**D-day Primary Sources**

**Document #1***: “Doughboys get Glory for Allies’ Success”**By John Thompson (Chicago Tribune) – Newspaper Article*

**Off to a Bad Start.**

But before we had embarked our colonel had told us a truism: “If anything can go wrong in battle, it will go more wrong in an amphibious landing, which is the toughest military offensive operation.”

He was right. Whether because of the haze, defense machine gun fire, or inexperience, the boats grounded on the wrong sections of the beach. Some lowered their ramps immediately in front of strong points. Even the engineers were helpless.

They started lashing their demolitions to the obstacles, but machine gun fire cut them down before the charges could be ex­ploded. Then came the infantry in waves, many of them also hit­ting the wrong beach sections. As the soldiers plowed ashore thru neck high water and surf, the hidden Germans enjoyed a machine gunners paradise.

**On and On They Drive.**

But this was power, sheer power, with which we were to crack Hitler’s fortress, and men kept coming while the naval guns blasted enemy artillery in pillboxes many feet thick. And from well camouflaged positions which had long been emplated in the beach approaches German 88’s laid their fire directly on the beach. But still our troops kept coming on tho the beaches were in shambles and sunken landing barges dotted the sea.

…The dead and wounded sprawled on every side, while medical aid men, lying beside them tried to save the living.

**Rallies Men for New Push.**

We were completely at the mercy of the enemy, saved only by naval gunfire and the courage and ability of the soldiers who pressed inland on the flanks.

…He got his men off the beach and onto high ground where they could silence the machine guns and push inland. But thruout the day the Germans retained an advantage in artillery and made the beach a scene of horror and confusion.

**Document #2***: Staff Sergeant Walter Ehlers, L Company, 18th Infantry, 1st Infantry Division, landed on Omaha Beach, shortly after the first assault wave. – Oral History*

…What was going through my mind is how could there be any resistance on the beach when you saw all those bombers and all those ships firing on that beach and everything…. Then the first wave landed.... When the assault boats came back and...said that they needed more troops on the beach immediately…[They] took us off and then rendezvoused and got about three or four boats together, and then we headed in to the beach. And when we were going in, there were ducks…amphibious trucks out there, and some of them were being swamped. And even some of the landing craft like the ones that we were in were bailing out because they’d gotten hit by shells….the water was rough….we headed in. [W]e thought we were going to come up to the beach and land, but we hit a sandbar, so the ramp goes down and we go out the front. As soon as we go out the front we land in the water, and it’s up around my armpits, where some of our shorter guys, up around their necks.

….I said, “Come on.” …The other leaders were yelling at their troops to get up and move out…. So we start rushing, and then…a beach commander…says that we’ll stick to that path because it’s been made by people who have already been up that far, clearing the mines. In other words, they’d stepped on mines. There were guys laying right and left of the path. We went up there…

…When we got to the barbed wire we had to stop. There… were bangalore torpedo men that had blown the previous wire, so we asked them if they’d blow this last role of wire for us. …They did, and we got a guy up there. I rushed with my squad right on through that and we got up into the trenches. And once when we got in the trenches…we were able to overcome the Germans….

**Document #3***: The Intelligence and Reconnaissance Platoon of the 16th Infantry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division landed on Omaha Beach. – Diary Entry*

The choppy waters of the English Channel began to tell. Paper bags issued to each man filled as even the strongest stomachs succumbed. Men with taut nerves, set faces, talked of this and that, anything to keep their minds off the job that lay only minutes ahead….

At 7:10 (H-Hour plus 50) the first I & R landing craft struck bottom approximately two hundred yards off shore. The ramp went down and out the men went into an inferno of machine gun fire from the height above the beach, cross-fired so it seemed to cover every square foot, into mortar fire and artillery fire. Through the waist deep water men by the hundred waded beachward as the murderous fire cut them down. Those who reached the shore found sanctuary behind a ledge that screened off the small arms fire.

As far as the eye could see bodies were packed behind this ledge, men who were moaning with pain and those who would moan no more. The medics were everywhere dressing wounds and rescuing men which the incoming tide stretched out its lengthening tentacles to impound. To the left our planes were dive bombing an active pillbox as devastating machine gun fire still swept the water. Heavier equipment began to come in. Tanks remained submerged save for protruding cannon barrel.

**D-day Invasion**

**Directions**: read the “D-day Primary Sources” handout, then complete the following chart based on the reading. On the chart, summarize the challenges that the soldiers faced based on the information in the article.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **What challenges did the Soldiers face during D-day?** |
| **Document #1**  Author:  Type of Source: |  |
| **Document #2**  Author:  Type of Source: |  |
| **Document #3**  Author:  Type of Source: |  |

**Summary Question**: Based on the documents, why do you think that the D-day invasion was such an important victory for the allies? Why were the men who took part in this invasion seen as heroes?