

0. DIGGING IN; FIGHTING ON - Story Preface

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As Allied troops reached the Normandy shore, their landing efforts were hampered by heavy-surf conditions. The U.S. Army Center for Military History describes this picture: "Three Rhino barges and a petrol barge are being hammered by surf somewhere along the coast of France. Photographer: Bacon. SC 193920." Click on the image for a better view.

With the English Channel behind them, Allied troops stormed the beaches and dug in for the fight. In addition to military photographs (and a movie like Saving Private Ryan), poignant paintings and drawings by on-the-scene artists (like Alexander P. Russo and Mitchell Jamieson) help us to at least superficially contemplate what these soldiers went through.

- Germans shot at invading Allied troops from inside their pillboxes: smaller machine-gun positions protected by steel-reinforced concrete. (Mitchell Jamieson)
- Pillboxes and artillery bunkers were scattered through the hills, facing the beaches and giving the Germans a commanding view with interlocking firing power. They were often protected with obstacles. (Alexander P. Russo)
- Other man-made structures (built of cement, stone and steel) dotted French farm fields. Some were covered with foliage; others were built into the contours of sloping hills. Inside were protected Germans who took aim at advancing Allied troops. (Russo)
- Allied soldiers in beach fox holes tried to get whatever sleep they could. Some died from friendly anti-aircraft fire. (Russo)
- Thousands of men sought protection (drawing by Russo) in the first rise in terrain off Omaha Beach. Some men never made it that far. Exhaustion was a constant companion.
- Some of the men storming the beaches died within the first few minutes of the assault. Others, who were

wounded, were brought to transport ships for treatment.

- The same LSTs which brought the troops to Normandy returned many of the wounded to England. (Mitchell Jamieson. June, 1944.)

Invading forces were not the only ones who suffered casualties during D-Day and its aftermath. Nearby French towns and villages, like Caen and Verville-Sur-Mer, were also damaged.

By June 10th, life in Verville-Sur-Mer (whose road led to Omaha Beach) was getting back on track. Barrage balloons, visible from the village, were intended to prevent low-flying German aircraft from strafing the beaches.

Exhausted Allied troops took brief periods of rest in the quaint, heavily damaged Norman town. They still had a long road ahead of them ... to Paris and a battle to liberate the capital of France.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/DIGGING-IN-FIGHTING-ON-Normandy-Invasion>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/DIGGING-IN-FIGHTING-ON-Normandy-Invasion>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Does Art Influence Our Perception of War?

While some soldiers use their guns, during battle, others use their art supplies to create drawings and paintings of fearsome scenes.

Photographs capture a moment in time, but artistic works can sometimes convey the drawn-out aspects of an event. Take, for example, a work by Alexander P. Russo which is featured in Chapter 8 of the “Normandy Invasion,” entitled “Digging In; Fighting On.”

The drawing, in the media stream of Chapter 8, is entitled “Asleep in Beach Fox Holes.” Describe the work.

What was Russo trying to convey in this drawing?

What aspect of “Asleep in Beach Fox Holes” resonates the most with you? Explain your answer.

Media Stream

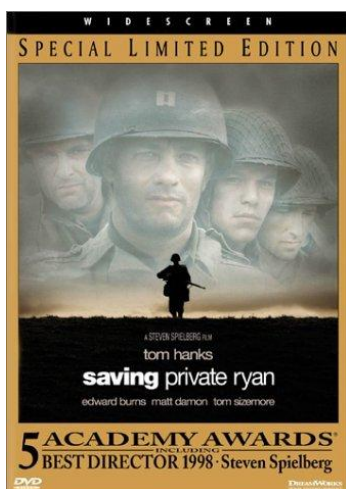


D-Day - Hammered by Surf along the Normandy Shore

U.S. National Archives

View this asset at:

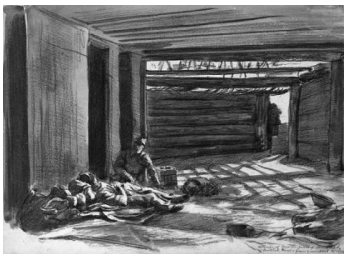
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/D-Day-Hammered-by-Surf-along-the-Normandy-Shore>



Saving Private Ryan - Movie Poster

DVD-cover, online courtesy Amazon.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Saving-Private-Ryan-Movie-Poster>



German Pillbox - Inside

Image 88-193-RS, described above, online courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/German-Pillbox-Inside>



German Reinforced Positions

From the "American Forces in Action Series," OMAHA Beachhead (6 June--13 June 1944) was compiled by the Historical Division of the War Department.

Of this series, General George C. Marshall (then Chief of Staff) said:

AMERICAN FORCES IN ACTION is a series prepared by the War Department especially for the information of wounded men. It will show these soldiers, who have served their country so well, the part they and their comrades played in achievement which do honor to the record of the United States Army.

Image described above, online, courtesy HyperWar Foundation and iBiblio - The Public's Library and Digital Archive at University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/German-Reinforced-Positions>



Concrete Structures - Protected German Soldiers

Painting, Gouache on Board; by Alexander P. Russo; 1945. Online via Naval History and Heritage Command.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Concrete-Structures-Protected-German-Soldiers>



Asleep in Beach Fox Holes

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Asleep-in-Beach-Fox-Holes>



Allied Soldiers - Dig in for Protection

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

PD

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Allied-Soldiers-Dig-in-for-Protection>



Photo # 88-G-421289 USS LCI(L) 3412 lands troops on Omaha Beach, 6 June 1944

Omaha Beach - View of the Terrain

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Omaha-Beach-View-of-the-Terrain>



Dead Soldiers on Omaha Beach

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

PD

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Evacuating Wounded Troops

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Casualties Along Side a Transport Ship

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Casualties-Along-Side-a-Transport-Ship>



Transferring Casualties Onto the Transport Ship

U.S. Military Photo, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

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Evacuating the Wounded

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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Verville-Sur-Mer

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Verville-Sur-Mer>



War Damage in a French Village

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Damage-in-a-French-Village>



View of the Barrage Balloons from the Village

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/View-of-the-Barrage-Balloons-from-the-Village>



Exhausted Allied Troops

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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Rest - Battle Weary Soldier

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rest-Battle-Weary-Soldier>



Village - Heavily Damaged

Image online, courtesy Naval History & Heritage Command.

PD

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Village-Heavily-Damaged>



D-Day - Intense Action at Omaha Beach

U.S. National Archives

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/D-Day-Intense-Action-at-Omaha-Beach>



Normandy Invasion, D-Day - Waffen-SS Counterattack

Video clip online, courtesy WW2GermanNewsreels' Channel at YouTube.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Normandy-Invasion-D-Day-Waffen-SS-Counterattack>



D-Day - The Battle for Caen

Video clip online, courtesy WW2GermanNewsreels' Channel at YouTube.

PD

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