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HVL LESSON TITLE:

STORM OVER NORMANDY

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

STORM OVER NORMANDY

GUIDING QUESTION:

**How did the weather shape the
experience and success of the
D-Day invasion?**

OVERVIEW:

One of the key players of the June 6, 1944 Normandy landings was the weather. The weather impacted the landings in various ways, including seasickness, difficulty in getting off landing craft, scaling cliffs, and jumping into enemy territory. This lesson will allow students to get into the senses of the soldiers and sailors of the D-Day invasion.



SUBJECT(S):
English/Creative Writing



WWII Veteran:
Howard Polin



DURATION:
60 minutes

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“And they thought that in June that things would be relatively calm, and they went through a series of weather reports. As we got closer to the June 5 date, it became clear that June 6 would be a better weather day.”

WWII Veteran, Howard Polin

OVERVIEW:

One of the key players of the June 6, 1944 Normandy landings was the weather. The weather impacted the landings in various ways, including seasickness, difficulty in getting off landing craft, scaling cliffs, and jumping into enemy territory. This lesson will allow students to get into the senses of the soldiers and sailors of the D-Day invasion.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

The Allied invasion of Normandy, known as D-Day, was originally planned for June 5, 1944. However, severe weather in the English Channel threatened the operation. High winds, rough seas, low clouds, and poor visibility could have caused disaster for landing craft, paratroopers, naval bombardments, and air support.

A team of Allied meteorologists predicted a brief break in the storm for June 6. Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower made the difficult decision to proceed with the invasion.

The Germans believed the weather was too bad for an attack and were caught off guard.

OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Describe the weather conditions during D-Day.
- Explain how weather affected soldiers and military strategy.
- Analyze firsthand accounts describing the storm.
- Use descriptive language to recreate the atmosphere of the invasion.

STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas of a source.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[Howard Polin HVL Video](#)

Video Slip (Doc A)

Teacher Lecture Notes (Doc B)

Sensory Chart (Doc C)

Step Into the Storm Group Activity (Doc D)

Writing Activity (Doc E)

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Write the following quote on the board:
The Channel was rough. Men were seasick everywhere. Ask students: how did weather impact D-Day?
- Show the [Howard Polin HVL Video](#).
Inform students that Mr. Polin served as a meteorologist during the war. Instruct students to complete the Video Slip (Doc A) after watching the video.

ACTIVITY 02

- Teacher will use the D-Day Quick Reference (Doc B) to provide a brief lecture and discussion.

ACTIVITY 03

- Divide students into five small groups.
NOTE: If the class is large, more than one group can do the same topic. Distribute the Sensory Chart (Doc C). Distribute Step Into the Storm Source (Doc D) per group.

- Read the Step Into the Storm directions aloud as students follow along. Give students time to complete the task.
- After the group task is completed, ask student volunteers to share some of their group's thoughts from the group's Sensory Chart.

ACTIVITY 04

- Instruct students to return to their individual areas. Distribute the Writing Activity (Doc E). Read the directions aloud as students follow along.
- If time allows, have students share their writing assignments or conduct peer critiques.

STORM OVER NORMANDY

VIDEO SLIP

DOC A



What did you find most interesting about Mr. Polin's story?

As a meteorologist in WWII, what major event did Mr. Polin take part in?

If you could ask Mr. Polin any question, what would that question be?

STORM OVER NORMANDY

TEACHER'S D-DAY QUICK REFERENCE

DOC B



Use the following facts about the D-Day landings to get students to think about the sights and sounds of the D-Day invasion.

In the English Channel

Waves tossed landing craft violently.
Soldiers became seasick before combat even began.
Equipment became soaked.
Cold rain and sea spray reduced visibility.

In the Air

Thick clouds caused navigation problems.
Paratroopers were dropped off target.
Pilots struggled to identify landmarks.

On the Beaches

Strong surf drowned some soldiers carrying heavy gear.
Wet sand slowed movement.
Smoke, fog, and clouds created confusion.

STORM OVER NORMANDY

SENSORY CHART

DOC C



SENSE	WHAT MIGHT THE SOLDIERS AND SAILORS EXPERIENCE DURING THE D-DAY INVASION?
SIGHT	
SOUND	
SMELL	
TOUCH AND FEEL	
TASTE	
EMOTIONS	

STORM OVER NORMANDY

STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC D



DIRECTIONS: In your group, discuss the quotes listed below. Use the quotes to help complete the Sensory Chart and to answer the question at the bottom of the page.

Group 1 — Soldiers on Landing Craft

“The sea was terribly rough.”

“Men vomited continually during the crossing.”

“Clouds covered the coastline.”

“I could hear my heart beating loudly and my hands shook.”

“The water was red. The sand was red. I could hear them call for their Mother.”

“I will never forget the pop-pop of the German guns and seeing my comrades fall to the ground.”

Describe what you see, hear, smell, and feel crossing the Channel and landing on the beach.

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STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC D



DIRECTIONS: In your group, discuss the quotes listed below. Use the quotes to help complete the Sensory Chart and to answer the question at the bottom of the page.

Group 2 — Paratroopers

“It was a high-stakes jump with 50-60 lbs on my back.”

“I landed in a flooded area in the middle of hundreds of German soldiers.”

“All I could hear was the flak from German guns.”

“I landed off course and alone in the pitch of night.”

Describe jumping into darkness, clouds, and rain.

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STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC D



DIRECTIONS: In your group, discuss the quotes listed below. Use the quotes to help complete the Sensory Chart and to answer the question at the bottom of the page.

Group 3 — Naval Crews

“The waves were high, and the smell of vomit permeated the air.”

“Winds blew the rain sideways, obscuring our vision.”

“It was chaotic, yet quiet except for the sound of soldiers vomiting and the crash of the waves; and then once we grew close to the beaches, the eruption of gunfire sounded.”

“The idea of hitting mines the Germans placed in the water stayed on my mind.”

Describe trying to fire weapons accurately and landing soldiers safely in high seas.

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STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC D



DIRECTIONS: In your group, discuss the quotes listed below. Use the quotes to help complete the Sensory Chart and to answer the question at the bottom of the page.

Group 4 — Army Rangers at Point du Hoc

“I looked up at the steep climb and knew this was not going to be easy.”

“The rain pelted us. And the wind was intense, pushing off course and delayed our landing. We lost the element of surprise.”

“Once I managed to scale the ropes to the top, I saw massive craters where the Germans had bombarded the area with artillery shells.”

“I saw one of my buddies fall into the water. The Germans cut our ropes.”

Describe the feeling of not knowing what to expect when you get to the top of the cliff.

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STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC D



DIRECTIONS: In your group, discuss the quotes listed below. Use the quotes to help complete the Sensory Chart and to answer the question at the bottom of the page.

Group 5-German Defenders

“When the Allies arrived, we were still uncertain how to respond due to a break down in our leadership’s communication. We expected an invasion, just not one of this strength along the Normandy coast.”

“The Allied ships were hitting us on the beach, but we did not have any air support to help out the ground forces on the beach.”

“It was raining. The seas were high. The winds were high. It was not a good time to invade. We were taken somewhat by surprise.”

“When we discovered paratroopers falling from the sky, we went on the defensive, setting fires and firing upon them.”

Describe the feeling the Germans felt when they saw the Allies invading.

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STEP INTO THE STORM

DOC E



DIRECTIONS: Choose one of the following writing activities. Using the discussion of the classes' Sensory Charts, write a descriptive and detailed narrative.

"Weather Report from D-Day"

Students write a 1944-style radio weather report describing:

Wind

Waves

Visibility

Rain

Predictions for invasion conditions

OR

"Diary from the Channel"

Write from the perspective of:

A seasick infantryman

A frightened paratrooper

A naval officer watching the storm

(Minimum of 4 paragraphs)