Turning the Tide

Battles and decisions in World War II

USH.C.5.2.A "Identify major battles, military turning points, and key strategic decisions in both the European and Pacific Theaters of Operations (e.g., Pearl Harbor, the D-day Invasion, Stalingrad, Midway, Okinawa, Battle of the Bulge, Iwo Jima…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each named battle or attack, and circle each military decision. Put a star beside two sentences that explain why a battle was a turning point.

Two Theaters, Changing Plans

1. In December 1941, Japanese aircraft struck the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The attack damaged the Pacific Fleet and brought the United States into World War II. Japan hoped to gain time to secure territory across the Pacific, but U.S. aircraft carriers were not in the harbor. Six months later, Japan tried to lure those carriers into a trap near Midway. U.S. codebreakers helped reveal the plan, and American planes sank four Japanese carriers. The Battle of Midway stopped Japan's major advance and shifted the initiative in the Pacific toward the United States.

2. After Midway, U.S. forces used island hopping, capturing selected islands while bypassing others. This decision saved time and aimed to bring airfields and naval bases closer to Japan. On Iwo Jima in February and March 1945, U.S. troops fought for an island with airfields useful to planes flying missions against Japan. The battle cost thousands of lives on both sides. At Okinawa, from April to June 1945, U.S. forces sought a base near Japan's home islands. Fierce fighting and heavy civilian losses showed how costly a possible invasion of Japan might be.

3. In Europe, Germany tried to seize the Soviet city of Stalingrad in 1942, but Soviet forces surrounded and defeated the German army there in early 1943. The defeat marked a major reversal for Germany in the east and strengthened a Soviet push west. On D-day, June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed in Normandy, France, opening a major western front against Germany. Germany made one last large offensive in the west at the Battle of the Bulge that December. Its failure drained German reserves while Allied armies kept advancing. The decision to attack through Normandy gave the Allies a lasting route into occupied Europe.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why does the passage identify Midway as a turning point in the Pacific?

2. Identify the U.S. strategy used after Midway. How did the battles for Iwo Jima and Okinawa fit its goal?

3. How did Stalingrad and the Battle of the Bulge each change Germany's military position?

4. What strategic choice did the Allies make on D-day, and what did it allow them to do?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five- or six-sentence museum label arguing whether a single turning-point battle or a sustained strategic decision better explains Allied progress. Use one named battle from each theater, explain the effect of each, name one strategic decision, and address a reasonable counterargument.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.5.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each named battle or attack, and circle each military decision. Put a star beside two sentences that explain why a battle was a turning point. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why does the passage identify Midway as a turning point in the Pacific?	**U.S. forces sank four Japanese carriers, stopping Japan's major advance and shifting the initiative toward the United States.**
2	Identify the U.S. strategy used after Midway. How did the battles for Iwo Jima and Okinawa fit its goal?	**Island hopping aimed to bring bases closer to Japan by capturing selected islands. Iwo Jima had useful airfields, and Okinawa was sought as a base near Japan's home islands.**
3	How did Stalingrad and the Battle of the Bulge each change Germany's military position?	**Stalingrad was a major reversal in the east that strengthened the Soviet push west. The failed Battle of the Bulge drained German reserves in the west.**
4	What strategic choice did the Allies make on D-day, and what did it allow them to do?	**They landed in Normandy, opening a major western front and gaining a lasting route into occupied Europe.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A sustained strategic decision best explains how the Allies kept making progress after major battles. Midway shifted the Pacific initiative toward the United States after American aircraft sank four Japanese carriers. Stalingrad marked a major German reversal in Europe and strengthened the Soviet push west. After Midway, island hopping let U.S. forces capture selected islands and bring bases closer to Japan. One could argue that Midway alone mattered more because it stopped Japan's major advance. Yet island hopping turned that opening into a continuing route toward Japan.

Accept either position in Part 3 if the label accurately explains one battle from each theater, names a strategic decision, and responds to a plausible counterargument. For the marking job, students may star any two sentences that clearly state a battle's effect on the war.