

2nd Prize Winner 11-12 age group

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Georgia

History is about people and their stories. What people did in the past affects our lives today. My mom, who is also my homeschool teacher, loves teaching me about history and helps me understand the personal aspects of history. History is important because we would not be here today without the actions and bravery of people who lived before us.

World War II started in 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. The two groups that fought in World War II were the Axis Powers made up of Germany, Italy, and Japan and the Allied Powers of Great Britain, France, the United States (U.S.), and the Soviet Union. Most of the war took place in Europe until Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This attack pulled the U.S. into World War II and opened fighting in the Pacific Ocean. The U.S. declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941. A few days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S., which caused America to be involved in fighting in both the European and Pacific Theatres of the war.

Our focus is on the fighting in the Pacific Ocean. The U.S. fought Japan at the battles of the Coral Sea (May 7-8, 1942) and Midway (June 4-7, 1942) and badly hurt Japan's military. After that, Japan was put on the defense. The first time the U.S. went on offense was in the Battle of Guadalcanal. On August 7, 1942, U.S. troops landed on the islands of Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Florida. These islands are part of the Southern Solomon Islands. This invasion stopped Japan's plan to interrupt supply routes to Australia and New Zealand. The battle lasted six months and included battles at sea, fighting on land, and lots of fighting with airplanes. Sixty thousand U.S.

men fought in these battles. Finally, the U.S. won the battle of Guadalcanal and eventually the U.S. and the Allied Powers won World War II.

When we look at specific parts of the Battle of Guadalcanal, there are a few lessons that are useful for us today: keep your focus, do not underestimate the enemy, and do not celebrate too early. These lessons come from battles during the whole operation, but they really stick out after the nighttime naval attack on the U.S. ships at Savo Island, which happened one day after the U.S. easily took control of Lunga Point and renamed it Henderson Field. The U.S. thought we had won easily, and we let our guard down. We were not prepared for the Japanese to come and attack again so quickly. Many men died and many ships were damaged or lost that night.

There are a few more things we learned from the Battle of Guadalcanal that the U.S. has used in the later wars around the Pacific Ocean. We learned that it is very hard to get supplies quickly from the U.S. across the Pacific Ocean. So, it is very important to have military bases in around the Pacific Ocean area to help supply our military. We also found out that the Japanese and other Asian cultures will fight until death or complete destruction, and it made a difference in how we planned for future war battles.

The weather was also a real challenge in the Solomon Islands because it is hotter and more humid than most parts of the U.S. The landscape is mostly jungle and our military was not used to fighting in jungles. Also, U.S. equipment did not always work in the jungles like it did on American land. So, the military had to work hard to change the way we did things and learned many lessons that the U.S. used later in the Vietnam and Korean wars.

My life would be a lot different if Japan controlled the Western Pacific Ocean Rim. It would be different because Japan may not let the U.S. trade with other countries on the Pacific Ocean. If

Japan had taken over that whole area, they might not have stopped and could have continued to attack and try to take over other countries, including America. If that had happened, it is possible that I would not even be an American!

In my personal life, if the battle was not successful for the U.S, my great-grandfather may have seen more fighting and even possibly not have lived. If he had died during World War II, I wouldn't be here today! Literally! My great-grandfather was Clement West. He was not in the Battle of Guadalcanal, but he joined the U.S. Navy in 1944. On March 19, 1944, three months before officially turning eighteen, he boarded the U.S.S. General John R. Brooke and shipped out to the Solomon Islands. My grandfather says that he remembers his dad talking about being part of a construction crew that rebuilt the islands after the battles.

Many Americans died and many were wounded in the Battle of Guadalcanal. More than 7,000 men died and about 7,800 more were wounded. The U.S. lost 29 ships and 615 aircraft in the Guadalcanal Campaign. The U.S. lost a lot in these battles and it was a great sacrifice for many American families. This year is the 80th anniversary of the battle and it is still relevant to me today because without the sacrifice of all these men, I would not be living a life of freedom in America. Even though I never met these men, I am still very grateful for what they did for America and for people around the world.

Resources:

World War II History. History.com Editors. <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history>. Originally published October 29, 2009. Last updated September 15, 2021 by A&E Television Networks.

History of Western Civilization 2, Chapter 28. ER Services, Lumen Courses.
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/the-guadalcanal-campaign/>

The Solomon Islands Campaign: Guadalcanal. National World War II Museum, New Orleans.
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/solomon-islands-campaign-guadalcanal>

U.S., World War II Navy Muster Rolls, 1938-1949