

The Most Important Forecast in History!

Planning an invasion like D-Day is extremely complex and circumstances surrounding the invasion can be problematical; however, the architects of the D-Day invasion created a plan for thousands of men to invade France by air, land, and sea. These military planners relied on information from weather forecasters and other scientists to determine the best time to invade. Shortly after the invasion Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Great Britain, stated that D-Day was "...the most complicated and most difficult [operation] that has ever taken place. It involved tides, winds, waves, visibility, both from the air and sea standpoint, and the combined employment of land, air, and sea forces in the highest degree of intimacy and in contact with conditions which could not and cannot be fully foreseen."

OBJECTIVE: By examining primary source documents, students will understand the environmental conditions surrounding D-Day and will learn why General Eisenhower decided to allow D-Day to commence June 6, 1944. In addition, students will be able to evaluate the conditions on D-Day for themselves and either support or refute Eisenhower's decision in a written memo.

BENCHMARKS: USII.1a, e; CE.1a, e-g; VUS.1a, c-e; VUS.10b; GOVT.1 a, e-g

DIRECTIONS:

1. Considering the questions on the following page, have students brainstorm the ideal conditions for a large air, land, and sea invasion. After brainstorming, have the students individually or in small groups, rank these conditions from most important to least important. Are there any conditions that can be compromised?
2. After students compile a list of ideal invasion conditions, compare it with General Eisenhower's stipulations for D-Day. Do you think Eisenhower would have agreed or disagreed with your plan?
3. Read what the weather conditions were really like on D-Day. How were they similar to Eisenhower's original plans? How did they differ? Did Eisenhower compromise on any of his stipulations? Why did Eisenhower decide to proceed with the D-Day invasion?
4. Read Eisenhower's [D-Day memo](#) located at the National Archives website. Ask students whether they agree with Eisenhower's decision. Students should justify their decisions in a short memorandum addressed to President Franklin Roosevelt.

ASSESSMENT: Students should be assessed on their written memorandum.

Some things to keep in mind:

Since the Germans had thousands of beach obstacles to hamper an invasion by sea, when would be the best time to invade according to the movement of the tide? Why?

What are ideal weather conditions for an invasion? Most infantry soldiers must arrive by sea, but many are not good sailors.

What time of day is best for paratroopers to invade? Remember, paratroopers do not want to be spotted, but they still need to see where they are going.

Why might the architects of D-Day have to study the phases of the moon while planning the invasions? Who might benefit from a full moon? Who might suffer?