?	Historical Figure	Actors
What movie quotes will you include?		
What sort of merchandise could you advertise?		

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TIMELINE

ISLAND HOPPING & THE SEABEES



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3. Allow time for students to complete their proposal and begin their movie poster.

Part Three: Wrap Up & Discussion

1. Have students share their movie posters and film ideas.
2. Recap the key points of island hopping and the Seabees.

Supplemental Activities (for homework or extension)

1. Complete the movie poster if not finished in class
2. Write a brief synopsis for the movie
3. Develop a short script for a scene in the imagined Seabees movie
4. Have the students produce a movie trailer for their film