

Operation Cobra Source Analysis Answer Key

Source A

Using the narrative of Operation Cobra, use two colors to draw the routes and label the dates of the U.S. and German soldiers on the map.

Using the map, estimate how many miles a day soldiers traveled between the following cities.

- a. Caen to Saint-Lô: **50 km / 30 mi** b. Saint-Lô to Avranches: **40km / 25 mi**
c. Avranches to Mortain: **25km / 15 mi** d. Avranches to Falaise: **90 km / 50 mi**

Using the timeline and the map, estimate the distance Allied soldiers traveled from July 20 to August 7, 1944: **200 km / 125 miles**

The average pace for marching soldiers is two miles per hour. What factors might interfere with the rate of travel from city to city?

Being under fire, exhaustion, geography (hills, bocage, open farmland, ordinance craters), lack of food, lack of sleep, lack of trucks / trains, etc.

Source B

What event is being described in this article?

Opening day of battle for Operation Cobra and the carpet bombing of the German lines.

What is the author's purpose in writing about the event in this manner?

To inform American audiences that U.S. soldiers continue to overcome obstacles and reinforce that German forces are retreating. This will raise morale because people will believe that the war is coming to a close.

Why do you think that the bombing of the Allied front line receives such little attention in the article?

There may not have been much detail released by the time the article was published, but it would also cause families to worry about loved ones and question the military strategies of the generals in charge of operations.

What impression does it leave with the reader?

The war is making great strides in France and the Germans are scared of Allied forces.

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Source C

What event is Ernie Pyle writing about?

Being on the front lines of Operation Cobra when the soldiers were shelled by their own planes.

How does this account differ from the *New York Times* article of the same event?

This account has more detailed information about the experience of the soldier actually fighting in the war. Operation Cobra does not sound as positive or straight forward as the New York Times article makes it out to be.

What is the author's purpose in writing about the event in this manner?

To expose the reader to the perils and trials of soldiers who are fighting across Europe. This may save soldiers from having to directly tell their loved ones about the traumatic experiences of war.

How might that explain why details of this account are missing from the *New York Times* article?

If the *New York Times* article shared more detail about the soldier's experience, it would complicate the reporting of the operation details and open up military leadership for criticism. This could weaken morale at home. In addition, the reporter may not have been a direct witness to the action.

Why do you think Pyle's article was written so many days after the event?

Besides just the bombing itself, the first few days after the opening of Operation Cobra were fast-paced and likely chaotic. Pyle may not have had a spare minute to write if his unit was taking fire from German soldiers and/or crossing long distances.

Source D

What battles/events recently transpired that would have affected the tone of the letters Lieutenant Shelfer sent home?

Lieutenant Shelfer has already participated in fighting in Africa, Sicily and in France. The very next day will be the start of Operation Cobra. As an officer, he knows that another battle is on the way.

What is missing from the Lieutenant's letters? Why do you think it/they are missing?

He does not share any details of his fighting or his experiences in war. He likely does so to spare his family the worry for his safety. It is also something that is probably very difficult to share with someone who has not been in combat.

How does the content and tone of Shelfer's letters either reinforce or conflict with the reporting published in the *New York Times* or written by Ernie Pyle?

Lieutenant Shelfer's letters are much more pessimistic about war itself and his outlook of coming home. It is clear that he does not romanticize the conflict and is struggling to find information he is willing to share.