



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
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HVL LESSON TITLE:

WHAT THEY CARRIED

DEVELOPED BY: ERIN COGGINS

DESCRIBING A VETERAN

GUIDING QUESTION:

What did U.S. paratroopers
carry on D-Day?

OVERVIEW:

Students will participate in hands-on activities in order to learn about the average-sized American paratrooper and the things they carried into battle.



SUBJECT(S):
Physical Education



WWII VETERAN(S):
Charles Henry



DURATION:
55 min.

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“I learned a lot while assigned to that position as a MP because the Germans spoke English and knew more black history than I did.”

WWII Veteran Charles Henry

OVERVIEW:

Students will participate in hands-on activities in order to learn about the average-sized American paratrooper and the things that they carried into battle.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

In the opening maneuver of the Normandy landings, about 13,000 American paratroopers from the 82nd and the 101st Airborne Divisions were dropped behind enemy lines. The paratroopers, carrying equipment equaling 70 pounds, were dropped anywhere from 300 to 2,000 feet with many pilots accelerating to 150 mph.

OBJECTIVES:

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

- Recognize the hardships American paratroopers endured in battle.

STANDARDS:

AL PE: 6.4.7 Use equipment appropriately and safely, using teacher's guidelines.

AL PE: 6.5-2 Acknowledge individual challenges in order to handle them in a positive way.

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MATERIALS & DOCUMENTS

[Charles Henry Memoirs of WWII Video](#)

Doc A- Backpack Graphic Organizer and List of Things They Carried

Doc B-Calculating and Response Handout

Backpacks (at least four)

Weights (variety)

PROCEDURES

ACTIVITY 01

- Show students the [Charles Henry Memoirs of WWII Video](#).
- After the video, ask students if they know the role paratroopers played in D-Day and other battles of the war. NOTE: Refer to historical context for information.
- Distribute Doc A Backpack Graphic Organizer and List of Things They Carried. Instruct students to fill in the backpack with items from the provided list that they believe paratroopers carried while on mission.
- After 10 minutes, ask students to share out some of the items they wrote on their backpack. Then inform students that everything on the list was carried by paratroopers during World War II.

ACTIVITY 02

- Inform students that WWII paratroopers carried 70 pounds of equipment in their backpacks. Add the parachute and men weighed in at 90-120 pounds over their body weight.
- Instruct students to take out Doc

B-Calculating and Response Handout. Tell them to complete the G.I. portion with the following information: The average American G.I. was 5'8, weighed 144 pounds.

- Tell students that the average person can carry 20-25% of their body weight on their backs. Explain the formula used to calculate the amount one can carry ($\text{percent} \times \text{body weight} = \text{amount body can carry}$). Walk students through the calculation for the average WWII paratrooper: $20/144=28.8$ pounds
- Instruct students to do their personal calculations.

ACTIVITY 03

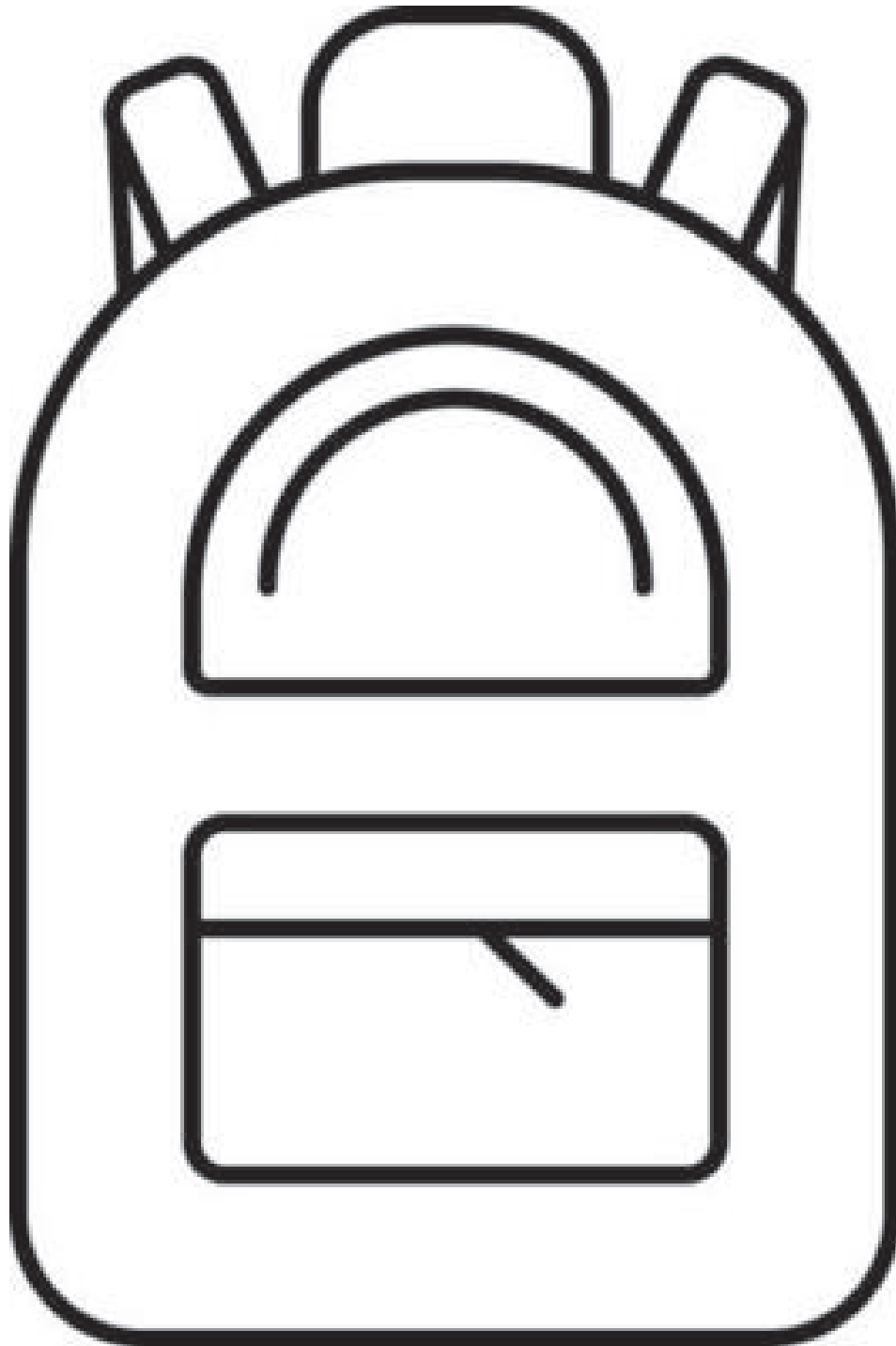
- **NOTE:** The teacher should have at least 4 backpacks for students to use as well as weights that can total at least 70 pounds for each backpack.
- Divide students into 4 lines (per backpack). Have each student start with their calculated "carrying weight" in the backpack. Then add as much weight as they can hold. NOTE: Be sure to have a spotter for the weights and do not let students take on more than they can handle.
- After every student has a chance to fill the backpack, instruct them to return to their seats and complete the bottom portion of Doc B.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

WHAT THEY CARRIED
GRAPHIC ORGANIZER

DOC A



WHAT THEY CARRIED

EQUIPMENT/NEEDS LIST

DOC A



M-1 Garand Rifle with 8-round clip
cartridge belt with canteen
hand grenades
parachute and pack
anti-flash headgear and gloves
pocket compass
machete
.45 caliber Colt automatic pistol
flares
message book

Spread throughout pockets
loaded .45 automatic pistol
medical kit
2 additional lb. ammunition
knife
escape/survival kit
toggle rope
additional personal items

*PBS Learning: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/dday-paratroopers/>

WHAT THEY CARRIED

CALCULATING AND PERSONAL RESPONSE

DOC B



PART ONE: The American Paratrooper

Average Height:_____

Average Weight:_____

Calculated Weight to Carry:_____

PART TWO: My Personal Calculations

Height:_____

Weight:_____

Calculated Weight to Carry:_____

PART THREE: Personal Reflection Questions

1. How much weight did you put in the backpack?
2. Describe how difficult you think it would be for you to jump out of an airplane with this amount of weight on your back.
3. What did you learn about toughness and dedication of American paratroopers during this activity?