

Introduction

Welcome to Battles of World War II Facts Copywork! In this book, you'll find information about five key battles of World War II. Each battle unit begins with a short description of the battle. Following that is a key vocabulary word related to the battle or time period that students can copy. Next, students can continue practicing handwriting by copying key facts about the battle. A page is included for students to record additional information about the battle if they wish. I hope you enjoy discovering battles of World War II!



Battle of Dunkirk

Leading up to the Battle of Dunkirk, Germany invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. The Dutch fought bravely, but by May 12, 1940, German tanks were on the outskirts of Rotterdam. Queen Wilhelmina and the government evacuated to England the next day, and on May 14, 1940, the Dutch army surrendered.

Belgium was invaded on May 10, and by May 11, German tanks had pushed back the Belgian, French, and British forces.

As the Germans invaded France from Belgium, French General Henri Giraud worked on plans to stop them. However, French forces could not move quickly enough to stop the ever-advancing German forces. German Generals Heinz Guderian and Georg-Hans Reinhardt each used their forces to move in on the Calais and Dunkirk areas where many of the Allied forces had been driven. Fighting continued until, on May 27, Belgium was forced to surrender.

Before the Belgian surrender, the British government had decided to evacuate the British Expeditionary Force by sea from Dunkirk. This effort was named Operation Dynamo. British Admiral Bertram Ramsay was in command of the operation. He asked Captain William Tennant to take care of the tactical part of the rescue. Captain Tennant arrived at Dunkirk on May 27 and found that bombing by the Luftwaffe had destroyed the facilities of the port. He decided that it would take too much time to take the troops out directly from the beach. However, he found that the eastern breakwater still had a wooden boardwalk that would allow the troops to use it to board the ships. About 200,000 troops were rescued in this way. The other troops had to be taken from the beach. Taking the troops off the beach took more time, but about 198,000 British troops and 140,000 Allied troops, mainly French, were evacuated by June 4. Most of the equipment had to be left behind.

During the rescue, the air cover provided by the English fighter planes and the number of seacraft, from destroyers and ferries to fishing vessels and yachts, that were made available, made the rescue possible. The highly disciplined troops did exactly as necessary to help in the rescue efforts, and a huge help was unintentionally given by Adolf Hitler.

German tanks were close to Dunkirk on May 23, but Hitler stopped them and told them to pull back with an order issued on May 24. This order came after several German generals expressed concern that the armored divisions needed to be

available to continue the offensive as it moved forward. The Luftwaffe, under Reich Marshal Hermann Göring, insisted it could prevent any escape by sea, and Hitler himself was afraid that his tanks would get bogged down if they went any further toward the beach. Another factor in issuing the order was that Hitler believed he could convince Britain to make peace if their army was not humiliated. It was three days before the German army commander, Field Marshal Walther von Brauchitsch, was able to convince Hitler to change his mind. However, by then, there was stronger opposition. Hitler stopped his troops again and then ordered them to move south for other operations.

With the loss of equipment, warplanes, destroyers, and smaller seacraft in this battle, and the fact that the Allies were forced to leave the European continent, the Battle of Dunkirk can be seen as a huge loss for the Allies. However, the number of lives saved was a huge victory for the Allies. With Germany not pressing their advantage in the battle, it was a tactical loss for the Germans.



Vocabulary

Evacuate: remove; withdraw as a way to provide protection

Evacuate: remove; withdraw as
a way to provide protection

Battle of Dunkirk

Facts

1. Date: May 26-June 4, 1940

2. Place: Dunkirk, France

3. Allied leaders: Admiral

Bertram Ramsay; Captain

William Tennant

4. Axis leaders: Reich Marshal

Hermann Goring; Field

Marshal Walther von

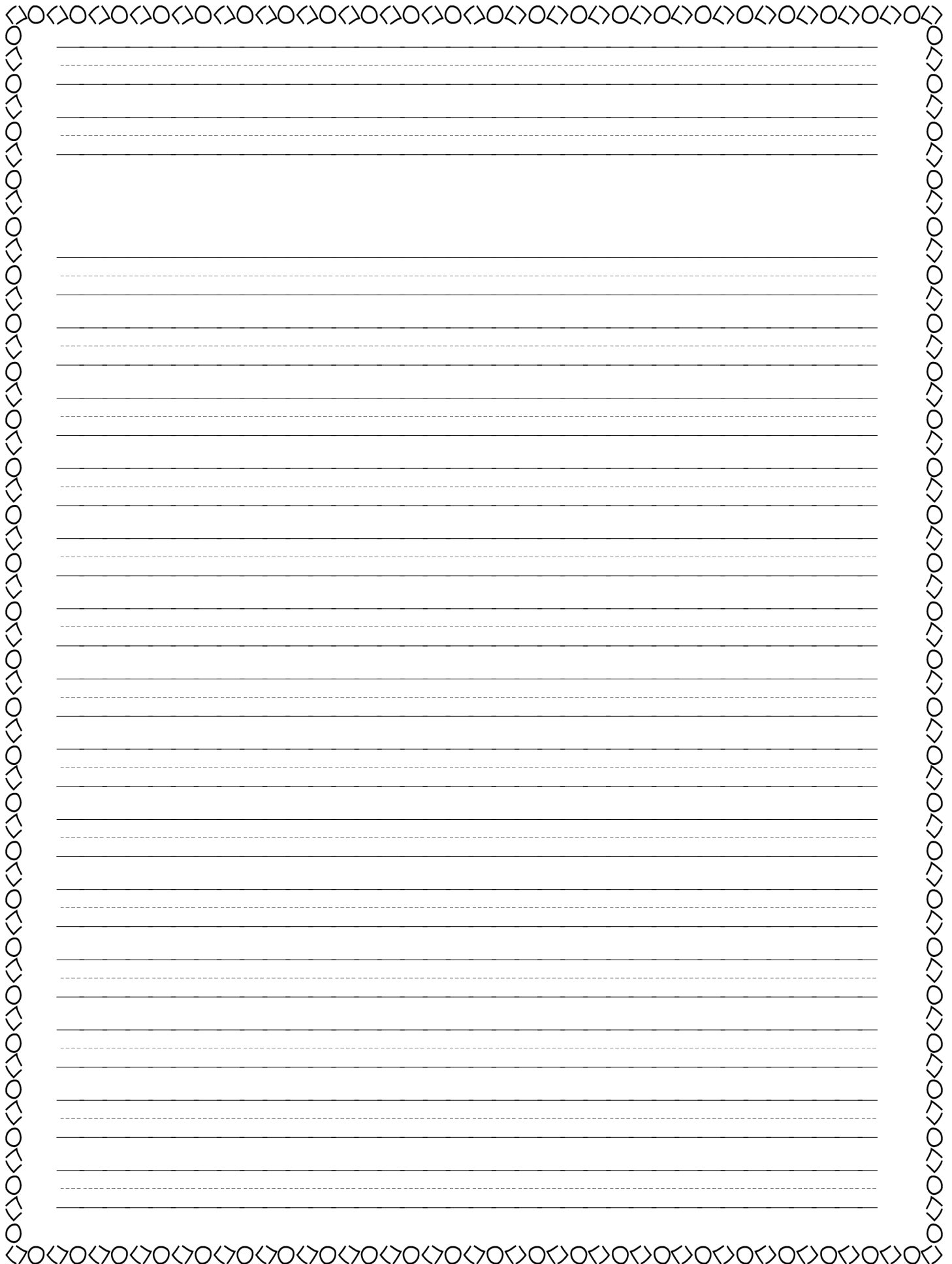
Brauchitsch

5. Defeated: tactical loss for

Axis

6. Victory: tactical victory for

Allies



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Battle of Britain

Following the evacuation of British troops from the continent of Europe at Dunkirk, Germany completed its invasion of France. Nazi leader Adolf Hitler expected Britain to agree to a peace agreement with terms that favored Germany. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill refused to surrender and continued fighting. Hitler refused to believe Churchill would not surrender, as he considered Britain's situation to be hopeless. He ordered his troops to prepare to begin Operation Sea Lion, an invasion of Britain.

However, German troops had never trained to land on the beaches of Britain, and they had no landing craft to speak of to use for the invasion. German generals were not happy with the risks to their troops crossing the sea, and German admirals were terrified to encounter the Royal Navy. They did not believe they were prepared to stop the British at this time.

To remedy the concerns, Air Marshal Hermann Göring stated he believed the Luftwaffe could take care of the British Navy and the Royal Air Force (RAF) if it was necessary. The invasion was postponed until mid-September to allow the Luftwaffe to attack Britain as a lead-in to the invasion.

On July 10, 1940, Germany sent bombers to attack British convoys and ports to weaken their shipping. This continued almost continuously until August 13 when the main offensive started. It began with attacks on air bases and expanded to attacks on aircraft factories and radar stations. The plan was to wear down the defenses of the British air force.

Fighter Command in Britain was under the command of Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding. There were just over 600 frontline fighters used by the British to defend the country. The Germans had set aside about 1,300 bombers and dive bombers, about 900 single-engine fighters, and about 300 twin-engine fighters. The Germans used bases in Norway and all the way down to Northern France on the Cherbourg peninsula.

The British radar early warning system was the most advanced in the world at that time and stopped the Germans from using surprise attacks. The British used Hawker Hurricanes to fight the Luftwaffe bombers and Supermarine Spitfires against the fighter escorts for the bombers.

By late August, Germany had lost more than 600 aircraft, and the RAF had lost

about 260. In addition to the higher loss of aircraft by the Germans, the German planes were larger and had larger crews. When one was shot down, more men were killed or taken prisoner. With the bombing raids happening over Britain, when a British plane was shot down, if the pilot survived, he was on his own soil. If he was not too severely injured, he could be back in service in a short time. The British use of radar was also a key advantage.

In September, civilians in London were bombed. It is thought it may have been accidental, but Britain retaliated by bombing Berlin. This angered Hitler so much that he ordered the Luftwaffe to purposefully attack civilian areas. Starting on September 7, the Luftwaffe bombed London for 57 nights in a row. After that, the Luftwaffe bombed London, Coventry, Liverpool, and other cities in Britain for many months.

September passed slowly. German bombers were being shot down faster than they could be replaced with new ones. Because of this, the Luftwaffe changed their tactics so they were attacking mostly at night. This was the beginning of what came to be called the Blitz.

Operation Sea Lion, the land invasion, was postponed from September 3 to September 21, 1940. On September 19, Hitler ordered the ships that were to take part in Operation Sea Lion to disperse. On October 12, he announced that the plan was off for the winter and turned his attention to Russia, choosing to simply try to keep up a blockade of the seas concerning Britain.

The Blitz lasted during the winter of 1940 and 1941, with the attacks becoming fewer and fewer after April 1941. It caused many deaths and made life even more difficult for civilians. However, the Luftwaffe was still unable to get the upper hand in British air space, and Hitler never launched the planned land invasion of Britain.



Vocabulary

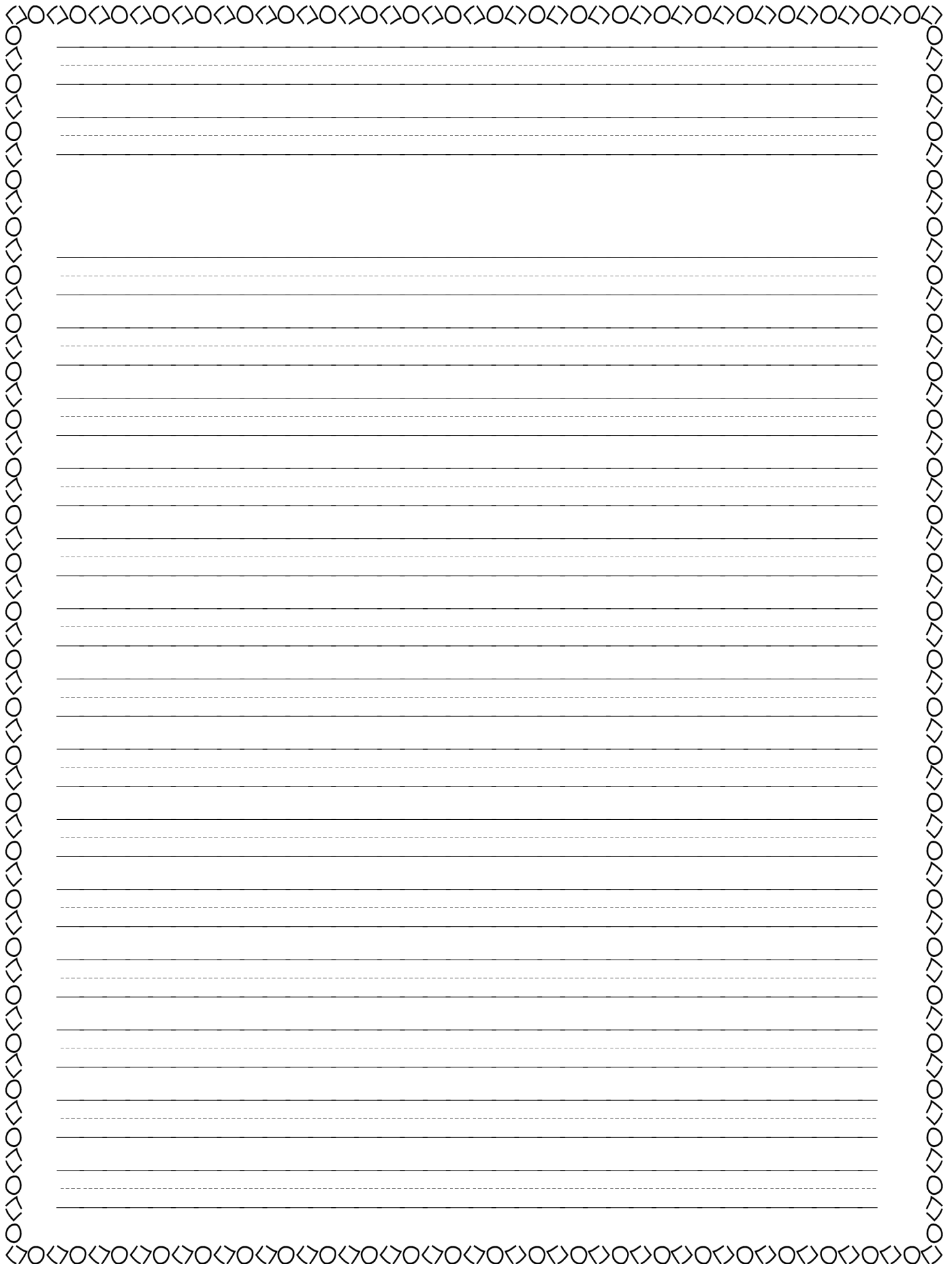
Radar: an instrument or system that sends out radio waves and processes their reflection to determine distance, direction, and speed of objects that cannot be seen

Radar: an instrument or system
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and speed of objects that
cannot be seen

Battle of Britain

Facts

1. Date: June 1940-April 1941
2. Place: Great Britain
3. Allied leader: Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding
4. Axis leader: Air Marshal Hermann Goring
5. Defeated: Axis
6. Victory: Allies
7. At one point, the Luftwaffe bombed London 57 nights in a row
8. Hitler never launched the planned land invasion of Britain



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Battle of Stalingrad

Stalingrad, a city in southwestern Russia now known as Volgograd, sits along the Volga River and was the site of the Battle of Stalingrad.

The battle lasted about six and one-half months. Stalingrad was a key location because its factories produced armaments and tractors. In addition, if the Germans could capture the city, it would provide them a way to reach the oil fields in the Caucasus. It would also be a boost to Hitler's propaganda machine because the city was named after Joseph Stalin, the dictator of the Soviet Union at the time.

Germany had won many victories prior to this battle, but Hitler changed his original plan and decided to break the German forces into two parts. One part, led by Field Marshal Maximilian von Weichs, was to capture Stalingrad; the second was to capture the Caucasus. By splitting the forces, Hitler caused an added strain on the troops and created a gap between the two forces. This gap allowed the Soviet forces to escape their grasp and head east. The battle had not yet officially begun, but Hitler changed the plan again and moved Hermann Hoth's Fourth Panzer Army away from the upcoming Stalingrad battle to help in the Caucasus.

Soviet Marshal Semyon Timoshenko was in charge of the Soviet army defending Stalingrad. Stalin ordered the troops in Stalingrad to not retreat for any reason and refused to evacuate civilians, hoping this would make the army fight harder if they were defending innocent civilians.

German troops began their attack on Stalingrad from positions they held along the Don River. The move toward Stalingrad began on August 21, 1942. By August 23, tanks under the command of the German army had reached the Volga River. They slowly made their way into the city, backed by the Luftwaffe, the German air force. The Luftwaffe dropped bombs on the city, destroying much of the housing. As the Soviet troops moved back into the city, General Vasily I. Chuikov took command and made a stand against the German troops. German reserves were being drained because of stretching over such a long area.

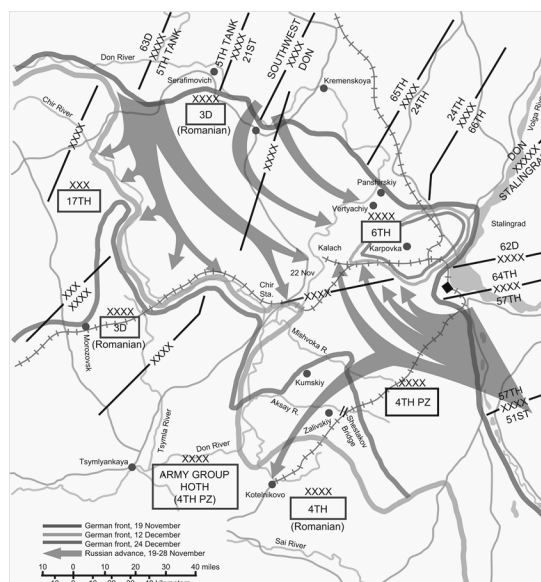
By the middle of September, the fighting became hand-to-hand while homes, streets, and factories were fought over and often destroyed. By November, Soviet troops had been forced into four separate areas along the riverbank in Stalingrad. Generals Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov, Aleksandr Mikhailovich Vasilevsky, and Nikolay Nikolayevich Voronov drew up plans for a Soviet counteroffensive. On

November 19, the Soviet troops were ready and counterattacked. Instead of attacking the German troops head-on, they began attacking the weaker undermanned flanks. As they were able to attack deeper and deeper into the flanks, they were able to meet on November 23 and surround the German troops.

While the German troops felt they could possibly break out and rejoin other troops away from Stalingrad, Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler ordered his troops to continue the battle. He said the Luftwaffe would drop supplies, but the Luftwaffe didn't bring nearly enough supplies. Hitler sent reinforcements but would not allow them to join forces with other troops in the area. With the Germans being inadequately reinforced, the Soviets were able to keep them encircled.

Hitler's orders were to fight to the death. He promoted General Friedrich von Paulus, now leader of the German troops, to field marshal, and made certain he understood that no German field marshal had ever surrendered. The German troops were hungry and almost frozen. Finally, on January 31, 1943, German Field Marshal Friedrich von Paulus surrendered, and the last of the German troops in Stalingrad surrendered on February 2. Paulus became a prisoner of war and later testified at the Nürnberg trials. The German defeat at Stalingrad stopped their advance into the Soviet Union and was a turning point in the war.

The number of dead and wounded in this battle was enormous. It is thought there were more than 800,000 dead, wounded, missing, or captured of the Axis troops and about 1,100,000 Soviet troops dead, wounded, missing, or captured. About 40,000 civilians are thought to have died in this battle.



Vocabulary

Luftwaffe: German for “air weapon,” it was the part of the military of Germany similar to the air force

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weapon,” it was the part of the
military of Germany similar to
the air force

Battle of Stalingrad

Facts

1. Date: July 17, 1942–

February 2, 1943

2. Stalingrad (Volgograd),

Russia

3. Allied leaders: Marshal

Semyon Timoshenko; Generals

Vasily Chuikov, Georgy Zhukov,

Aleksandr Vasilevsky, and

Nikolay Voronov

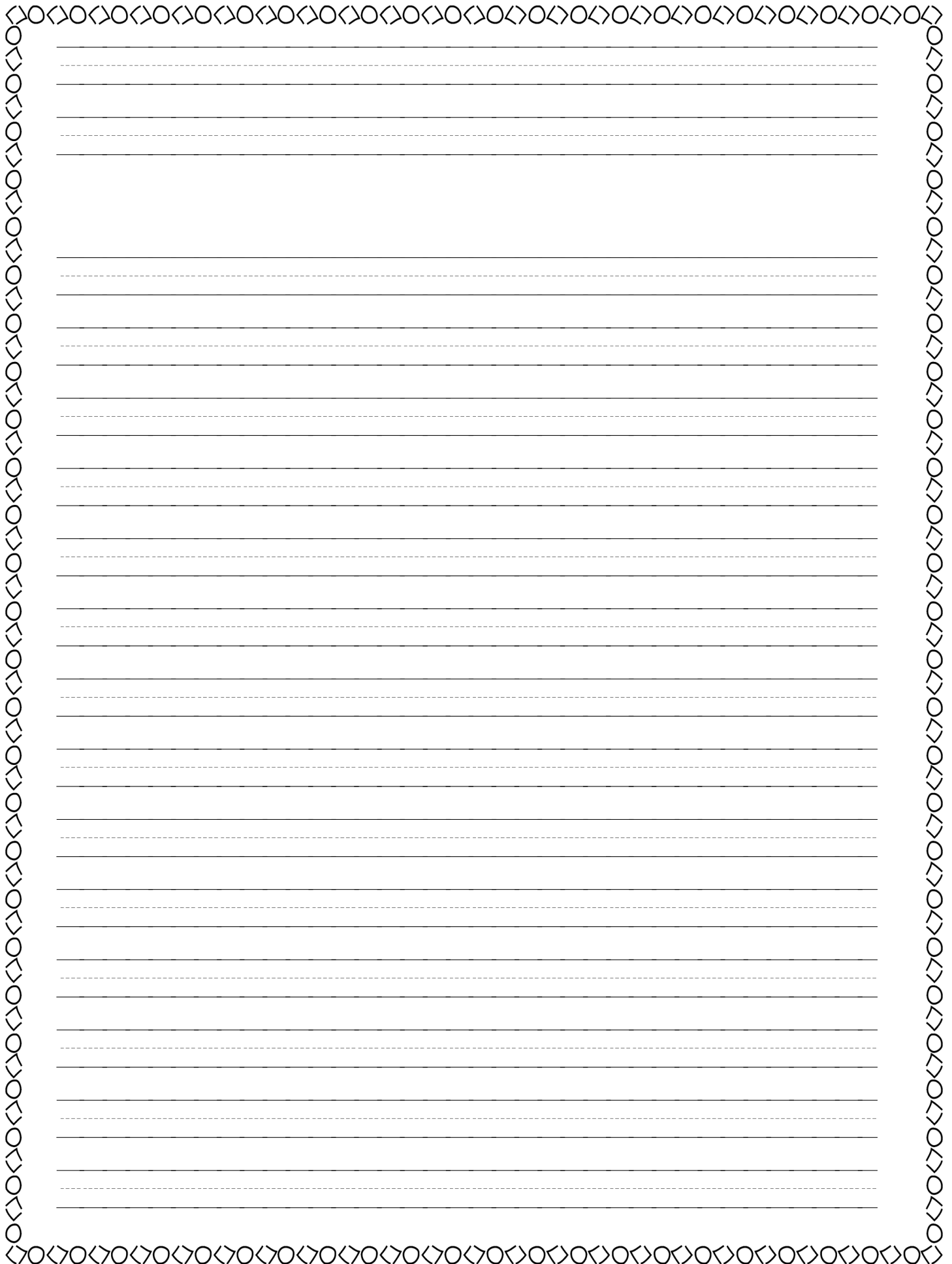
4. Axis leaders: Field Marshals

Maximilian von Weichs and

Friedrich von Paulus

5. Defeated: Axis

6. Victory: Allies



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Battle of Anzio

Anzio is a town in Italy, located on a peninsula that sticks out into an arm of the Mediterranean Sea. The Allies proposed a combined U.S. and British amphibious landing under the command of U.S. Major General John Lucas on the coast of Italy behind German lines. Unfortunately, there were not enough resources available to make the initial landing effective.

The landing on January 22, 1944, was a complete surprise to the Germans, but General Lucas failed to move the troops forward immediately and did not take advantage of the element of surprise. Because of this, the German army, which was commanded by German Field Marshal Albert Kesselring and had control of the high ground, had time to surround the Allied troops and prevent them from moving. While both sides brought in reinforcements, the German troops were able to carry out massive attacks on the Allied soldiers below. However, the German army was not able to push the Allies back, and the Allies were not able to move forward. This caused a stalemate, and the fighting continued for about four months.

Major General Lucien Truscott replaced Major Lucas, but he was not able to move forward either. Finally, after a great deal of work by land and air units throughout Italy, the Allied troops at Anzio were able to break out of the area on May 25 and meet other Allied troops. Together, they continued on to liberate Rome. At this point, about 4,400 of the Anzio Allied troops had been killed, 18,000 had been wounded, and 6,800 were missing or had been taken prisoner. Of the German troops, about 5,500 had been killed, 17,500 had been wounded, and 4,500 were missing or had been taken prisoner. When the Allies marched into Rome on June 5, there was no opposition.



Vocabulary

Amphibious landing: landing or invasion that involves land, sea, and air forces

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Battle of Anzio

Facts

1. Date: January 22,-

June 5, 1944

2. Place: Anzio, Italy

3. Allied leaders: Major

Generals John Lucas and

Lucien Truscott

4. Axis leader: Field Marshal

Albert Kesselring

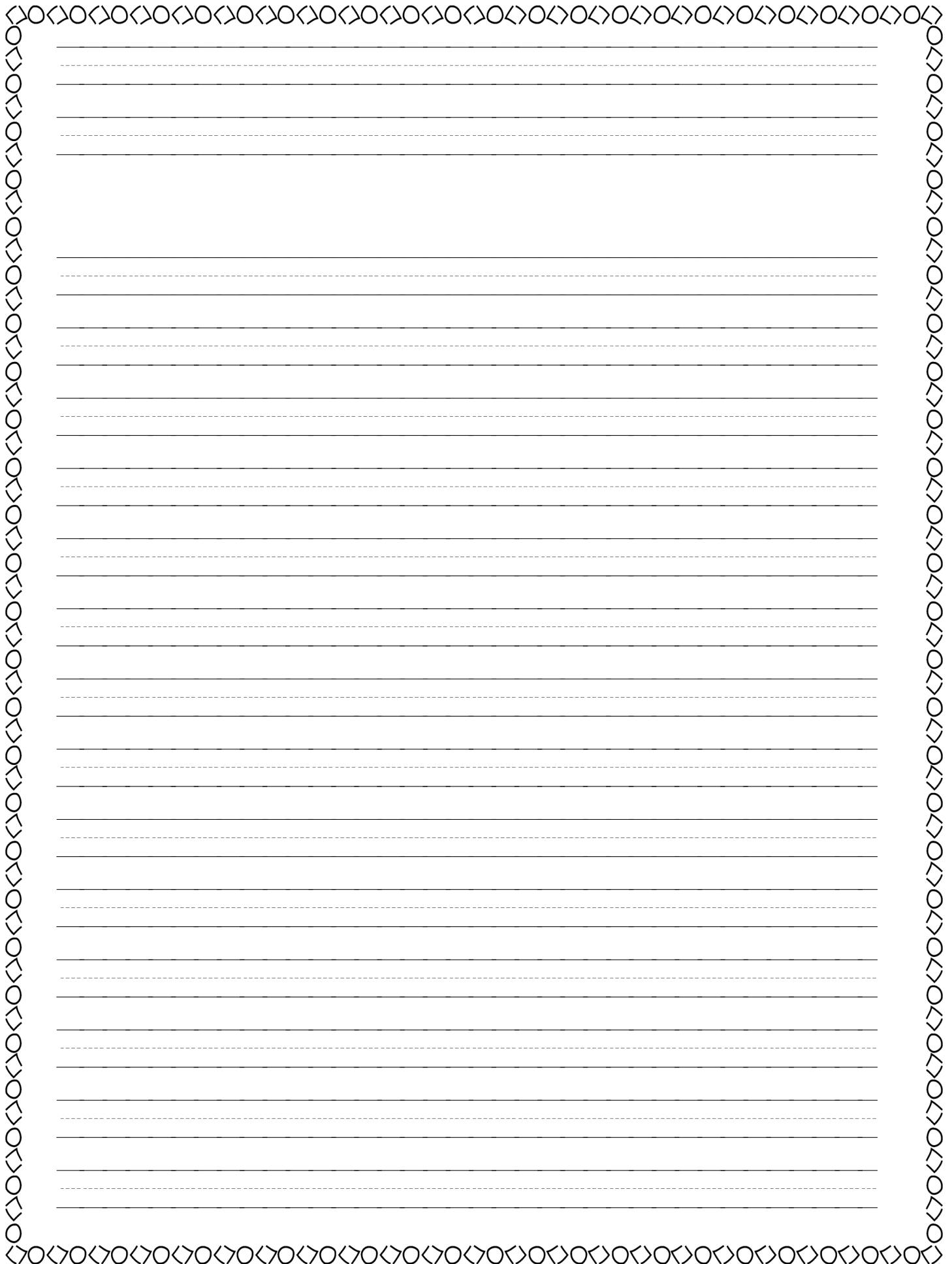
5. Defeated: Axis

6. Victory: Allies

7. Allies marched into Rome on

June 5, 1944, without

opposition



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Battle of the Bulge

After the D-Day invasion of Normandy in June 1944, the Allies moved through northern France and into Belgium. However, they became stalled in September and October 1944, not making much progress. Meanwhile, Germany was reinforcing its defenses.

Germany decided to launch a counteroffensive in mid-December. They chose an area that would be unexpected to attack from but would provide them with cover and an area where their tanks could operate. They chose the Ardennes region, which was hilly and wooded and had a higher ground for their tanks. Germany's aim was to ultimately reach the Allied supply port in Antwerp, Belgium. If they could do this, they could cut off the British Army from the American forces and supplies. Their end goal was to defeat the British army.

The tanks of two panzer groups were under the command of Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt, the main German commander, and SS Commander Sepp Dietrich. They were to break through using the majority of the German tanks that were available and drive a wedge between the American and British troops. Knowing the possibility of air support coming in to help the Americans and British troops, the Germans decided to attack when the forecast called for mist and rain, keeping the air forces on the ground.

At the beginning, the Allied forces were confused by the surprise attack, which started before dawn on December 16, and the Germans made a great deal of progress. German troops and almost 1,000 tanks attacked the Allied forces along a 75-mile (121-kilometer) front in the Ardennes Forest. This created a bulge in the line at the front, which is where the battle got its name.

However, the Germans lost time because they faced a shortage of gasoline, winter weather was moving in, and the Allied air attacks were able to begin. In addition, the United States forces that were placed in areas of the Ardennes where there were bottlenecks managed to stall the movement of tanks. The amazing speed shown by British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery in moving his troops to stop the Germans from crossing the Meuse River did much to turn the tide of the battle.

On December 26, General George S. Patton was placed in command of certain forces in Bastogne. On January 3, 1945, the United States First Army began a counteroffensive. The Allies attempted to surround a large portion of the German

forces, but the Germans were able to withdraw successfully. Germany was able to cause a great deal of damage to the Allies in this battle, but the Battle of the Bulge was a crippling battle for Germany. They lost about 120,000 men and a great deal of equipment, neither of which could be replaced. This took away any chance they had of resisting future Allied offensives over a long period of time.



Vocabulary

Panzer: German mechanized, armored vehicle such as a tank used in World War II

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Battle of the Bulge

Facts

1. Dates: December 16, 1944–
January 16, 1945

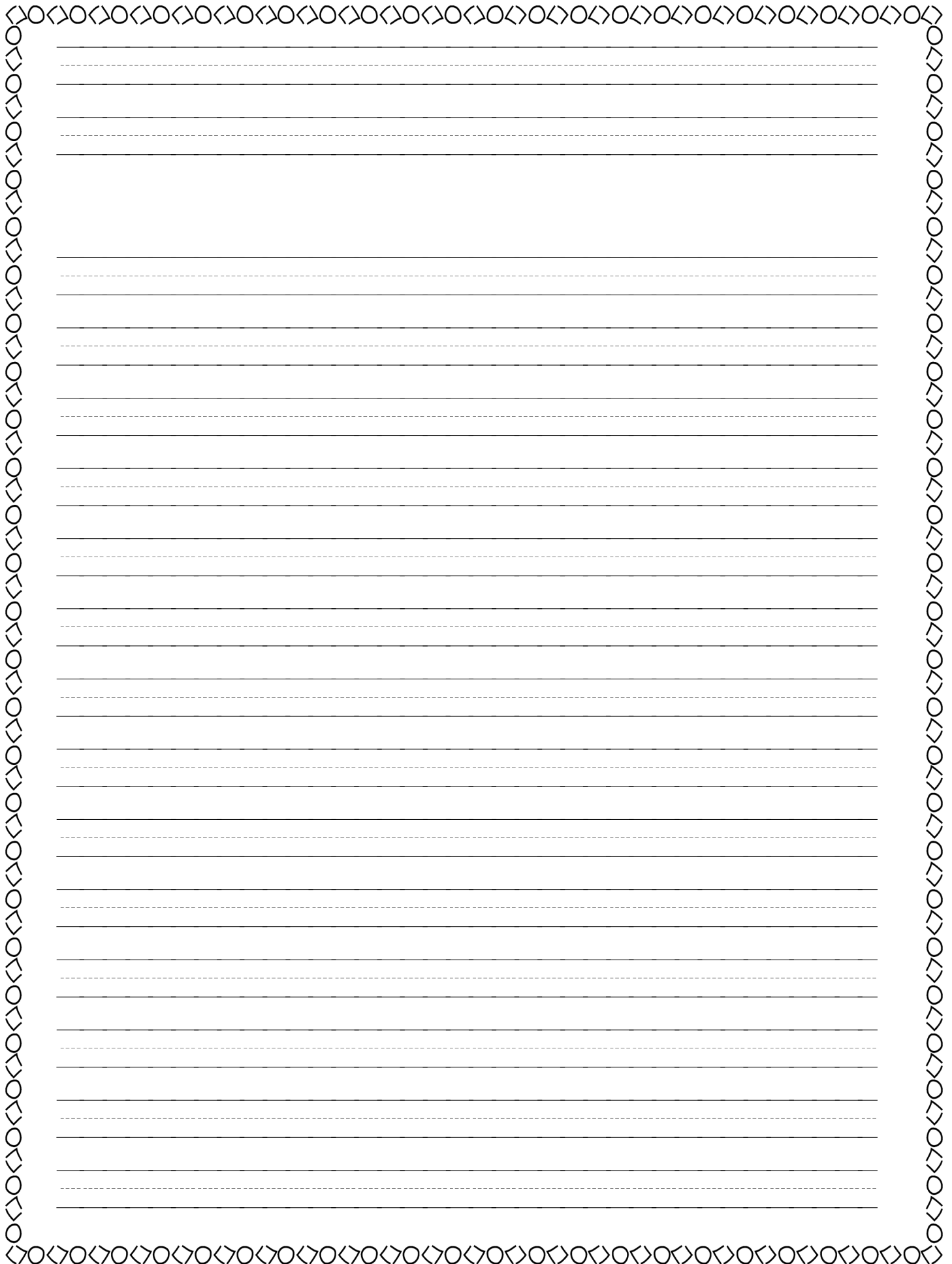
2. Place: Ardennes region of
France, Luxembourg, and
Belgium

3. Allied leaders: British Field
Marshal Bernard Montgomery;
General George S. Patton

4. Axis leaders: Field Marshal
Gerd von Rundstedt; SS
Commander Sepp Dietrich

5. Defeated: Axis

6. Victory: Allies



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