

SECTION 4 Pushing the Axis Back

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

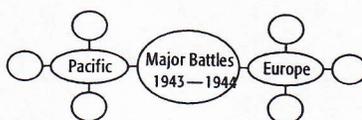
The Allies slowly pushed back the German and Japanese forces in 1943 and 1944.

Key Terms and Names

Casablanca Conference, Operation Overlord, D-Day, Omar Bradley, amphibious, Guadalcanal, kamikaze

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the major battles of 1943 and 1944, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by filling in the names of the battles fought. Indicate whether each battle was an Allied or an Axis victory.



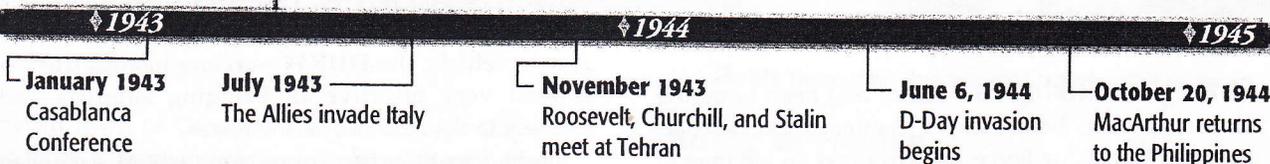
Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the goals of the two major offensives the Allies launched in Europe in 1943.
- **Explain** the American strategy for pushing the Japanese back in the Pacific.

Section Theme

Geography and History The United States fought the war by landing troops in Italy and France and island-hopping across the Pacific toward Japan.

Preview of Events



★ An American Story ★



Men board a landing craft on D-Day

On the morning of June 6, 1944, Lieutenant John Bentz Carroll of the 16th Infantry Regiment scrambled down a net ladder from his troop ship to a small landing craft tossing in the waves 30 feet (9 m) below. The invasion of France had begun. Carroll's platoon would be among the first Americans to land in Normandy. Their objective was a beach, code-named "Omaha":

“Two hundred yards out, we took a direct hit. . . . [A machine gun] was shooting a rat-tat-tat on the front of the boat. Somehow or other, the ramp door opened up . . . and the men in front were being struck by machine gun fire. Everyone started to jump off into the water. They were being hit as they jumped, the machine gun fire was so heavy. . . . The tide was moving us so rapidly. . . . We would grab out on some of those underwater obstructions and mines built on telephone poles and girders, and hang on. We'd take cover, then make a dash through the surf to the next one, fifty feet beyond. The men would line up behind those poles. They'd say, 'You go—you go—you go,' and then it got so bad everyone just had to go anyway, because the waves were hitting with such intensity on these things.”

—quoted in *D-Day: Piercing the Atlantic Wall*

Striking Back at the Third Reich

As Lieutenant Carroll's experience shows, storming a beach under enemy control can be a terrifying ordeal. There is no cover on a beach, no place to hide, and no way to turn back. Launching an invasion from the sea is very risky. Unfortunately, the Allies had no choice. If they were going to win the war, they had to land their troops in Europe and on islands in the Pacific.

The first large Allied invasion of the war—the attack on North Africa in November 1942—had shown that the Allies could mount a large-scale invasion from the sea. The success of the landings convinced Roosevelt that it was again time to meet with Churchill to plan the next stage of the war. In January 1943, the president headed to Casablanca, Morocco, to meet the prime minister.

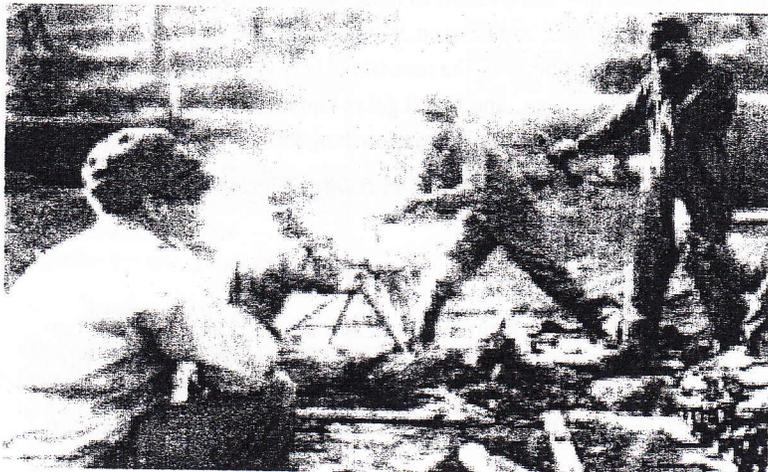
At the **Casablanca Conference**, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to step up the bombing of Germany. The goal of this new campaign was “the progressive destruction of the German military, industrial, and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people.” The Allies also agreed to attack the Axis on the island of Sicily. Churchill called Italy the “soft underbelly” of Europe and was convinced that the Italians would quit the war if the Allies invaded their homeland.

Strategic Bombing The Allies had been bombing Germany even before the Casablanca Conference. Britain’s Royal Air Force had dropped an average of 2,300 tons (2,093 t) of explosives on Germany every month for over three years. The United States Eighth Army Air Force had joined the campaign in the summer of 1942, and they had dropped an additional 1,500 tons (1,365 t) of bombs by the end of the year.

These numbers were tiny, however, compared to the massive new campaign. Between January 1943 and May 1945, the Royal Air Force and the United States Eighth Army Air Force dropped approximately 53,000 tons (48,230 t) of explosives on Germany every month.

Picturing History

Softening the Gustav Line Infantrymen fire an 81-millimeter mortar to soften the German Gustav Line near the Rapido River. Why do you think the Allies decided to attack first in Italy rather than in France?



The bombing campaign did not destroy Germany’s economy or undermine German morale, but it did cause a severe oil shortage and wrecked the railroad system. It also destroyed so many aircraft factories that Germany’s air force could not replace its combat losses. By the time the Allies landed in France, they had total control of the air, ensuring that their troops would not be bombed.

Striking at the Soft Underbelly As the bombing campaign against Germany intensified, the plan for the invasion of Sicily moved ahead as well. General Dwight D. Eisenhower was placed in overall command of the invasion. General Patton and the British General Bernard Montgomery were put in charge of the actual forces on the ground. The invasion began before dawn on July 10, 1943. Despite bad weather, the Allied troops made it ashore with few casualties. A new vehicle, the **DUKW**—an amphibious truck—proved very effective in bringing supplies and artillery to the soldiers on the beach.

Eight days after the troops came ashore, American tanks led by General Patton smashed through enemy lines and captured the western half of the island. After capturing western Sicily, Patton’s troops headed east, staging a series of daring end-runs around the German positions, while the British, under Montgomery, attacked from the south. By August 18, the Germans had evacuated the island.

The attack on Sicily created a crisis within the Italian government. The king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, and a group of Italian generals decided that it was time to get rid of Mussolini. On July 25, 1943, the king invited the dictator to his palace. “My dear Duce,” the king began, “it’s no longer any good. Italy has gone to bits. The soldiers don’t want to fight anymore. At this moment, you are the most hated man in Italy.” The king then placed Mussolini under arrest, and the new Italian government began secretly negotiating with the Allies for Italy’s surrender.

On September 8, 1943, the Italian government publicly announced Italy’s surrender. The following day, American troops landed at Salerno. Although stunned by the surrender, Hitler was not about to lose Italy to the Allies. German troops went into action at once. They seized control of northern Italy, including Rome, attacked the Americans at Salerno, and put Mussolini back in power.

To stop the Allied advance, the German army took up positions near the heavily



The Big Three Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill meet at Tehran.

fortified town of Cassino. The terrain near Cassino was steep, barren, and rocky. Instead of attacking such difficult terrain, the Allies chose to land at Anzio, behind German lines. They hoped the maneuver would force the Germans to retreat. Instead of retreating, however, the Germans surrounded the Allied troops near Anzio.

It took the Allies five months to break through the German lines at **Cassino** and **Anzio**. Finally, in late May 1944, the Germans were forced to retreat. Less than two weeks later, the Allies captured Rome. Fighting in Italy continued, however, until May 2, 1945. The Italian campaign was one of the bloodiest in the war. It cost the Allies more than 300,000 casualties.

Roosevelt Meets Stalin at Tehran Roosevelt wanted to meet with Stalin before the Allies launched the invasion of France. In late 1943 Stalin agreed, and he proposed that Roosevelt and Churchill meet him in Tehran, Iran.

The leaders reached several agreements. Stalin promised to launch a full-scale offensive against the Germans when the Allies invaded France in 1944. Roosevelt and Stalin then agreed to break up Germany after the war so that it would never again threaten world peace. Stalin also promised that once Germany was beaten, the Soviet Union would help the United States defeat Japan. He also accepted Roosevelt's proposal to create an international organization to help keep the peace after the war.

Reading Check **Explaining** What two major decisions did the Allies make at Casablanca?

Landing in France

After the conference in Tehran, Roosevelt headed to Cairo, Egypt, where he and Churchill continued planning the invasion of France. One major decision still had to be made. The president had to choose the commander for **Operation Overlord**—the code name for the planned invasion. Roosevelt wanted to appoint General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff for the United States Army, but he depended on Marshall for military advice and did not want to send him to Europe. Instead, the president selected General Eisenhower to command the invasion.

Planning Operation Overlord Knowing that the Allies would eventually invade France, Hitler had fortified the coast. Although these defenses were formidable, the Allies did have one advantage—the element of surprise. The Germans did not know when or where the Allies would land. They believed that the Allies would land in Pas-de-Calais—the area of France closest to Britain. To convince the Germans they were right, the Allies placed inflated rubber tanks, empty tents, and dummy landing craft along the coast across from Calais. To German spy planes, the decoys looked real, and they succeeded in fooling the Germans. The real target was not Pas-de-Calais, but Normandy.

By the spring of 1944, everything was ready. Over 1.5 million American soldiers, 12,000 airplanes, and more than 5 million tons (4.6 million t) of equipment had been sent to England. Only one

thing was left to do—pick the date and give the command to go. The invasion had to begin at night to hide the ships crossing the English Channel. The ships had to arrive at low tide so that they could see the beach obstacles. The low tide had to come at dawn so that gunners bombarding the coast could see their targets. Before the main landing on the beaches, paratroopers would be dropped behind enemy lines. They required a moonlit night in order to see where to land. Perhaps most important of all, the weather had to be good. A storm would ground the airplanes, and high waves would swamp the landing craft.

Given all these conditions, there were only a few days each month when the invasion could begin. The first opportunity would last from June 5 to 7, 1944. Eisenhower's planning staff referred to the day any operation began by the letter D. The date for the invasion, therefore, came to be known as **D-Day**. Heavy cloud cover, strong winds, and high waves made it impossible to land on June 5. A day later the weather briefly improved. The Channel was still rough, but the landing ships and aircraft could operate. It was a difficult decision. Eisenhower's advisers were split on what to do. After looking at weather forecasts one

last time, shortly after midnight on June 6, 1944, Eisenhower gave the final order: "OK, we'll go."

The Longest Day Nearly 7,000 ships carrying more than 100,000 soldiers set sail for the coast of Normandy on June 6, 1944. At the same time, 23,000 paratroopers were dropped inland, east and west of the beaches. Allied fighter-bombers raced up and down the coast, hitting bridges, bunkers, and radar sites. As dawn broke, the warships in the Allied fleet let loose with a tremendous barrage of fire. Thousands of shells rained down on the beaches, code-named "Utah," "Omaha," "Gold," "Sword," and "Juno."

The American landing at Utah Beach went very well. The German defenses were weak, and in less than three hours American troops had captured the beach and moved inland, suffering less than 200 casualties in the process. On the eastern flank, the British and Canadian landings also went well. By the end of the day, British and Canadian forces were several miles inland.

Omaha Beach, however, was a different story. Under intense German fire, the American assault almost disintegrated. As General Omar Bradley, the commander of the American forces landing at Omaha

What If...

Operation Overlord Had Failed?

In what some historians believe was the most important weather prediction in military history, Group Captain James Stagg, chief meteorologist for the Royal Air Force, predicted gradual clearing for Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944. The prediction was critical for General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. He had already delayed Operation Overlord once. The invasion forces of Operation Overlord were assembled and ready to go at a moment's notice. Everything depended upon a break in the bad weather so that the assault would take the Germans by surprise. Eisenhower trusted the weather prediction and believed in the battle

plan. The day before the invasion, however, he wrote the following note on a small piece of paper—a message he would deliver in the event the invasion failed. He mistakenly jotted "July 5" on the bottom and stuck the note in his wallet.

“Our landings in the Cherbourg-Havre area have failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based upon the best information available. The troops, the air and the Navy did all that Bravery and devotion to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone.”

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July 5

and Utah, grimly watched the carnage, he began making plans to evacuate Omaha. Slowly, however, the American troops began to knock out the German defenses. More landing craft arrived, ramming their way through the obstacles to get to the beach. Nearly 2,500 Americans were either killed or wounded on Omaha, but by early afternoon Bradley received this message: "Troops formerly pinned down on beaches . . . [are] advancing up heights behind beaches." By the end of the day, nearly 35,000 American troops had landed at Omaha, and another 23,000 had landed at Utah. Over 75,000 British and Canadian troops were on shore as well. The invasion had succeeded.

Reading Check **Summarizing** What conditions had to be met before Eisenhower could order D-Day to begin?

Driving the Japanese Back

While the buildup for the invasion of France was taking place in Britain, American military leaders were also developing a strategy to defeat Japan. The American plan called for a two-pronged attack. The Pacific Fleet, commanded by Admiral Nimitz, would

advance through the central Pacific by hopping from one island to the next, closer and closer to Japan. Meanwhile, General MacArthur's troops would advance through the Solomon Islands, capture the north coast of New Guinea, and then launch an invasion to retake the Philippines.

GEOGRAPHY

Island-Hopping in the Pacific By the fall of 1943, the navy was ready to launch its island-hopping campaign, but the geography of the central Pacific posed a problem. Many of the islands were coral reef atolls. The water over the coral reef was not always deep enough to allow landing craft to get to the shore. If the landing craft ran aground on the reef, the troops would have to wade to the beach. As some 5,000 United States Marines learned at Tarawa Atoll, wading ashore could cause very high casualties.

Tarawa, part of the Gilbert Islands, was the Navy's first objective in the Pacific. When the landing craft hit the reef, at least 20 ships ran aground. The marines had to plunge into shoulder-high water and wade several hundred yards to the beach. Raked by Japanese fire, only one marine in three made it ashore. Once the marines reached the beach the battle was still far from over. As reporter Robert Sherrod wrote, the marines faced savage hand-to-hand fighting:

☞☞ A Marine jumped over the seawall and began throwing blocks of fused TNT into a coconut-log pillbox. . . . Two more Marines scaled the seawall, one of them carrying a twin-cylindrical tank strapped to their shoulders, the other holding the nozzle of the flame thrower. As another charge of TNT boomed inside the pillbox, causing smoke and dust to billow out, a khaki-clad figure ran out the side entrance. The flame thrower, waiting for him, caught him in its withering stream of intense fire. As soon as it touched him, the [Japanese soldier] flared up like a piece of celluloid. He was dead instantly . . . charred almost to nothingness.☞☞

—from *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle*

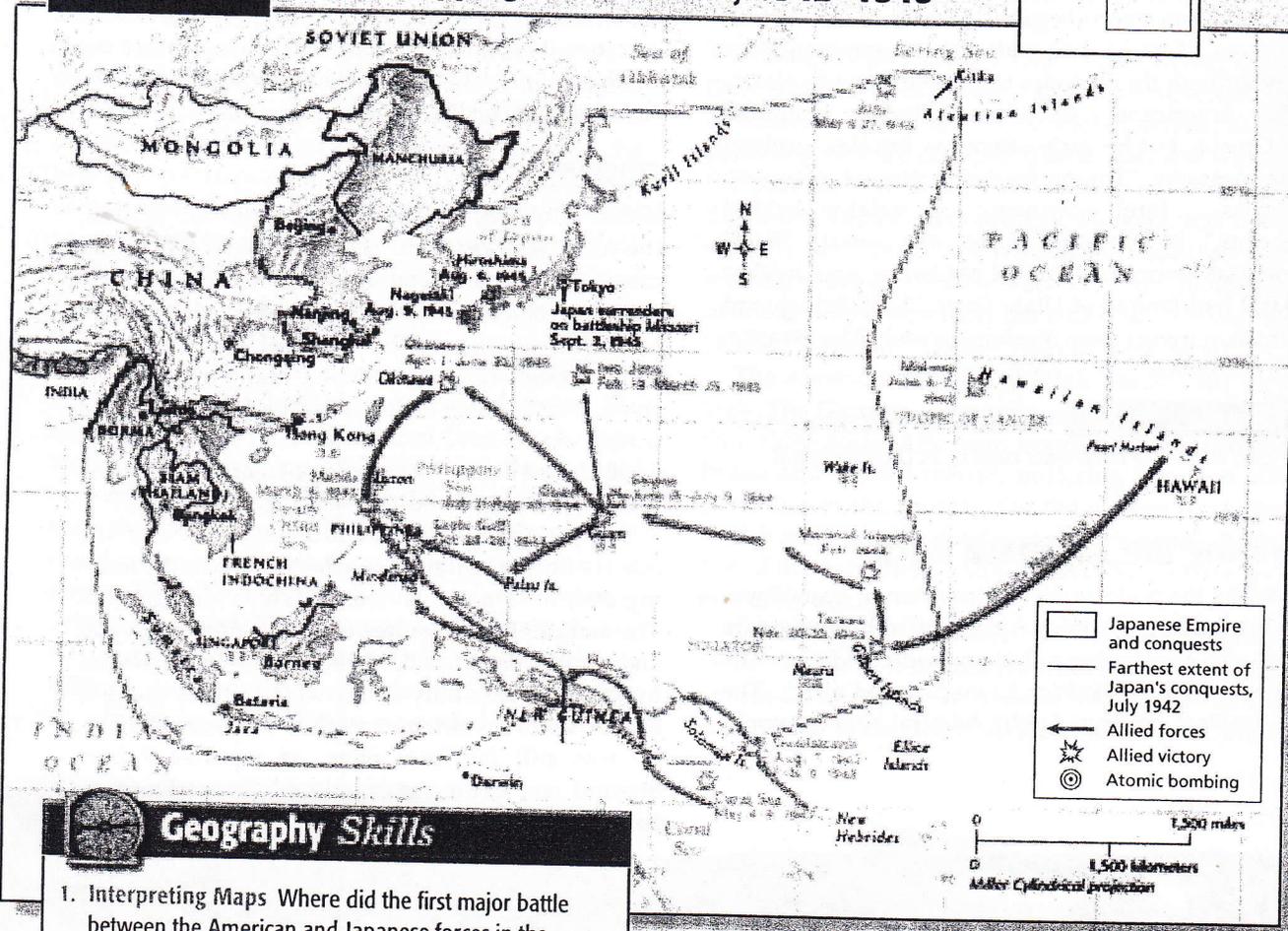
Over 1,000 marines died on Tarawa. Photos of bodies lying crumpled next to burning landing craft shocked Americans back home. Many people began to wonder how many lives it would cost to defeat Japan.

Although many troops died wading ashore, one vehicle had been able to cross the reef and deliver its troops onto the beaches. The vehicle was the LVT—a boat with tank tracks. Nicknamed the "Alligator," the



- W**
1. What might have happened if the weather had not changed and the troops had landed amidst fog and rain?
 2. What if the invasion had been delayed and the element of surprise lost?

Island-Hopping in the Pacific, 1942–1945



Geography Skills

1. **Interpreting Maps** Where did the first major battle between the American and Japanese forces in the South Pacific take place?
2. **Applying Geography Skills** Why do you think Americans adopted the policy of island-hopping?

amphibious tractor, or *amphtrac*, had been invented in the late 1930s to rescue people in Florida swamps. It had never been used in combat, and not until 1941 did the navy decide to buy 200 of them. Had more been available at Tarawa, the number of American casualties probably would have been much lower.

The assault on the next major objective—Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands—went much more smoothly. This time all of the troops went ashore in *amphtracs*. Although the Japanese resisted fiercely, the marines captured Kwajalein and nearby Eniwetok with far fewer casualties.

After the Marshall Islands, the navy targeted the Mariana Islands. American military planners wanted to use the Marianas as a base for a new heavy bomber, the B-29 Superfortress. The B-29 could fly farther than any other plane in the world. From airfields in the

Marianas, B-29s could bomb Japan. Admiral Nimitz decided to invade three of the Mariana Islands: Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. Despite strong Japanese resistance, American troops captured all three by August 1944. A few months later, B-29 bombers began bombing Japan.

MacArthur Returns to the Philippines As the forces under Admiral Nimitz hopped across the central Pacific, General MacArthur’s troops began their own campaign in the southwest Pacific. The campaign began with the invasion of **Guadalcanal** in August 1942. It continued until early 1944, when MacArthur’s troops finally captured enough islands to surround Rabaul, the main Japanese base in the region. In response the Japanese withdrew their ships and aircraft from the base, although they left 100,000 troops behind to hold the island.

Worried that the navy’s advance across the central Pacific was leaving him behind, MacArthur ordered his forces to leap nearly 600 miles (966 km) past Rabaul to capture the Japanese base at Hollandia on

the north coast of New Guinea. Shortly after securing New Guinea, MacArthur's troops seized the island of Morotai—the last stop before the Philippines.

To take back the Philippines, the United States assembled an enormous invasion force. In October 1944, more than 700 ships carrying over 160,000 troops sailed for Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. On October 20, the troops began to land on Leyte, an island on the eastern side of the Philippines. A few hours after the invasion began, MacArthur headed to the beach. Upon reaching the shore, he strode to a radio and spoke into the microphone: "People of the Philippines, I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil."

To stop the American invasion, the Japanese sent four aircraft carriers toward the Philippines from the north and secretly dispatched another fleet to the west. Believing the Japanese carriers were leading the main attack, most of the American carriers protecting the invasion left Leyte Gulf and headed north to stop them. Seizing their chance, the Japanese warships to the west raced through the Philippine Islands into Leyte Gulf and ambushed the remaining American ships.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf was the largest naval battle in history. It was also the first time that the Japanese used *kamikaze* attacks. *Kamikaze* means "divine wind" in Japanese. It refers to the great storm that destroyed the Mongol fleet during its invasion of Japan in the thirteenth century. Kamikaze pilots would deliberately crash their planes into American ships, killing themselves but also inflicting severe damage. Luckily for the Americans, just as their situation was becoming



A Triumphant Return In October 1944, Douglas MacArthur fulfilled his promise and returned to the Philippines.

desperate, the Japanese commander, believing more American ships were on the way, ordered a retreat.

Although the Japanese fleet had retreated, the campaign to recapture the Philippines from the Japanese was long and grueling. Over 80,000 Japanese were killed; less than 1,000 surrendered. MacArthur's troops did not capture Manila until March 1945. The battle left the city in ruins and over 100,000 Filipino civilians dead. The remaining Japanese retreated into the rugged terrain north of Manila, and they were still fighting when word came in August 1945 that Japan had surrendered.

Reading Check **Describing** What strategy did the United States Navy use to advance across the Pacific?

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- 1. Define:** amphtrac, kamikaze.
- 2. Identify:** Casablanca Conference, Operation Overlord, D-Day, Omar Bradley, Guadalcanal.
- 3. Explain** why D-Day's success was so vital to an Allied victory.

Reviewing Themes

- 4. Geography and History** How did the geography of the Pacific affect American strategy?

Critical Thinking

- 5. Analyzing** What made the invasion of Normandy so important?
- 6. Organizing** Use a graphic organizer to explain the significance of each leader listed below.

Leader	Significance
Dwight Eisenhower	
George Patton	
George Marshall	
Omar Bradley	
Douglas MacArthur	

Analyzing Visuals

- 7. Examining Photographs** Study the photograph on this page. What effect do you think MacArthur's return had on Philippine morale?

Writing About History

- 8. Expository Writing** Using library or Internet resources, find more information on one of the battles discussed in this section. Use the information to write a report detailing the importance of the battle. Share your report with the class.