



Activity: Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice: Virtual Field Trip to the Meuse-Argonne Battlefield



Guiding question:

How does physical evidence help us understand the service, achievements, and sacrifices made by American Expeditionary Forces during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and along the Western Front during World War I?

DEVELOPED BY CHRIS BUNIN AND TERESA GOODIN

Grade Level(s): 9-12

Subject(s): Social Studies, Art History

Overview

In this activity students use an ArcGIS Online Story Map to take a virtual field trip to the Meuse-Argonne battlefield where they explore the experiences of the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Students have the opportunity to see 3D visualizations of World War I (WWI) tunnels, trenches, bunkers, and ruins; follow a go-cam video showing where American doughboys, as American soldiers were known, fought; and learn why American Battle Monument Commission (ABMC) monuments and cemeteries were established along the Western Front to commemorate American service, achievement, and sacrifice during WWI.

Historical Context

After the end of WWI, the U.S. Congress established the ABMC to create war memorials and permanent U.S. military burial grounds in honor of those who lost their lives on foreign soil.

The Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France, which covers 130.5 acres, has more than 14,000 graves, the largest number of American military dead in Europe. Most of them lost their lives during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive of WWI.

Seven miles south of the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery is the WWI Montfaucon American Monument. The 200-foot granite Doric column towers over the ruins of the former village. It commemorates American victory at the Meuse-Argonne Offensive from September 26, 1918 to November 11, 1918, when the American First Army forced the enemy to retreat, helping to lead to the Armistice.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to

- Identify and explain what evidence from WWI is still present on France's landscape 100 years later.

“To truly honor the fallen, we must ensure that future generations are able to retrace their steps in sacrifice, and if students cannot travel to this hallowed ground, we must bring it to them. By digitizing the Meuse-Argonne battlefield and embedding pictures, primary sources, and videos into a Web Map, teachers now have a resource that connects today’s students with World War I in an authentic and meaningful way.”
—Chris Bunin and Teresa Goodin

- Identify the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, explain why it was built along the Western Front, and discuss the role it serves today.
- Use primary source evidence to explain the significance of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, and Montfaucon American Monument.
- Use primary source evidence to identify examples of service, achievement, and sacrifice during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.
- Explain why the Medal of Honor was awarded to Freddy Stowers and other American soldiers.

Standards Connections

Connections to Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Connections to C3 Framework

D2.Geo.1.9-12. Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects on events in the past.

D2.His.15.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

Materials

- Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet
- Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Answer Key
- Computer with Internet access for each student.
- Optional – [Getting Started with ArcGIS Handout](#).
- Lost Battalion Primary Source Excerpts

Lesson Preparation

- Set up classroom technology and test all online resources before class.
- Print one copy of the Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet for each student.
- Make sure you test the online maps and check your technology functionality. **Do not use Internet Explorer. It has compatibility issues with ArcGIS Online.**

Procedure (60 minutes)

- Pass out the Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet to each student.
- Have students go to the [“Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice” Story Map](#).
- Demonstrate for the students how to use the interactive Story Map.
- Explain that the Meuse-Argonne Offensive was one of the largest land offensives in American military history and helped bring an end to WWI. The battle took place along one of the most highly fortified areas of the Western Front and resulted in over 120,000 casualties. Following WWI, the U.S. Congress established the ABMC to serve as the “guardian of America’s overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials and to honor the service, achievements, and sacrifice of U.S. Armed Forces.” During the next 45 minutes (teacher discretion) the students will interact with this map and take a virtual field trip to visit the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, the Montfaucon American Monument, and key sites.
- Have students navigate the Story Map using the Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet. Monitor their progress by providing technical, content, and primary source analysis support.

Closure: When students have completed the activity, review questions and answers while projecting the ArcGIS Online map. Highlight areas mentioned during the discussion/review. Key discussion points include, but are not limited to:

- What did you learn about WWI and the Meuse-Argonne Offensive during the “field trip?”
- What evidence is still visible on France’s landscape that reminds us that the Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the site of one of the most important battles of WWI?

- What did you discover that indicates service, achievement, and sacrifice by American forces?
- Point out the five important heights that helped control the region: Montfaucon, Romagne Heights, Heights of the Meuse, Argonne Forest, and Barricourt Heights.
- Why is Stowers important in American history? Did anything surprise you about his story and Medal of Honor? How about the other headstones and soldiers you visited during the field trip? What did you notice?
- What role do you think ABMC cemeteries and memorials play in commemorating American service, achievement, and sacrifice?

Assessment

- Students complete the attached Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet. Teachers review and grade their answers and contributions to classroom discussion.

Methods for Extension

- Students may complete the following ABMC lessons about the Meuse-Argonne Offensive: “It’s Now or Never: The Meuse-Argonne Offensive,” or “Geography is War: The Case of the Lost Battalion.”

Adaptations

- The class can complete this activity using one computer and LCD projector.

Honoring Service, Achievements and Sacrifice Student Directions and Worksheet

1. Click on the link for the map: "[Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice.](#)"
2. The map contains the following important features about the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne:

Stop 1 Vauquois Hill: Geo-tagged images and 3D video from Vauquois Hill, France

Stop 2 Montfaucon: Geo-tagged images and videos from Montfaucon-d'Argonne France

Stop 3 Romagne Heights: Geo-tagged images from Romagne, France

Stop 4 Argonne Forest: Geo-tagged images from the Argonne Forest, France

Stop 5 Meuse Heights: Geo-tagged images from the Heights of the Meuse, France

Stop 6 Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery: Geo-tagged images; Medal of Honor citations; videos from Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery

Railroads: Railroads through or near the battlefield

Rivers: Two major rivers on the battlefield

German Lines: Major German defensive lines on battlefield

Hindenburg Line: Strongest of the German defensive lines

Important Heights: Major heights of the Meuse-Argonne battlefield

Meuse-Argonne Area: Battlefield

STOP 1 – VAUQUOIS HILL

Explore the images and video. Then answer Q1 – Q3.

Q1: Watch the 3D video of the tunnels and trenches and list three things you notice or three things that surprise you about these WWI artifacts.

Q2: This area has been preserved and remains a historical site in France. Based on the video and images, why do you think this area has been preserved?

Q3: What evidence of service, sacrifice and/or achievements do you see in the images and/or videos that you viewed?

STOP 2 - MONTFAUCON

Explore images and videos. Answer Q4 – Q7.

Q4: Why do you think this area has been preserved and an American memorial was built?

Q5: Watch 3D video of Montfaucon (located in the field behind the monument) and list three significant facts about the Montfaucon American Monument.

Q6: Watch the Panoramic Video from Montfaucon (located on top of the monument) and list three words or phrases that describe the landscape surrounding Montfaucon American Monument.

Q7: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics).

STOP 3 – ROMAGNE HEIGHTS

Explore images and videos. Answer Q8 – Q10.

Q8: Watch the “go-cam” video of “Where Doughboys Fought” and list three facts about the landscape around Romagne and within the Meuse-Argonne battlefield.

Q9: Watch the 3D video of the “Command Bunker” and list three facts or things that surprise you about this fortification that still stands along the Western Front.

Q10: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics).

STOP 4 – ARGONNE FOREST

Explore images. Answer Q11 - Q12.

Q11: Explore images about the Lost Battalion and German fortifications. List three words or phrases that describe the landscape and features in this area.

Q12: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics).

STOP 5 – HEIGHTS OF THE MEUSE

Explore images. Answer Q13 – Q15.

Q13: Explore the images of the landscape. List three words or phrases that describe the landscape and features in this area.

Q14: Why do you think the Heights of the Meuse were important to American forces?

Q15: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images, documents, and/or videos that you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics).

STOP 6 – THE MEUSE-ARGONNE AMERICAN CEMETERY

Click on the image near the “entrance gates” and answer Q16.

Q16: Why is it important to create gates of entry/departure at a cemetery? What do you think they represent?

Click on the map note that looks like a “notepad” in the cemetery and read the U.S. Army story about Stowers. Answer Q17.

Q17: List three things you learned about Stowers.

Choose an American flag at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery and click on the image of the medal. This will take you to Medal of Honor recipients from WWI on the U.S. Army website. Find the name of the recipient on the alphabetical list and read the citation. When you are finished reading answer Q18.

Q18: Whose citation did you read? Why was this individual awarded the Medal of Honor? What examples of service, sacrifice, and achievement were present in their citation?

Watch the 3D video located on the “Meuse-Argonne Chapel.” Answer Q19.

Q19: List three things you learned about the chapel at Meuse-Argonne American cemetery.

Proceed to the Meuse-Argonne section. Reflect and answer Q20.

Q20: How is the American government “guarding” the service, sacrifice, and achievement of American soldiers who fought in this area of France? Identify and explain three ways.

Honoring Service, Achievements, and Sacrifice Answer Key

STOP 1 – VAUQUOIS HILL

Q1: Watch the 3D video of the tunnels and trenches and list three things you notice or three things that surprise you about these WWI artifacts.

Answers will vary. Key features that students will notice: the size of the craters, the tunnels and what the Germans left behind – beds, tables, unexploded ordnances, wine bottles, etc. Above ground they may be surprised by the appearance of the trench and the fact the trench is still there today.

Q2: This area has been preserved and remains a historical site in France. Based on the video and images, why do you think this area has been preserved?

Answers will vary. Key features/reasons for preservation: Vauquois Hill used to be home to a village now identified with a memorial. This area has some of the best-preserved German trenches from WWI, and it serves as a stark reminder of the destruction of WWI.

Q3: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics). *Answers will vary. Look for critical thinking and connections between these words and their observations.*

STOP 2 – MONTFAUCON

Q4: Explore the images and videos at this stop. Why do you think this area has been preserved and an American memorial built?

Answers will vary. Possible answers include: both sides wanted to gain control of Montfaucon because of its high elevation; gaining control of the site by the Allies was a significant point in the battle; and that the memorial built on the site provides a view of most of the battlefield.

Q5: Watch 3D video of Montfaucon (located in the field behind the monument) and list three significant facts about the Montfaucon American Monument.

Answers will vary. Possible answers include the size of the church that was destroyed; the German Observation post built inside the church; how close WWI artifacts are to the road; and the height of the memorial.

Q6: Watch the Panoramic Video from Montfaucon (located on top of the monument) and list three words or phrases that describe the landscape surrounding Montfaucon American Monument.

Answers will vary. Possible answers: how rural the area is, how many different landforms were part of the battlefield, how far away Vauquois (Stop 1) is from Montfaucon.

Q7: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images, documents, and/or videos that you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics).

Answers will vary. Look for critical thinking and connections between these words and their observations.

STOP 3 – ROMAGNE HEIGHTS

Q8: Watch the “go-cam” video of “Where Doughboys Fought” and list three facts about the landscape around Romagne and within the Meuse-Argonne battlefield.

Answers will vary. Possible answers: American soldiers didn’t fight in trenches, fought to gain control of a farm, the forests in the area, the pastures, etc.

Q9: Watch the 3D video of the “Command Bunker” and list three facts or things that surprise you about this fortification that still stands along the Western Front.

Answers will vary. Possible answers: Command bunkers were built on hills; how large the bunker is; how remarkable that the bunker still exists; the challenges soldiers on both sides must have faced.

Q10: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? *Answers will vary. Look for critical thinking and connections between these words and their observations.*

STOP 4– ARGONNE FOREST

Q11: Explore images about the Lost Battalion and German fortifications. List three words or phrases that describe the landscape and features in this area.

Answers will vary. Possible answers: How nice the German “rest” camp was just below where the Lost Battalion was located, the marker on the side of the road pointing down, the steepness of the area where the Lost Battalion fought.

Q12: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images and videos you viewed? *Answers will vary. Look for critical thinking and connections between these words and their observations.*

STOP 5 – HEIGHTS OF THE MEUSE

Q13: Explore images of the landscape. List three words or phrases that describe the landscape and features in this area.

Answers will vary. Possible answers: the rolling hills, the pill box on the side of the road, the farm house at the top of the heights, and the variation in the landscape.

Q14: Why do you think the Heights of the Meuse were important to American forces?

Answers will vary. Possible answers: Heights of the Meuse represented the last area of high ground within German control, but to win this battle the Americans had to take it from them.

Q15: What evidence of service, sacrifice, and/or achievements do you see in the images, documents, and/or videos that you viewed? (You may not see evidence for each of these characteristics). *Look for critical thinking and connections between these words and their observations.*

STOP 6 – MEUSE-ARGONNE AMERICAN CEMETERY

Q16: Why is it important to create gates of entry/departure at a cemetery? What do you think they represent?

Gates mark an entrance to an area with a specific purpose. Gates or a barred entrance in a cemetery may symbolize the gates of Heaven or the entrance of the departed into another realm.

Q17: List three things you learned about Stowers.

Possible answers: He continued to fight after being mortally wounded, he was the second African American Medal of Honor awardee from South Carolina, he didn't receive his award until 1991, how young he was when he died.

Q18: Whose citation did you read? Why was this individual awarded the Medal of Honor? What examples of service, sacrifice, and achievement were present in their citation?

Q19: List three things you learned about the chapel at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.

Possible answers: the flags of the principal allies, the stained glass windows, quotes on the walls, the battle lasted a month, and the chapel is located near the center of the battlefield.

Q20: How is the American government "guarding" the service, sacrifice, and achievement of American soldiers that fought in WWI in this area of France? Identify and explain three ways.

Look for critical thinking and connections between service, sacrifice, and achievements and the students' observations.