

The War in the Pacific Map Notes

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/neh/interactives/wwii/lesson1/>

Box	Date(s)	Title	Summary
1	1937-1945	Japan v China	Japan was seeking to seize territory in China in order to expand the Japanese empire. Japan had early success in gaining a foothold in China, but the Chinese refusal to surrender and the sheer size of the country proved far too much for Japan to overcome. Most importantly for the U.S., for every Japanese soldier fighting in China there was one less Japanese soldier to fight the U.S. in the Pacific theatre.
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3-12	9 December 1941 - 8 March 1942	Japanese Expansion in the Pacific	In the wake of Pearl harbor, Japan's strategy was to expand across the Pacific in order to establish a strong defensive perimeter that would prevent the U.S. from a direct assault on mainland Japan. Many U.S. territories/military bases were attacked during this period at locations such as the Philippines, Guam, Midway and Wake Islands. One notable event that occurred during this period was the Bataan Death March in the Philippines. Over 12 days, the Japanese army forced captured American and Filipino troops to walk 60 miles without food or water to prison camps. Approximately 1,000 Americans die during the march. General Douglas MacArthur , who would become the head of all allied troops in the Pacific, avoided capture and said the famous words of "I shall return" upon leaving the Philippines.
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14	7-8 May 1942	Battle of the Coral Sea	As part of Japan's strategy to set up an island defense network, the Japanese Navy sent a fleet of ships to secure the island of Papua located in the Coral Sea. To stop the Japanese advance, the U.S. Navy sent a fleet of ships consisting of eight cruisers, eleven destroyers and two aircraft carriers (the Yorktown and the Lexington). The battle was essentially a draw, however since the Japanese were unable to gain a decisive victory, the decision was made by Japanese leaders to postpone advancing into the Coral Sea.
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16, 19	7 June 1942 - July 1943	Japanese forces Land on the Aleutian Islands	Japan was planning a surprise attack against the U.S. at Midway Island and in order to divert U.S. attention they invaded two of the Aleutian Islands. The tactic did not work as the U.S. had already broken the Japanese code and were prepared for the upcoming attack at Midway. In the summer of 1943 the U.S. decided to eradicate the Japanese presence from the Aleutians as a matter of pride; they were pieces of U.S. territory after all.
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18, 20-25	September 1942 - July 1944	U.S. v Japan in the South Pacific	Following the success at Midway, the U.S. continued the process of clearing the Japanese out of their strongholds on various South Pacific Islands. While the U.S. was successful in their endeavors, it came at a heavy cost as the U.S. suffered approximately 27,000 casualties in these battles. On several of these islands, the Japanese retreated to the mountainous interior. Employing the Island Hopping strategy, MacArthur chose not to pursue the Japanese knowing that they would be cut off from all supplies since the U.S. had the island surrounded.
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27	21, 24 July, 1944	U.S. takes Guam and Tinian	Taking back these two islands were crucial to launching attacks against the Philippines and eventually mainland Japan. Each island was heavily populated with Japanese troops, all of who were willing to fight to the death. Nonetheless, both islands were securely under U.S control by early August of 1944.
28 - 30	20 Oct. 1944 – March, 1945	Leyte Gulf and Luzon (Philippines)	U.S. forces landed on the island of Leyte in the Philippines in October, 1945 under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. While U.S. forces were fighting on land, the largest sea battle in naval history was set to occur at the battle of Leyte Gulf. During a three day period in late October of 1944, the U.S. handed a devastating defeat to the Japanese Navy. Japan suffered a significant loss of ships including four aircraft carriers. This battle also witnessed the first use of <i>kamikaze</i> (divine wind) pilots by the Japanese. These pilots backed their planes with explosives for the purpose of intentionally crashing into U.S. ships. After the victories around Leyte, the U.S. began the invasion of the main island of Luzon in early January of 1945. While fighting in the Philippines would continue until the end of the war, the U.S. had the territory in firm control by March of 1945.
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