

NATIONAL MUSEUM **OF THE PACIFIC WAR**

FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS

Activity Title: What Makes One Battle More Famous Than Another?

Areas of the museum to visit for this lesson plan: The George H.W. Bush Gallery

Teacher Note: If you are bringing a large group you will want to split them up into groups of 10- 25 and have them start at different locations. These smaller sizes allow all to access the various areas at one time.

Activity Objectives: The student will understand some of the criteria which make battles famous and apply them to battles fought in the Pacific during World War II.

TEKS:

5th Grade:

113.16(b)(5)(C)

6th Grade:

113.18(b)(3)(A)

U.S. History Since 1877:

113.41(c)(2)(D), 113.41(c)(4)(A),(B), 113.41(c)(7)(A),(B)(E),(F)

World History Studies:

113.42(c)(1)(F), 113.42(c)(12)(A),(B),(C)

World Geography Studies:

113.42(c)(4)(A),(B),(C), 113.43(c)(8)(B)

113.43(c)(14)(C), 113.43(c)(19)(A),(B)

Activity Description:

1. Prior to the museum visit (Time Frame: 30 min.): Complete the exercise below to determine which battle (Tarawa or Kwajalein) was more famous.

What makes one battle more famous than another?

There were hundreds of battles in the Pacific during World War II, many of them are unknown by most Americans. Even though the battle may be little known you must remember that it was extremely important to the men who fought in it. The outcome of the battle might affect them for the rest of their lives and therefore affect in some small or large way all who come into contact with that veteran. Battles become famous for a reason, it may be that someone famous took part, it may be that there is a famous photograph from that battle that is seen many places or it may be the numbers of dead that make it famous.

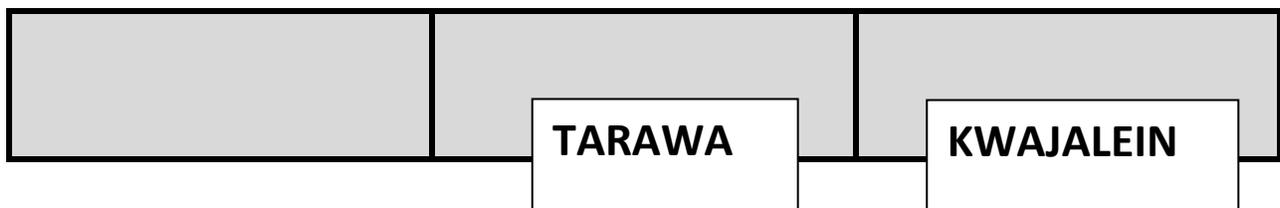
1. Which of the following World War II battles have you heard of?
 - Tarawa
 - Bataan
 - Iwo Jima
 - Kwajalein
 - Guadalcanal
 - Manila
 - Okinawa
 - Peleliu
 - Angaur
 - Biak
 - Saipan
 - Attu
2. Pick one battle you have heard of from the list above and explain why have you heard of it?
3. What are some of the reasons some battles are more famous than others?
 - The number of participants: Okinawa was a big operation, but the liberation of the Philippines had more troops involved but is less well known.

- The number of casualties or percentage of casualties: Tarawa is famous because of the over 3000 US casualties on a small island in three days. This is not a sole indicator though because a very famous battle in American history, The Little Bighorn or Custer's Last Stand, resulted in only about 125 American soldiers killed.
- The location: Okinawa is famous because it is on the doorstep of Japan. The many battles along the north coast of New Guinea are not nearly as famous.
- Timing: Saipan, although a very important battle, is not so well known since it occurred immediately after the Normandy invasion in Europe which attracted all the press.
- The long term political, cultural and social impact: Okinawa was famous for the kamikaze attacks and because it formed the basis for the decision to drop the atomic bomb.
- Was the battle written about or later made into a movie?(film, books, news reports): "With the Marines at Tarawa" won the Oscar for the best documentary in 1944.
- Famous people involved, this includes people who later became famous: The flag raisers on Iwo Jima, MacArthur in the Philippines, Ernie Pyle being killed on Ie Shima all contribute to the fame of those actions.

4. We are going to compare two of the battles on two islands in the Pacific invaded and captured by an American division (a division is a military organization of approximately 20,000 troops):
- Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, 2nd Marine Division vs. 4836 Japanese, November 1943
 - Kwajalein Island, Kwajalein Atoll, 7th Infantry Division vs. 4824 Japanese, January 1944

The chart below compares the battles of Tarawa and Kwajalein using the criteria of what makes a battle famous. These criteria are from the book *Ripples of Battle* by Victor Davis Hanson. In the Epilogue of the book he asked the question, "...what determines which engagements deserve more official recognition both formally and in the popular imagination?"

We will try to determine why Tarawa is so famous and Kwajalein is not.



Number of Participants	<u>US</u> 20,000+	<u>JAPAN</u> 4836	<u>US</u> 20,000+	<u>JAPAN</u> 4824
Number of Casualties	US Killed: 1008 Total: 3352	JAPAN Killed: 4690	US Killed: 174 Total: 1177	JAPAN Killed: 4650
Location	Central Pacific Gilbert Islands		Central Pacific Marshall Islands	
Timing	November 1943		January 1944	
Political, Social or Cultural Impact	Heavy casualties First assault against fortified atoll		None	
Books, Articles and film	Lots of press coverage and photos, 35+ books Documentary film which showed American dead		Minimal press coverage No major film, less than 10 books	
Famous people involved	None		None	

Looking at each of the criteria, let's determine which ones are different and why they influence the fame or significance of the battle.

Number of Participants: There are no major differences.

Number of Casualties: No major difference in Japanese casualties. Almost six times as many Americans were killed on Tarawa than on Kwajalein along with over twice as many wounded. This is a large difference and definitely plays a part in why Tarawa is more well known. It also demonstrates that the lessons learned at Tarawa were absorbed and implemented quickly enough to be useful at Kwajalein.

Location: There are no major differences.

Timing: Two months apart would initially indicate no major difference in timing however, you must look at what else was going on in the war that might attract more attention from the American public. Look at a timeline of WWII and you will find that nothing really exciting was happening elsewhere in November 1943, but on the 22nd of January the Allies launched a major amphibious landing at Anzio in Italy which quickly bogged down. By the time of the Kwajalein landings the Americans and British forces at Anzio were fighting for their lives and captured the attention of the world.

Political, Cultural or Social Impact: The American public was shocked by the tremendous casualties at Tarawa. Admiral Nimitz received hate mail from families and many wanted him relieved of command. This outpouring of grief and anger made Tarawa well known to the American public. The fact that this was the first assault against a fortified atoll and we had no established tactics or doctrine did not matter to the public, all they saw were the large number of dead Marines. With the new tactics and doctrine in place by Kwajalein, this was not an issue.

Books, Articles and film: A Marine photographer, Sergeant Norm Hatch, took both still and motion picture footage (in color). The motion picture footage was used to create a documentary film "*With the Marines at Tarawa*" which won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short Subject. The film was uncensored and showed in brutal detail, never seen before by the American public, what the fighting was like. No such film was made about Kwajalein.

Famous people involved: No famous personalities were involved, although Eddie Albert received a medal for rescuing Marines offshore with his landing craft at Tarawa. Eddie Albert later became a famous actor in Hollywood.

In looking at the criteria above you should be able to realize why Tarawa was more famous than Kwajalein.

2. During the museum visit (Time Frame: 60 min.):

Go to exhibit area **270 (Tarawa)** and area **320 (Marshall Islands)** and review the previous assignment. These areas tell the stories of these two battles.

In Tarawa, read the panels, watch the film, and on the touch screen interactive, go through the Battle Timeline. At the end of the Battle Timeline read the Lessons Learned.

In Marshall Islands, read the panel about Kwajalein and go through the Battle Timeline on the touch screen interactive. Compare the numbers of participants and number of casualties on the chart. Did we learn our lessons from Tarawa? _____

You will now look at two more Pacific island battles and fill out the chart to determine which is the more famous and why.

The battles were for the islands of Iwo Jima and Guam.

Guam is a U.S. possession taken by the Japanese in 1941. It was recaptured in the summer of 1944.

Iwo Jima was invaded by the Marine Corps in February 1945 and declared secure the following month.

The ratio of U.S. to Japanese forces is roughly the same: 3.2 to 1 on Iwo Jima and 3 to 1 on Guam. In terms of infantry strength in battalions (a battalion of infantry normally has about 800 men) it was 24 to 13 on Iwo Jima and 24 to 11 on Guam.

In geographical terms, Guam is much larger than Iwo Jima. This meant more room for U.S. forces to maneuver. This may account for some of the difference in casualty figures on the U.S. side.

Information on the liberation of Guam is found in area **330 (Marianas)** of the gallery and on the touch screen interactive in section **320 (Marshall Islands)**.

Information on the capture of Iwo Jima is found in area **420 (Iwo Jima)** and on the touch screen interactive in area **430 (Okinawa)**. Select Iwo Jima on the initial screen of that interactive. Additional information on the flag raising on Mount Suribachi is located in area **470 (The Price of Freedom)**.

Not all information necessary to complete this project is available in the exhibits and you will need to do some of the research on your own. We do not have information on Books, articles and films or famous people involved in the battles in the gallery. A look through the museum store may give you some ideas on the amount of books and/or films based on these battles.

Student Objectives:

- 1. Determine which battle is more famous.**

2. List the seven criteria below in order of their importance or influence in making that battle more famous. Explain your reasoning as is done above for Tarawa and Kwajalein.

	IWO JIMA	GUAM
Number of Participants	US: 70,000 JAPAN: 22,000	US: 55,000 JAPAN: 18,500
Number of Casualties	US: JAPAN:	US: JAPAN:
Location		
Timing		
Political, Social or Cultural Impact		
Books, Articles and film		
Famous people involved		

3. After the museum visit (Time Frame: 60 min):

Compile the data you found at the museum and that from your own research, fill in the chart and evaluate your findings to determine which battle was more famous and why. Use Dr. Hanson's criteria to justify your answer.

Vocabulary:

Atoll	Engagement
Casualties	Epilogue
Compile	Implemented
Criteria	Maneuver
Doctrine	Ratio
Documentary	Recognition

Resources: To locate the areas in the museum relevant to this lesson plan you will need to download the two maps from the TEKS Based Lesson Plans page of this website.

Materials: pencil, paper

Technology Utilization: Touchscreen interactive in exhibit area.

Accommodations: Students may require a printed copy of this lesson plan during the museum visit.