

Stalingrad and D-Day

Enquiry: When was the turning point of the Second World War?

Ms Dawson



The German army experienced early success during their invasion of Russia. But by November 1941, the German army were halted due to the extreme Russian winter. Stalin, meanwhile, was drawing up secret plans to defeat them. In 1942, Germany were experiencing a shortage of oil. Therefore, Hitler decided to send his army south in order to try and break the stalemate on the **Eastern front**. The army was split into two groups: one of them would go around the Russian city of Stalingrad and take the city of Baku, which was rich in oil. The other was to march directly into the city of Stalingrad and fight. More German **reinforcements** would join the attack on Stalingrad later. The city of Stalingrad was of huge importance to the USSR – it was named after their leader. The Russians would resist any attack fiercely. In advance of the German invasion, the Russians transported supplies of grain and cattle out of the city so that the Germans wouldn't be able to take them. The Soviet government chose not to **evacuate civilians**, even children. It was thought that their presence would inspire the **Red Army**. In addition, the Russians needed all the help that they could get. Anyone who wasn't already in the Red Army was organised into a **militia** group ready to fight. Women and children were sent to dig trenches. Anyone who was able to hold a weapon was expected to fight, sometimes with very little training.



The attack on Stalingrad began in August of 1942 and lasted for almost half a year, it was one of the most brutal battles in history. The average life-expectancy of a Soviet soldier during the Battle of Stalingrad was just 24 hours. The Germans, who were used to success with their **blitzkrieg** tactics, were shocked by the resistance of the Russians. They fought in close combat in the streets, and the Russians deliberately stayed close to the German army – this made it difficult for the Luftwaffe to attack Russians from the air. The Russians also didn't consider surrender an option. Stalin famously issued his Order 227: 'not a step back!' – this meant that those who surrendered or retreated could be executed. A final factor that made the attack difficult for the German army was the harshness of the Russian winter: The Red Army were better prepared to fight in the sub-zero temperatures. Despite suffering heavy losses, the Russians practiced a tactic of **fighting retreat**, which exhausted the German army. Eventually the Red Army were able to form a ring about the city surrounding the 300,000 remaining German troops. The Germans surrendered on February 2nd, 1943. It was a crushing defeat for Nazi Germany. After winning the Battle of Stalingrad, the Russians started their counter-attack. This became a relentless march towards Berlin for the next year.



While the Germans suffered heavy losses in the Eastern Front, the Western allies also planned an attack. The Battle of Normandy, which lasted from June 1944 to August 1944, saw Western Europe freed from Germany's control. The allies had planned to storm the beaches of Normandy and push the Germans back. Great care was taken in planning the invasion, including using a deception campaign to make the Nazis think that they planned to land elsewhere. The Battle of Normandy began on June 6th, 1944. This date was given the code name: D-Day. On D-Day 156,000 troops from British, American, and Canadian divisions landed across five beaches in Normandy.



Despite German resistance and heavy casualties, within a week the beaches were secured. This enabled the allies to prepare to carry out the planned invasion inland. In under a week over 300,000 men, 50,000 vehicles and 100,000 tonnes of equipment made its way to the beaches of Normandy ready for the attack. In the coming weeks the allies fought their way across North-Western France. By August of 1944 the Allies had liberated Paris. From there, they would push on to Germany, where they planned to meet the Soviet troops moving from the East. The invasion was a huge military blow for Hitler and the Nazis. As well as heavy losses on the beaches of Normandy, the D-Day landings had stopped Hitler from being able to send troops to the Eastern front to defend Germany against the advancing Russians. Germany was being attacked from both sides. It felt like the Allies were closing in on Germany. The following year on May 8th, 1945 Germany was finally forced to surrender to the Allies.



Glossary

Eastern front: Where the war was being fought between Germany and Russia.

Reinforcements: Back up troops to support.

Evacuate: To leave in order to reach a safer place.

Civilians: People who are not soldiers.

Red Army: The army of the USSR/Russia.

Militia: An army formed of civilians in an emergency.

Blitzkrieg: Lightning war.

Fighting retreat: A planned retreat where the force is still able to fight, while falling back to a better position.



Comprehension questions:

1. Why were the German army halted in November 1941?
2. What did Hitler decide to do in order to break the stalemate on the Eastern Front?
3. When was the Battle of Stalingrad?
4. Why were the Germans unable to defeat the Russians during the battle?
5. When did the Germans surrender to the Red Army?
6. What was D-Day?
7. What success did the allies experience between June and August 1944?

Challenge: What was the impact of the D-Day landings on Germany?

Sentence starter: The impact of the D-Day landings was...

Evidence to support this is...

This was important because...



Turning point table

Date	In your opinion, who looks likely to win the war at this point?	Evidence to justify your view
June 1940	Nazi Germany	They had defeated Poland, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France. They had forced the British and French to evacuate.
May 1941		
November 1941		
December 1941		
February 1943		
June 1944		



Extension Question

Why could the Battle of Stalingrad be considered a turning point in the war?
Use the sentence starters and key words below to help you.

Sentence starters:	Key words
<p>The Battle of Stalingrad could be considered a turning point in the Second World War because...</p> <p>Evidence to support this is...</p> <p>This was important because...</p>	<p>Retreat</p> <p>Advance</p> <p>Defeat</p> <p>Berlin</p>

