Ground Gained

Battlefield victories and the struggle for occupied territory

SS24.US2.7a "Develop an argument supporting the thesis that major battles of World War II in which the United States was involved were turning points of the war and outline the impact of these battles on territorial occupation by the Allied and Axis..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the four battles in the order they appear, underline evidence that each shifted the war's direction, and circle phrases that show what happened to territory. Use your marks to connect each turning point to control of land.

When Battles Changed the Ground

1. In June 1942, Japanese forces tried to seize Midway, a U.S.-held island in the Pacific. U.S. aircraft sank four Japanese aircraft carriers, while Japan sank one U.S. carrier. Midway stayed under U.S. control, so the battle did not itself free occupied land. Yet Japan lost ships and trained aircrews it could not quickly replace, weakening its ability to expand. In August, U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal, where Japan was building an airfield. After months of fighting, Japan withdrew in February 1943. Allied forces secured the island and its airfield, turning defense into a campaign to retake Japanese-held territory.

2. By June 1944, German forces still occupied France. On D-Day, U.S., British, and Canadian troops landed on the Normandy coast. Despite heavy losses, the Allies established beachheads that Germany failed to destroy. From those footholds, Allied armies pushed inland, breaking through German lines in late July. They liberated Paris in August and continued toward Germany. Normandy mattered as a turning point because the landings opened a western front on German-occupied soil, forcing Germany to fight major Allied armies from both east and west. The beaches alone did not liberate France, but holding them made a sustained campaign possible.

3. In December 1944, Germany launched a surprise attack through the Ardennes, hoping to split Allied armies in the west. During the Battle of the Bulge, German troops briefly captured ground in Belgium and Luxembourg, but U.S. forces, with other Allied troops, resisted and counterattacked. By late January 1945, Germany had lost the ground it had gained in the offensive. The Allies then advanced into Germany, while Soviet forces pressed from the east. The battle was a turning point not because it opened new territory immediately, but because Germany's last major western offensive failed and its forces could no longer hold the western front.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Midway shift the war's direction even though no occupied land changed hands there?

2. How did Guadalcanal change control of territory, and what larger Allied campaign did that change support?

3. Why was Normandy more than a one-day gain of beaches? Trace its effects on occupied France.

4. A classmate calls the Battle of the Bulge an Axis turning point because Germany captured ground. How does the passage challenge that claim?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which battle in the passage offers the strongest evidence that U.S. involvement helped reverse Axis occupation? Write one paragraph arguing for your choice, compare it with a second battle, and address one limitation or counterclaim using details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.7a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the four battles in the order they appear, underline evidence that each shifted the war's direction, and circle phrases that show what happened to territory. Use your marks to connect each turning point to control of land. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Midway shift the war's direction even though no occupied land changed hands there?	**The U.S. kept Midway, and Japan lost four carriers and trained aircrews it could not quickly replace. Those losses weakened Japan's ability to expand.**
2	How did Guadalcanal change control of territory, and what larger Allied campaign did that change support?	**Japan withdrew, and the Allies secured Guadalcanal and its airfield. The victory helped shift Allied efforts from defense toward retaking Japanese-held territory.**
3	Why was Normandy more than a one-day gain of beaches? Trace its effects on occupied France.	**The Allies held beachheads, pushed inland, broke through German lines, and liberated Paris. The landings made a sustained campaign against German occupation possible.**
4	A classmate calls the Battle of the Bulge an Axis turning point because Germany captured ground. How does the passage challenge that claim?	**Germany's gains in Belgium and Luxembourg were temporary. By late January, it had lost that ground and its last major western offensive had failed.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Normandy offers the strongest evidence that U.S. involvement helped reverse Axis occupation. U.S. troops joined British and Canadian forces to establish beachheads in German-occupied France. From there, Allied armies advanced inland and liberated Paris, showing a change far beyond the landing sites. Guadalcanal also shifted control when Allied forces secured the island and its airfield, but that gain was confined to one island. Normandy's beaches did not free France on D-Day, yet holding them made a wider campaign possible.

Accept any of the four battles as the strongest choice if the argument accurately compares territorial effects and addresses a limitation or counterclaim. Distinguish territory secured during a battle from territory gained in the campaign that followed.