World War II Articles

The Office on War Information

During World War II, the Office of War Information (OWI) produced propaganda to support the U.S. war effort. Propaganda is information presented by a government or organization to promote a specific policy or point of view. The groups that employ propaganda are deliberately presenting biased information to promote their views.

During World War II, the OWI used propaganda techniques to encourage civilians to support the war, keep the morale of American soldiers high, and broadcast pro-Allied forces news to zones of conflict around the world.

Formation of the OWI

During the early years of World War II, the U.S. government did not have a central department that was responsible for disseminating war information to the public. As a result, the American public often received confusing or contradictory information about the war.

At the time, three departments handled domestic information: the Division of Information of the Office for Emergency Management (OEM), the Office of Government Reports (OGR), and the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF). The leader of the OEM often refused to issue information that he felt was biased toward promoting the war effort, which led to infighting and slow information releases. Meanwhile, politicians who opposed FDR's New Deal suspected the OGR of distributing information that was slanted in favor of FDR's policies, thereby discrediting it as well. On the other hand, the OFF was often flooded with information from radio and magazines about the war, which led them to sometimes issue contradictory data.

One type of war propaganda produced by the OWI used symbolism and stylized images. Many factory workers who saw this poster missed the point and assumed it referred to their bosses.

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the onslaught of information about the war increased. FDR recognized the need to create a central department to distribute all this information to the American people. However, he did not want to give the impression that the department was issuing propaganda. Because of this concern, the executive order that created the OWI made no mention of propaganda.

Instead, the mandate vaguely stated that the department would “carry out . . . information programs designed to facilitate the development of an informed and intelligent understanding, at home and abroad, of the status and progress of the war effort and of the war policies, activities, and aims of the Government.” However, the executive order also stated that the OWI would distribute all available information that “will not give aid to the enemy.”

Throughout the war, the government had a strong influence over almost all communications received by the American people. Most Americans received their news from radio broadcasts and newspapers. The Office of Censorship issued a “Code of Wartime Practices” for the press, which restricted the information about the war that the press could relay to listeners. While some of these restrictions were designed to keep military details such as troop location and strength secret from enemies, the guidelines also made sure that information about the war was generally positive. Meanwhile, the OWI produced its own materials, designed to encourage citizens and soldiers to remain patriotic, passionate, and vigilant.

Conflict in the OWI

Because of the loosely defined goals of the OWI, conflict and infighting soon developed within the department. This conflict can be boiled down to a dispute between two sides of the department: the writers and the advertisers. The leader of the OWI, Elmer Davis, wanted to promote bond sales, waste-paper collection, and other programs. To accomplish this, Davis began relying more on the advertisement people within the department. As a result, the writers became uneasy. They believed the main goal of the OWI was to intelligently inform the American public about important issues concerning the war. Due to the increased focus on advertising, the writers feared that the OWI was becoming a tool to sell the war effort, which would eventually involve creating propaganda. The writers reasoned that if this happened, the goal of the OWI would become about manipulating the views of people about the war, instead of informing them about the war.

The writers protested the direction that the OWI was heading and submitted their grievances to Davis. However, Davis refused to back the writers, and many resigned as a result. After this, the OWI began the task of selling the war effort to the American public. This selling effort took the form of various types of propaganda via the press, radio, motion pictures, and print posters.

OWI Propaganda

The OWI advertisers laid down rules about what should and should not be shown in their work. For example, they would make no reference to the number of American casualties. In fact, they decided that nothing would be said or shown that reflected negatively on the war effort. Materials would show the U.S. forces in a positive light in order to present confidence in the ultimate victory of the United States and the Allies. As a result of this approach, the OWI downplayed the horrors that the Nazis were inflicting on Europe because they did not want to make the German army seem too strong.

Despite these ground rules, members of the OWI still disagreed about the style of their propaganda. For example, advertisers who had career experience in magazines wanted to create “war art” that used

symbolism and stylized images for posters. This type of poster promoted the defeat of fascism. However, advertisers who came from backgrounds in large businesses, such as soft drink companies, wanted to create propaganda that emphasized familiar images. This type of poster often showed wholesome households with smiling faces while emphasizing the need for civilians to make sacrifices for the greater good of the war effort. The large-business advertisers feared that much of the general public would miss the point of stylized, symbolic posters. By 1943, the ad people from large business backgrounds won out, and the OWI stopped issuing stylized propaganda posters.

The OWI and Hollywood

The OWI also played a role in Hollywood's film output. The department included the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP), which made sure that U.S. films included government-approved messages about the war effort whenever possible. The BMP even published a handbook that featured detailed descriptions of how motion pictures should depict the war.

OWI advertisers who came from large companies believed that propaganda posters should incorporate familiar images, like this wholesome, American family.

Under the guidance of the BMP, American movies emphasized the wartime roles of minorities and women, as well as the importance of the home front. The OWI could not ban films, but it could block the overseas distribution of films that contradicted its goals. In this way, the OWI influenced the content of American movies produced during World War II. The OWI also worked with Hollywood to create propaganda films. Director Frank Capra, who won three Academy Awards during the 1930s, created a series of films funded by the War Department titled "Why We Fight," which used documentary film techniques to show the bravery of U.S. troops, the dangers of the Axis powers, and the importance of patriotism. The films were considered very successful, and the OWI worked with other filmmakers, including Walt Disney, to promote the war effort.

Operations Abroad

While much of OWI's work focused on promoting the war to Americans in and out of uniform, the Office also operated an Overseas Operations Branch. This branch particularly engaged in Psychological Warfare against the Axis Powers. It printed leaflets in many languages and dropped them from planes in war zones. Some championed the overwhelming strength of the U.S. forces and encouraged enemy soldiers to surrender.

Others encouraged people living in Axis-occupied territory to have hope that the Americans were coming and to rise up against their occupiers. In one series of fliers used in both Japan and Germany, Axis soldiers are asked “Why die now in the last 5 minutes of war?” Other Japanese fliers asked Japanese soldiers, “Who will rebuild Japan?” and encouraged them to find food and shelter as prisoners of war in the U.S. military lines.

The OWI also broadcast radio signals. In 1942, the OWI took over the Voice of America, a multi-language broadcast that provided war news from the U. S. point of view. After the war, the Voice of America became part of the State Department and continued to broadcast pro-American content into the Soviet Union.

During World War I and World War II, propaganda was used extensively by both sides to gain support for their own side and to exaggerate the violence and harmful actions of the other side. In 1945, the OWI was dissolved, and some of its functions were incorporated into the Department of State. Today, propaganda use is more sophisticated and less obvious than it was in the past. Politicians carefully stage public events, generate news stories to air at particular times, and use social media to spread their messages.

1. Which of the following describes a major conflict within the OWI?
    a. bosses vs. workers
    b. writers vs. advertisers
    c. Republicans vs. Democrats
    d. militarists vs. pacifists
2. Why were some OWI advertisers against using propaganda posters with stylized and symbolic images?
    a. They thought that many Americans would disregard these posters as trivial.
    b. They believed that these posters were ugly and might alienate Americans.
    c. They felt that these posters put too great an emphasis on the horrors of war.
    d. They feared that many Americans would miss the point of these posters.
3. The writer states: “These qualities of propaganda have granted it a stigma that President Roosevelt (FDR) wanted to avoid.” Based on text clues, what does the word stigma mean?
    a. something that is complex and difficult to understand
    b. something that is boring and uninteresting
    c. something that is superficial and not important
    d. something that is shameful and socially unacceptable
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an Office of War Information? Provide at least two examples, with details and evidence from the passage to support your answer.

Rosie the Riveter

Today, it is no big deal to see a woman in the workplace. Women run big companies, work as sales clerks, and labor in factories. However, it was not until World War II that large numbers of women were allowed to work what had been considered men's jobs. Before the war, women were usually nurses, teachers, or secretaries. During the Great Depression, many women were discouraged from working because they would take jobs away from men. During the war, however, many new workers were needed to fill the positions of the men who had gone to fight in the war. The U.S. government used the character "Rosie the Riveter" to encourage women to participate in the war effort.

Who Was Rosie?

As more and more men were called into action, the labor force in the defense factories became smaller and smaller. These factories were responsible for producing the supplies needed for the war effort, such as weapons, airplanes, ships, and ammunition. These factories needed to keep operating, or the United States would risk losing the war. The U.S. government began to urge women to take men's places in the factories. Women answered the call, providing the needed labor to keep the war effort going.

A female worker character named "Rosie the Riveter" began appearing on propaganda posters all over the United States. Rosie was loyal, patriotic, and strong. Yet the poster was careful not to make Rosie look masculine. There was even a popular 1942 song about Rosie, linking her work on the assembly line to American victory. One line depicts Rosie as a key part of the war effort: "She's a part of the assembly line. / She's making history, / Working for victory, / Rosie the Riveter." The song meant to draw women into the workforce by linking their jobs with the male soldiers' efforts in the war.

Government propaganda posters directly linked women working in factories to winning the war.

Image source: The Library of Congress

In May 1943, American painter Norman Rockwell created an image of Rosie for the cover of the popular newspaper the Saturday Evening Post. A woman with goggles on her forehead and muscular arms sat eating a sandwich with a riveting gun across her lap. A riveting gun is a tool used to drive fasteners into metal. Yet Rosie was still feminine. Her hair was curled and she wore lipstick.

She used Mein Kampf—the book written by Nazi leader Adolf Hitler—as her footstool. The woman in the painting represented the new role of the American woman.

Rockwell's Rosie gave an idealized look to the women who had stepped into the traditional male jobs. An American flag in the background and a halo over Rosie's head emphasized her importance in the war effort. The halo was a common image in war propaganda, meant to symbolize the goodness and compassion of the American side. The painting encouraged women to do their part for the war effort.

Recognize this poster? The Westinghouse "We Can Do It!" poster has become an iconic image of "Rosie the Riveter," even though it is not the original Rosie!

Image source: National Park Service

Rockwell was the second man to capture the persona of Rosie. One year earlier, J. Howard Miller designed the well-known poster "We Can Do It!" for the Westinghouse Corporation and War Production Coordinating Committee. Featuring a woman rolling up the sleeves of her blue work shirt and wearing a red bandana, the poster was displayed in Westinghouse helmet factories. Miller based his image on a picture of Geraldine Hoff-Doyle, who worked at a factory in Michigan. Miller's image captured Monroe's industrious spirit, but his painting was not just of a riveter. In fact, Westinghouse called her "Molly the Molder" or "Helen the Helmet-maker," depending on what factory the poster was hanging in. Yet the woman in the "We Can Do It!" poster is known in popular culture today as Rosie.

The Real Rosies

Women answered Rosie's call to action. When the war started, women made up just one-quarter of the workforce, but by the end they made up one-third. This amounted to 19 million women working, with 3 million of them in defense factories. At first, America's Rosies were low-income and minority working women attracted to the higher-paying factory jobs. Defense factories needed more workers, and began recruiting high school graduates and married women as well

Clerical workers, such as secretaries, were also in high demand during the war. Some women preferred the office jobs because they had shorter hours and were less physically demanding than factory jobs. Working mothers gravitated toward these jobs because the shorter hours made it easier for mothers to work all day in an office and then care for their homes and families in the evening. Until the war was over, mothers were encouraged to leave their oldest children in charge of the family so they could work. Many women enjoyed learning new skills and taking full responsibility for their families' needs.

Still, this double life was hard for many women, especially because they were treated differently than men in the workplace. Even though the government was urging women to fill industrial jobs, factories were not a welcoming place for women. Women were paid much less than men for the same job, and many bosses and unions did not treat women workers fairly.

Life for Rosie After the War

When World War II ended, women were asked to leave the jobs they had filled in the absence of men. They were expected to return to their homes or take a more traditional job. Many returned to raising their families full-time, and some were forced out of good-paying jobs and into their former, lower-paid jobs. However, because of the high casualty rate, many men did not come back from the war, and some were seriously disabled. Thus, there were still "men's jobs" to be filled, just fewer of them. Women who had lost their husbands particularly needed the better-paid work and tried to stay in the factories.

Although many women had to leave their jobs when men returned from war, American women and their place in society had been transformed. The contributions of American women had helped the United States during the war and changed the way women were viewed in society. Rosie continued to remind Americans of the determination and ability that women had. The image of Rosie was later adopted by feminists in the 1970s and 1980s in an effort to further move women towards greater social and economic equality.

1. Which statement about "Rosie the Riveter" is correct?
    a. The images of Rosie all looked the same.
    b. Rosie always appeared very masculine.
    c. Artists always made sure to make Rosie appear feminine.
    d. The image of Rosie was never based on an actual woman.
2. What type of job is considered clerical work?
    a. filing
    b. cooking
    c. riveting
    d. welding
3. Why did feminists adopt the Rosie image after World War II?
    a. Rosie looked like a man.
    b. Rosie did not adhere to government expectations.
    c. Rosie believed in overthrowing the social norms for personal success.
    d. Rosie showed that women could be important members of the workforce.
4. How did the real Rosies compare with the image of "Rosie the Riveter" in terms of both appearance and traits? Use examples from the text to support your viewpoint.

Famous Fighters

During World War II, thousands of U.S. soldiers risked their lives fighting for their country. Many of these soldiers belonged to units that became famous for their actions in battle, such as the 5307th Composite Unit called "Merrill's Marauders," the 82nd Airborne called the "All Americans," and the 332nd Fighter Group called the "Tuskegee Airmen." This reading passage will focus on the wartime roles and actions of three other well-known fighting units: the Flying Tigers, the 101st Airborne, and the 3rd Army.

Flying Tigers

The American Volunteer Group (AVG), called the Flying Tigers, consisted of American pilots who volunteered to serve in the unit. In 1941, Japan had taken control of large areas in China, including ports and railroads. As a result, the nationalist government of China was in danger of being cut off from the rest of the world. To link this government with the Allies, the United States wanted to gain control of the skies over China so that it could fly supplies to the Chinese government.

Members of the Flying Tigers head toward their planes.

The 100 pilots who joined the Flying Tigers came from the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marines. President Franklin Roosevelt gave these pilots permission to resign their respective positions and enlist in the AVG. Technically, the AVG flew for the Chinese Air Force. Lead by retired U.S. Army Air Corps Captain Claire L. Chennault, the Flying Tigers consisted of some of the best fighter pilots in the United States. They flew P-40 Tomahawk fighter planes and painted the mouth of a tiger shark on the noses of these planes.

The Flying Tigers fought Japanese pilots in the skies over Burma and China for 28 weeks. Despite being outnumbered 10 to 1, the Flying Tigers wrenched control of the air space above Southeast Asia from the Japanese. For example, on Christmas Day of 1941, the AVG downed 20 of 78 Japanese planes without losing a single plane of their own. One reason for the success of the Flying Tigers was their use of unorthodox flying tactics, diving away from attacks rather than turning to fight if the pilots were at a disadvantage. In fact, a radio broadcast from Tokyo complained that the AVG were not using traditional tactics.

The success of the Flying Tigers can also be attributed to their ingenuity at repairing their planes. Since they had a shortage of parts, the pilots used hand tools and makeshift materials to patch up damaged aircraft. The Tomahawk planes of the AVG had advantages and disadvantages compared to the Japanese planes. The Tomahawks were faster than the Japanese planes, but they could not ascend or maneuver as quickly.

In total, the Flying Tigers downed 300 Japanese planes and lost 14 of their own pilots. The AVG succeeded in protecting the Chinese capital of Chungking and the Burma Road, as well as in providing supplies for the Chinese government. In July 1942, the Flying Tigers were disbanded, and many of the group's pilots joined the U.S. 10th Air Force.

101st Airborne

The U.S. Army activated the 101st Airborne Division for duty in World War II in August, 1942. During the next 16 months, this division, called the Screaming Eagles, trained extensively. This training involved the creation of glider troops and an elite parachute unit.

Under the command of U.S. Brig. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, the 101st Airborne saw its first combat on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The division was given the vital mission of landing paratroops west of Utah Beach in Normandy to secure positions for the Allied invasion of German-occupied France. Enormous numbers of Allied troops would be storming the beaches of Normandy into heavy German machine-gun fire in the morning. The Screaming Eagles' job was to parachute in behind the German defenses, weaken their forces, and capture the roads and bridges the Allied 4th Infantry would cross to move inland once they landed.

Because of dense fog, many paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions missed their landing zones. As a result, these troops were scattered over the countryside and had difficulty finding their units. In fact, many soldiers ended up forming impromptu units and fighting in small groups. This situation prohibited the Screaming Eagles from fighting in organized battle formations as planned. Also, since they missed their drop zones, some paratroops descended in areas densely occupied by German soldiers and were killed before hitting the ground. Others landed in a swamp and were drowned. In total, about 1,500 soldiers of the 101st Airborne were killed or captured.

However, this confusion had one advantage for the Allies. The chaotic landing of the 82nd and 101st Airborne also confused the Germans, who had difficulty understanding the exact size and location of the divisions. Even though the Screaming Eagles were forced to improvise, they succeeded in securing the exits from Utah Beach in their zone and contacting the 4th Infantry Division.

Several months later, the 101st Airborne defended the city of Bastogne, Belgium, against a large German assault. The German commander sent an ultimatum to the Screaming Eagles, telling them to surrender or face annihilation. In response, the U.S. commander, Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, sent a note that said, "Nuts!" The following day, the 3rd Army led by U.S. Lt. Gen. George S. Patton relieved the battered 101st Airborne. Soon the German army was forced to retreat. This conflict came to be called the Battle of the Bulge.

The 3rd Army

During World War II, the 3rd Army was sent overseas in early 1943. They established headquarters in England and began to train for the Normandy invasion. General George Patton was put in charge of this

group. Patton was strict, tough, and a brilliant tactician, especially with tank warfare. His men called him "Old Blood and Guts" because of his experience and gruff demeanor.

Holding binoculars, Gen. Patton stands by a U.S. tank.

The 3rd Army joined the Allied invasion force in France in August 1944. Patton gave his army one general order: "Seek out the enemy, trap him, and destroy him." Using Patton's unconventional strategies, the army swept through northern France. They constantly attacked, despite bad weather and rugged terrain. Before long, the army captured the cities of Laval, Le Mans, Mayenne, and Reims.

Constantly on the run, the German forces launched a major offensive in late 1944 in a desperate attempt to halt the advancing Allies. Using two Panzer (tank) armies, the German military pushed toward Liege and Antwerp. The Allies were caught off guard by the attack. The 101st Airborne managed to stop the Germans at Bastogne. However, the German forces surrounded the city and bombarded it constantly. The 101st Airborne could hold out only a few more days.

During a meeting, the Allied commanders assigned Patton and his 3rd Army the task of relieving Bastogne and stopping the German advance. However, at the time, the 3rd Army was about to launch an attack many miles south of this city. Therefore, this massive army had to pull back, turn 90 degrees to the north, and head to Bastogne. The commanders asked Patton how long it would take him to perform this maneuver. Patton said he could have two divisions at Bastogne in two days.

The commanders thought Patton was exaggerating or crazy. It seemed impossible to complete this complicated operation in such a short time. Nevertheless, Patton insisted and put his strategy into action.

Never before had such a large army changed directions and covered ground so quickly. The entire 3rd Army reached Bastogne in three days. As his soldiers headed for Bastogne, Patton is reported as saying: "No other army in the world could do this. No other soldiers could do what these men are doing. By God, I'm proud of them."

The 3rd Army stopped the German force at Bastogne and began to push them back to the German border. In March 1945, this army trapped thousands of German soldiers near the Moselle River. Then the 3rd Army swept across southwestern Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria.

In total, the 3rd Army liberated 81,522 square miles of land, which included about 12,000 cities and towns. They also wounded 386,200 enemy soldiers and killed 144,500 more. In contrast, the 3rd Army had 96,241 wounded and 16,596 killed.

1. Which of the following was a main goal of the Flying Tigers?
    a. to help Allied forces defeat the Japanese in Burma
    b. to support U.S. naval operations in the southern Pacific
    c. to protect supply routes for the Chinese government
    d. to gain control of the air space over Japan
2. Why was the landing of the 101st Airborne Division in France chaotic?
    a. The division landed in fog, causing them to miss their drop zones.
    b. The division's radio equipment broke, preventing them from communicating effectively.
    c. The division leaders misinterpreted orders, causing some units to go in the wrong direction.
    d. The division leaders misjudged the enemy's strength, limiting the soldiers' effectiveness in combat.
3. What text structure did the writer use to organize information about the 3rd Army?
    a. cause/effect
    b. chronological order
    c. comparison/contrast
    d. most to least important
4. What traits did the Flying Tigers, 101st Airborne, and the 3rd Army have in common? What inspired the exceptional actions of these groups? Explain by providing at least two examples, with details and evidence from the passage to support your answer.

The Doolittle Raid (Eyewitnesstohistory.com)

Once the shock of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor subsided, the focus of American military planners turned to retaliation - even if it was only symbolic. A few weeks after the attack, Lt. Colonel James H. Doolittle presented his superiors with a daring and unorthodox plan. B-25 bombers, normally land-based, would be transported by an aircraft carrier to within striking-distance of the Japanese mainland and launched to attack a number of cities.

A top-secret training program began immediately. The major problem was to learn how to force the bomber, which normally required a minimum of 1200 feet of runway for takeoff, to get airborne using the 450 feet of a carrier deck. After weeks of training, the volunteer crews flew to San Francisco where they boarded the USS Hornet and joined a small flotilla of ships headed for Japan.

The attack was launched on the morning of April 18, 1942, 150 miles further from Japan than planned out of fear that the task force had been spotted by the Japanese. Doolittle gunned the lead plane and

lumbered successfully off the carrier's flight deck. Fifteen planes followed, each one skimming just above the waves and carrying a payload of four bombs. Thirteen bombers targeted Tokyo; the others struck Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe. Flying low, the planes were cheered by civilians who thought they were Japanese.

After dropping their bomb-loads on their assigned targets, the attackers flew on until they ran out of fuel. Fifteen of the crews landed in Japanese-occupied China and made it to friendly territory with the aid of Chinese peasants. One crew landed in the Soviet Union and was immediately interned. Eight airmen were captured by the Japanese, four of whom were later executed.

Although the raid was materially but a pin prick, its psychological impact was monumental. It elevated the flagging American moral and destroyed the Japanese conviction that they were invulnerable to air attack. The humiliated Japanese command hastily planned an attack on the American outpost at Midway - an attack whose failure would become the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

Takeoff:

Lt. Ted Lawson piloted one of the attacking bombers. We join his story as he watches the strike leader, Colonel James H. Doolittle, gun the engines of his B-25 and attempt to take off from the carrier deck:

"A Navy man stood at the bow of the ship, and off to the left, with a checkered flag in his hand. He gave Doolittle, who was at the controls, the signal to begin racing his engines again. He did it by swinging the flag in a circle and making it go faster and faster. Doolittle gave his engines more and more throttle until I was afraid that he'd burn them up. A wave crashed heavily at the bow and sprayed the deck.

Then I saw that the man with the flag was waiting, timing the dipping of the ship so that Doolittle's plane would get the benefit of a rising deck for its take-off. Then the man gave a new signal. Navy boys pulled the blocks from under Doolittle's wheels. Another signal and Doolittle released his brakes and the bomber moved forward.

With full flaps, engines at full throttle and his left wing far out over the port side of the Hornet, Doolittle's plane waddled and then lunged slowly into the teeth of the gale that swept down the deck. His left wheel stuck on the white line as if it were a track. His right wing, which had barely cleared the wall of the island as he taxied and was guided up to the starting line, extended nearly to the edge of the starboard side.

We watched him like hawks, wondering what the wind would do to him, and whether we could get off in that little run toward the bow. If he couldn't, we couldn't.

Doolittle picked up more speed and held to his line, and, just as the Hornet lifted itself up on the top of a wave and cut through it at full speed, Doolittle's plane took off. He had yards to spare. He hung his ship almost straight up on its props, until we could see the whole top of his B-25. Then he leveled off and I watched him come around in a tight circle and shoot low over our heads-straight down the line painted on the deck."

The Attack:

We rejoin Lawson's story as he pilot's his plane towards its bomb target in Tokyo:

"I was almost on the first of our objectives before I saw it. I gave the engines full throttle as Davenport [co-pilot] adjusted the prop pitch to get a better grip on the air. We climbed as quickly as possible to 1,500 feet, in the manner which we had practiced for a month and had discussed for three additional weeks.

There was just time to get up there, level off, attend to the routine of opening the bomb bay, make a short run and let fly with the first bomb. The red light blinked on my instrument board, and I knew the first 500-pounder had gone.

Our speed was picking up. The red light blinked again, and I knew Clever [bombardier] had let the second bomb go. Just as the light blinked, a black cloud appeared about 100 yards or so in front of us and rushed past at great speed. Two more appeared ahead of us, on about the line of our wingtips, and they too swept past. They had our altitude perfectly, but they were leading us too much.

The third red light flickered, and, since we were now over a flimsy area in the southern part of the city, the fourth light blinked. That was the incendiary, which I knew would separate as soon as it hit the wind and that dozens of small fire bombs would molt from it.

The moment the fourth red light showed I put the nose of the Ruptured Duck into a deep dive. I had changed the course somewhat for the short run leading up to the dropping of the incendiary. Now, as I dived, I looked back and out I got a quick, indelible vision of one of our 500-pounders as it hit our steel-smelter target. The plant seemed to puff out its walls and then subside and dissolve in a black-and-red cloud. . .

Our actual bombing operation, from the time the first one went until the dive, consumed not more than thirty seconds."

Crash Landing:

About 6 1/2 hours later, Lawson's plane is low on fuel as the crew spots the Chinese mainland and Lawson attempts to land on a beach in a driving rain:

"So I spoke into the inter-phone and told the boys we were going down. I told them to take off their chutes, but didn't have time to take off mine, and to be sure their life jackets were on, as mine was. I put the flaps down and also the landing wheels, and I remember thinking momentarily that if this was Japanese occupied land we could make a pretty good fight of it while we lasted. Our front machine gun was detachable.

. . . Davenport was calling off the airspeed. He had just said, 'One hundred and ten,' when, for some reason I'll never understand, both engines coughed and lost their power.

In the next split second my hands punched forward and with one motion I hit both throttles, trying to force life back into the engines, and both prop pitch controls. And I tried to pull back the stick to keep the nose up, so we could squash in. We were about a quarter of a mile off shore when we hit.

The two main landing wheels caught the top of a wave as the plane sagged. And the curse of desperation and disappointment that I instinctively uttered was drowned out by the most terrifying noise I ever heard.

It was as if some great hand had reached down through the storm, seized the plane and crunched it in a closing fist.

Then nothing. Nothing but peace. A strange, strange, peaceful feeling. There wasn't any pain. A great, restful quiet surrounded me.

Then I must have swallowed some water, or perhaps the initial shock was wearing off, for I realized vaguely but inescapably that I was sitting in my pilot's seat on the sand, under water.

I was in about ten or fifteen feet of water, I sensed remotely. I remember thinking: I'm dead. Then: No, I'm just hurt. Hurt bad. I couldn't move, but there was no feeling of being trapped, or of fighting for air.

I thought then of Ellen [Cpt. Lawson's wife] - strange thoughts filled with vague reasoning but little torment. A growing uneasiness came through my numb body. I wished I had left Ellen some money. I thought of money for my mother, too, in those disembodied seconds that seemed to have no beginning or end.

I guess I must have taken in more water, for suddenly I knew that the silence, the peace and the reverie were things to fight against. I could not feel my arms, yet I knew I reached down and unbuckled the seat strap that was holding me to the chair. I told myself that my guts were loose.

I came up into the driving rain that beat down out of the blackening sky. I couldn't swim. I was paralyzed. I couldn't think clearly, but I undid my chute.

The waves lifted me and dropped me. One wave washed me against a solid object, and, after I had stared at it in the gloom for a while, I realized that it was one of the wings of the plane. I noticed that the engine had been ripped off the wing, leaving only a tangle of broken wire and cable. And with the recognition came a surge of nausea and despair, for only now did I connect my condition with the condition of the plane.

Another wave took me away from the wing and when it turned me around I saw behind me the two tail rudders of the ship, sticking up out of the water like twin tombstones."

1. What was Lt. Colonel James H. Doolittle’s plan to retaliate against Japan after their attack on the United States at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii?
2. What major problem did the American bombers have to overcome if they were going to be flown off of an aircraft carrier?

3. Why did the American bombers have to leave the aircraft carrier 150 miles earlier than planned?
4. What Japanese cities were attacked by the American bombers?
5. Where did the American bombers land after bombing Japan?
6. What happened to some of the American airmen who were captured by the Japanese?
7. How did the Doolittle Raid help the American war effort?
8. What problems did Doolittle face while trying to get his B-25 Bomber to take off of the aircraft carrier?
9. How long did the bombing operation or bombing run last over Tokyo for Ted Larson's crew?
10. On what type of terrain in China did Ted Larson attempt to crash land his bomber?
11. Why do you think America wanted to bomb Tokyo, Japan so badly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?

Doris Miller Analysis

Doris Miller, known as "Dorie," was born in Waco, Texas, in 1919 to Connery and Henrietta Miller. He was the third of four sons and grew up helping around the house, cooking meals and doing laundry, as well as working on the family farm. He played fullback on the football team at Waco's A.J. Moore High School.

He worked on his father's farm until 1938 when he enlisted in the Navy as mess attendant (kitchen worker) to earn money for his family. At that time, the Navy was segregated so combat positions were not open to African Americans.

After training in Norfolk, Virginia, and serving a stint on the ammunition ship Pyro, Miller was assigned to the battleship West Virginia in 1940. The ship was in port at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Dorie rose that morning at 6 a.m. to begin work and was doing laundry when the siren went off warning of anattack. He immediately reported to his assigned battle station when word came that the ship's captain was injured on the bridge. Dorie rushed up and picked up the captain and brought him down to the first aid station.

He returned to deck and saw that the Japanese planes were dive-bombing the U.S. Naval Fleet and they had little defense. He picked up a 50-caliber antiaircraft machine gun (which he had never been trained on) and managed to shoot down three to four enemy aircraft. (In the chaos of the attack, reports varied, and not even Miller was sure how many he hit.) He fired until he ran out of ammunition and by then the men were being ordered to abandon ship. The ship had been severely damaged and was sinking. Of the 1,541 men on board during the attack, 130 were killed and 52 wounded.

“It wasn’t hard,” said Miller after the battle. “I just pulled the trigger and she worked fine. I had watched the others with these guns. I guess I fired her for about 15 minutes.”

On April 1, 1942 Miller was commended by the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, and on May 27, 1942, he received the Navy Cross for his extraordinary courage in battle. His rank was raised to Mess Attendant First Class on June 1, 1942.

As happened with other war heroes, Dorie Miller was sent on a tour across the US to raise money for the war. However, Miller he was soon called back to serve on a new escort carrier the USS Liscome Bay. The ship was operating in the Pacific near the Gilbert Islands in the Fall 1943. On the morning of November 24th, the ship was hit by a Japanese submarine’s torpedo. The torpedo detonated the bomb magazine on the carrier and sank the ship within minutes. Of the 918 sailors on board, Miller and 645 others were killed.

In 1973, the Navy commissioned a ship called the USS Miller in his honor. There is also a Dorie Miller Park in Hawaii as well as schools and buildings throughout the U.S. named in his honor.

1. Who was Dorie Miller? Why did he receive the Naval Cross?
2. What is significant about an African American receiving the Naval Cross?
3. What was life like for African Americans serving in the military during World War II?
4. Why was Dorie Miller used on this naval recruitment poster?

Jesse Owens

Jesse Owens, one of the greatest athletes in history, became a symbol of courage and dignity for his achievements in the 1936 Olympics, which were held in Berlin, Germany. On the eve of World War II, the athletic accomplishments of this African American hero shattered Adolf Hitler's claims of racial superiority.

Early Years

Jesse Owens was born on September 12, 1913, in Oakville, Alabama, to Henry and Mary Owens. His full name was James Cleveland Owens, and he was the youngest of ten children in a family of sharecroppers. Sharecroppers were farmers who did not own their land. Instead, they worked farms owned by someone else and paid rent and gave a part of their harvest for the land. The Owens family, like most sharecroppers, was very poor.

When Jesse's older sister got a job in the northern city of Cleveland, Ohio, she wrote to her family about the job opportunities in the North. The family decided to move to Cleveland. Jesse's father and brothers got jobs in the steel mills, and Jesse started school. When Jesse started at Bolton Elementary School, he told the teacher his name was "J.C.," his family nickname. She thought he said "Jesse" and the name stuck.

Starting to Train

At Fairmount Junior High School in Cleveland, Jesse Owens met the man who became his first coach, Charles Riley. Riley would make a big difference in the life of young Owens. He recognized Jesse's talent and started to train him for track events. Jesse had always loved to run. He began to compete—and win—breaking records along the way. He excelled at the 100-yard and 220-yard races, in the high jump and the long jump.

In high school, Jesse continued to train, race, and win. In his last year of high school, he won 75 of his 79 races. At the national high school track championships that year, he won the long jump, broke the record for the 220- yard dash, and tied the world record for the 100-yard dash.

A Track Star

Owens went on to college at Ohio State University. There, he continued to be a track star, but he also faced racial prejudice in school and in athletics. Because he was African American, he was not allowed to live on campus.

When the track team traveled to competitions, he and the other African American athletes were often not allowed to eat in restaurants or sleep in the same facilities as the white athletes.

However, Owens did not let this treatment affect his performance. In fact, he went on to become a legend in college athletics. In one particular competition, the Big Ten Championships held on May 25,

1935, he showed the traits of a champion. He broke the world records in the 220-yard dash, the 220-yard hurdles, the long jump, and he tied the world record in the 100-yard dash.

The 1936 Olympics

Owens easily qualified for the U.S. Olympic team in 1936, winning his three key events: the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, and the long jump. Owens was competing for more than just medals for the United States. The 1936 Olympics were held in Berlin, Germany. At that time, Germany was under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. It was just three years before the outbreak of World War II.

One of the central beliefs of the Nazis was in their own racial superiority. Hitler wanted to use the Olympics to show the world that the "Aryan" race, as shown in white Germans, was the peak of athletic perfection.

In his performance at the 1936 Olympics, Jesse Owens challenged Hitler's racist propaganda. With outstanding athletic ability and quiet dignity, he dominated the games, becoming part of sports history and a hero to millions. It began with the 100-meter dash, which he won in a world record–tying the time of 10.3 seconds. Traditionally, the leader of the host nation congratulated the gold medal winners, but Hitler refused. Although his behavior outraged many people, it did not affect Owens. He continued to perform with grace and humility.

Owens next triumphed in the long jump, setting a new Olympic record of 26 feet, 5 ¼ inches. In that event, he defeated the German favorite, Luz Long. Long was tall, blond, and blue-eyed, considered a specimen of Aryan perfection. Long went against the Nazi racist policies and warmly congratulated his African American opponent.

Owens's next event was the 200-meter dash, which he won while setting another Olympic record of 20.7 seconds. In his last event, the 4 × 100-meter relay, Owens ran as part of a team that beat all the other competition by 15 yards, setting another world record.

As the Olympics came to a close, Owens was clearly its star. He had won four gold medals— the first American to achieve that distinction. Always gracious, he received the praise that came from around the world with dignity. Hitler refused to acknowledge Owens's achievement in any way. In spite of this, Owens won over many fans, including many German citizens who were impressed with his athletic performance

Returning Home

When Owens returned to the United States after the Olympics, he was welcomed as a hero. However, America was still divided along racial lines, and he still faced racial prejudice. For example, when he and his wife were in New York City for a celebration in his honor, they could not find a hotel that would allow African American guests. He was still unable to sit in the front of a public bus and had to sit in the "colored" section in the back.

At that time, there were no professional track meets, where athletes could compete and win prize money. Athletes were not sponsored by different companies, like they are today. Instead, Owens, who had a family to provide for, took odd jobs to make money. He tried to make money any way he could, including racing against horses in spectacles that seemed humiliating to an athlete and a man of such achievements.

After several years of struggling, Owens became a public speaker and found a job working with young people in a Chicago Boys' Club. In the 1950s, he became a goodwill ambassador for the United States. He traveled to Asia, gave speeches, and also ran athletic programs.

Later in his life, Owens received important recognition for his accomplishments. He was inducted into the Track and Field Hall of Fame in 1974. In 1976, President Gerald R. Ford awarded him the Medal of Freedom. Owens, who died in 1980 at the age of 66, was also honored after his death. In 1990, President George H. W. Bush awarded him the Congressional Gold Medal. In his speech, Bush summarized the legacy of this great Olympic champion, noting his "unrivaled athletic triumph, but more than that, a triumph for all humanity."

Today, Jesse Owens is honored and remembered for the courage and greatness he showed at the 1936 Olympics. Through his athleticism, but also through his quiet dignity, he defied Nazi claims to racial superiority, becoming one of the great and enduring symbols of African American achievement.

1. How did Charles Riley impact Jesse Owens?
    a. He recognized Owens's talent and coached him.
    b. He helped Owens find a job as a public speaker.
    c. He raised money to send Owens to the Olympics.
    d. He tried to prevent Owens from competing in the Olympics.
2. When Jesse Owens won his Olympic events, how did Adolf Hitler respond?
    a. He held a parade in his honor.
    b. He shook his hand and congratulated him.
    c. He changed the racial policies of the Nazi party.
    d. He refused to acknowledge Owens's achievements in any way.
3. What was life like for Owens after the 1936 Olympics?
    a. He struggled to provide for his family.
    b. He found new acceptance in the United States.
    c. He decided to move to Canada to pursue track.
    d. He continued to be a major athlete and became wealthy.
4. In what ways did Jesse Owens's achievements challenge the racial policies of Adolf Hitler? Use details from the passage to support your answer.