

THE BOYS OF BATAAN



An American Town Goes to War

LESSON PLAN

Grade: 9-12

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Subject: Social Studies,
History/Social Studies Literacy

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Duration: 1-2 Class Periods
(Lesson includes optional
extended learning activities.)

“The Boys of Bataan” tells the stories of a group of young men from Brainerd, Minnesota, who served in the 194th Tank Battalion, Company A in the Philippines during World War II.

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This Lesson Plan engages classrooms in a guided exploration of the documentary, focusing on the diverse and lasting impacts of the wartime experience on a rural American community.

Where to Watch:

Web Viewing:

- Lakeland PBS Website: lptv.org/local-show/the-boys-of-bataan/
- YouTube (has ads): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlfThOrnnuQ&t=208s>

Smart TV:

- Download the free PBS App
- Search for Boys of Bataan

Lesson Plan: Boys of Bataan: *An American Town Goes to War*

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: Social Studies and History/Social Studies Literacy

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Standards Addressed | Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards Social Studies 2011

Economics		Grade Level: 9-12	9.2.1.1.1
<i>Substrand 5: Economic Reasoning Skills</i>			
	<i>Standard 1:</i> People make informed economic choices by identifying their goals, interpreting and applying data, considering the short- and long-run costs and benefits of alternative choices and revising their goals based on their analysis.		
	<i>Benchmark 1:</i> Apply reasoned decision-making techniques in making choices; explain why different individuals, households, organizations and/or governments faced with the same alternatives might make different choices.		
History		Grade Level: 9-12	9.4.3.12.3
<i>Substrand 3: World History</i>			
	<i>Standard 12:</i> A rapidly evolving world dominated by industrialized powers, scientific and technological progress, profound political, economic, and cultural change, world wars, and widespread violence and unrest produced a half century of crisis and achievement. (A Half Century of Crisis and Achievement: 1900—1950).		
	<i>Benchmark 3:</i> Describe the social, political and economic causes and main turning points of World War II. (A Half Century of Crisis and Achievement: 1900—1950).		
History		Grade Level: 9-12	9.4.4.21.6
<i>Substrand 4: United States History</i>			
	<i>Standard 21:</i> The economic growth, cultural innovation and political apathy of the 1920s ended in the Great Depression which spurred new forms of government intervention and renewed labor.		
	<i>Benchmark 6:</i> Evaluate the economic impact of the war, including its impact on the role of women and disenfranchised communities in the United States. (Great Depression and World War II: 1920—1945) activism, followed by World War II and an economic resurgence. (Great Depression and World War II: 1920—1945).		

Standards Addressed | Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects

Key Ideas and Details		Literacy in History/Social Studies
<i>Grade: 9-10</i>		
9.12.1.1	Cite specific textual visual or physical evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.	

9.12.2.2	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.
9.12.3.3	Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
<i>Grade: 11-12</i>	
11.12.1.1	Cite specific textual visual or physical evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
11.12.2.2	Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
11.12.3.3	Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
Craft and Structure	
Literacy in History/Social Studies	
<i>Grade: 9-10</i>	
9.12.4.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, geographic, historical, or economic aspects of history/social studies.
9.12.5.5	Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
9.12.6.6	Compare the point of view of two or more authors or creators for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize or exclude in their respective accounts including points of view about Minnesota American Indian history
<i>Grade: 11-12</i>	
11.12.4.4	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses, reinforces, and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
11.12.6.6	Evaluate authors' differing points of view, including differing points of view about Minnesota American Indian history, on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
Literacy in History/Social Studies	
<i>Grade: 9-10</i>	
9.12.7.7	Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, maps, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
9.12.9.9	Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources, including texts from various cultures and Minnesota American Indian culture.
<i>Grade: 11-12</i>	
11.12.7.7	Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, spatially, aurally, physically as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem
11.12.9.9	Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Teaching Tips | Boys of Bataan: An American Town Goes to War

Essential Question: How can going to war affect the lives of soldiers' families and neighbors back home?

Supporting Questions

- What motivated the young men of Brainerd to sign up for the National Guard?
- How did the deployment of the "Boys of Bataan" impact the lives of those on the home front? How does the memory of their service continue to impact their community?

Historical Thinking OR Civics Skills

- Understanding Diversity of Historical Experience (Historical Thinking)
- Developing Civic Understanding and Engagement (Civics)

This resource has an additional extended learning activity that focuses on the following History/Social Studies literacy skills:

- Analyzing Primary Sources
- Analyzing Multiple Perspectives
- Developing an Argument

Vocabulary

National Guard

Deployment

KIA (Killed in Action)

MIA (Missing in Action)

POW (Prisoner of War)

Death March

Procedure

Use the following before, while, and after viewing suggestions for engaging students with this resource and with activities related to this topic.

Note: We recommend that you view the entire documentary, if possible, for additional context. However, in the interest of time, you may use the timestamped abbreviated viewing guide below to meaningfully engage with specific parts of the narrative.

Before Viewing

1. Have students read the Navy's official historical summary of the Battle of Bataan available here: <https://usnhistory.navylive.dodlive.mil/Recent/Article-View/Article/2686254/lessons-learned-on-bataan/>
 - a. Ask students to make notes of any questions or confusing terminology.
 - b. Review vocabulary list above and ask students to add any unfamiliar terms from the pre-reading to the list. Define those terms as needed.
 - c. Group Discussion Question: *Why was the Battle of Bataan so important to American military history?*
2. The narrator mentions that Brainerd's Washington High School had a high dropout rate in the 1930s leading up to wartime—why might that have been?
 - The Great Depression decimated the economy
 - Family pressure to contribute to household (e.g., working on family farm, helping raise siblings, get an outside job)
 - The local job market didn't require as much formal education at this time.

While Viewing

If you are viewing the entire documentary, please pause at **[7:35]** to engage students in the following guided discussion. Discussion may be conducted in pairs, small groups or as an entire class.

Otherwise, please begin by viewing the following timestamp **[3:00–7:35]**.

Section 1: Why did young men join the National Guard?

1. Why did so many young males join the National Guard during this time period?
Possible discussion topics:
 - Joining the national guard in the 1930s was an option for young men to drop out of school and support their families
 - The Great Depression put great pressure on finances
 - Interested in the vehicles at the Armory, tanks etc.
2. What effect did joining the military have on the social life/social status of soldiers?
 - The Armory was the “place to be”
 - Provided a sense of association and identity/belonging
 - Social status from going to balls and being seen by the town public as “having status”
 - Most young males were too poor to afford things like fancy clothes, which offered them a greater sense of dignity and pride

Section 2: Deployment, Combat and Aftermath

If you are viewing the entire documentary, please pause at [43:45] to engage students in the following guided discussion. Discussion may be conducted in pairs, small groups or as an entire class.

Otherwise, please begin by viewing the following timestamps [16:45–25:45] & [35:00-43:45].

1. What difficulties did the soldiers encounter during the battle?
 - They were fighting a retreat
 - They were forced to destroy their own weaponry
 - Hell ships, death marches and forced labor camps
2. What helped the soldiers survive the death march?
 - Strong leadership from military officers
 - The men reduced their rations
 - They worked together and took advantage of friendships and human connection
 - Men put their own safety at risk to help their fellow soldiers
 - Connections to family and loved ones back home
3. 2nd Lieutenant Ed Burke volunteered to return to his men in Bataan after being wounded during combat. What would motivate a man to choose to go back to war after surviving this experience?
 - Loyalty to his men
 - Sense of duty or patriotism
 - Pressure of being a military officer

After Viewing (skip to *Taking it Further* activity, time permitting). These questions can be asked in group discussion or as individual writing prompts.

1. The narrator begins this documentary by arguing that the town of Brainerd “carries the tradition of the men of company A wherever they go.” What are the different ways that Brainerd veterans and residents have carried on that tradition over the years?
2. Why is it important that we remember the “Boys of Bataan” today?
3. What are ways that our community remembers or honors our local soldiers today?

Taking It Further [optional extended learning activity]

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes

Refer to the additional *Resource Packet*: “Remember Bataan, Never Forget.”

Instructions:

1. **BEFORE CLASS:** Print out copies of the resource packet to be distributed to students.
2. **DURING CLASS:** Split students into groups of ~4 students. Distribute at least one copy of the resource packet to each group.
3. If possible, begin the activity by showing the clip “Christmas Recordings” [13:00-16:25] to the class. If students have internet access, they may also locate the clip in their groups here: [Boys of Bataan](#).
4. Advise students to share and discuss the three historical “files” in front of them from the resource packet. Each group member should review all information provided.
 - a. Students will analyze a variety of primary documents related to the stories shared in the film.
 - b. Students will compare and contrast the three files provided to explore connections between them.
 - c. Student groups will then complete a guided activity [included] which synthesizes historical information, draws connections to present time, and engages imagination to generate new ideas.
5. Time permitting, ask groups to share and defend their project proposals with entire the class. You may also revisit the “After Viewing” questions listed above to wrap up discussion.

Resources for Further Engagement

Visit <https://bataanproject.com/> to access additional primary source documents, contextual information and soldiers’ personal testimonies.