

Distances and Directions of Four Historical Battles

Introduction:

In this activity, students will measure and compare the distances traveled in four major historical military maneuvers.

Grade level:

Middle school

Illinois State Goals:

16A, 17A

Activity:

Students need a ruler and an atlas to complete this activity. Students also need a basic understanding of how maps and scales and measurements work.

Students read the text in each section and then use a ruler and an atlas to make measurements as required.

Four Historical Military Maneuvers

Use a ruler and an atlas with a scale to answer the following questions.

The American Revolutionary War: the Battles of Lexington and Concord

Before the war, Boston, Massachusetts had been the scene of much revolutionary activity, leading to the effective abolition of the provincial government of Massachusetts by the British parliament in 1774. Popular resistance to these measures, however, compelled the newly appointed royal officials in Massachusetts to resign or to seek refuge in Boston. Lieutenant General Thomas Gage, the British Commander-in-Chief, North America, commanded four regiments of British regulars (about 4,000 men) from his headquarters in Boston, but the countryside was in the hands of the Revolutionaries.

On the night of April 18, 1775, General Gage sent 900 men to seize munitions stored by the colonial militia at Concord, Massachusetts. Riders from Boston alerted the countryside, the most famous of which was Paul Revere, and when the British troops entered Lexington on the morning of April 19, they found 75 minutemen formed up on the village common. Shots were exchanged, and the British moved on to Concord, where there was more fighting. By the time the British began their return march to Boston, thousands of militiamen had arrived on the scene, inflicting much damage upon the detachment. With the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the Revolutionary War had begun.

1. How many miles is it from Boston, Massachusetts to Lexington, Massachusetts?
2. Did Paul Revere ride east or west?

The American Civil War: Sherman's March to the Sea

“Sherman's March to the Sea” is the name commonly given to the Savannah Campaign, conducted in late 1864 by Major General William Tecumseh Sherman of the Union Army during the American Civil War. The campaign began with General Sherman's troops leaving the captured city of Atlanta, Georgia, on November 15, 1864, and ended with the capture of the port of Savannah on December 22.

Sherman's march followed his successful Atlanta Campaign of May to September 1864. He and U.S. Army commander Ulysses S. Grant believed that the Civil War would end only if the Confederacy's strategic, economic, and psychological capacity for warfare were decisively broken. Sherman therefore applied the principles of scorched earth, ordering his troops to burn crops, kill livestock, consume supplies, and destroy civilian infrastructure along their path.

3. How many miles is it from Atlanta, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia?
4. Did Sherman march east or west?

World War I: First Battle of the Marne

Following the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the German army opened the Western Front by first invading Luxembourg and Belgium, then gaining military control of important industrial regions in France.

The German army came within 43 miles (70 km) of Paris, but at the First Battle of the Marne (6 September – 12 September), French and British troops were able to force a German retreat, ending their advance into France. The German army retreated north of the Aisne River and dug in there, establishing the beginnings of a static western front that was to last for the next three years. Following this German setback, the opposing forces tried to outflank each other in the Race for the Sea, and quickly extended their trench systems from the English Channel to the Swiss frontier.

5. How many miles is it from Berlin, Germany to Brussels, Belgium?
6. How many miles is it from Brussels, Belgium to Paris, France?
7. How many miles is it from Berlin, Germany to Paris, France?
8. Is Paris north or south of Brussels?

World War II: The Battle of Iwo Jima, February 16, 1945 – March 26, 1945

Iwo Jima was of strategic importance to the United States because it would provide a landing/re-fueling site for American bombers on missions to and from Japan. Many of the planes had difficulty making it back to the nearest American base on Guam or Tinian in the Mariana Islands. This was due to several factors:

- The vast distances involved meant that B-29 bombers on their way to or from bombing Japan were at the limit of their range.
- The Japanese installation on Iwo Jima contained radar with which they notified their comrades at home of the incoming B-29s.
- The Japanese had fighter aircraft on Iwo Jima which shot down many of the B-29s. The bombers were especially vulnerable on their way to Japan because they were heavily laden with bombs and fuel.

U.S. Army Air Force General Curtis LeMay declared to General of the Army Douglas MacArthur that his 20th Air Force could not sustain these losses. Therefore, the decision to invade was taken. The island of Iwo Jima would provide an airstrip closer to Japan for planes seeking repair or in need of fuel. In addition, it would eliminate the Japanese radar and fighter installations. For the Japanese, it was a loss of native soil and a sign of impending defeat.

9. How many miles is it from Guam to Tokyo, Japan?
10. How many miles is it from Iwo Jima to Guam?
11. How many miles is it from Iwo Jima to Tokyo, Japan?
12. Is Japan north or south of Guam?

Four Historical Military Maneuvers Answers

1. How many miles is it from Boston, Massachusetts to Lexington, Massachusetts?
~10 miles
2. Did Paul Revere ride east or west? **West**
3. How many miles is it from Atlanta, Georgia to Savannah, Georgia? ~210 miles
4. Did Sherman march east or west? **East**
5. How many miles is it from Berlin, Germany to Brussels, Belgium? ~495 miles
6. How many miles is it from Brussels, Belgium to Paris, France? ~160 miles
7. How many miles is it from Berlin, Germany to Paris, France? ~605 miles
8. Is Paris north or south of Brussels? **South**
9. How many miles is it from Guam to Tokyo, Japan? ~1,700 miles
10. How many miles is it from Iwo Jima to Guam? ~900 miles
11. How many miles is it from Iwo Jima to Tokyo, Japan? ~800 miles
12. Is Japan north or south of Guam? **North**

Resources at the Pritzker Military Library:

Barraclough, Geoffrey. *The Times concise atlas of world history*. London: Times, 1982.

Gilbert, Martin. *Atlas of World War I*. New York: Oxford University, 1994.

Griess, Thomas E. *Atlas for the Second World War: Asia and the Pacific*. Wayne, NJ: Avery, 1985.

Hammond Incorporated. *Hammond atlas of the world*. Maplewood, NJ: Hammond, Inc., 1993.

Stadler, Gerald P. *Atlas for the American Civil War*. Wayne, NJ :Avery, 1986.

United States. War Dept. *The official military atlas of the Civil War*. Norwalk, CT: Easton, 1978.