

ATLANTIC 1939–1945: THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: Can you raise the cash for the Battle of the Atlantic Museum?

Your task

Your task is to write a report about the significance of the Battle of the Atlantic to support the Western Approaches Museum in Liverpool.

Use the report table to help plan your report.

CAN YOU RAISE THE CASH FOR THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC MUSEUM?

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill made these two remarks about the Battle of the Atlantic in WW2:

- *The only thing that ever really frightened me during the war was the U-boat peril.*
- *The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war.*

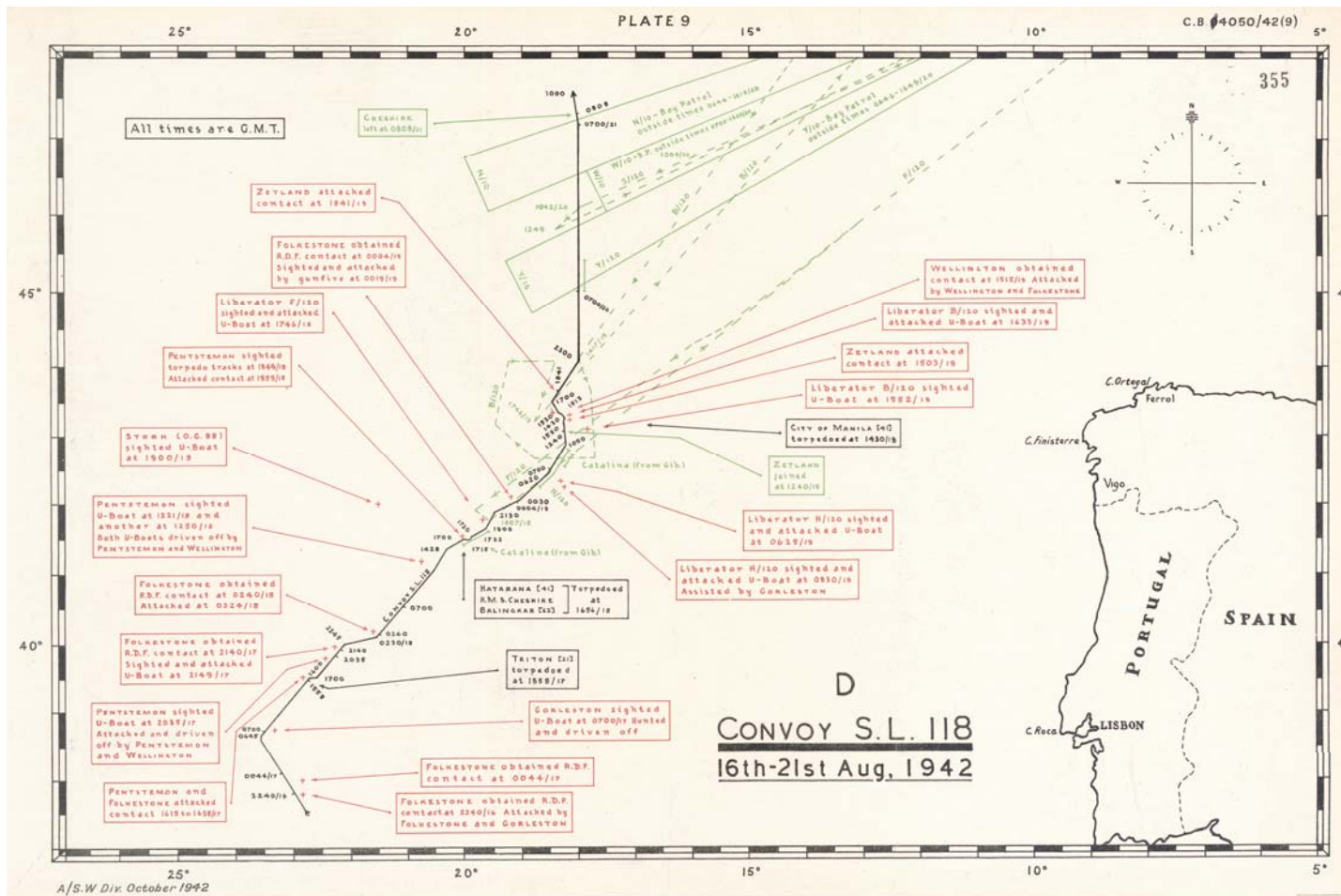
Your task

The Western Approaches Museum in Liverpool needs your help. The museum is based in the actual underground bunker that served as Britain's headquarters during the Battle of the Atlantic. The museum wants to raise money to develop its exhibition. Your task is to write a report about the significance of the Battle of the Atlantic to support the Museum.



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A chart showing the attacks on an Atlantic convoy in August 1942.



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What is this source?

This chart shows what happened to just one convoy of ships, Convoy SL118, as it tried to cross the Atlantic in 1942, at the height of the battle. Commanders of the Royal Navy used this chart to examine how and where German forces had attacked.

Captains of ships kept detailed records (logs) of any actions they took part in. The chart was probably drawn up after the convoy reached Britain, based on these logs.

What's the background to this source?

By 1940 Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was in control of most of Western Europe. Only Britain and its empire opposed him. Although Hitler failed to invade Britain in 1940, his forces still threatened the country. The greatest danger for Britain 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. When the war began Canada also declared war on Germany. The USA was neutral, although it favoured Britain strongly by supplying food and equipment. A good example was the Lend Lease scheme that supplied huge amounts of military equipment to Britain. When the USA joined the war in 1941 the scheme continued, and the US naval forces also took direct action against German forces in the Atlantic.

It's worth knowing that..

It is difficult to get accurate figures, but something like 50 000 merchant seamen were killed during the war. This service suffered the highest losses of any of the services in WW2. The range of attacks listed here gives some indication of the danger of trying to supply Britain during the war.

The names on the document are mostly the names of ships in the convoy. The "Liberator" mentioned a couple of times was a long-range bomber which was used to attack U-boats. RDF stands for Radio Directional Finder. This worked like radar to try and locate U-boats.

How will you use this source?

1. How many attacks did the convoy suffer in total?
2. How many ships were torpedoed or sunk?



Learning Curve

WORLD WAR II

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3. How did the convoy protect itself?
4. Does this source provide evidence to support either or both of these views?
 - o 'Serving on a convoy was tiring and frightening.'
 - o 'The men who served on the convoys were very brave'.
5. Does this source help you to explain why the Battle of the Atlantic was so significant?