



MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

World War II Primary Resources



Flag Raising on Iwo Jima, February 23, 1945

Background

President Woodrow Wilson described World War I as the “war to end all wars.” In reality, World War I caused more problems than it solved because the Treaty of Versailles failed to satisfy both the victors and the defeated nations. As General Douglas MacArthur prophetically wrote at the time, the Treaty of Versailles was a “treaty of perpetual war, not a treaty of perpetual peace.”

By the late 1930’s Europe was once again at war, and Japan was invading its neighbors. Faced with the Great Depression and committed to isolationism, many Americans hoped to avoid involvement in another war. On December 7, 1941 however, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. This attack drew the United States into the war against Japan and then into the war in Europe against Japan’s ally Nazi Germany.

Fighting a war in the Pacific and in Europe required a massive effort from both the military and citizens on the Homefront. As American troops fought around the world, Americans on the Homefront altered their daily lives to contribute to the war effort and American industry was completely mobilized to produce the materials needed to win the war. Eventually, American manpower and production on the Homefront turned the conflict decisively in favor of the Allied powers. On May 8, 1945 Nazi Germany capitulated, and on September 2, 1945 the Japanese surrendered. Speaking via radio to a world wide audience at the Japanese surrender ceremony, General MacArthur said: “Today the guns are silent. The entire world is quietly at peace.” Today, many historians consider World War II a war that won the peace.

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Additional resources available at <http://www.macarthurmemorial.org/>

Background Information: Primary Document #1

Relations between Japan and the United States began to break down in the years after the end of World War I. Japan had been one of the Allied nations during World War I, but felt slighted by the terms of the Versailles Treaty. In the years that followed, Japan grew increasingly frustrated as its imperial ambitions were blocked or countered by Western nations. Japanese leaders began to see war as the only way to break out of this isolation and acquire territory and resources for their nation.

By 1940-1941 tensions were escalating between the United States and Japan and military action seemed a possibility. As a result, steps were taken to raise the alert levels of American forces in the Pacific. This message – received about two weeks before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor – warned General Douglas MacArthur that the Japanese might be planning an attack against the Philippines or Guam.

Warning telegrams like this were sent to U.S. forces throughout the Pacific. The telegrams primarily focused on the Philippines and Guam because no one thought it was possible for the Japanese to attack Pearl Harbor. As a major military base, Pearl Harbor was thought to have adequate defenses and general consensus among military leaders was that the Japanese could not reach Pearl Harbor without being detected.

Unfortunately, despite all of the intelligence indicating a possible Japanese attack, the United States was indeed surprised on the morning of Dec. 7, 1941. Defying all odds, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, demonstrating that intelligence without a “*who, what, when, where, why, and how,*” can often be difficult to act on.

Primary Source Analysis:

1. How did post World War I Europe set the stage for World War II? How did Japan become involved in World War II?
2. From the message, what can you infer about the relationship between Japan and the United States?
3. How did the United States become involved in World War II? What evidence does the memo provide that suggests Japan is planning an aggressive move?
4. Why do you think the memo lists the Philippines and Guam as potential targets? Do you think the United States was worried about an attack at Pearl Harbor?
5. Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, prompting the United States to declare war on Japan. How did the United States become involved in the war in Europe? What conclusions can you draw about the relationship between Germany and Japan during World War II?
6. 9/11 is frequently compared to Pearl Harbor. Given what you know about both events, explain this comparison.

Primary Document #2

Arthur MacArthur, Jr. on Corregidor, 1942



Background Information: Primary Document #2

In hindsight, the eventual victory of the Allies in World War II can seem like a foregone conclusion. In reality, victory was hardly certain. From the opening hours of the war against Japan, the United States was fighting an uphill battle.

Nine hours after Pearl Harbor was attacked, American and Filipino forces in the Philippines under the command of General Douglas MacArthur were also attacked. The Japanese invaded Philippines weeks after this first attack and soon MacArthur and his forces were forced to retreat to the Bataan Peninsula and the island fortress of Corregidor. Trapped and surrounded by the Japanese invaders, MacArthur's forces continued their resistance.

As the Japanese invaded, many civilians in the Philippines became refugees. Thousands of men, women, and children flocked to Bataan and Corregidor in the hopes of escaping the Japanese and finding refuge with MacArthur's forces. With food supplies dwindling daily, the situation on Bataan and Corregidor grew more and more dire.

General MacArthur lived on Corregidor with his wife and young son Arthur. Like many people on Corregidor, the General and his family spent a great deal of their time in tunnels that had been dug into the rock on Corregidor. This photograph shows General MacArthur's young son Arthur outside of one of the tunnels on the fortress of Corregidor.

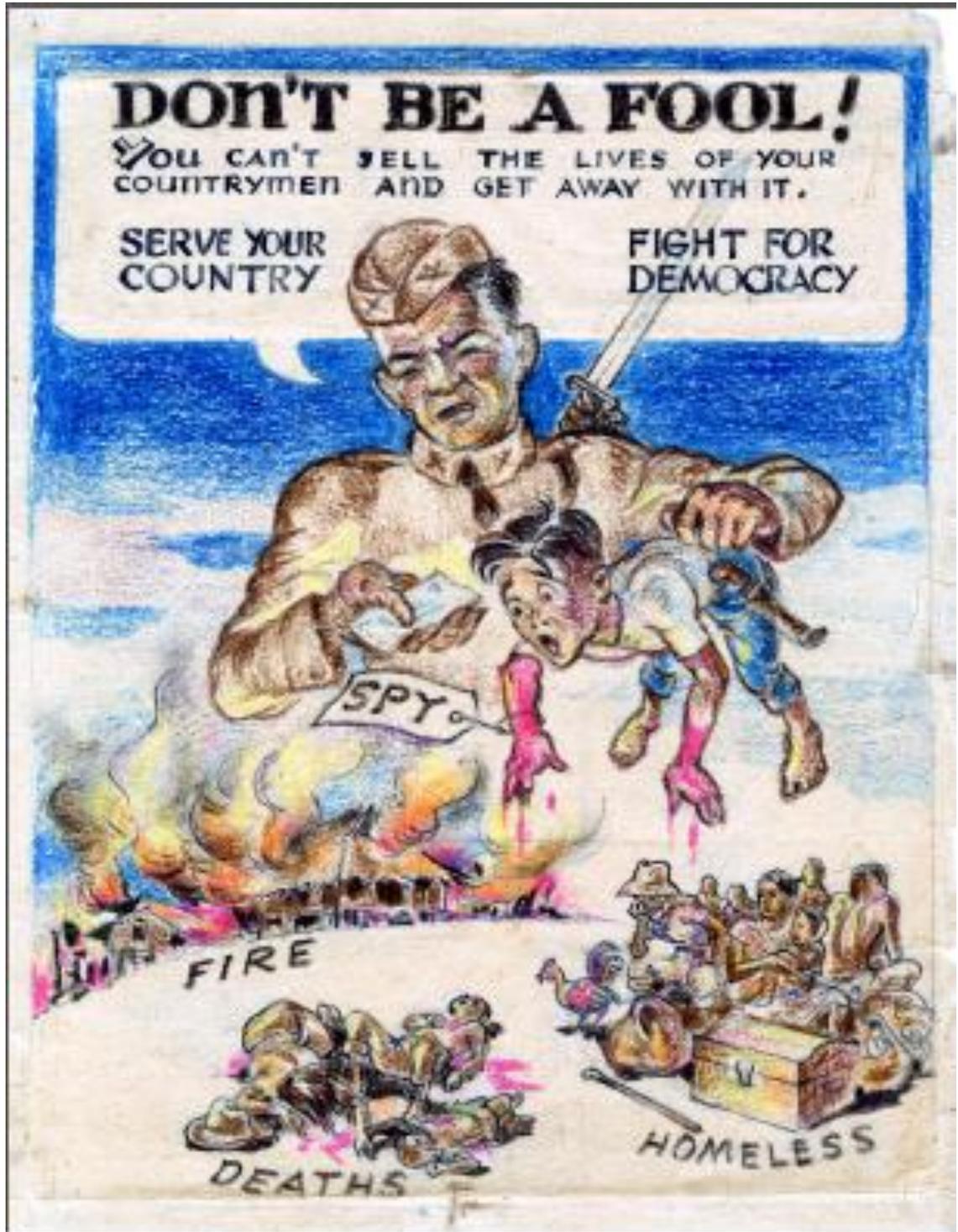
When it became clear that Bataan and Corregidor would eventually fall to the Japanese, President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to escape from Corregidor. After much hesitation, MacArthur escaped with his family to Australia. In Australia, MacArthur uttered the famous promise: "I Shall Return."

Primary Source Analysis:

1. What was the situation like in the Pacific in 1942. When did the situation in the Pacific change in favor of the Allies?
2. In this photograph, Arthur MacArthur, Jr. is standing in front of a tunnel on the Island of Corregidor in the Philippines. What inferences can you draw about the situation on Corregidor, given that many people were living in tunnels on the island?
3. The three men in the photograph are Filipino. What role did the Filipino people play in World War II?
4. Eventually the situation on Corregidor became so hopeless that President Franklin Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to escape the island and go to Australia. Why do you think the President made this decision? Do you think it was a wise decision? Why or why not?
5. How do you think General MacArthur felt about leaving the Philippines? What famous promise did he make when he got to Australia?

Primary Document #3

“Don't Be a Fool” Propaganda Leaflet, 1942-44.



Background Information: Primary Document #3

The Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines propaganda as "*ideas, facts, or allegations* spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause." Propaganda leaflets were used extensively during World War II by both the Allied and Axis powers because each side understood that influencing public opinion or demoralizing the enemy was a powerful tool.

The most effective leaflets featured simple, dramatic, universally recognizable images. This particular leaflet targeted Filipinos in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1944). The leaflet is meant to discourage the Filipino people from collaborating with the Japanese. The image implies that helping the Japanese will result in death and destruction. It also makes it clear that resisting the Japanese is the only way to achieve independence and democracy in the Philippines.

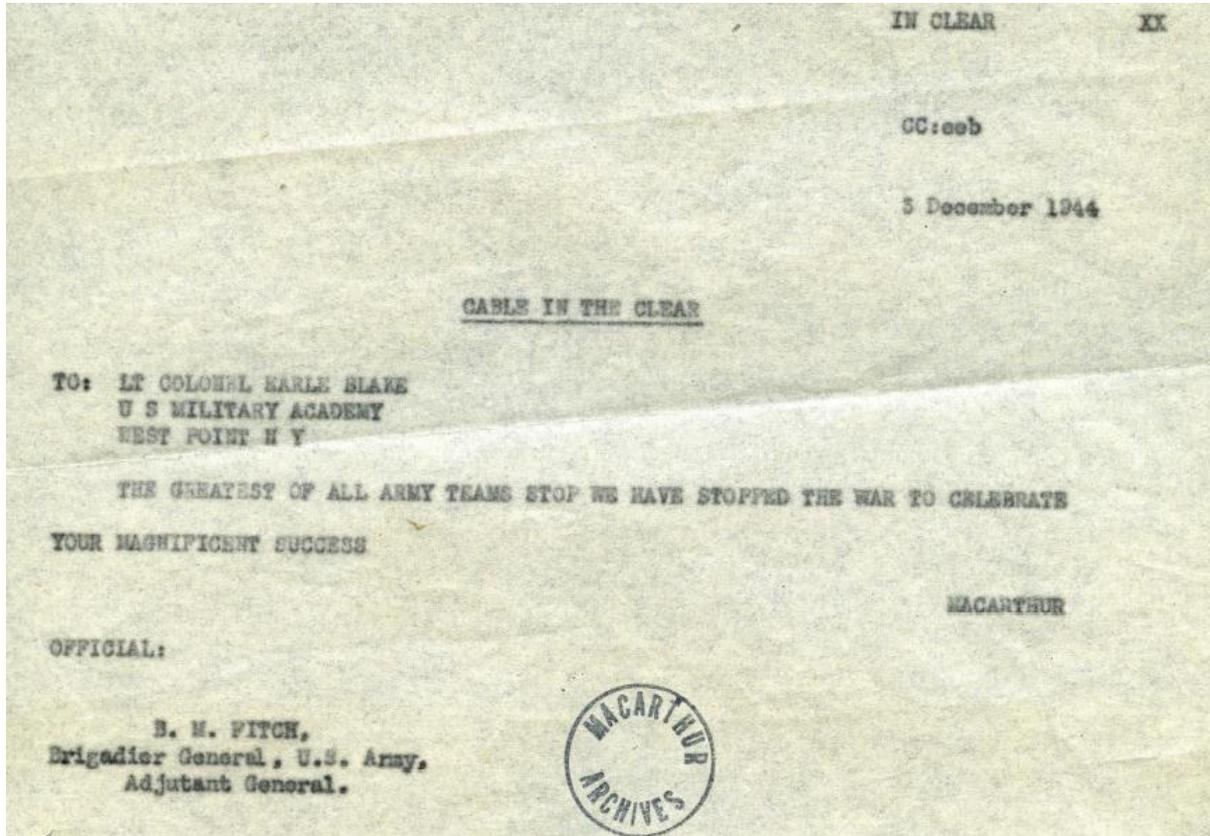
In 1944 General MacArthur kept his "I Shall Return" promise when he waded ashore at Leyte in the Philippines. As MacArthur's forces worked to push the Japanese out of the Philippines, they were assisted by Filipino guerilla fighters who had been operating in the Philippines during the Japanese Occupation. Many of these guerilla fighters had assisted the Allies in distributing "I Shall Return" propaganda throughout the Philippines to remind the Filipino people to be ready for MacArthur's return. This "I Shall Return" propaganda encouraged many to resist the Japanese and helped pave the way for MacArthur's triumphant return.

Primary Source Analysis:

1. What is propaganda? What is the purpose of using propaganda?
2. Who is the intended audience for the leaflet? Why do you think leaflets like this were distributed?
3. What is the message of the leaflet? What does the United States hope to accomplish?
4. What is guerilla warfare? Why would guerilla tactics have proved useful in the Philippines?
5. Did the Axis Powers also use propaganda? What messages do you think they were trying to spread?

Primary Document #4

General MacArthur to the West Point Football Team, December 5, 1944



Background Information Primary Document #4

World War II drastically altered the lives of millions of men, women, and children. From the battlefield to the Homefront, people's daily lives changed – from what they ate, to how they shopped, to how they saw their world.

One thing that didn't change however, was the fact that even during wartime, Americans were still interested in things like music, movies, comic books, and sports. For many – especially those on the battlefield- these types of entertainment provided a welcome relief from the war.

General MacArthur was no different. A lifelong lover of football, even during World War II, he did his best to keep up with the West Point Army football team. One of his favorite football games each year was the Army vs. Navy game. In 1944, shortly after MacArthur's return to the Philippines, the Army team beat the Navy team for the first time in a long time. Ecstatic, MacArthur sent this telegram to the victorious Army team: "The greatest of all Army teams. We have stopped the war to celebrate your magnificent success." The war didn't really stop, but for those serving in the Army, the Army win was something to celebrate.

Primary Source Analysis:

1. Why do you think General MacArthur took the time to send this telegram? What does it say about MacArthur and football?
2. World War II altered the lives of millions of people in the United States. Based on this document, what kinds of things stayed the same?
3. Do you think access to news about things like sports helped to improve the morale of the soldiers fighting in World War II? Why or why not?
4. Due to technological advances, men and women in the military today have almost instant access to news from home. How does this compare or contrast with the experiences of men and women in World War II.

Primary Document #5

Roosevelt Congratulates MacArthur on Leyte, October 20, 1944

FROM: PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

TO: GENERAL MACARTHUR

20
[Oct. '44]

THE WHOLE AMERICAN NATION TODAY EXULTS AT THE NEWS THAT THE GALLANT MEN UNDER YOUR COMMAND HAVE LANDED ON PHILIPPINE SOIL. I KNOW WELL WHAT THIS MEANS TO YOU. I KNOW WHAT IT COST YOU TO OBEY MY ORDER THAT YOU LEAVE CORREGIDOR IN FEBRUARY, 1942, AND PROCEED TO AUSTRALIA. EVER SINCE THEN YOU HAVE PLANNED AND WORKED AND FOUGHT WITH WHOLE-SOULED DEVOTION FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU WOULD RETURN WITH POWERFUL FORCES TO THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. THAT DAY HAS COME. YOU HAVE THE NATION'S GRATITUDE AND THE NATIONS PRAYERS FOR SUCCESS AS YOU AND YOUR MEN FIGHT YOUR WAY BACK TO BATAAN.



~~SECRET~~

ROUTINE

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Background Information Primary Document #5

In February 1942, MacArthur escaped from the Philippines with his family and eventually made it to Australia where he uttered the famous promise: "I Shall Return."

Leaving the Philippines was a very difficult decision for MacArthur because he knew that the troops he left behind would eventually be forced to surrender to the Japanese. He also knew that they would then spend the rest of the war in prisoner of war camps. Of the 90,000 troops he left behind, approximately 25% would die in these camps before the end of the war as a result of harsh treatment and deprivation.

From the moment he left the Philippines, MacArthur was determined to return and liberate those he left behind. Until the Battle of Midway in June 1942 however, he could do little to make this hope a reality. Midway turned the tide of the war and stopped the Japanese advance through the Pacific. With the Japanese halted, MacArthur and the other Allied commanders in the Pacific took the offensive and began "Island-Hopping" to regain territory the Japanese had conquered.

In 1944 MacArthur attended the Pearl Harbor Conference – a conference called by President Roosevelt to help determine the strategy of the war in the Pacific Theatre. Admiral Chester Nimitz, one of the chief naval commanders in the Pacific Theatre was also invited to the meeting. Nimitz and MacArthur had different ideas about the future strategy of the war. Nimitz favored bypassing the Philippines and capturing Formosa (present day Taiwan) which was closer to Japan. He believed that the key to defeating Japan was to get as close as possible and then use air bases and bombers to target the Japanese mainland.

MacArthur had a different idea. He believed the United States had a moral obligation to liberate the Philippines because the United States had been responsible for the security and defense of the Philippines when the war broke out. He also argued that taking Formosa would take months to prepare for, and that the liberation of the Philippines could be accomplished far more quickly – thus keeping the Japanese on the run in the Pacific and moving the Allies ever closer to Japan.

President Roosevelt ultimately agreed with MacArthur, and on October 20, 1944 General MacArthur kept his promise to return to the Philippines when he waded ashore at Leyte.

Primary Source Analysis:

1. When MacArthur was forced to flee the Philippines, the Japanese were in the more advantageous position in the Pacific Theater. When and how did this change in favor of the Allies?
2. Why do you think President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to leave the Philippines in 1942? How do you think this order affected MacArthur? What can you infer about MacArthur based on the statements made by President Roosevelt in the message?
3. Based on the message, what can you infer about the mood of the United States after MacArthur's invasion of Leyte? Cite evidence to support your claim.
4. Why do you think President Roosevelt took the time to congratulate MacArthur on the Leyte landings? What, if anything, does this suggest about the importance of the Leyte landings?

Primary Document #6

Casualty Estimate for Operation Olympic, June 17, 1945

TOP SECRET

PRIORITY

COPY

G-1

17 JUNE 1945

FROM: CINCAFPAC

TO : WARCOS

Estimate of OLYMPIC battle casualties for planning purposes (C-19571)
Reurad W-17477 as follows:

D to D/30:	50,800
D/30 to D/60:	27,150
D/60 to D/90:	27,100

The foregoing are estimated total battle casualties from which estimated return to duty numbers are deducted. Not included in the foregoing are non battle casualties which are estimated at 4200 for each 30 day period.

* Note: D to D-30: 50,800 means that in the first 30 days of Operation Olympic, it is estimated that 50,800 American troops will be killed or wounded.

Background Information Primary Document #6

By 1945, it was clear that the Allies were going to win the war in Europe and the Pacific. In May 1945 Nazi Germany surrendered, and in the Pacific Theatre, military leaders including General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz were planning the invasion of the Japanese mainland. This invasion was code named Operation Downfall and consisted of many different phases. As planning progressed, President Truman received casualty estimates for Operation Downfall and its smaller phases like Operation Olympic.

In the wake of the fierce fighting at Okinawa and Iwo Jima, it was clear that the Japanese would resist surrender – even when faced with no alternative. On Okinawa and Iwo Jima, tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers had chosen to fight to the death or to become suicide bombers rather than surrender. Faced with an enemy that was unlikely to surrender, even in the face of defeat, military planners estimated that ending the war through Operation Olympic would result in millions of casualties. These casualties included American servicemen, Japanese servicemen, and Japanese civilians.

Armed with this information, President Truman would make the most difficult decision of his presidency.

Primary Source Analysis:

1. Can you explain what this memo regarding Operation Olympic details? Why would this information be classified as TOP SECRET?
2. How did the United States think an invasion of Japan would unfold? Approximately how many casualties are estimated for Operation Olympic?
3. Operation Olympic was just **one** phase of the proposed Allied invasion of Japan – named Operation Downfall. Do you think planners expected more or less casualties for Operation Downfall as a whole?
4. The United States did not invade Japan. How did the United States end the War with Japan?
5. Do you think memos such as this one would have influenced President Truman in his decision to drop the atomic bombs? Why?