

## **“The Great Crusade”: Ike and the Men of D-Day**

### **Classroom Pre-Visit Activity**

### **Letters of Leadership**

As the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower felt personally responsible for the success or failure of the D-Day invasion. Before the attack, he wrote out two messages for the coming invasion. The first, his “Order of the Day,” was to be given to each soldier, sailor, and airman before the attack began. The other message was a personal one, only to be given out in the event the attack was unsuccessful. This second message was later discovered by one of Eisenhower’s staff officers, and though written before the attack, was incorrectly dated “July 5”. These two documents not only show us General Eisenhower’s thoughts on the D-Day Invasion, they offer us a window into his view of leadership.

**Procedure:** Hand out the two documents by General Eisenhower: his “In Case of Failure Message” and his “Order of the Day”. Have the students read each document, and then answer the following questions. This can be done in small groups, with discussion afterwards, or as a writing activity.

- How does Eisenhower describe the invasion?
- How does Eisenhower describe the Allied troops?
- How does Eisenhower describe the Axis forces?
- How does Eisenhower describe his role in the invasion?
- What leadership qualities do each of these documents show?
- Do these documents show Eisenhower was an effective leader? Why or why not? Provide examples to support your answer.

After analyzing the documents, put yourself into the position of General Eisenhower. Knowing the difficulties associated with Operation Overlord, write your own message to the soldiers before they begin the invasion of France. Think of what the soldiers who are about to leave for France should know about their mission and what is at stake. Encourage the students to think about a time in their life when they needed encouragement, and how we can encourage others today. Have the students write out their messages before the program.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944 ! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned ! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory !

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory !

Good Luck ! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.



*Dwight D. Eisenhower*



Our landings in the  
Cherbourg - Have and  
have failed to gain a  
satisfactory foothold and  
~~I have with glory~~  
~~the troops have been~~  
~~withdrewn.~~ ~~This particular~~  
~~operation~~ | my decision to  
attack at this time and place  
was based upon the best  
information available, ~~and~~  
the troops, the air and the  
Navy did all that ~~was~~  
Bravery and devotion to duty  
could do. If any blame  
a fault attends to the attempt  
it is mine alone.

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July 5

## Transcript of Eisenhower's "In Case of Failure Message"

"Our landings in the Cherbourg-Harve area has failed to gain a satisfactory foothold and I have withdrawn the troops. My decision to attack at this time and place was based on the best information available. The troops, the air and the navy did all that bravery and dedication to duty could do. If any blame or fault attaches to the attempt it is mine alone."

July 5