



The USS Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA HISTORY CENTER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

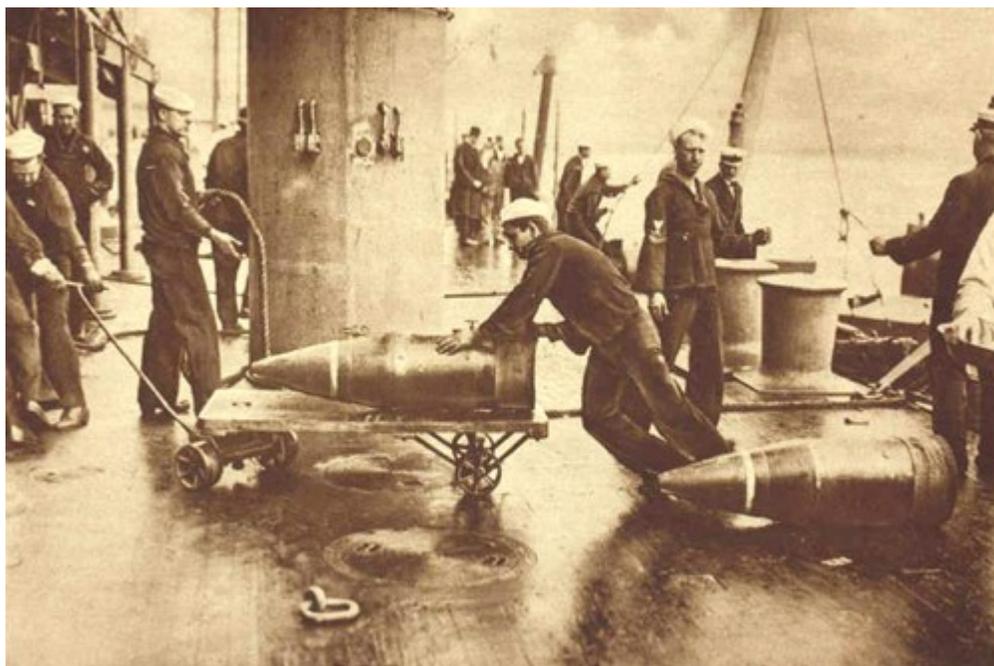
What is a Battleship?

During World War II, a battleship was the largest type of ship you could find in the US Navy, and it had bigger guns than any other type of ship. When the USS *Oklahoma* was built in 1916, it was the largest and most advanced ship in the US Navy. The USS *Oklahoma* needed 2,166 sailors and marines to function properly, and could travel 20,000 miles without refueling. It weighed 11,000 tons and carried ten 14-inch guns. The guns on battleships are rated by the diameter of the ammunition used. A 14-inch gun has shells that are 14 inches in diameter and weigh about 1,400 pounds each. That means that each shell fired by one of these guns weighed about the same as three motorcycles. Each of the *Oklahoma's* guns could fire almost twelve miles.

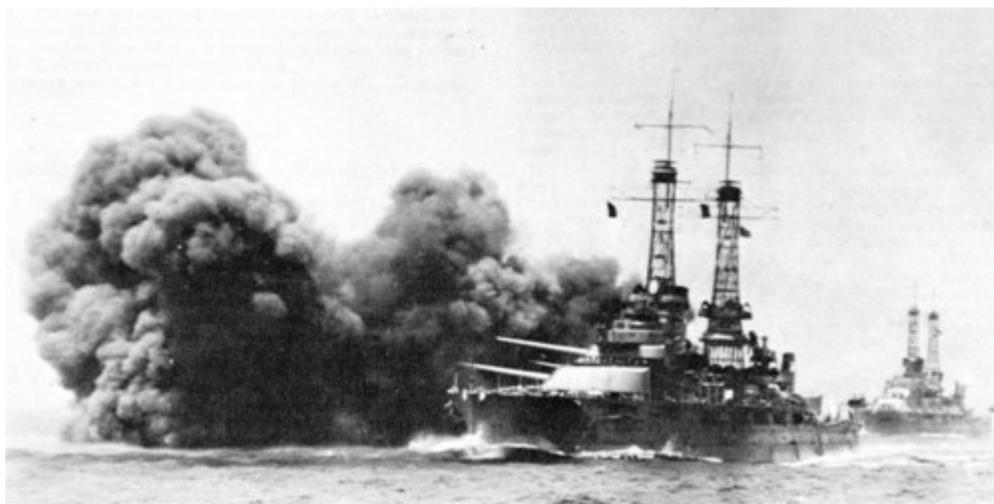
That is farther than anyone could see, even with binoculars or a telescope, so the *Oklahoma* had two airplanes it would use to find targets. They are called spotter planes.



Sailors moving a 14-inch shell around the deck, by hand (image courtesy of the Library of Congress).



Sailors on the USS *Oklahoma* cleaning one of the 14-inch guns. The gun barrel for a 14-inch gun is over 53 feet long, which is longer than three average-sized cars (image NH 44422, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).



The USS *Oklahoma* demonstrating its firepower during gunnery practice. Each shell fired by her 14-inch guns required 420 pounds of gunpowder (image 80-G-1023157, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).



The USS *Oklahoma* at the Puget Sound Naval Yard in Washington, September 28, 1940 (1256-40-1701, USS *Oklahoma* Memorial Association Collection, OHS).

Pre-War Service

The *Oklahoma* began its service during World War I escorting supply and troop ships across the Atlantic Ocean. German **submarines**, called **U-boats**, were threatening to sink any ship they could find, so the *Oklahoma* protected them as they sailed back and forth from Europe and America. The *Oklahoma* even escorted President Woodrow Wilson as he traveled to Europe to negotiate the Treaty of Paris to end the war.

After World War I, the *Oklahoma* traveled the world providing help to those in need. In 1925 the *Oklahoma* and ten other battleships, along with their **destroyer** escorts and support ships, traveled around the Pacific Ocean. They sailed all over the Pacific, including places like Samoa, Australia, and New Zealand. The sailors on board the *Oklahoma* enjoyed the trip and even had a special celebration to mark their crossing of the Equator. When Long Beach, California, experienced a disastrous earthquake in 1933, the commander of the *Oklahoma* sent sailors ashore to help police and firefighters. They helped to keep the peace so that the firefighters could do their job. In 1936, the *Oklahoma* traveled to Spain to help evacuate American and European refugees. A **refugee** is someone who is forced out of his or her home because of a natural disaster or war. That year was the start of the Spanish Civil War, so many American, British, and French citizens needed to escape the fighting. One woman who left Spain on the *Oklahoma* delivered a baby while traveling home. It was the first baby ever born on an American battleship.



Crowds of people wait to board the USS *Oklahoma* and the USS *Nevada* in Melbourne, Australia, during the Great Tour of 1925 (image courtesy of Museum Victoria, Melbourne, Australia).



Crewmen practice their football skills on the deck of the *Oklahoma* in their free time (22895.99, Lyman T. Branch Collection, OHS).

Photo # NH 50969 USS Oklahoma crewmen with evacuee children, off Bilbao, Spain, Aug. 1936



Crew members cradle children evacuated from the Spanish Civil War as they board the *Oklahoma* off the coast of Bilbao, Spain, in 1936 (image NH 50969, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).

Pearl Harbor

The USS *Oklahoma* was on Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. That was the morning the Japanese Empire attacked the United States by surprise. The Japanese used dive-bombers, fighter-bombers, and **torpedo** planes to sink nine ships, including five battleships, and severely damage twenty-one ships. There were 2,402 US deaths from the attack. Of those deaths, 1,177 were from the USS *Arizona*, and 429 were from the USS *Oklahoma*. The crew of the USS *Oklahoma* did everything they could to fight back. In the first ten minutes of the battle eight torpedoes hit the *Oklahoma* and it began to sink. A ninth torpedo hit the battleship as it sank in the mud.

After the battle, the Navy decided that they could not salvage the *Oklahoma* due to the amount of damage it received. They decided to **right** the ship and then salvage any equipment or steel they could for other ships to use. They finally finished salvaging everything they could in 1946, and then sold the **hull** of the *Oklahoma* to a private company that tried to tug it to California. On the way to California, the hull began taking on water and finally sank to the bottom of the Pacific about 500 miles east of Hawaii. Today, there is a memorial to the USS *Oklahoma* and the 429 sailors and marines lost on December 7, 1941, located on Ford Island in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor made people in the United States angry. The Japanese military had attacked without warning, and without a formal declaration of war from the Empire of Japan. The next day, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt went before Congress and asked them to declare war on the Empire of Japan. Congress passed the declaration of war with only person voting "no." Three days later, the German Empire declared war on the United States because Germany was Japan's ally. On December 11, 1941, the United States declared war on Germany, making it the official day that the United States entered World War II.

A Japanese pilot took these three photographs during the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Photo # NH 50472 Japanese aerial photo of Pearl Harbor's "Battleship Row" under attack, 7 Dec. 1941



This photograph shows the severity of the attack. The darker waters around the *Nevada* (left), *West Virginia* (center), and *Oklahoma* (right) are actually oil slicks from the fuel reserves on board each ship. The *Oklahoma* is already listing badly, as the edge of the port deck has already slipped underwater. It would completely capsize only a few minutes later (image NH 50472, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).



This shows the first wave of torpedoes hitting the *West Virginia* and the *Oklahoma*. The great plume of water in the center is the result of a torpedo striking the *West Virginia*. A similar plume would have accompanied the torpedo strikes on the *Oklahoma* (image NH 50930, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).

Photo # NH 50931 Japanese torpedo attack on "Battleship Row", Pearl Harbor, 7 Dec. 1941



This shows the second wave of torpedoes hitting the *West Virginia* and the *Oklahoma*. The *California* (far right) has already sunk, and the *Arizona's* (second from the left, next to the island) stern is in the water. The *Nevada* is still moored in the lower left of the photo (image NH 50931, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).

Photo # 80-G-19949 USS Maryland and capsized USS Oklahoma, 7 December 1941



This photo was taken shortly after the start of the attack. The first wave is over, and the *Oklahoma* lies capsized in the harbor, while the *West Virginia* burns in the background (image NH 19949, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).

Photo # 80-G-19941 Men working on capsized USS Oklaboma at Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941



This photo was taken shortly after the attack. The *Oklahoma* lies capsized in the harbor, while sailors begin rescuing crewmen that are in the harbor or trapped on the capsized *Oklahoma*. The small boat in the foreground is the Captain's Gig from the *Oklahoma*, which had launched from the *Oklahoma* before the attack began (image NH 19941, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).

In order to right the USS *Oklahoma* so that it could be salvaged, the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard constructed cranes on the shore and attached uprights to the hull of the *Oklahoma* and used cables and winches to rotate the battleship until it was upright once more. This picture shows the *Oklahoma* as it reached the 90 degree position (image ARC #296975, Courtesy of the Library of Congress).



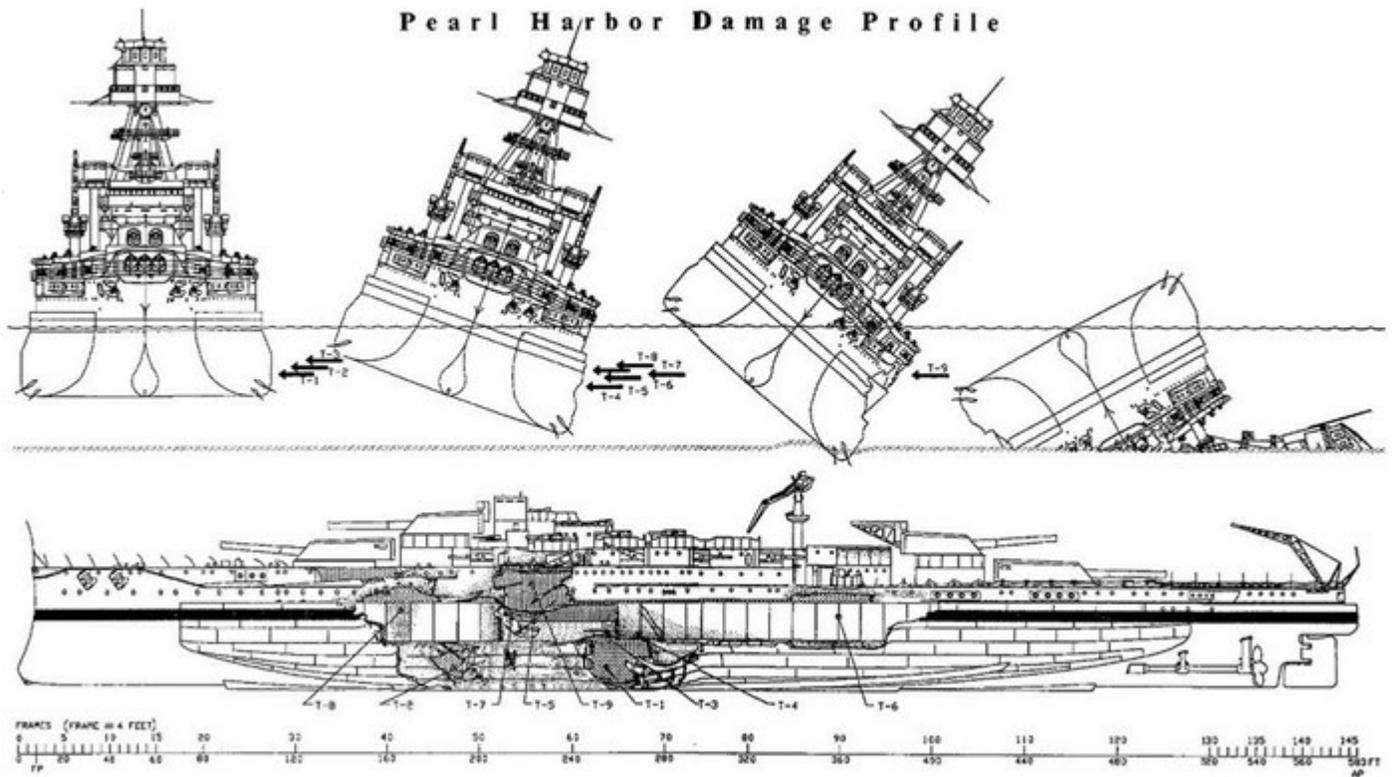
Photo # 80-G-276601 Photographer works on wreck of USS Oklaboma, Jan. 1943



Photographer's Mate 3rd Class T. E. Collins takes a break after photographing the salvage efforts on board the USS *Oklahoma*. Documenting the ship's salvage was as important as the actual salvage operation (image 80-G-276601, courtesy of Naval Heritage & History Command).



It's March of 1943, and the guns of the *Oklahoma* are exposed to sunlight for the first time in fifteen months. A salvage worker is scrambling over the *Oklahoma's* turrets to check the cables needed to pull the last little bit before it is properly righted (image courtesy of the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard).



This drawing shows the damage to the USS *Oklahoma* caused by the Japanese torpedoes. It also shows the *Oklahoma* capsizing, and how it came to rest in the muddy bottom of Pearl Harbor. Each black arrow represents a torpedo hitting the ship (illustration courtesy of WFI Research Group).

Survivors



Paul A. Goodyear

Paul A. Goodyear

Paul Goodyear was born in 1918 in Michigan. He joined the Naval Reserve in September of 1940 and was mustered on board the USS *Oklahoma* on March 31, 1941. Signalman Third Class Goodyear was still learning his way around both the Navy and the USS *Oklahoma* when the Japanese Empire attacked Pearl Harbor the morning of December 7, 1941. He was at his duty station on the signal bridge when the first bombs were dropped on the hangar at Ford Island. Over the course of the battle, Signalman Goodyear managed to abandon ship and aid in the defense of the USS *Maryland* after being rescued from the harbor.

After the USS *Oklahoma* capsized, Signalman Goodyear was reassigned to the USS *Indiana* until 1943 when he joined the staff of Battleship Division 8. He served there until the end of World War II.

Here are Goodyear's own words, describing his actions after the *Oklahoma* was hit by Japanese torpedoes:

...I left the signal bridge and went down to the boat deck. And this is again a tribute to my stupidity and ignorance. I got down on the boat deck. I remembered that I was supervisor for the signal bridge and had left the code book there. That code book was as secret as the daily paper. It had ordinary flag codes and was very simple. One of the most ignorant things I did was to go back up to the signal bridge and that code book was about as big as the Kansas City phone book, but it had lead covers on it. I carried that cotton-picking thing down and over the side and finally carried it on the upturned hull and offered it to the Executive Officer, Kenworthy. I was standing on the bottom of the ship and he looked at me like I was the most stupid person in the world for doing that, and I was. He said, 'get rid of that thing,' and threw it over the side.



Herbert Rommel (image courtesy of the William J. Mosher Collection, National Destroyermen's Museum).

Herbert Rommel

Herbert Rommel was born in 1915 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He joined the Naval Reserve in 1934 and was commissioned an ensign in 1938. On the morning of December 7, 1941, Ensign Rommel was the Division Officer of the 4th Division, which ran the number three gun turret at the **stern** of the *Oklahoma*. Sunday was Ensign Rommel's day off, so he was eating breakfast as the first bombs struck Ford Island. As Ensign Rommel ran to his station, he alerted the ship to the air raid over the loudspeakers. When the *Oklahoma* began to capsize, Ensign Rommel ordered his crew to abandon the turret. They escaped into the harbor, where Rommel was picked up by a motor boat. He then spent the rest of the morning picking survivors out of the water and taking them to the *Solace*, a Navy hospital ship.

After the events of December 7, Ensign Rommel was transferred to the USS *Gridly*, a destroyer. He served on the *Gridly* for three years, working his way up to Executive Officer, and then commanded the USS *Wilkes* for the last year of the war. Herbert Rommel served in the Navy until 1969, retiring with the rank of captain from his post as chief of staff of Naval Station Newport in Rhode Island. Captain Rommel passed away in 2007 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Here is Captain Rommel's description of the *Oklahoma* capsizing:

The manhole covers on the blisters had been removed to air them out in preparation for the inspection on Monday and that was the reason the *Oklahoma* rolled over instead of sunk. As soon as she took the hits on the port side and started to list, as soon as the blisters got underwater, the water just poured in and there was no way the damage control station could have counter flooded the ship to keep her on an even keel. She rolled over in about 10 minutes. Looking back from in the water, it was just like a sail boat [sic] going over, slow, inexorable, nothing you could do about it. Nothing swift or rushing, it just slowly went over.



Walter Staff

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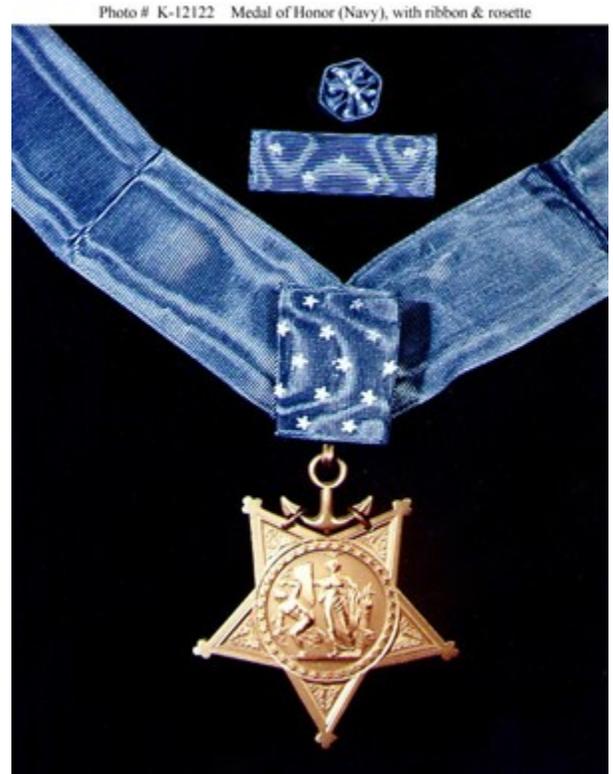
Walter Staff was born in 1917 in Magna, Utah. He grew up in Salt Lake City, where he joined the Navy in February of 1940. Later that summer he was assigned to the USS *Oklahoma*. Staff was a carpenter's mate, second class. On the morning of December 7, he was fixing a chair in the woodworking room when the order for general quarters was sounded. Staff's duty then was to check for water leaks, which is what he was doing when the *Oklahoma* was struck again by torpedoes and began to list. He was trapped in the *Oklahoma* as the boat capsized. He stayed in the hull of the *Oklahoma* for two days, until he was rescued on Tuesday, December 9. Staff was one of the thirty-two sailors rescued from the *Oklahoma*. After the attack, he was assigned to the USS *Medusa*, a repair ship. Walter Staff passed away in Utah in 1997 and is buried in the Utah Veterans Memorial Park.

Here is Walter Staff's account of being rescued with his friend, Centers, from the *Oklahoma*:

It took them about an hour to cut through the double bottoms [of the hull]. They just couldn't cut wildly in there because there was fuel oil and ammunition...they drilled a hole first, they had tapered plugs used in test holes. We were under quite a bit of water pressure down there, you could hear the air going out and this shot of light came down from above and I watched the water coming up and I watched that hole. That hole allowed the water to come in as the air pressure went out...the rescue team left because they were afraid of being flooded. That was the worst feeling because we were that close and they left...there was a linen room and I told Centers that if we could get in the linen room it would be dry. We were in water and fuel oil, so I beat the lock off...so we got in this linen room and dogged the door down so we were in a compartment that was not going to be flooded...there was a manhole and they didn't have to cut through. They said stand clear because the hatch was going to drop from overhead. They beat the dogs off and the hatch came down.

Medal of Honor Recipients

The Medal of Honor is the highest-ranking United States' combat award, with different patterns used by the navy, the army and the air force. Authorized in December 1861 as an award for enlisted men, the Navy Medal of Honor originally served to further promote the efficiency of the Navy. Its award criteria subsequently included “deeds of gallantry and heroism in times of War and of Peace” on the part of officers and enlisted personnel, but in 1942 were restricted to acts of extraordinary heroism in armed combat. The design of the medal and its associated ribbon have also varied, with the pattern presently used having been adopted in 1942.



Medal of Honor (image courtesy Naval Heritage & History Command).

Photo # NH 92305 Ensign Francis C. Flaherty, USNR



Ensign Francis C. Flaherty (image courtesy Naval Heritage & History Command).

Ensign Francis C. Flaherty

Ensign Flaherty was born in Charlotte, Michigan, in 1919. He joined the Naval Reserve in July of 1940 and was commissioned an Ensign by December of 1940. During the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ensign Flaherty stayed in a gun turret to provide light so that the turret crew and others could abandon ship.

As the *Oklahoma* rolled over, he stayed in the turret, until he was trapped inside the ship, under water. He is listed among the missing and dead from the attack.

The destroyer escort USS *Flaherty* DE-135 was named for Ensign Flaherty. It was commissioned in 1943 and decommissioned in 1946.

Here is his official Medal of Honor citation:

For conspicuous devotion to duty and extraordinary courage and complete disregard of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, during the attack on the Fleet in Pearl Harbor, by Japanese Forces on 7 December 1941. When it was seen that the USS *Oklahoma* was going to capsize and the order was given to abandon ship, Ensign Flaherty remained in a turret, holding a flashlight so the remainder of the turret crew could see to escape, thereby sacrificing his own life.

Seaman First Class James Richard Ward

Seaman First Class James Richard Ward was born in Springfield, Ohio, in 1921. He enlisted in the United States Navy in November of 1940. During the attack on Pearl Harbor, Seaman Ward remained in a turret after the order to abandon the USS *Oklahoma*, providing light so that other crewmen could escape the sinking ship. When the *Oklahoma* finally rolled over, he was trapped in the turret. He is listed among the missing and dead from the attack.

Here is his official Medal of Honor citation:

For conspicuous devotion to duty, extraordinary courage and complete disregard of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, during the attack on the Fleet in Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces on 7 December 1941. When it was seen that the USS *Oklahoma* was going to capsize and the order was given to abandon ship, Ward remained in a turret holding a flashlight so the remainder of the turret crew could see to escape, thereby sacrificing his own life.

The destroyer escort USS *J. Richard Ward* DE-243 was named in honor of Seaman Ward. It was commissioned in 1943 and decommissioned in 1946.

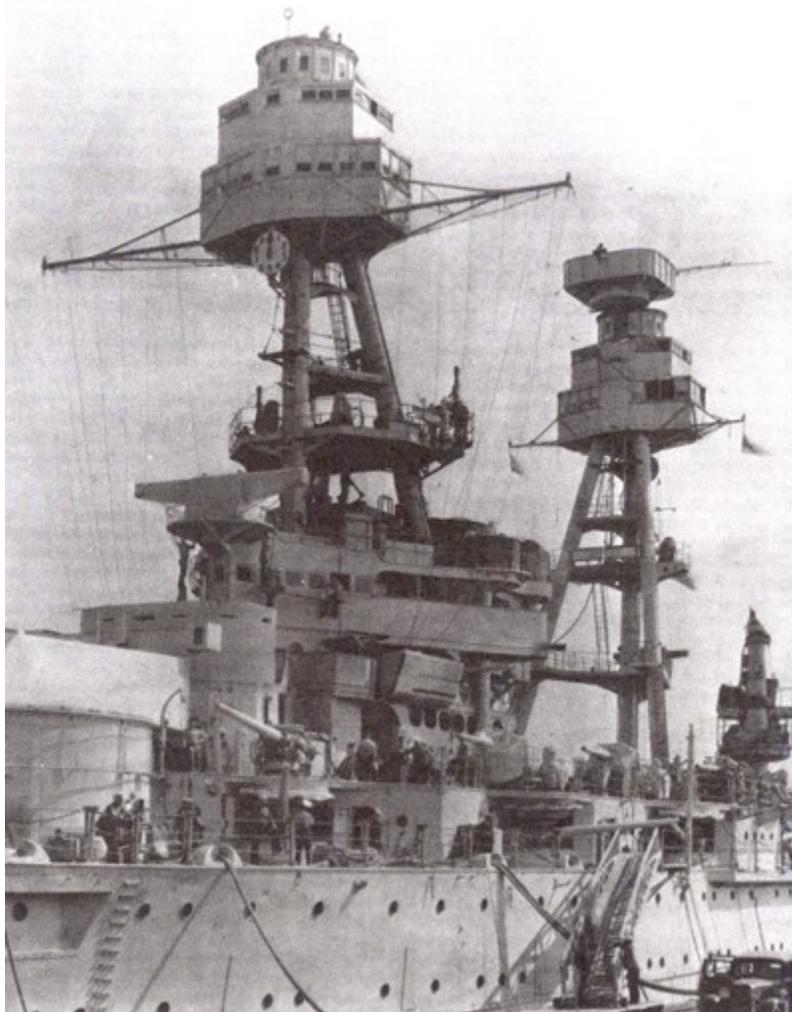


Seaman First Class James Richard Ward (image courtesy Naval Heritage & History Command).

The Parts of the USS *Oklahoma*

The Mast

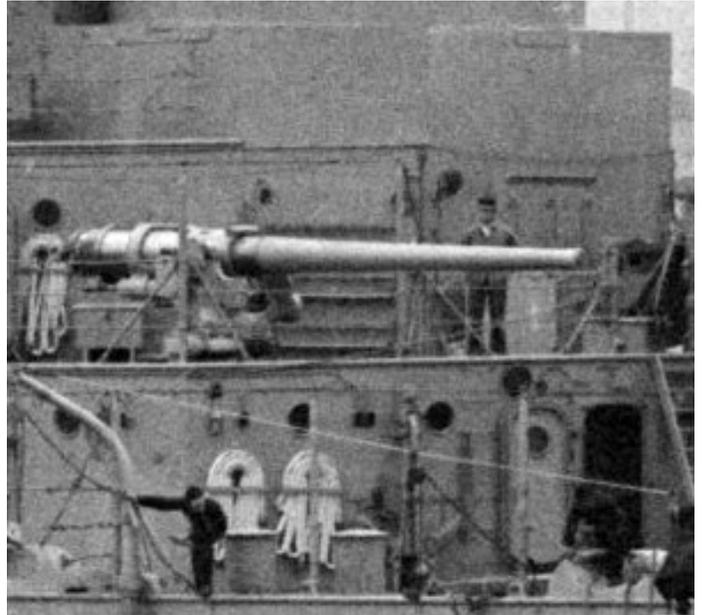
Masts are tall structures in the middle of a ship that are used to mount sails or provide a place for seeing things that are far away. On the USS *Oklahoma*, the masts were used to spot targets and direct fire from the ship's main guns. The mast towards the **bow** of the ship is called the foremast, while the mast towards the rear of the ship is called the mainmast. During World War II, most battleships had one or two masts, while newer battleships might not have one at all. A person standing on the top of one of these masts would be standing over 120 feet, or twelve stories, above the water.



Tri-pod masts of the USS *Nevada*, the USS *Oklahoma's* sister ship

Funnel

A battleship's **funnel** is also called a smokestack, or stack. The funnel is where the exhaust from a battleship's **boilers** is released. The *Oklahoma's* boilers boiled water to make steam for the ship's **steam engines**. The USS *Oklahoma* had three boilers and all of their exhaust was released from this one funnel. The USS *Nevada* and the USS *Oklahoma* were the first battleships to have only one funnel. Older battleships might have two or three funnels. Knowing how many funnels are on a ship can be helpful in identifying ships at sea, especially when you are looking for targets.



The *Oklahoma* had fourteen of these 5-inch 51 caliber anti-aircraft guns. This is a photo of a similar gun on the USS *Texas* in 1914.



As the USS *Oklahoma* travels the Panama Canal, you can see smoke rising from the funnel (OHS Collections).

Anti-Aircraft Fire Control

When a battleship comes under attack from aircraft, it uses special guns to fire at aircraft as they fly past the ship. This is very difficult and can be like trying to hit a fly with a spitwad. Ships like the *Oklahoma* have special equipment in rooms like this one to help the sailors aim at their targets. Unfortunately, the *Oklahoma* was sunk so quickly on December 7 that no one on board was able to get a shot off to defend the ship from the Japanese attack.

Rangefinder

The USS *Oklahoma* was equipped with ten 14-inch guns. These massive cannons could fire up to twelve miles away, but in order to aim well the crew needed to use special equipment to target at such long distances. A **rangefinder** helps the sailors know how far away their target is. The rangefinder is like a special pair of binoculars that can help you see both things far away, and tell exactly how far away those objects are.



This is a Mark 19 Gun Director. The USS *Oklahoma* had one just like this. The knob sticking out from the box is the gun director's rangefinder (OHS Collections).

Main Guns or Turrets

Battleships carry the largest guns on the ocean and can use them to attack heavily **armored** targets on land or sea. These guns are called the **main guns**. The USS *Oklahoma* had ten 14-inch guns arranged in four **turrets**. They are called 14-inch guns, because they fired **shells** that were 14 inches in diameter. That's about the same size as an average hubcap on a car tire. The turrets are like the houses for the guns, and are armored to protect the sailors loading and firing the guns. Two of the *Oklahoma's* turrets had three guns, and two of them had two guns. The shells fired from a 14-inch gun could hit targets twelve miles away, and weighed up to 1,400 pounds each.



The crew of the USS *Oklahoma* are getting in some target practice for their 14-inch gun crews. When a ship fires all of its main guns at the same target, that is usually called a "Broadside" (18636.70, John J. Clunie Collection, OHS).

Spotter Plane and Catapult

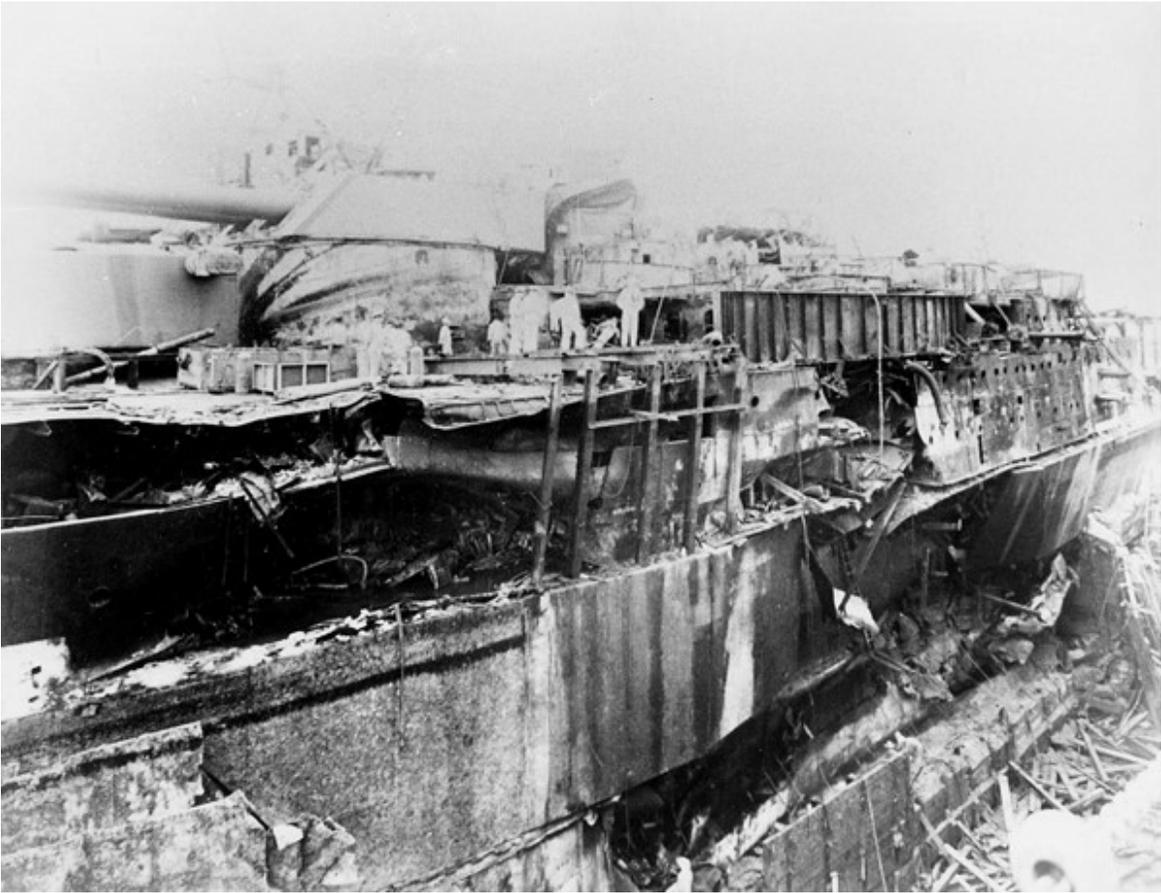
The USS *Oklahoma* could fire its main guns so far that it relied on someone scouting in an airplane to help locate targets. This meant that the *Oklahoma* could hit targets too far away for anyone on the ship to see, even with the help of binoculars and rangefinders. Since the *Oklahoma* didn't have enough space for a normal take-off, like on an **aircraft carrier**, it used a **catapult** mounted on one of the main guns to launch the plane into the air. The plane had pontoons for landing in the water, and the crew of the *Oklahoma* could use a **crane** to pick the airplane and place it safely back on the boat once the mission ended.



This biplane waits for its next mission on the deck of the USS *Oklahoma* (OHS Collections).

Torpedo Armor

Also called **torpedo blisters**, this special plating was added to the side of the USS *Oklahoma* during its overhaul from 1927 to 1929. The armor creates a second skin that causes torpedoes to explode outside the actual hull of the ship. This was designed to prevent water from entering the hull of the ship and prevent it from sinking. Unfortunately, the water-tight doors on top of the *Oklahoma's* blisters were open during the attack on Pearl Harbor. This allowed water to enter the ship more easily, causing the *Oklahoma* to sink faster. Torpedo blisters are also meant to be used to protect the battleship from one or two lucky shots, not seven direct hits like the *Oklahoma* received in the first ten minutes of fighting that morning.



This picture was taken after the *Oklahoma* had been recovered from the bottom of Pearl Harbor. You can see how extensive the torpedo damage was to the outer hull (OHS Collections).

The Bridge

The **bridge** of any ship is where the captain commands the rest of the crew. The steering controls are located there, as well as communication tools so that the captain's orders can be passed throughout the ship. On the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked the captain of the USS *Oklahoma*, Captain Howard D. Bode, was not on board the ship. He had gone over to the USS *Maryland* for Sunday services when the attack began. This meant that the Executive Officer, or XO, was in command. The XO was Commander Kenworthy.



Captain Howard D. Bode of the USS *Oklahoma*. He was put in command of the heavy cruiser USS *Chicago* after the *Oklahoma* sank (OHS Collections).

The Rudder and Propellers

The **rudder** and the **propellers** of a ship work together to make a **vessel** move. The steam engine on the USS *Oklahoma* was connected to the propellers and made them spin. The *Oklahoma* was the last battleship built by the US Navy to have two propellers. The propeller spins in the water like the propeller of an airplane spins in the air, only the ship's propeller pushes the boat instead of pulling it. The rudder of a ship moves left and right based on what the helmsman does to the ship's wheel. This causes the boat to turn right or left, depending on the captain's orders.



The wheel of a ship turns the rudder. This is the aft wheel of the USS *Oklahoma*.

Glossary

aircraft carrier: A warship with a deck from which aircraft can take off and land.

anchor: A device usually of metal that is attached to a boat or ship by a cable and that, when thrown overboard, digs into the earth and holds the boat or ship in place.

anti-aircraft: Anything used to defend against an air attack.

armor: A protective outer layer used to defend someone or something from attack usually made from a heavy and tough material like steel.

boiler: The part of a steam generator in which water is converted into steam. It usually consists of metal shells and tubes.

bow: The forward part of a boat or ship.

bridge: The forward part of a ship's superstructure from which the ship is navigated.

caliber: The diameter or bore of a gun barrel.

catapult: A device for launching an airplane usually from a ship like an aircraft carrier.

crane: A machine with a swinging arm for lifting and carrying heavy objects.

crow's nest: A partly enclosed platform high on a ship's mast for use as a lookout.

destroyer: A small, fast warship armed with guns, depth charges, torpedoes, and, often, guided missiles.

fleet: A number of warships under a single command; in other words, an organization of ships and aircraft under the command of a flag officer.

funnel: A stack or flue for the escape of smoke or ventilation, as on a ship.

hull: The frame or body of a ship or boat exclusive of masts, yards, sails, and rigging.

keel: A timber or plate running lengthwise along the center of the bottom of a ship and usually sticking out from the bottom.

mast: A long pole or spar rising from the keel or deck of a ship that supports the yards, booms, and rigging.

navy: The complete naval establishment of a nation including yards, stations, ships, and personnel.

porthole: An opening in the side of a ship or aircraft.

port: When looking towards the front of a ship or aircraft, the left side.

propeller: A device consisting of a hub fitted with blades that is made to turn rapidly by an engine and is used especially for propelling airplanes and ships.

range finder: An instrument used to determine the distance of a target.

righting: The act of reversing a capsized vessel.

rudder: A flat movable piece of wood or metal attached to the rear of a ship or aircraft for steering.

sailor: A member of a ship's crew.

shell: A projectile for cannon containing an explosive bursting charge.

ship: A large vessel for travel on water.

spotter: A person that locates targets beyond the visible horizon.

steam engine: An engine that uses steam for power.

Glossary

stern: The rear end of a boat or ship.

submarine: A naval vessel designed to operate underwater.

tactics: The science and art of disposing and maneuvering forces in combat.

torpedo: A weapon used to destroy ships by rupturing their hulls below the waterline.

turret: A revolving armored structure on a warship that protects one or more guns mounted within.

U-boat: A German submarine.

vessel: A watercraft that is larger than a boat.

waterline: A line marked on the outside of a ship that matches the surface of the water when the ship floats.

Activities

Cardinal Directions Activity

Help the *USS Oklahoma*!

The *USS Oklahoma* had started a world tour, when its compass suddenly broke!

1. Fill in the missing directions on the *USS Oklahoma*'s compass
2. After you've filled in the compass, finish filling the line from Start to Stop #1.
Is the *USS Oklahoma* going North or South?

3. Now, with your finger, trace the lines that show the *USS Oklahoma*'s trip from Stop #1 all the way through to Stop #6. Once you've done that, fill in the lines from Stop #1 all the way through to Stop #6.

On this part of the trip, did the *USS Oklahoma* ever travel East?

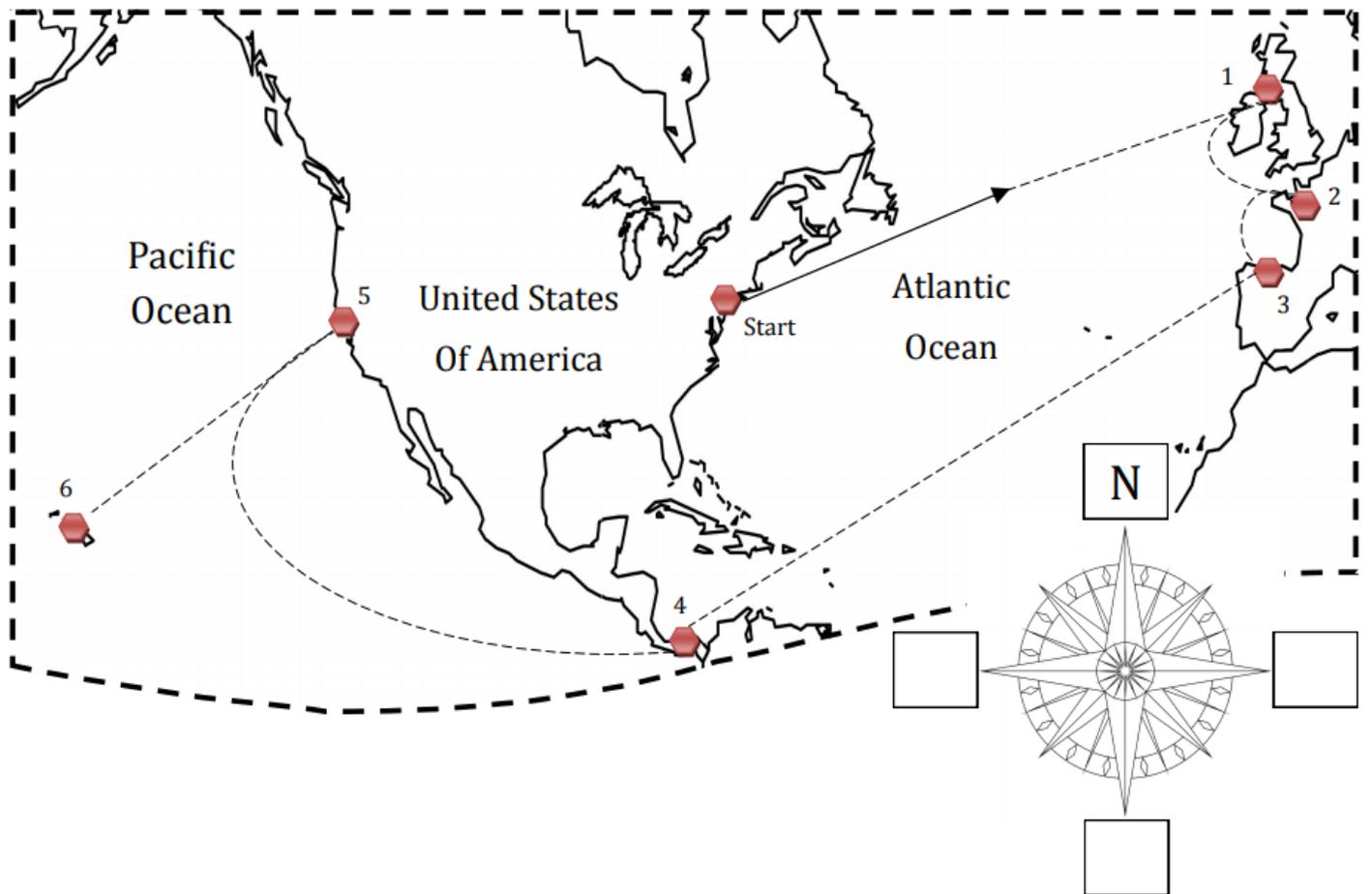
4. The *USS Oklahoma* finally made it home to Stop #6!
Is the *USS Oklahoma* North or South of where it started?

Is Stop #6 East or West of the Start?



Cardinal Directions Activity

Help the *USS Oklahoma*!



Join the Signal Corps

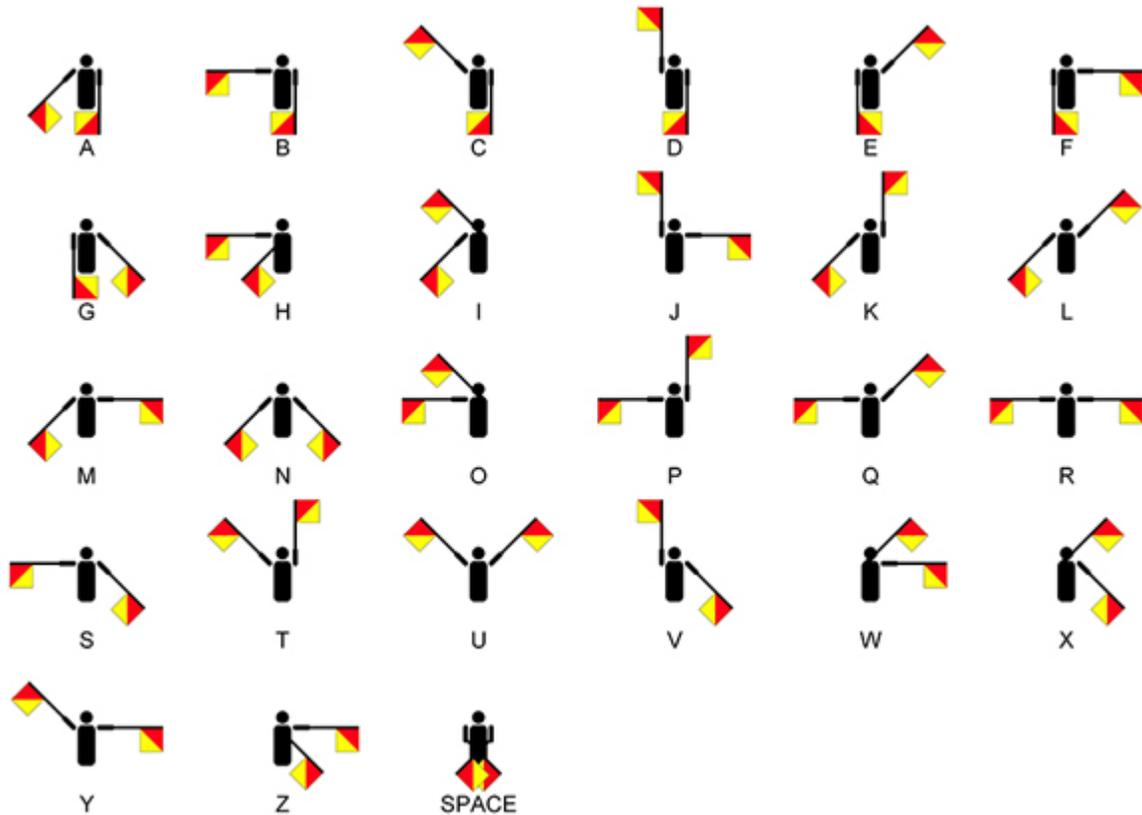
Battleships like the USS *Oklahoma* travel all over the world, so they need to be able to communicate over long distances. Battleships can also be very noisy, so they need to be able to communicate without words. In order to communicate, the Navy used Morse Code for communicating on radio telegrams over long distances, and Semaphore to communicate when it was too loud for talking.

Semaphore is communicating with flags, where the position of each flag represents a letter. Morse Code uses sequences of long (dash) and short (dot) electronic "beeps" to represent letters.

Below are two alphabets. One is the Morse Code alphabet and the other is the Semaphore alphabet. Use these alphabets to craft your own message to the crew of the USS *Oklahoma* or translate the example message given below.

Sample message:

"AIR RAID! AIR RAID! GENERAL QUARTERS! THIS IS NO DRILL!"



Morse Code

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| A ● - | J ● - - - | S ● ● ● |
| B - ● ● ● | K - ● - | T - |
| C - ● - ● | L ● - ● ● | U ● ● - |
| D - ● ● | M - - | V ● ● ● - |
| E ● | N - ● | W ● - - |
| F ● ● - ● | O - - - | X - ● ● - |
| G - - ● | P ● - - ● | Y - ● - - |
| H ● ● ● ● | Q - - ● - | Z - - ● ● |
| I ● ● | R ● - ● | |

V-mail



[Download V-mail envelope](#)

(Image courtesy of *Stalag Luft Prisoners of War*).

During World War II, there was no internet or cell phones. Being on board a battleship meant you had no access to tele-phones either. The best way to communicate with your family and friends was through V-mail, or Victory Mail. These small letters folded into postcard size and only cost 3 cents to mail.

Imagine it is December 1941, and you have been training on board the USS *Oklahoma*. The attack on Pearl Harbor has not occurred and, while you are preparing for war, you think you are safe in Hawaii. Using the blank V-Mail envelope write a letter home to your family telling them about your experiences in Hawaii and on board the USS *Oklahoma*.

When you are done, exchange your letter with a partner.

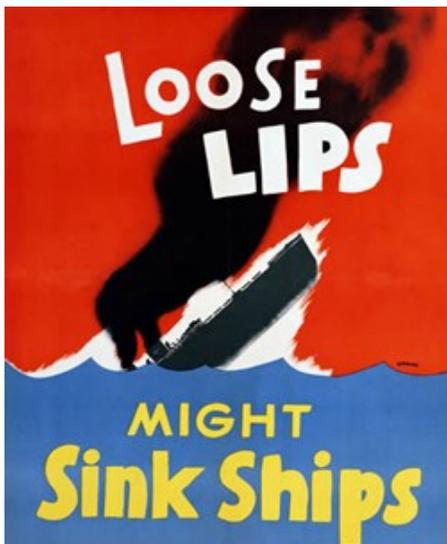
You are now a censorship officer in the US Navy. While the country is preparing for war, you are concerned about information from sailors' letters being intercepted by enemy spies. Your job is to now censor your partner's letter by blacking out any information related to their:

- Location
- Military maneuvers or training operations
- State of the sailor's ship
- Number of crewmembers or ships at the naval base.

Think about and answer these questions when you are done:

- Do you think this censorship was fair? Why or why not?
- Do you think this was done without the sailors' knowledge, or do you think the sailors on the USS *Oklahoma* knew what they could and could not talk about in letters?
- How is this activity related to the "Loose Lips Might Sink Ships" poster?

Below is a copy of a V-mail letter sent home by a private in the Army. Are there any censorship marks on his letter? Do you think he knew the rules about what he could and could not talk about in a letter?



(Image courtesy of *Vintage Ad Browser*.)

Print the recipient's address in plain letters in the space below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Pencil or small writing is not suitable for photographing.



TO
MR. & MRS. JOHN HENNING
RTE 1 Box 201 X
OKLA. CITY, OKLA.
U.S.A.

FROM A.S.N. 35401884
Pvt. VERNIE HENNING
CO. C 120th INF. APO 30
7 P.M. NEW YORK, N.Y.
AUG 4 1944
(Sender's complete address above)

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

Dearest folks,
I will drop you a few lines today to let you know I am
O. K. & hope all of you are the same. Been working the
hardest I've ever worked in my life, in the last three
weeks! Really had some tough fighting the last few
days. Don't worry about me any more than you can
help. I'm still waiting for mail and I'll sure be
glad when I get some! How are all the folks by this
time? Fine I hope. Tell them all I said "Hello" and
that I don't have time to write to anyone but just you.
I sure would like to hear from all of you though. Last
letter I got from any of you was written June 5.
Quite a while, no? I have another buddy now. He
is from Texas. We get along fine together. Been
raining some lately & pretty muddy and hot. How
are all of you coming along in your jobs? Fine
I'll bet and hope. Well, I'll try to write as often
as I possibly can, and all of you do the same. What
are you doing now Al? Same job? I guess you are on
the same job, aren't you, Mom & Dad. Lots of love & kisses

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY
V...-MAIL

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP? *Bye Bye*

(OHS Collections.)

Propaganda

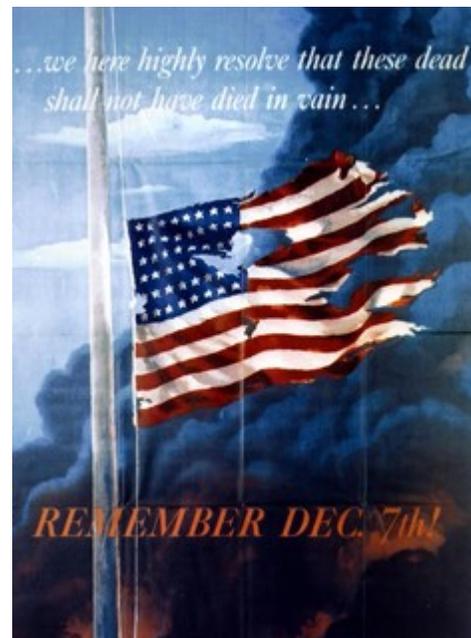
Propaganda is media that uses words, images, and/or music in order to motivate a group of people to think, feel, or act in a specific way. During World War II, the United States became very good at propaganda and used its messages to motivate the whole country to strive towards one goal: victory in World War II. Propaganda tends to use emotional arguments over logical ones and to depict its audience as powerful and good and its targets as weak and evil.

Write a paragraph analyzing one of these four posters. While you do that, think about these questions to answer:

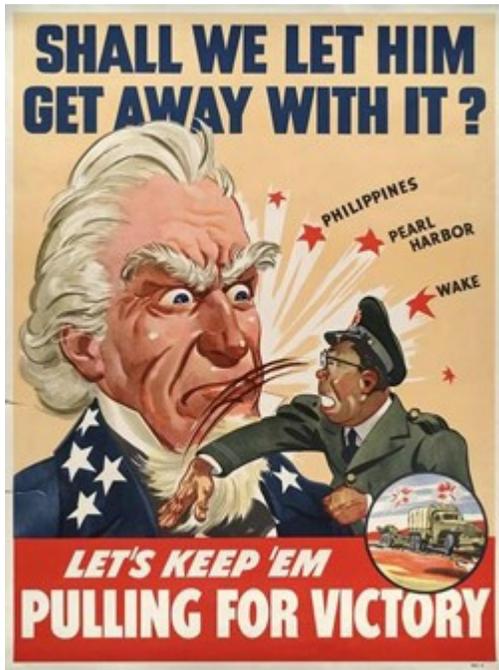
1. Who is the audience?
 2. What is the subject of the art? Is there more than one subject?
 3. Is there a specific emotion that this poster is supposed to evoke?
 4. Does the poster depict anyone in a negative way? How does it do this?
 5. Is the poster's message effective? In other words, would it have made you want to join the war effort during World War II?
 6. Once you have finished writing your paragraph, design your own poster that uses the sinking of the USS *Oklahoma* to motivate an audience to join the war effort. Remember the questions you tried to answer in your paragraph and make sure others could answer the same questions about your poster.
- After finishing your poster, think about a commercial, poster, song, etc., that you have seen. How is it similar to these four examples? How is it different?



(Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.)



(Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.)



(Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.)



(Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

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Pearl Harbor Raid, 7 December 1941: Salvage of USS *Oklahoma*, 1942–1944 <https://www.history.navy.mil/our-collections/photography/wars-and-events/world-war-ii/pearl-harbor-raid/post-attack-ship-salvage/salvage-of-uss-oklahoma--1942-1944.html>

NavSource Online: Battleship Photo Archive – BB-37 USS *Oklahoma*, 1912–1916 <http://www.navsource.org/archives/01/37a.htm>

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