

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: D-DAY**The importance of air power on D-Day**

Film clip from "Special Invasion", a film produced by War Pictorial News showing actual footage of aerial attacks on Hitler's West Wall coastal defences before and after D-Day

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Transcript

1944 Tuesday June 6th, the invasion of Western Europe, a date with history! From hundreds of airfields on Britain, thousands of aircraft roared out across the Channel in a shuttle service of destruction. Theirs, a vital task: the softening up of the German coastal defences, Hitler's formidable West Wall. The bombing and strafing [attacking using low-flying airplanes with machine-gun fire] of communication channels carrying ammunition and weapons from inside Germany to still further strengthen those same coastal defences. Theirs too, the job of keeping the Luftwaffe out of the air

What is this source?

This is an extract from a film produced by War Pictorial News shown to British and overseas audiences in 1944.

By late 1943 and early 1944 the Allies had built up a commanding position in terms of air power. It was to prove a key element in the success of the D-Day campaign.

What's the background to this source?

By late 1942 the tide began to turn against Germany. From 1943 to 1944, British Empire and US forces began a build up of troops and equipment to drive the Germans out of the lands they had invaded in 1940. The landings took place in June 1944.

One key area in which the Allies were stronger than the Germans was in air power. They had more aircraft, more different types of aircraft suitable for different jobs and also well trained pilots. The film gives a sense of the hugely destructive power of aerial bombardment.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: D-DAY**It's worth knowing that...**

The Allies enjoyed almost complete air superiority on D-Day. This was a huge advantage as it meant Allied aircraft could focus on attacking German forces and not have to worry about enemy aircraft.

Another key role of the air forces was reconnaissance. Aircraft could spot enemy defences and troop movements and alert troops on the ground.

How does this source help us to understand why D-Day was successful?

1. What activities do the aircraft in the film carry out?
 2. How do you think the actions of the pilots helped the troops on the ground?
 3. This is a propaganda film. What do you think is the aim of the film?
 4. Does the film clip support the story told in the log of an RAF squadron involved in the D-Day campaign that you can find in the source box?
 5. Is it possible to say whether the role of the air forces was more or less important than the role of the naval forces on D-Day?
 6. How would you sum up the main value of this source to the historian?
- Will you include this source (or part of it) in your storyboard?
 - If you do use it, what are the main points you will make in your caption?

Use this framework to plan your storyboard.