



D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History (Scholastic Focus)

Deborah Hopkinson

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Sibert Honor author Deborah Hopkinson brings her signature action-packed narrative style to one of the most crucial battles of WWII.

The WWII invasion known as D-Day was the largest military endeavor in history. By June 6, 1944, Hitler and his allies had a strong grip on the European continent, where Nazi Germany was engaged in the mass extermination of the Jewish people. The goal of D-Day was the total defeat of Hitler's regime, and the defense of free democracies everywhere. Knowing they had to breach the French coast, the US, Great Britain, and Canada planned for the impossible.

D-Day was an invasion not for conquest, but liberation, and required years to plan and total secrecy to keep the advantage of surprise. Once deployed, Operation Overlord involved soldiers, sailors, paratroopers, and specialists. Acclaimed author Deborah Hopkinson weaves together the contributions of not only D-Day's famous players, but African Americans, women, journalists, and service members in a masterful tapestry of official documents, personal narratives, and archival photos to bring this decisive battle to vivid, thrilling life.

D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History (Scholastic Focus) Details

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From Reader Review D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History (Scholastic Focus) for online ebook

Alicia says

The book tries to do too much. Between the layout in which Hopkinson has briefings, strategies, voices, readers's additions, dispatches, notebooks, etc. I wished she had stuck to just one or two angles to cover the invasion that changed history. But of course, she also mentions, there's just so much to cover. I think it got muddled in it's delivery and will be interesting to those that enjoy the subject matter, but unfocused and hard to connect with if you'd like to learn about something that you didn't know much about. I couldn't concentrate with the amount going on.

Yet, I can appreciate the imagery she paints, the primary sources, and documentation to show all of the facets including the most hardhitting when discussing African Americans enlisting, women correspondents, and the difficulties of planning for such a large-scale invasion such as D-Day. Readers can feel the uphill battle and the luck as well as planning that went into this military strategy of this magnitude. It's horrific and difficult, confusing and scary but they did it for the betterment of the world and to stop a madman. I just wish the delivery had been better.

I'd also like to see it in the larger format that I know and love from informational nonfiction for a YA audience as I'm only seeing the ARC and hope it spaces itself out if it's going to a larger size dimension.

Valerie McEnroe says

This book is as good as it gets for a highly readable, nonfiction, war selection for kids. Getting kids to read about combat is not easy if it's not written in a style they can relate to. It needs to be as close to a narrative telling as it can get without crossing the line into fiction. Hopkinson tackles this challenge by telling the story from the perspective of real men who landed on the beaches of Normandy by air and sea. She is able to do this with a massive amount of quotes that makes it feel at times like dialogue. This is an approach also used by award-winning nonfiction writer, Steve Sheinkin. Her research is more than thorough. She manages to include fine details that make the whole story all the more exciting. Who knew that Eisenhower brought his dog over? Who knew the fate the weather would play? Who knew that cows would be mistaken for German soldiers? Who knew the terrain, filled with hedgerows, would require a new tank design? Fascinating details.

Hopkinson begins by describing the plan, which took a year to finalize and execute. She describes the Normandy coast and the five Allied entry points. The Americans come in at the western points of Utah and Omaha and take the worst beating. She describes the gliders which come in first with supplies. She gives first hand accounts of the paratroopers coming in next. Some dying immediately. Some missing their mark by miles. Then she describes the sea invasion at Omaha beach in astonishing detail.

Famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle said, "After it was over it seemed a pure miracle that we ever took the beach at all." I get why he said that after reading this book. Hopkinson's writing put me there on Omaha Beach and I'm grateful to finally understand this important historical event. It's written for kids, but I also recommend it for adults.

Gilbert says

“The invasion, which is so many things, is also a mountain range of orders; hence of farewells, of empty places at the table, of incomplete Christmases, uncelebrated anniversaries, untaken weekends, and of changed lives here, there, and on the way over.”

Many parts would have been very dry to an 8-12-year-old me, but the first person accounts are compelling and moving.

Becca Gibbons says

GREAT book for kids to learn about D-Day's history. Why it happened, how it happened, and what happened after. Many original sources and documents cited. Written in an engaging format with different accounts and how everyone helped make this pivotal battle happen from start to finish.

Partha says

One of the most delightful accounts of D Day. It just feels like a chilly thriller even though every word and every line is just theory. What is the most amazing is the first hand account from real frontline soldiers, and rarest of rare photographs from the beaches. Brilliant. Totally worth the read. Will love to own it someday.

American Mensa says

D-Day: The World War II Invasion that Changed History by Deborah Hopkinson is a non-fiction book about the events of D-Day. This was an invasion of allied troops onto four German occupied beaches. It took months of painstaking planning and coordinated efforts of multiple nations to pull off this heroic feat. D-Day is widely considered one of the most important military efforts in history.

This book does an amazing job of bringing a pivotal point in human history to life. It shows the perspectives of military commanders, journalists, world leaders and soldiers, which allows the reader to become immersed in the story of D-Day. The book was divided into 6 main parts that covered events before, during, and after D-Day. Within these parts, there were numerous other sections, like “Invasion Briefings” and “Reporter’s Notebook.” This broke up the information and made it easier to understand.

My favorite aspect of the book was the invasion briefings. As a World War II buff, it was fascinating to see the intricate maneuvers involved with each invasion, and how different units worked in unison. The labeled maps, captions, and diagrams made the information very accessible. Each of the four beaches (Sword, Juno, Omaha, and Utah) had separate invasions that defied the tremendous odds against them. The Allied troops braved beach obstacles, enemy fire and terrible weather, sacrificing everything for a common goal.

I also loved how this book displayed the bravery of those behind the scenes during D-Day. Though they were

not present on the battlefield, thousands of people worked to build machinery, predict the weather, and plan the invasion. If President Roosevelt had picked the wrong day to invade, the entire D-Day operation may have been for nothing. But under extreme pressure, Roosevelt rose to the occasion and picked the right date. I think he said it best: "I thank the gods of war we went when we did."

I would recommend this book to any reader over the age of ten who enjoys history and reading about World War II. I believe that the best and worst of humanity can be witnessed in wartime situations, and reading about prolific wars is very important. Such a momentous event like D-Day should be appreciated by readers old and young.

I give this book five out of five stars because of the multiple perspectives and fascinating battle plans. This book did justice to the importance of such a pivotal point in our history, and was simply a great read.
Review by Anya A, age 14, Metropolitan Washington Mensa

Kirsten says

A very well-researched, readable and thorough historical account of one of the world's most important battles, which turned the tide of war, and eventually led to the liberation of Paris and the defeat of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. Everyone should know this amazing story.

Anne says

A detailed look at the invasion of Normandy, France during WWII by the Allies that turned the tide of the war. This invasion is often referred to simply as D-Day. Many individual/personal accounts, lots of maps and charts. Incredibly thorough. Statistics and information that I was unaware of; shocking how many people were killed and wounded in this one day. Also saddening how black soldiers were still so poorly treated. Also astonishing how badly plans went astray and yet Allies were still victorious. (So glad I read this before I will go there in April; will be so much more meaningful)

Laura Petrie says

Thanks to the @kidlitexchange network for the review copy of the book—all opinions are my own. I remember my history teachers talking about the significance of D-Day to the Allies in World War II, but I never really personally understood why this was such an important event until reading this book. In this nonfiction narrative, Deborah Hopkinson gives the reader an account of this crucial military endeavor. She starts with all the planning that went into it, all of the action during the invasion, and the aftermath. As she does this, she seamlessly weaves in quotes from soldiers and eye witnesses, actual photos, and links the reader can go to if they want to continue their learning and research. I also appreciate that Hopkinson acknowledges groups that often don't receive recognition for their achievements during this time, such as women and African Americans, and she honestly addresses the discrimination and racism that prevented them from doing more, even when they wanted to do more. I learned a lot of interesting things while reading this book-- everything from how the weather affected plans, the different people who traveled to Normandy, and how they strategically planned their battle. One thing I found difficult about this book was the chronology. History is can be tricky because so many things are happening simultaneously. I had a hard time

understanding what was happening when. I think a visual timeline of just the invasion would have been helpful. I would recommend this book for anyone interested in history, wars, or World War II specifically.

Molly Dettmann says

Pros: An engaging intro and overall accessible read about D-Day for middle school readers. I learned more about D-Day than I ever did in school.

Cons: Even though the book was really 300ish pages since the last bit was sources and such, I felt about halfway through that I was slogging through it. The beginning captured me, but then it didn't continue at that pace to keep me engaged. It might be a harder sell for kids who aren't already in love with books about history or war.

Kathy Martin says

This story about D-Day brings to life, through the words of a few of the participants, the planning, horrors, and triumphs of one of the most important battles of the Second World War. Hopkinson focuses mainly on the American contribution to the battle.

The story is broken into small chunks with frequent "Look, Listen, Remember" sections that give links to further information about the current topic. Sections called "Briefings" and "Reader's Invasion Briefing" provide a wider context to the the eyewitness material. Other sections called "Reporter's Notebooks" give information about some of the men and women who were war photographers and correspondents. "Dispatches" are first person accounts.

The book is liberally illustrated with photos and maps. It also ends with an extensive "Quartermaster's Department" which includes a timeline, a list of the important people in the book, a glossary, a list of additional sources and detailed notes identifying and giving credit for all the quotes. The book will have an index which was not included in my ARC.

This book was compelling and fascinating. It is an excellent example of the best in current nonfiction and provides the reader with a basic understanding of this important battle and lots of pointers to where interested readers can get more information.

Heidi says

There are many books available about the D-Day Invasion of World War II. But because so many people were involved, there are endless ways for the story to be told. In addition, for the same reason, authors have to pick and choose what information to share, there is simply too much to share in any one book. Plus, no two authors tell the story in the same way. Thus, there is a place for Hopkinson's book on the subject. And she's done a fabulous job in sharing the information in a way that works for adolescent readers.

The book starts with the experience of a young man flying over France as one of the thousands of

paratroopers proceeding the sea-based invasion. This makes for a great beginning as it pulls the reader right into the story. Following a brief description of what D-Day was and how the U.S. Army was organized (helpful for those with little military or World War II background), Hopkinson goes back and tells the story of the major events that led up to the invasion itself. The book is divided up into 7 parts as follows: The Plan, The Gods of War, Night Into Day, Utah, Omaha, Aftermath: More than Courage, Quartermaster's Department. Each section includes important information related to the general plans and some of the individuals involved in creating those plans. As this book is written for American youth, it focuses on the two invasion sites that the Americans helped invade, the beaches code named Utah and Omaha. I especially appreciated the widespread use of quotes and experiences from individuals who were there. The story feels more real when one reads the words of an actual person. The inclusion of 'dispatches' and 'Reader's Invasion Briefings' helped create context in relation to specific issues that came up during the invasion.

All in all Hopkinson has created a compelling account of a day that changed the world forever. A day that young history buffs will want to know about. This is a book that would be easy to recommend to young readers who want a glimpse into the experiences of those involved in both the planning and executing of D-Day.

Sharon says

Excellent in-depth look at the invasions, particularly of the U.S. soldiers that landed at Omaha and Utah beaches. Divided into section that detail the history, the strategy, and the personal accounts. This format works really well in print but, unfortunately, doesn't always translate effectively to audio.

Sunday Cummins says

The kind of book you don't want to put down. For sophisticated YA and adult readers. I thought I knew about D-Day, but as I began to read this book, I realized I had no idea what a complex operation this was--the covert planning and the freaking size of this plan. 13,000 U.S. paratroopers jumped out of planes. Some 57,000 stormed the beaches at Normandy. Others were brought in on "horsas" --airplane "gliders" made of balsa wood that were pulled by bigger planes and then let go to glide into enemy territory - with hundreds of men and equipment including jeeps aboard. Even though they'd planned and planned, the implementation was a debacle. Paratroopers and gliders landed off course. Amphibious vehicles, loaded with men, beached in the wrong spot or were hit by German weaponry and sank, leaving soldiers to drown or swim to shore, loaded down with 75 pounds of equipment. The Germans had lined the coast with explosives and were nested in to bunkers, ready to attack. The U.S. attempted to destroy some of this before men landed but were not successful. The men landing did not know this until they came upon well-fortified, heavily armored and waiting Germans (especially at Omaha Beach). It was a mess. And yet, they got a "toehold" onto the German occupied territory. A toehold that allowed the Allied forces to start moving against Hitler's army.

I'm writing all of this to say that Hopkinson expertly conveys the gravity and enormity of the situation. She does not pretend to know the feelings or thoughts of individuals involved in this experience. Instead she uses well-established facts and primary sources including many quotes from oral histories to tell the story of this day. Honestly, I finished this book thinking, "OMG" and feeling incredibly indebted to these soldiers and any other person who has served our country.

IN A CLASSROOM – My first thought is “Why do we still rely on textbooks in any kind of high school history class?” Book talk this. And then recruit a group of students to read, engage in student-led conversations, learn from additional sources, and then share their learning (and even their gratitude). Questions that might serve as a guide:

- “What made this endeavor enormous?” This kind of question includes the literal numbers, but also thinking critically about the emotional and mental weight of this plan on key individuals that Hopkinson alludes to and thinking beyond the text to the planning that Hopkinson does not describe, but that must have had to happen to get the troops ready.
- “How does Hopkinson weave complex details together in a way that makes the enormity of what happened accessible to the reader?” This could include a discussion of how she includes statistics, but also oral histories. What is the role of each of these types of details?
- “What does Hopkinson leave out?” or “What choices did Hopkinson clearly make about what to include and what not to include?” or “How does Hopkinson establish accuracy and authority throughout the text?”

IF YOU BOOK TALK THIS, a couple of tips:

- I would not take for granted the value of students previewing this text before reading, of students thinking through the design of the text (looking carefully at the table of contents) and the PURPOSE of special features (e.g., sidebars like “reader’s invasion briefing” and “dispatch”). This will help them navigate and make sense of the information. Even sophisticated readers could benefit from this.
- Also, for me, the narrative really picked up in Part 2 after Hopkinson develops the context for D-Day and describes initial planning. Keep an eye on (striving) readers during Part 1 or until you feel like they are on a roll. It wouldn’t hurt to provide extra scaffolds like a current map of Europe, readers can reference as they move through the book or a chance to explore the topic (with video, etc) before they read.
- The technical language that Hopkinson includes early on related to service members’ rank, division, etc. may bog some readers down. Do not let this deter them. You may need to think aloud in front of students about how you make sense of these terms as a reader and continue moving forward. This lightens up and becomes easier to navigate a little bit into the book.

The courage it took to face that day (and many others that we have asked service members to face since then) is stunning. As a reader of this book, YOU FEEL THIS. Towards the end of reading this book, I went to lunch with family and as we entered the restaurant, I saw a group of service members eating at a table nearby. I couldn’t help it...I quietly paid for their lunch. I asked to be anonymous, but the wait staff gave me away. When the service members came over to say thank you and shake my hand, I nearly wept. I live in a freaking silo—I know no one serving in the military. This book strengthened my gratitude to anyone who has served our country. Thank you, Deborah Hopkinson.

Jacob Rausch says

“D-Day: The World War II Invasion That Changed History” By Deborah Hopkinson is a book that gives a bit more detail into what most books give you about this one specific event during World War II that most other books don’t give you. With this book having first hand accounts from people which survived these terrible days of bloodshed it really gives a sort of personal connection to the people that lived these moments. I would recommend this book to a friend if they needed to do a small history project on major events in history. I would also just recommend it to someone that likes reading about World War II and some of the stories. I personally liked the book because it is on a subject that I enjoy reading about. The book could have organized things a little differently.

