IWO JIMA: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: Why was the battle for Iwo Jima so important to America?

Your task: You work as a tour guide in the park where the US Marine Corps Memorial is situated. Decide how you would explain the memorial and its history to visitors.

Click on the **starter source** for more details then open the source box.

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WHY WAS THE BATTLE FOR IWO JIMA SO IMPORTANT TO AMERICA?

For many Americans, Joe Rosenthal's photograph showing the raising of the American flag on the island of Iwo Jima is highly significant. There are several reasons for this:

- It is such a powerful and dramatic image
- It is a statement of loyalty to the US – after such a hard battle US troops still had the strength to raise the flag
- The image, and the men in it, was used in a publicity campaign to get Americans to buy war bonds (funds for the war effort) – this made millions aware of the image and the story behind it
- Each side in this battle fought bravely
- It was the first time Allied forces landed on Japanese home territory (rather than lands Japan had invaded)

Casualties in the battle were enormous, which may have contributed to the decision to use the Atom Bomb.

Your task

You work as a tour guide in the park where the US Marine Corps Memorial is situated. Decide how you would explain the memorial and its history to visitors. This could be in the form of:

- A talk
- A presentation
- A written text or pamphlet
- A video
- Your own ideas

PHOTOGRAPH OF US MARINES RAISING THE AMERICAN FLAG ON THE ISLAND OF IWO JIMA IN 1945

Catalogue ref: EMP.2372506

What is this source?

This source is a photograph taken by American press photographer Joe Rosenthal on 23rd February 1945, on the fourth day of battle. The US Marines were planting the American flag on Mount Suribachi, the highest point on the island of Iwo Jima.

The photograph is the model for the US Marines memorial statue at Arlington, Virginia and is said to be one of the most reproduced images of all time.

What's the background to this source?

During the 1930s Japan emerged as a major world power. It had ambitions to build a great empire in Asia and the Pacific. To do this Japan would have to defeat the USA, and in December 1941 Japanese forces attacked and sank the US Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Japanese successes continued into 1942 until May of that year when US forces destroyed Japan's aircraft carriers at the Battle of Midway. From this point the USA gradually drove Japanese forces back. By 1945 US forces reached the first of the islands that made up Japan's homeland, Iwo Jima.

The attack began on February 19th 1945. The Japanese plan was to cause as many casualties as possible to the invading Americans. The troops and their commander knew their role was to delay the Americans while their comrades prepared to defend the rest of Japan. It was effectively a suicide mission. Iwo Jima was heavily defended by over 20 000 troops with plenty of artillery and other equipment. They were dug into a system of caves and bunkers. They fought ferociously. When the battle ended on March 16th 1945 US casualties totalled almost 28 000 (with over 8000 dead). Japanese casualties were almost 21 000 dead out of a force of 22 000. Those not killed in fighting committed suicide.

It's worth knowing that...

This photograph made the men in it into household names. The U.S. Postal Service even put the photo on a US postage stamp. The men were brought home and toured the USA to raise money for the war effort by urging Americans to buy war bonds. In 2006 the famous Hollywood director Clint Eastwood made a film called Flags of Our Fathers that told their story.

Most people know that the photograph was actually the second raising of the flag. A smaller flag had been put up a few hours earlier. When Rosenthal reached the summit of the mountain he found a group of men raising a second larger flag. It was the raising of this flag that Rosenthal photographed. He won a Pulitzer Prize for the photo. Some people have suggested that the composition of the photo is so dramatic that Rosenthal must have posed the marines. Rosenthal has always denied this to be the case.

How will you use this source?

1. Describe this image as though you were a radio broadcaster. What details would you describe to your listeners?
2. The Pulitzer Committee awarding Rosenthal's prize described the photo as showing a "frozen flash of history." What do you think they meant?
3. Why do you think the US government used this image to convince Americans to buy war bonds?
4. This photograph was not the first raising of the flag. Does that matter?
5. Is there any information from these notes that you could use in your presentation?