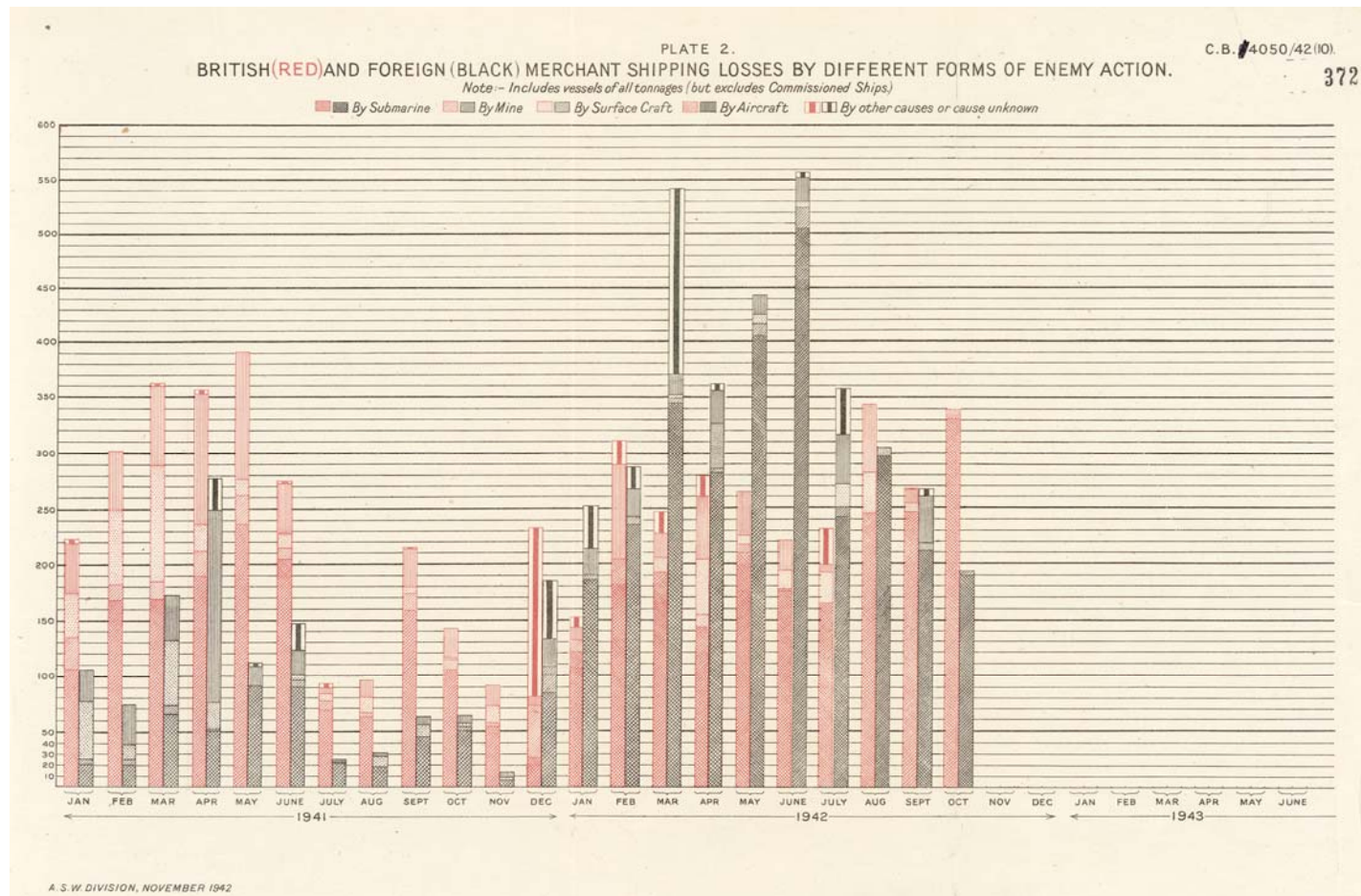


ATLANTIC 1939-1945: THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Source A: Graph to show Allied shipping losses and causes of loss, 1941-42

Catalogue ref: MFQ 586/7/372

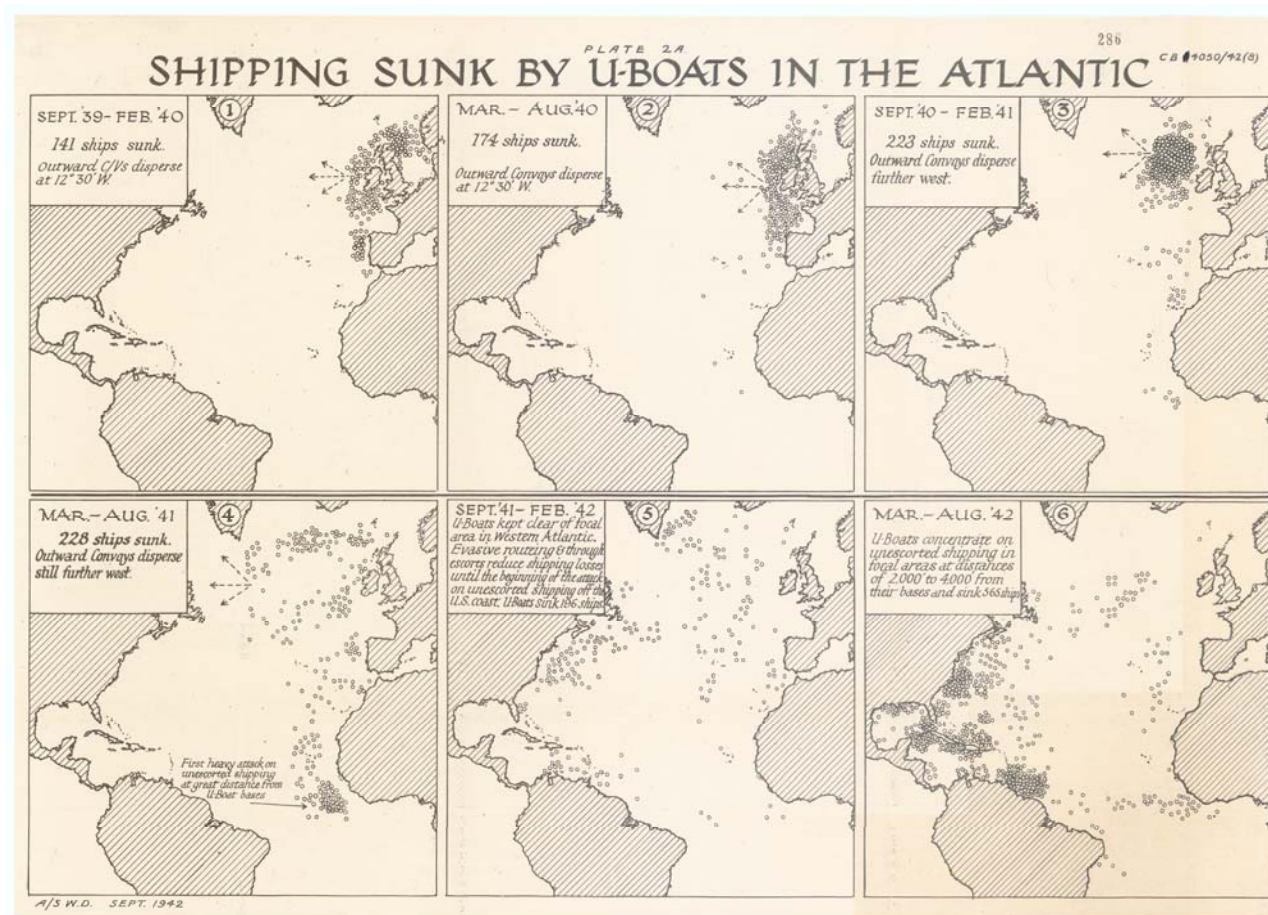


<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

ATLANTIC 1939-1945: THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Source B: Chart to show the location of Allied shipping losses, 1941-42

Catalogue ref: MFQ 586/5/286



ATLANTIC 1939–1945: THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

What is this source?

The Royal Navy produced both sources. They show how serious the situation was in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1941–42.

No details are entered for 1943 because the graph (Source a) was completed in 1942. This does not mean that there were no losses for that year!

What's the background to this source?

From 1940 onwards the greatest danger for Britain in WW2 was that German forces could cut off supplies of troops, food, medicine and equipment from Canada and the USA. This was exactly what the Germans tried to do. This campaign became known as the Battle of the Atlantic. The Germans used submarines (U-boats), aircraft and surface ships to attack shipping bound for Britain.

The years 1941 and 1942 were the worst years in the Battle of the Atlantic. In 1941 they lost 1300 ships and in 1942 they lost 1661 ships.

It's worth knowing that...

By late 1942 Britain was only able to import about one third of the goods it normally imported in peacetime.

In January 1943 the Royal Navy only had two months worth of oil left to supply its ships.

How will you use this source?

1. Study **Source a**. Find the heaviest months for British shipping losses.
2. Which weapons used by the Germans seemed to do most damage?
3. What does **Source b** tell us about German tactics in the Battle of the Atlantic?
4. Is it possible to see links between both sources?
5. Would these sources have been useful to navy commanders?
6. Would it be fair to say these sources show that Britain's situation in 1942 was serious, or do you think desperate is a more accurate word?
7. Does this source help you to explain why the Battle of the Atlantic was so significant?