

Ga'an Point, War in the Pacific National Historical Park

Introduction

Ga'an Point lies in the coastal village of Agat. The white sandy beaches echoes the place where the 1st Provisional Marines Brigade and the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the U.S. Army 77th Infantry Division began their assault to liberate the island from the Japanese forces on the 21st of July 1944.



The synchronized landing of the Marines in Agat and Asan beaches was paid with high casualties as the Japanese resistance anticipated the Americans. The Japanese military fortified the beach by forcing the local inhabitants, the Chamorros, to build concrete pillboxes and cave tunnels under threat of violence.

Today, a Japanese 25mm gun and a 200mm gun stand silently on the coast as reminders of the battle. Concrete pillboxes, caves, and tunnels can be found in the 38 acres as well as American military equipment that sunk in the 557 coastal waters. Three flags flying above honor and represent the citizens that suffered and gave the ultimate sacrifice for the war.

"We lost 75 men in an area the size of a football field, most of them in the first ten minutes...and for every dead man, there are always two to three wounded. Our company had the most casualties of any in our battalion...We were at point-blank range, no place to go except straight ahead."

---- Marine Raymond G. Schroeder

General Citation

About this lesson

This lesson is based on the National Register of Historic Places nomination file, Ga'an Point and other source materials provided by the War in the Pacific National Historical Park. This lesson was written by Elisa D. Campbell. TwHP is sponsored, in part, by the Cultural Resources Training Initiative and Parks as Classrooms programs of the National Park Service. This lesson is one in a series that brings the important stories of historic places into the classrooms across the country.

Where it fits in the curriculum

Topics: American history, social studies, and geography in units on World War II

Time period: Mid20th century

Relevant United States History Standards for grades 5-12:

Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II(1929-1945)

Standard 3A – The student understands the international background of World War II.

Standard 3B – The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

Standard 3C – the student understands the effects of World War II at home.

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Standards

Theme I: Culture

Standard B - Students give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference

Theme II: Time, Continuity & Change

Standard A – Students demonstrate an understanding that different people may describe the same events or situation in diverse ways, citing reasons for the differences in views

Standard D – Students identify and use various sources for reconstructing the past, such as documents, letters, diaries, maps, textbooks, photos, and others

Theme III: People, Places & Environments

Standard B – Students interpret, use, and distinguish various representation of the earth, such as maps, globes and photographs

Standard E – Students locate and distinguish among various landforms and geographic features, such as mountains, plateaus, islands, and oceans

Standard H – Students examine the interaction of human beings and their physical environment, the use of land, building of cities, and ecosystem changes in selected locales and regions

Theme IV: Individuals, Groups, & Institutions

Standard E – Students identify and describe examples of tensions between an individual's beliefs and government policies and laws

Theme VI: Power, Authority, & Governance

Standard F – Students identify and describe factors that contribute to cooperation and cause disputes within and among groups and nations

Theme IX: Global Connections

Standard F – Students investigate concerns, issues, standards, and conflicts related to universal human rights, such as the treatment of children, religious groups, and effects of war

Common Core Standards

English Language arts Standards History/Social Studies for grades 6-8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 = Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 = Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELAN-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4 = Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

CCSS.ELAN-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 = Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELAN-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7 = Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9 = Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary sources on the same topic.

English Language Arts Standards History/Social Studies for Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 = Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of information.

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.9-10.4 = Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.5 = Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6 = Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 = Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8 = Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9 = Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Objective for students

1. To determine why the Battle for Guam was an important event in the Pacific Theater during World War II.
2. To research the experiences of the Chamorros on Guam during World War II in order to greater understand of their hardship.
3. To research World War II markers, memorials, or parks in the local community and use technology to create display to support their understanding of the subject matter.
4. Students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories.
5. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.

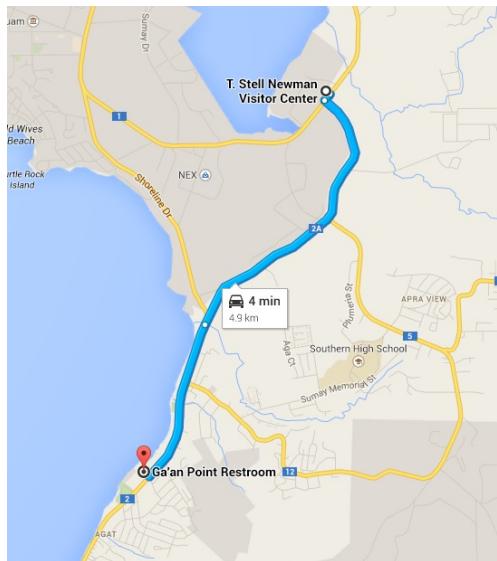
Materials for students

The readings and maps listed below can be used directly on the computer or can be printed out, photocopied and distributed to the students.

1. Readings: Reading 1 explains Guam as she is renamed Omiya Jima; Reading 2 details the Island-Hopping campaign in the Pacific theatre; Reading 3 recounts the invasion at Agat beach.
2. Three Maps are included: Map 1 shows the Pacific Offensive; Map 2 shows Guam in 1944; Map 3 details the southern beachhead.
3. Five photos of the Agat invasion; Marines on the beaches; the 25mm gun and 200mm gun; landing craft and a Chamorro woman being carried to safety.

Visiting the site

Ga'an Point is located approximately four minutes south of T. Stell Newman Visitor Center. The T. Stell Newman Visitor Center is open daily from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's days. The information desk can be contacted at (671) 333.4050.



Googlemaps.com

Teaching Activities
Getting Started
Inquiry Questions



Agat invasion beach aerial looking south

Photo courtesy of Department of Defense/National Park Service

1. How would you describe the photograph above? Explain at least three things from the photograph.
2. How would you explain the event that is happening in the photograph?
3. What can you infer at least three things from the picture?

Setting the Stage

Guam is 212 square miles, but is the largest island in the Mariana Islands located in Micronesia. The island came under the United States control during the Spanish-American War in 1898 under the Treaty of Paris while the rest of the Mariana Islands fell under German and later Japanese control after World War I. Guam was placed under the Naval department with the captain having the title of governor for the island.

The indigenous population, the Chamorro, lived on the island chain for more than 4,000 years cultivated the land and excelled in fishing and navigating the Pacific waters. The strong influence of the Spaniards which ruled the island for almost 300 years can be seen within the island's religion, culture and architecture.

After World War I, Japan's desire to become a powerful industrialized nation was stymied since the island nation had few natural resources. Japan looked at the surrounding nations and sought to expand her influence by invading China and French Indo-China. By 1941 Japan maintained its influence of her neighboring countries under her Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere despite objections from the United States, England and other countries. The US placed economic embargo and froze Japanese assets in America.

In the early morning hours of December 7, 1941, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor woke the sleeping giant and American was thrust into the Second World War. On the other side of the International Dateline, as thousands of Chamorros prepare for the annual feast of the Immaculate Concepcion, planes from Saipan also bombed the island. The Chamorro population became an unwilling participant in the conflict that would last till 1945.

Determining the Facts

Reading 1: Omiya Jima or Great Shrine Island

The island was bombed from planes stationed from Saipan. 271 Navy personnel, 153 Marines, and 247 Chamorro Insular Force Guard and Naval Militia were left to gallantly defend Guam. The Insular Guard Force Guards only had minimal military training. They were ill equipped and no match to about 600 Naval Battalion and 5,000 Army Brigade. The defenders had no artillery, only a few .30 caliber guns and small arms. The few sailors, Marines and some members of the Insular Guardsmen defended the island.

On 10 December 1941, Guam became the first US territory in the Pacific to fall under Japan as Governor George J. McMillin, a captain in the US Navy, surrendered, thus beginning the hardships of the Chamorro people under the empire of Japan. American military personnel and civilian personnel became prisoners of war and were shipped to Japan for the remainder of the war.

Japanese occupation on Guam lasted two and a half years. Guam was renamed Omiya Jima or Great Shrine Island as the Imperial Japanese Navy, the Keibitai, controlled the island for one and one-half years. The Chamorros were required to learn Japanese and Japanese yen became the currency.

Chamorros from Saipan, Tinian and Rota acted as interpreters for the Japanese and helped them in their investigation to search for Navy radioman such as George Tweed, who refused to surrender to the Japanese. Chamorro families harbored him in the jungles of Guam. The military believed that Father Jesus Baza Duenas and his nephew Eddie Duenas had information of the American; they were tortured and executed. The brutal treatment of the Chamorros in the hands of the Japanese continued for the duration of the war.

By early 1944 the tides of war began turning as American island hopping strategy under the Combined Chiefs of staff, General Douglas McArthur and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander of the Southwest Pacific Area. Operation "Forager," require the US forces to capture the Mariana Islands. B-29 bombers have a range of 3,000 miles and can carry 10,000 pounds of bombs. These bombers can take off and airfields from Guam, Saipan and Tinian and penetrate the Japanese archipelago.

Locating the Site

Map 1: Pacific Offensive



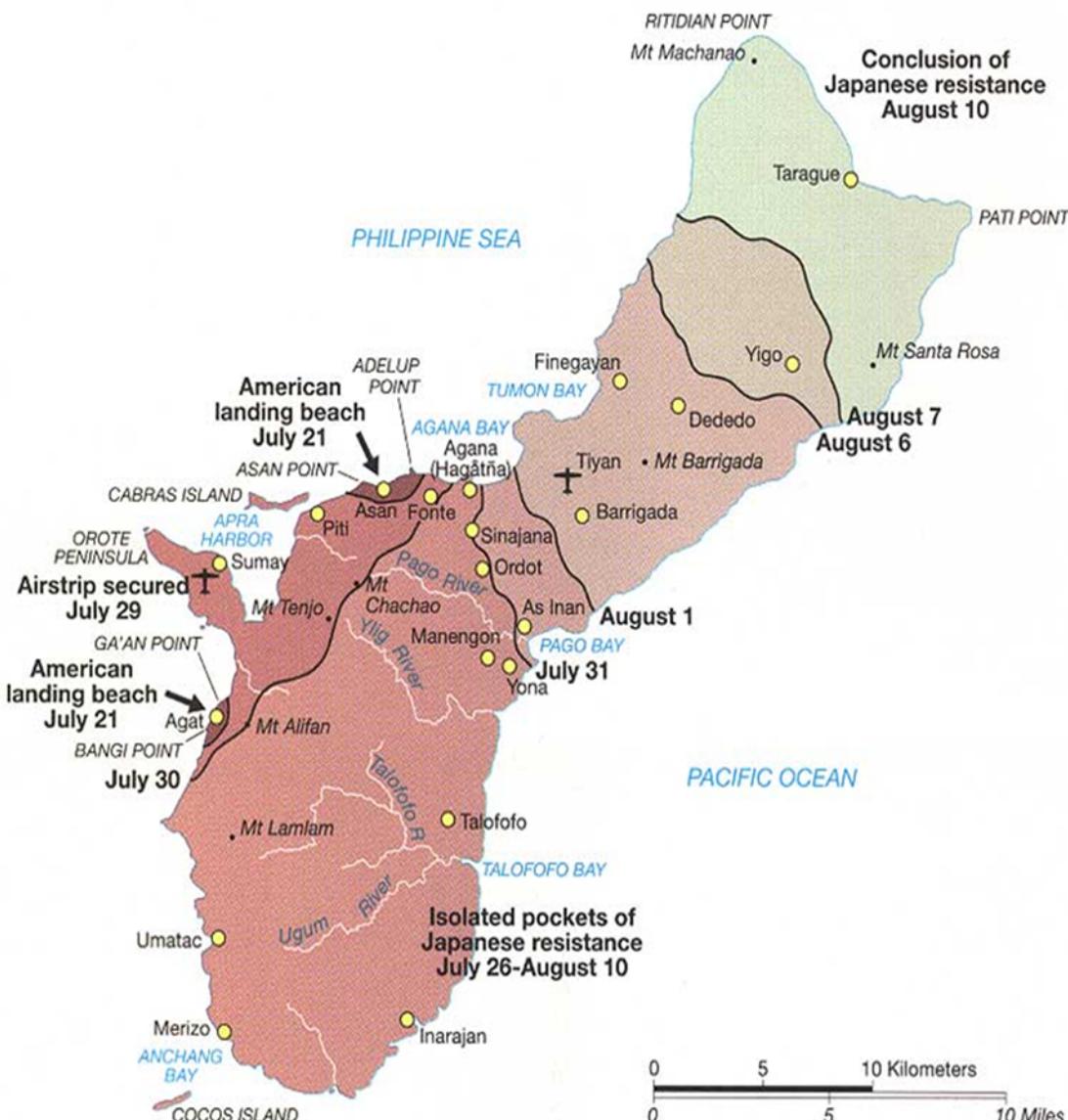
The Pacific Offensive National Park Service

Map courtesy of the National Historical Park

Questions:

1. Define in your own words the greatest extent of Japanese control based on the map provided.
2. How would you explain the direction of the arrows on the map? Do you think this is a practical strategy in the Pacific campaign? Explain.
3. Identify at least four countries that were involved in the Pacific Theater?
4. Why do you think Japan needed the raw materials from Manchuria and French Indo-China?

Locating the Site
Map 2: Guam in 1944



Map courtesy of the National Historical Park

Questions:

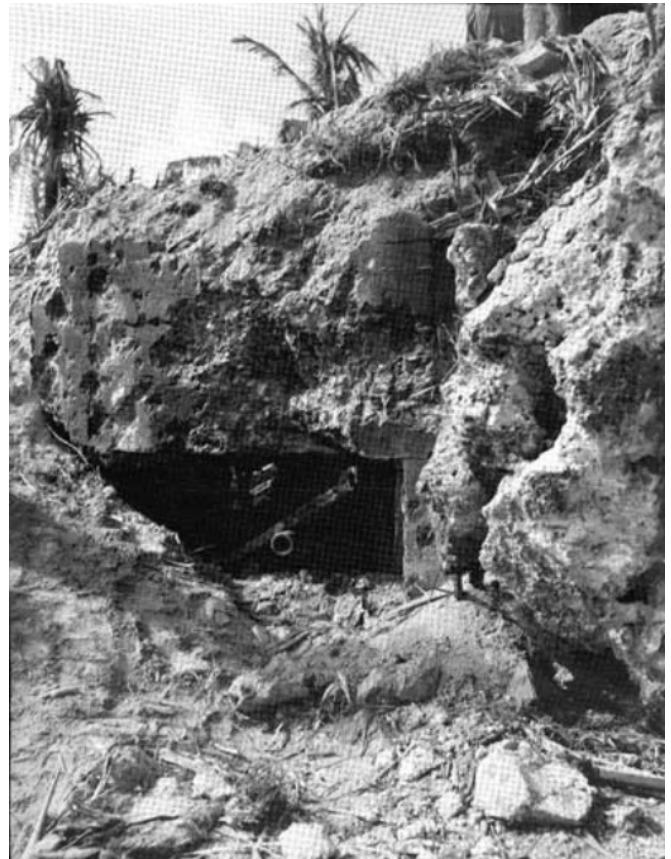
1. Why do you think it was important to launch an attack on both Asan and Agat beaches at the same time? Explain.
2. Create a timeline based on the information provided on the map. What direction did the Marines take in their quest to liberate the island?
3. Explain why it was important for the US to control and secure the airstrip at the Orote Peninsula?

Visual Evidence
Photo of Marines and concrete pillbox



Department of Defense Photo
Questions for Determining Facts

1. Why did the US forces increase the bombardment on the island before invading the beaches?
2. What can you deduce from the pictures with the US flag?
3. What materials do you think were used to build the pillboxes?
4. Why do you think the Chamorros were forced to build the pillboxes?



Determining the Facts

Reading 2: Island Hopping

The Allied forces in the Pacific adopted an “Island-Hopping” campaign in which the strategy was to capture the main islands in the Pacific as the US advances towards Japan. General Douglas McArthur focused on New Guinea and the Bismark Archipelago as the US eyes on returning to the Philippines. Admiral Chester W. Nimitz was in charge of the central Pacific region which included the Mariana Islands.



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park

Operation Forager began with the invasion of Saipan on June 25th by the 5th Amphibious Corps, 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions and the Army’s 27th Infantry Division. Despite the six days pre-invasion bombardment from aircraft carriers and B-24s and B-25s, that occurred before the Marines landed on Garapan, and after fierce resistance from the Japanese forces, Saipan was secured by July 9, 1944.

W-Day for the liberation of Guam from the Japanese forces began on 21 July 1944. For thirteen days the island was subject to the pre-invasion bombardment to prevent or hasten the urban warfare that the Marines and Army soldiers experienced as they secure Saipan from Japanese forces.

Seizing the Mariana Islands would serve as a refueling station, supply, and serve as airfields that would enable the long ranged B-29s bombers to attack the main islands of Japan.

Determining the Facts

Reading 3: Agat Beaches

The strategy to liberate the island was to conduct two simultaneous landings on Asan and Agat beaches by the 3rd Marine Division, 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, and the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Army Infantry Division. As 55,000 Marine and Army soldiers stormed the white sandy beaches of Asan and Agat, they met the 18,500 Japanese defenders who were entrenched in the slopes of Guam. For two weeks, the Japanese troops had known about the fall of Saipan and knew that the Americans would soon liberate the island.

In early 1944, Guam came under the Kai-kontai or Japanese Kwantung Army of the 29th Division from Manchuria under the Lt. General Takeshi Takashina. Lt. General Hideyoshi Obata, the commander of the 31st Army was on Guam following an inspection trip to Palau.

The Chamorros as young as 12 years old were forced to build or repair Guam's two airfields in Orote and Tiyan. The islanders build concrete pillboxes and hundreds of Japanese shelter caves. The Army also rationed food as they forced the islanders to complete defense installations. On July 10, 1944 10,000-15,000 Chamorros were ordered to evacuate their homes and march to concentration camps in the island's interiors. The concentration camps offered no sanitation and inadequate shelter and low food supply. Moving the Chamorros in concentration camps helped shield the islanders from the Naval pre-invasion bombardment that later followed.



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park

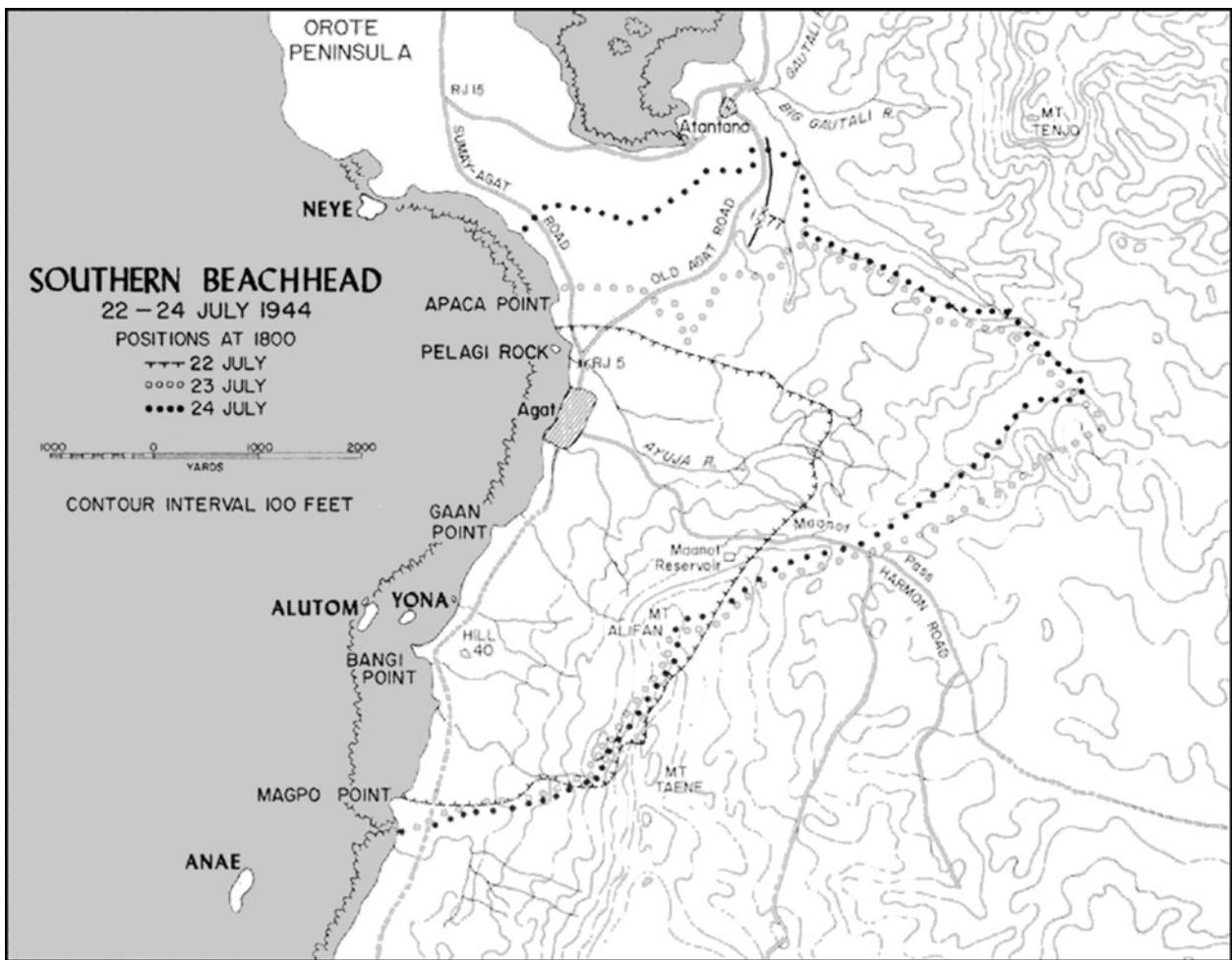
As the 3rd Marine Division charged on the beaches of Asan and Adelup, General Takashina, overlooked the assault from the Fonte Plateau headquarters. At the same time, the 1st Brigade landed on the shores of Agat, small arms, machine gun fire along with two 75mm opened fired at the Marines. This 75mm guns at Ga'an Point prevented the Marines from quickly meeting the objectives. A Japanese pillbox hid a 37mm gun that was not spotted by photo interpreters also targeted the invading Marines. The guns hit two dozen amtracs or landing vehicles carrying Marines. This loss prevented the US from replenishing the Marines with supplies and men to take Agat. Some of the soldiers waded ashore with full packs in waist deep water or higher while facing Japanese fire. Most of the landing vehicles drowned in the reef and beaches from enemy gunfire and large bomb holes in the reef.

The Japanese 1st and 2nd Battalions, 38th Infantry were deeply entrenched among beaches and surrounding hills of Agat. The 4th Marines secured the beachhead and Harmon Road down from the mountains of Agat. By 1020 the 1st Battalion was in the village of Agat with small arms resistance and by 1330, Ga'an Point was also secured. By July 22-24, the Marines and Army were able to advance to Mt. Alifan and Orote Peninsula. The liberators can now focus on isolating and securing Orote Peninsula and drive out the rest of the Japanese defenders north to free the islanders.



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park

Visual Evidence
Map 3: Southern Beachhead



Map courtesy of National Historical Park

Questions:

1. Based on the map provided, when did the Marines and Army finally secure Agat beaches?
2. How can you modify the plan to secure the beaches?
3. Why do you think it was important to secure Asan and Agat beaches and then to take Orote Peninsula?

Visual Evidence
Marines with the landing craft



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park

Questions:

1. What can you deduce from the pictures?
2. Explain three things that are probably happening in the pictures.
3. What do you think will happen as the people in the picture jumped out of the amtrac or landing vehicle?

Visual Evidence
Photo: Chamorro Woman



Photo courtesy of National Historical Park

Questions:

1. Why did the Japanese Army force the Chamorros to stay in concentration camps?
2. Do you agree with the Japanese for placing the islanders in concentration camps? Explain your opinion.
3. What hardships do you think the Chamorros endured during the encampment in the concentration camps?

Putting it All Together

The following activities will help demonstrate the significance of the Battle of Guam in relation to Ga'an Point and of the Pacific Offensive Campaign during World War II.

Activity 1: Setting the Context

Students check their history books for passages about the Battle of Guam. If the students find a passage about the island during World War II, discuss why it may not be mentioned in detail. To further their knowledge, students can research more about the island in relation to WWII. Students can develop PowerPoint presentations based on their research.

Activity 2: Community

Students can research about historical sites in their villages as well as people who made a difference in history. If applicable, they can interview an elder who witnessed an important event in history. Prior the interview, students must research about the event and prepare questions. They can videotape the interview process. Students may research interview format on the internet or ask their teachers for assistance. After the interview, students can edit and present the interview to the class.

Activity 3: Visit the Site

Teachers can arrange to visit the historical site in this lesson. Before the trip, students can research the topic. With permission and assistance from the National Historical Park, teachers and students do an archaeological dig at the site.

Supplementary Resources

The War in the Pacific National Historical Park's website, www.nps.gov/wapa The park and site focus on the Pacific Campaign Theater in World War II. On Guam, T. Stell Newman, named after the first park superintendent, offers the visitors a wide array of information and artifacts.

Guampedia Foundation

The website, www.guampedia.com offers updated information about the island of Guam. The site is user-friendly and most sought after by students and community alike.

Liberation: Marines in the Recapture of Guam

This is part of a US Marines series published by the History and Museum Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, Washington D.C. This pamphlet has an excellent account of the Marines on Guam written by Cyril O'Brien which contains photos and maps. The website: <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-C-Guam/>

U.S. Army Center of Military History The document, "Guam Operations of the 77th Division: 21 July-10 August 1944: was originally published by the US War Department's Historical Division. The digital version is at:

<http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/guam/guam77div-fm.htm>

http://www.micsem.org/photos/war_marianas/intro.htm This website is a link which contains pictures of the Marines and Army soldiers as they fought in the Mariana Islands.

Books:

Liberation-1944 The Pictorial History of Guam by Don A. Farrell Published in 1984. This book contains many photos and personal account of the Chamorro people as they endured the hardships during WWII.

The Recapture of Guam by Major O. R. Lodge, USMC Published in 1954 by the Historical branch G-3 Division Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. The book contains maps and photos and detailed account of the recapturing the island.