Turning Points, Lasting Choices

Trace how wartime decisions shaped victory and its aftermath

USH.C.5.2 "Analyze the series of events affecting the outcome of World War II. Identify major battles, military turning points, and key strategic decisions in both the European and Pacific Theaters of Operations (e.g., Pearl Harbor..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three events that changed the course of the war, and number them in the order they happened. Circle two decisions that affected what happened after the fighting.

From Battlefields to Peace Talks

1. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 brought the United States into World War II. In June 1942, American forces defeated a Japanese carrier fleet at Midway, limiting Japan's ability to attack. General Douglas MacArthur led Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific as the United States advanced by island hopping, capturing selected islands to reach Japan. Navajo code talkers sent secure battlefield messages. The costly fights for Iwo Jima and Okinawa brought U.S. forces closer to Japan.

2. In Europe, Soviet forces stopped Germany's advance at Stalingrad in 1943, then pushed west. General Dwight Eisenhower commanded the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-day in June 1944, opening a western front against Germany. The Tuskegee Airmen escorted bombers, while the 442nd Regimental Combat Team fought in Europe despite discrimination against Japanese Americans at home. Germany's last major attack in the west, the Battle of the Bulge, failed in early 1945. Pressure from both fronts helped bring Germany's surrender in May.

3. At Yalta in February 1945, Allied leaders planned for Germany's defeat and debated Europe's future. At Potsdam that summer, they agreed to disarm Germany but disagreed about its political future, foreshadowing the Cold War. Seeking Japan's surrender without an invasion, President Harry Truman authorized atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August. Japan surrendered soon afterward; Soviet entry into the war against Japan also increased pressure. The bombings killed many civilians and raised lasting questions about nuclear weapons and their human costs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did victory at Midway and island hopping each help the U.S. advance toward Japan?

2. How did Stalingrad and D-day put pressure on Germany, and what happened to its later attack at the Battle of the Bulge?

3. Choose one American leader and one special fighting force in the passage. How did each contribute to the Allied effort?

4. What did Allied leaders discuss at Yalta, and how did their agreement and disagreement at Potsdam affect Europe's future?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence briefing that connects one European and one Pacific turning point to the war's outcome. Explain Truman's atomic bomb decision, one lasting concern about atomic weapons, and one way Allied talks shaped postwar Europe.

ANSWER KEY

Turning Points, Lasting Choices

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.5.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three events that changed the course of the war, and number them in the order they happened. Circle two decisions that affected what happened after the fighting. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did victory at Midway and island hopping each help the U.S. advance toward Japan?	**Midway weakened Japan's ability to attack. Island hopping captured selected islands that brought U.S. forces closer to Japan.**
2	How did Stalingrad and D-day put pressure on Germany, and what happened to its later attack at the Battle of the Bulge?	**Soviet forces pushed west after Stalingrad, while D-day opened a western front. Germany's attack at the Battle of the Bulge failed.**
3	Choose one American leader and one special fighting force in the passage. How did each contribute to the Allied effort?	**For example, Eisenhower commanded the D-day invasion, and the Tuskegee Airmen escorted bombers.**
4	What did Allied leaders discuss at Yalta, and how did their agreement and disagreement at Potsdam affect Europe's future?	**At Yalta, they planned for Germany's defeat and debated Europe's future. At Potsdam, they agreed to disarm Germany but disagreed about its political future, foreshadowing the Cold War.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Stalingrad helped Soviet forces push Germany west, adding pressure that led to Germany's surrender. In the Pacific, Midway weakened Japan's fleet and helped the United States advance toward Japan. Truman approved atomic attacks to seek Japan's surrender without an invasion, though Soviet entry into the war also increased pressure. At Potsdam, Allied leaders agreed to disarm Germany but disagreed about its political future, foreshadowing the Cold War. The deaths of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki leave a lasting concern about the human costs of nuclear weapons.

Accept other accurate leader and special-force pairs in question 3. In the briefing, look for causal connections rather than a list of events; do not require students to claim that the atomic bombs alone caused Japan's surrender.