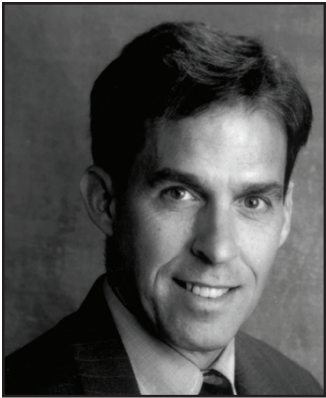


A TEACHER'S CURRICULUM GUIDE TO THE BOOKS BY RICK ATKINSON

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



RICK ATKINSON is an award-winning author and military historian and a former reporter, foreign correspondent, and senior editor at *The Washington Post*. His books include *The Long Gray Line*, *Crusade*, and *In the Company of Soldiers*. His Liberation Trilogy is comprised of *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942–1943*, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize; *The Day of Battle: The War in Sicily and Italy, 1943–1944*, and *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Europe, 1944–1945*. The trilogy provides a definitive chronicle of World War II and is written in compelling prose that illuminates this time in history. Read more about the author and these books at liberationtrilogy.com.

FOR
USE WITH
COMMON CORE
STATE
STANDARDS

ABOUT THE GUIDE

This guide supports the use of Rick Atkinson's books as part of a standards-based curriculum in both ELA and History or Social Studies classes. It is designed to deepen students' literacy skills and content knowledge and is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. These standards are referenced throughout the guide.

The guide contains questions to check for comprehension and strategies for readers to use before, during, and after reading Atkinson's books. These strategies will support students in the following ways:

Before reading:

- Access prior knowledge about the topic.
- Preview the text to create a context for the events and to acquire background knowledge.

During reading:

- Think critically about what they're reading and interpret it.
- Monitor understanding by questioning, summarizing, and reflecting on the information in the text.

After reading:

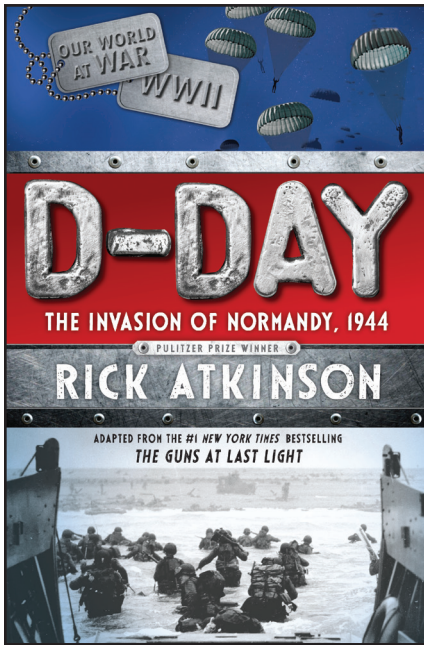
- Integrate new knowledge with prior knowledge.
- Synthesize information with that from other sources.
- Reflect upon the author's point of view.

This guide also contains suggestions for how the books can be used independently, in pairs, or in small- and whole-group settings. We hope you find it helpful and encourage you to adapt it as needed for the students in your classroom.

To attain specific Common Core grade-level standards for their classrooms and students, teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities listed in this guide to their classes' needs. You know your kids best!



ABOUT THE BOOKS



Ages 8–12

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D-Day is adapted from Rick Atkinson's third book in his Liberation Trilogy, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Europe, 1944–1945*, a narrative history of the U.S. military's role in the war in Western Europe. It begins with the planning phase for D-Day and gives an unforgettable account of the invasion of Normandy. The epilogue provides a summary of the end of the war. The book contains multiple resources for readers that provide a context for the action, including lists of the key players on each side, maps, timelines, statistics, and a glossary. Quotations from leaders and troops allow the reader to understand the war from multiple perspectives. In *D-Day*, Atkinson has created a moving account that vividly captures the events of the day that began the long journey to liberate Western Europe from Nazi Germany.

QUESTIONS TO CHECK FOR COMPREHENSION OF *D-DAY*:

❖ **The Gathering, May 5, 1944; On the Eve of a Great Battle: The Supreme Allied Commander; Planning the Land Battle: The British High Command (pages 1–18)**

- What was Hitler's intention when he invaded Poland and started WWII?
- How had the Allied powers begun to change the trajectory of the war after 1941?
- What was Operation Overlord? Why was it significant?
- What does the quote on page 8 reveal about General Eisenhower as a leader?
- What was Field Marshal Montgomery's plan for D-Day?
- Why was the Bay of the Seine chosen for the invasion site, even though other areas in France were closer to England?
- How did Montgomery's knowledge of Field Marshal Rommel as an adversary cause him to expand the scope of Overlord?
- How was the invasion of Normandy crucial to the liberation of Europe?

❖ **Considering the Soldiers; As the GIs Arrive; Invasion Matériel; Decoys and Camouflage; June Arrives (pages 19–48)**

- What were PINWE issues?
- Why did Eisenhower feel he needed to “develop a veneer of callousness”?
- Why do you think the U.S. army lowered its standards for the draft during the course of the war?



- Why could the average GI be described as an “amateur” soldier?
- Describe the types of combat necessities the Allies amassed prior to the invasion and explain the importance of each to the success of Overlord.
- How did the invasion resemble “an overrehearsed play”?
- Why were the security measures used to deceive the enemy crucial to the success of Overlord?
- What vocabulary does the author use to describe these measures?
- How did the Fortitude deception create a “German hallucination”?
- Even though all the preparations for the invasion were in place, why did Eisenhower postpone the invasion for twenty-four hours?
- What effect did this delay have on the troops?

❖ **Up Anchor, June 5, 1944; By Air—Jumpers and Gliders, June 6, 1944 (pages 53–69)**

- How did the troops prepare mentally for the upcoming battle?
- What advice did Eisenhower and senior officers offer the men?
- What evidence is there that Eisenhower was unsure of victory?
- What obstacles did pilots and paratroopers face as they reached France?

❖ **Operation Albany; Operation Boston; Bridges over the Orne and at Caen (pages 70–84)**

- What was the goal of Operation Albany? Was it successful? Explain.
- Despite the extensive loss of life and equipment, how did the men of the 101st Airborne demonstrate resiliency?
- What was the goal of Operation Boston? Was it successful? Explain.
- Why were so many regiments delivered to the wrong locations?
- What was the British 6th Airborne Division’s mission? Did they accomplish it?
- What did it mean that the British airmen were eager to settle scores with the Germans?
- Why were the accomplishments by the American and British airmen on the dawn of D-Day so remarkable?

❖ **The Bombers; Deception; It Is Now D-Day (pages 85–93)**

- What eased the way for the Overlord fleets to enter the Bay of the Seine?
- What measures did the Allies take to prevent the Germans from knowing about the invasion’s location?
- Why were the American B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators less effective than the B-26 Marauders and British bombers in bombing targets?

❖ **More Ships Than Sea; Utah: “How Do You Boys Like the Beach?”; Omaha: Hell’s Beach; Between Easy Red and Fox Green (pages 94–121)**

- Why did the naval bombardment of the Overlord beaches last for less than an hour?
- Why was Brigadier General Roosevelt anxious to land on Utah Beach?
- How did his landing on the wrong beach have a positive outcome?



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Books by Rick Atkinson

- Describe the series of events that earned Omaha Beach the name Hell's Beach.
- Explain how these words of an infantry surgeon describe the scope of the carnage that took place on Omaha Beach: "Face downwards, as far as eyes could see in either direction, were the huddled bodies of men living, wounded, and dead, as tightly packed together as layers of cigars in a box."

❖ **Four Miles West of Omaha; On the Command Ship; Good News at Dog White; "Things Look Better" (pages 122–132)**

- How did the invasion of Omaha Beach differ from General Bradley's proposed plan?
- Cite examples of the incredible courage shown by the GIs and officers at beach Dog White.
- What information did General Bradley receive to show that "the day was saved, if not won"?

❖ **The Eastern Flank: Gold, Juno, and Sword (pages 133–140)**

- What tactical modifications did the British and Canadians benefit from that the Americans didn't implement on Utah and Omaha Beaches?
- What gains did the British and Canadians make on Gold, Juno, and Sword Beaches?

❖ **On the Other Side of the Line: Field Marshal Erwin Rommel (pages 141–151)**

- Prior to D-Day, how did General Field Marshal Rommel view the threat of an Allied invasion? Use his quotes from the text in your response.
- What events contributed to a weakened response by the Germans on D-Day?

❖ **As the Full Moon Rises (pages 152–159)**

- How do the remarks of Corporal William Preston about the dead soldier he saw convey a sense of the overwhelming loss of those who died on D-Day?

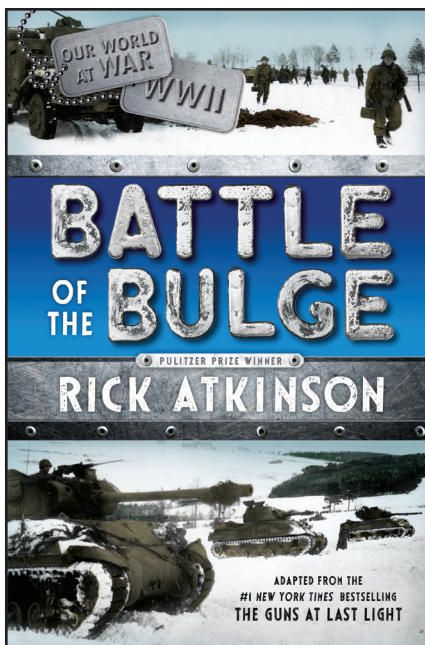
❖ **Epilogue: The Days That Followed (pages 161–173)**

- How much longer did the war continue in Europe and in Japan after D-Day?
- What factors led to the Allied victory?
- How was WWII a catalyst for social change in America?
- How do the words of General Eisenhower before D-Day and on V-E Day illuminate his belief in the teamwork necessary to achieve victory?

CCSS for English Language Arts

SL.6.1, SL.7.1, SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own ideas clearly.





Ages 8–12
9781627791137

Battle of the Bulge is also adapted from Rick Atkinson’s third book in his Liberation Trilogy; *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Europe, 1944–1945*, a narrative history of the U.S. military’s role in the war in Western Europe. It begins by providing an overview of WWII from its beginning to November 1944, the month before the battle begins. Atkinson describes Hitler’s plan to regain control of the war and force the Allies to surrender and then offers a detailed account of the nearly seven-week battle. The epilogue describes the aftermath of the battle and summarizes the end of the war. This book also contains multiple resources for readers that provide a context for the action, including lists of the key players on each side, maps, timelines, statistics, and a glossary. Quotations throughout offer firsthand accounts from leaders and troops. In *Battle of the Bulge*, Atkinson continues the dramatic saga of the men and women whose efforts and sacrifices led to the defeat of Hitler in WWII.

QUESTIONS TO CHECK FOR COMPREHENSION OF *BATTLE OF THE BULGE*:

❖ The European Theater, September 1939–November 1944; Staking Everything on One Card, December 11, 1944, The Small Solution; “Not to Be Altered” (pages 1–20)

- What event precipitated the beginning of WWII?
- What event started the Allied efforts to defeat the Germans in Europe?
- What was Hitler’s plan in December 1944 to regain control of the war in Europe?
- Why did Hitler’s senior commanders object to his “large solution”?
- What was the “small solution” they preferred?
- What were the motivations behind Hitler’s plan? Explain.

❖ The Supreme Commander, December 12, 1944; “I Still Have Nine Days”; The Ardennes: “It Has Been Very Quiet Up Here . . .” (pages 21–38)

- What was General Eisenhower’s strategic plan for defeating Germany?
- How did Churchill and senior British officers react to his plan?
- What was the key problem the Allies faced in carrying out their plans to defeat Germany?
- What signs of a German offensive did the Allies miss or misinterpret? What contributed to this intelligence failure?
- How prepared were the U.S. troops in the Ardennes for a German attack?



❖ **The Plan Was Fixed;The Germans' Final Assembly Area, December 15, 1944;“Nothing to Report” (pages 39–45)**

- What was Hitler's final plan to reach Antwerp?
- Why did the Germans consider the invasion in the Ardennes to be a “holy task”?
- On the eve of battle, what indications were there that the Americans were overconfident?

❖ **This Haunted Plateau;The North;The Atrocities Begin;“Much Happening Out There,” December 19, 1944 (pages 49–66)**

- What did Field Marshal Rundstedt mean when he told his legions before the battle, “Everything is at stake”?
- How did SS Lieutenant Colonel Joachim Peiper's devotion to Hitler and Germany lead to numerous instances of battlefield barbarism and atrocities?
- Why was the battle of Elsenborn Ridge significant? What contributed to the Americans holding the line there?
- Why did the Germans shift their offensive to the south?

❖ **The South;The Our River:“Hold at All Costs”; The Center: Holding St.-Vith (pages 67–85)**

- Although the Germans decisively defeated the 110th Infantry, how did the Americans impact Hitler's Autumn Mist plan?
- What Allied decisions contributed to Germany's relative success near the Schnee Eifel?

❖ **“All of Us, Without Exception, Were Astonished” The Last German Airborne Operation; Sowing Hysteria Across the Western Front; A Crucial Meeting in Verdun, December 19, 1944; A Line on the Map (pages 86–105)**

- How did General Eisenhower's reaction to the initial attacks in the Ardennes differ from General Bradley's? What measures did Eisenhower take to defend the area?
- What contributed to the end of the German airborne operations?
- How did the Germans attempt to infiltrate the American lines?
- How did the Americans thwart German sabotage efforts?
- When General Eisenhower met with his generals in Verdun, he said, “The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not of disaster.” What message was he trying to convey?
- What was his tactical approach to stop the Germans?
- What did Eisenhower's decision to turn over leadership of two American armies to British Field Marshal Montgomery reveal about him as a leader?

❖ **Bastogne: The Left Flank;“Nuts” St.-Vith—The Right Flank;The Allies' Secret Weapon; Tracking the Monster (pages 109–139)**

- What obstacles did the 101st Airborne face in its defense of Bastogne?
- How was the German request that the Americans surrender at Bastogne an empty threat?
- What gave General McAuliffe the confidence to turn this offer down?



- Despite the withdrawal and heavy losses of Allied troops at St.-Vith, how had the Allies impacted Germany's plans?
- How was the invention of the fuse called the "pozit" a secret weapon for the Allies?
- How did the Allies stop Lieutenant Colonel Peiper's drive toward the Meuse?

❖ **Status: Germany; Status: Allied Forces; Bastogne: Saturday, December 23, 1944; "Xmas Present Coming"; Patton: Luxembourg City, December 24, 1944 (pages 140–152)**

- What was the status of the German and Allied forces in the days before Christmas 1944?
- How had things changed for the Americans trapped in Bastogne?
- What was the significance of the Allied victory in Bastogne to the Americans?
- What effect did this victory have on the Germans?

❖ **"Glory Has Its Price"; Insurrection in the North; Insurrection in the South; The Last German Ground Offensive, January 1, 1945; The Internal Fight for Strasbourg (pages 153–177)**

- How were the Allied commanders divided in their approach to defeating the Germans?
- What caused friction between General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery?
- What problems did Eisenhower face on the southern flank?
- What was the German plan after the failure of Autumn Mist? Was it successful? Explain.
- How did the defense of Strasbourg create discord between American and French leaders?

❖ **Winston Churchill Arrives; New Worries; Yard by Yard; I Know the War Is Lost (pages 178–195)**

- How did political issues affect Eisenhower's decisions regarding the defense of Strasbourg?
- What military concerns and losses plagued General Eisenhower at this time?
- How did the Allies regain control of the western half of the bulge "yard by yard"?
- How did the Allied victory in the Battle of the Bulge contribute to Germany's defeat in the war?
- What were the Allied and German casualties and losses in this conflict?

❖ **Epilogue (pages 196–200)**

- How did Hitler's Autumn Mist plan have the opposite outcome from what he had hoped?
- How does the author's claim that "war is never linear, but rather a chaotic, haphazard enterprise of reversal and advance, blunder and enthusiasm, despair and elation" describe the Battle of the Bulge?

CCSS for English Language Arts

SL.6.1, SL.7.1, SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one on one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-appropriate topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing one's own ideas clearly.



COMMON CORE ACTIVITIES

BEFORE READING

KWL Chart

Distribute individual KWL graphic organizers to students. Students complete the first two columns: what they know about WWII, D-Day, and the Battle of the Bulge and what they want to learn. Discuss their entries with the class and begin a class chart. Encourage students to write what they learn on their organizers while reading the books and continue adding to the class chart.

Preview the Text

Explain that Rick Atkinson has included many visual resources in his books to provide context and background knowledge for the events in the narrative. Have students work with a partner to preview the text and make a T-chart; list the resources on the left side: on the right, explain how those resources will be helpful prior to and while reading the text. (Resources include timelines, lists of key players, charts, maps, photographs, and a glossary.)

CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

DURING READING

Note-taking

Encourage students to take notes while reading, using Cornell notes or another note-taking routine. They should keep track of important information, questions they have, and key words, summarizing what they've learned at strategic intervals. Provide time for students to review their notes with their partners and in whole-class discussions.

Reading Comprehension

The questions provided here for each book can be used in multiple ways. They can be given to students prior to reading each section, in order to guide their reading. They can also be used during whole- and small-group discussions after reading to check for comprehension. Another option is to choose a question as a prompt for a written response. When responding to questions orally or in writing, students should be required to cite textual evidence to support their responses and claims.

Building Academic Vocabulary

Explain to students that they will encounter many unfamiliar words while reading and that some of these words will be important for them to learn because they are crucial to understanding the text and are likely to appear in other texts. The two methods below will help students to acquire academic vocabulary.



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- **Direct Pre-teaching:** Choose important words from each section of the book that meet the criteria listed above. (Examples from the first section of *D-Day* include *invasion*, *fortress*, and *reconnaissance*.) Introduce each word in the context of the text. Write the word on chart paper and ask students to repeat it. Provide a definition of the word and use the word in other contexts. Analyze the words for known prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Generate other variants with students and list these words, e.g., *invade* and *invading*. Ask students to provide examples and non-examples of each word. Finally, students write the word and its definition in their notes or in a separate vocabulary notebook. They should keep track of pages where the word was used in the text.
- **Keeping Track of New Vocabulary:** Encourage students to identify new academic vocabulary by writing the word on a Post-it note and placing it on the page where they read it. After reading, they write the word in their vocabulary notebook, the sentence it appeared in, and a definition of the word. Brainstorm with students a list of resources for determining definitions of these words, including using the context, affixes and roots, the glossary, and print and digital dictionaries. Students keep track of pages where the word was used throughout the text.

CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

RI.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

RI.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

L.6.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

L.7.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

L.8.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.



AFTER READING

KWL Revisited

Students complete their KWL graphic organizers, adding to what they learned as well as what they still want to learn or questions they have. During a whole-class discussion, students share new learning and brainstorm sources for finding out what they want to learn and answering their questions. This becomes the basis for future research projects.

Summarizing the Text

Students choose one of Rick Atkinson's books and work independently or with a partner to identify one of the central ideas in that book. They analyze the development of this idea and write a summary that is supported by specific references to the text. They share these summaries with the whole class in oral presentations.

Author's Point of View

In both books, Rick Atkinson documents the unimaginable losses suffered in these battles and in the war as a whole. Near the end of both *D-Day* and *Battle of the Bulge*, he touches on the loss of an individual soldier. In *D-Day*, page 158, Corporal William Preston describes his reaction to seeing a dead soldier on the beach; on page 200 in *Battle of the Bulge*, the author describes a mother's reaction to losing her son. Why did Atkinson include these passages? What message was he conveying about the war and the impact it had on those who served in the military?

Written Response

Students respond to one of the following prompts designed to demonstrate their understanding of the key ideas in each text.

- Choose one of the leaders in the text from either the Allied or Axis powers. Write a brief description of this leader. Pay particular attention to his quotes as cited in the text. Describe his character traits and leadership style and how he contributed to the outcome of the military action. Be sure to cite specific information from the text to support your analysis.
- What factors contributed to the Allied success on D-Day or in the Battle of the Bulge? What impact did this success have on the ultimate outcome of WWII? Cite specific evidence from the text to support your response.



CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

RI.6.1, RI.7.1, RI.8.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.6.2 Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.6.3 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

RI.6.6 Analyze in detail how a key individual, event, or idea is introduced, illustrated, and elaborated in a text (e.g., through examples or anecdotes).

RI.7.2 Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.7.3 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.7.6 Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

RI.8.2 Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

W.6.1, W.7.1, W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

SL.6.4, SL.7.4, SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

EXTENDING LEARNING

Research Projects

Students review their KWL charts and their notes and choose a topic or a person to explore in more depth. They research the topic or person using other texts and different media and create a report. They present their reports to the class in oral presentations.



Compare and Contrast

Students read a book written by another author about one of these battles. They compare and contrast how each author presents key information about the battle and write a brief analysis of each author's interpretation of the event. They support their claims with relevant evidence from each text.

CCSS for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies

RI.6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

RI.6.9 Compare and contrast one author's presentation of events with that of another (e.g., a memoir written by and a biography on the same person).

RI.7.9 Analyze how two or more authors writing about the same topic shape their presentations of key information by emphasizing different evidence or advancing different interpretations of facts.

RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.

SL.6.4, SL.7.4, SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

W.6.1, W.7.1, W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

This guide was written by Barbara McLaughlin, literacy consultant and former Senior Program Director for Elementary ELA in the Boston Public Schools. She holds masters' degrees in reading and children's literature.

