

Mission Margraten Plus

Education Bridge

Assignment booklet to prepare for meeting an American
World War II veteran



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Dear Student,

Mission Margraten Plus is a Dutch-American foundation. This foundation brings American veterans of World War II in contact with young people and adults from the Netherlands and the United States. Students like you can thereby learn from their stories and experiences.

To this end, the foundation regularly organizes virtual meetings between veterans and students: through Zoom or Microsoft Teams, the veterans talk about their war experiences and their lives. Students are also enabled to ask their own questions.

Every year, Mission Margraten Plus organizes a trip to the Netherlands. The American veterans participating in this trip visit the Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten, to pay their respects to their fallen comrades in arms. They also participate in various commemorations and meetings with civilians and students.

This assignment booklet can be used as preparation for meeting an American World War II veteran. The stories of war veterans are the focus of this booklet, as are the stories of some of the American soldiers buried in Margraten.

Good luck with completing the missions in this booklet!



Mission 1

**Where and when did Nazi Germany lose
World War II?**

For this assignment, you will cooperate with other classmates in a small group.

Step 1

Read the cards carefully. These describe some key events of World War II. Historians consider these events as turning points, because they contributed to Germany losing the war after the successful beginning.

You can find the cards with the descriptions of the key events on the last pages of this assignment.

After reading the cards, continue with Step 2.

Step 2

Explain the group's opinion about the following question:

Which events most contributed to Germany losing World War II in 1945?

- Select the **two** key events that your group considers the most important.
- Explain for both key events of your choice why the group considers these events more important than the remaining events.

Key event 1:

Why so important?

Key event 2:

Why so important?

Step 3

Now you are going to decide as a group which of the two selected key event you consider the most important. To do so, answer the following question:

In retrospect, what does your group think was the most decisive event?

Explain your opinion with arguments.

We consider this key event the most important:

Arguments:

Step 4

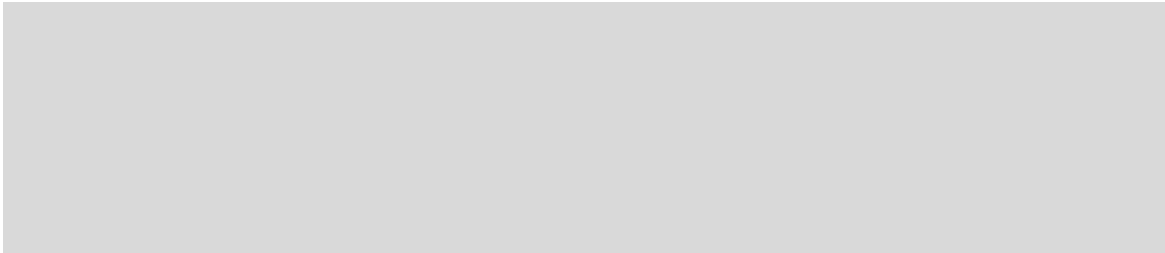
You are now going to empathize with three World War II soldiers, each with a different nationality. You will again need all the events for this.

Answer the following questions:

- a. In retrospect, which event would an **American soldier** (probably) find most decisive? Explain your answer.

- b. In retrospect, which event would a **soldier from the former Soviet Union** (probably) find most decisive? Again, explain your answer.

- c. In retrospect, which event would a **German soldier** (probably) find most decisive? Once again, explain your answer.



The cards describing the key events:

In the fall of 1940, the German Luftwaffe (air force) lost the **Battle of Britain**. The German pilots couldn't defeat the fighter pilots of the British Royal Air Force. This made an invasion of the German army on the English coast too dangerous. Therefore, England could be occupied by Germany. As a result, England became the base of operations for the Allied air forces. These began attacking German cities, factories and infrastructure with bombers. Also, a large army of British, American and Canadian troops was prepared in England for the invasion of Normandy (D-Day).



In late 1941, **Operation Barbarossa**, the German invasion of the Soviet Union (Russia), failed. The German tank armies initially advanced rapidly, but then got stuck in the sucking mud during the autumn. Subsequently, the harsh Russian winter caused serious problems within the German army. The German army wasn't prepared for the freezing cold temperatures of about -40 degrees Celsius. Many soldiers were unable to continue fighting because of frostbite and frozen limbs, which in most cases had to be amputated. Even the gasoline in many German tanks froze. As a result, the German invasion did not result in a swift decisive German victory. Instead, a years-long war of attrition began on the Eastern Front. This front would see the greatest number of both German and Allied casualties. The German army was forced to deploy the major part of their troops and armor on the Eastern Front. On this front, the German army lost more soldiers and tanks than on any of the other fronts.



On December 7, 1941, Japanese airplanes attacked the U.S. naval base Pearl Harbor on the island of Hawaii. Consequently, the U.S. declared war on Japan (an ally of Germany). Because Hitler then declared war on the United States, the U.S. Army, as well as the Navy and the U.S. Army Air Forces, would soon also join the war in Europe. The British and the Russians thus gained a powerful ally. After all, the U.S. was the strongest industrial country in the world. Therefore, American factories not only produced for its own armed forces, but also manufactured war equipment for Great Britain and the Soviet Union.



In early 1943, the Germans suffered a huge defeat on the Eastern Front when they lost the **Battle of Stalingrad**. The German soldiers had managed to capture almost the entire city, but then they were totally surprised by a major counterattack by the Red Army. As a result, one of the strongest German field armies was surrounded by the Russian troops and tanks. The surrounded German troops who survived the bitter fighting were eventually forced to surrender and became prisoners of war (due to a lack of food and ammunition). It was the first time that this happened to such a large number of German troops. In retrospect, the Battle of Stalingrad was the bloodiest battle of World War II. About one million people were killed during this battle.



In July 1943, the Germans lost the largest tank battle in history after another offensive in the Soviet Union near the Russian city of **Kursk**. During this battle, the German army lost so many tanks and troops that the remnants of the deployed units were forced to withdraw. The offensive at Kursk proved to be the last major German offensive on the Eastern Front. With an excess of tanks, artillery, fighter planes, bombers and soldiers, the Red Army then began pushing back the German troops further and further toward the west. As a result, Soviet tanks advanced into Poland during the summer of 1944. In January 1945, the Red Army crossed the eastern border of Germany to advance toward Berlin.



On June 6, 1944, American, British, Canadian and some French troops stormed the beaches of Normandy. This key event, known as **D-Day**, marked the start of the Allied invasion. The German troops along the Normandy coast offered stubborn resistance with machine gun and cannon fire from bunkers, trenches and other strongpoints. Still, the Allied troops managed to break through the German coastal defenses. They captured a small part of France here, from where they could begin with the liberation of Northwestern Europe. In the fall of 1944, the Allied forces also crossed the western border of Germany.



Mission 2

Enemies on D-Day

This assignment focuses on an American and a German veteran of World War II. Both experienced the heavy fighting on D-Day: the Allied invasion on the beaches in Normandy. At the time, they were each other's enemies.

The two veterans are:



The German soldier **Heinrich Severloh** (20 years old on D-Day).

- He was drafted into the German army during the war.
- On D-Day, his unit's task was to defend the part of the Normandy coast that the Allied troops called 'Omaha Beach'.
- He fired with his machine gun and rifle on the American troops that were storming the beach in front of his defensive position.
- As a result, he killed a large number of American soldiers.
- Later in the day, he was wounded, whereupon he was eventually taken prisoner by American soldiers during the night.
- In 1947, he was released to return home.



The American soldier **David Silva** (19 years old on D-Day).

- When the ramp of his landing craft went down, he stormed Omaha Beach under a hail of enemy bullets and shells.
- Soon after leaving the landing craft, he was wounded by German machine gun bullets.
- He survived both D-Day and the war.

Step 1

Scan the **QR-codes** to listen to what these two soldiers later wrote about their experiences on D-Day.

Heinrich Severloh



David Silva



Step 2

Read the following text:

After the war, Severloh read several books about D-Day. One of these books is titled '**The Longest Day**'. An excerpt in this book describes how David Silva was wounded on Omaha Beach by German machine gun bullets.

After reading this particular excerpt, Severloh decided to try to get in contact Silva. In 1963, he discovered that Silva was now working as a military chaplain at a U.S. Army post in Germany. Severloh drove to this American army post and asked the guards for permission to enter the site.

Assignment 1

Do you think it was brave of Severloh that he drove to the American army post to meet Silva?

Circle your opinion: *Yes / No*

Explain your opinion:

Assignment 2

Imagine you are David Silva.

Write down at least one reason why you **don't want** to meet Severloh:

Write down at least one reason why you **do want** to meet Severloh:

Step 3

Read the text:

Severloh was given permission by the guards to enter the army post. He then met with David Silva. During their meeting, Severloh explained to Silva why he so anxious to meet him: Severloh had become convinced that he was the German soldier who had wounded David Silva on D-Day.

Scan the QR code to listen to what Severloh later wrote about his first meeting with Silva:



Silva (left) and Severloh (right) during their meeting.

Step 4

After their first meeting, Silva and Severloh became good friends. Silva has also forgiven Severloh for the fact that he had killed and wounded many American soldiers on D-Day.

Assignment 3

What do you think: why did Silva decide to forgive Severloh?

A large, empty grey rectangular area provided for the student to write their response to the assignment question.

Do you agree with Silva's decision to forgive Severloh for what he had done on D-Day?

Circle your opinion: *Yes / No*

Explain your opinion:

Step 5

In 2003, Severloh and Silva met each other for the last time as old men. In Normandy, on Omaha Beach! (See the left photograph below).

After meeting on the beach, they visited the American military cemetery located near Omaha Beach. (See the right photograph below).



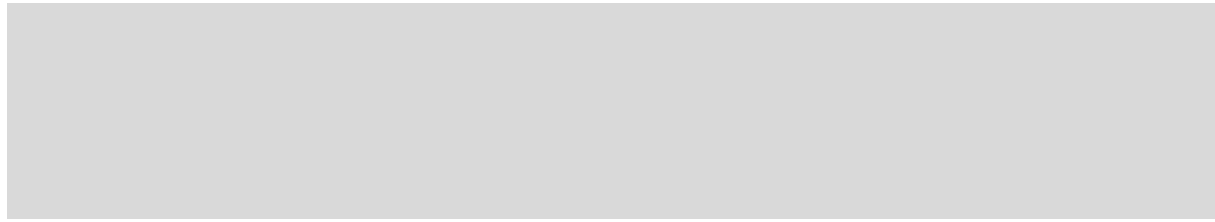
Assignment 4

What do you think: for whom was visiting the American military cemetery near Omaha Beach most emotional?

Circle one name:

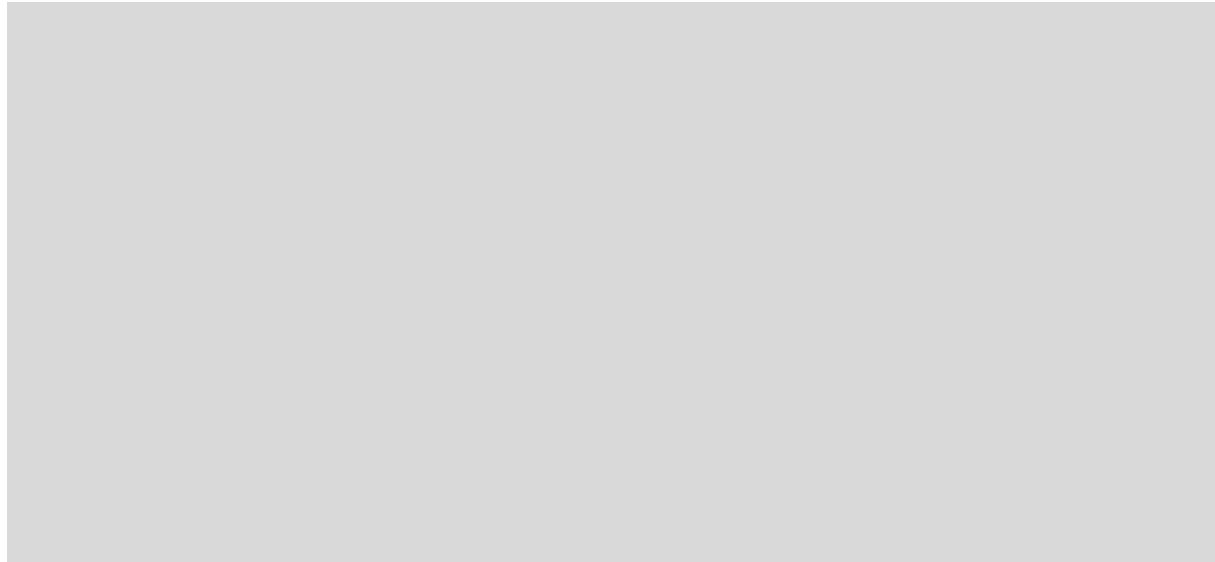
- A. Heinrich Severloh.
- B. David Silva.

Why do you think that?



Assignment 5

What can we learn from the story of Silva and Severloh?



Mission 3

Which soldier was awarded the Medal of Honor?

This assignment is about:

- Four American soldiers who were killed during the liberation of Europe.
- The Medal of Honor.

The four American soldiers are buried in Margraten.

Step 1

Assignment 1

Use internet: what is the Medal of Honor?

Assignment 2

Use internet: search for a photo of the Medal of Honor.

Then complete the picture below by adding a drawing of the Medal of Honor:



Step 2

Now you are going to read the stories of the four American soldiers:



Creswell Garlington Jr.

On November 29, 1944, in Germany, Creswell and his platoon were temporarily stopped by the fire of four German machine guns approximately 300 yards away. Creswell bravely crawled forward and eliminated two of the machine guns by throwing hand grenades. On December 1, 1944, Creswell carried a wounded member of his platoon through intense enemy artillery fire to a place of safety. Shortly thereafter, he was severely wounded himself when an enemy artillery shell hit approximately 10 yards away. Although he was in great pain himself, he insisted that other wounded men were treated and evacuated first. On December 3, 1944, Creswell died during a blood transfusion at the 91st Evacuation Hospital. He remained forever 22.



George J. Peters

George was a paratrooper. On March 24, 1945, he parachuted into Germany. With ten others, he landed in a field about 75 yards from a German machine gun nest. George and his comrades were immediately fired upon by the enemy machine gun. Disregarding his own safety, George stood up. Armed only with his rifle and grenades, he then started running towards the firing machine gun to knock it out. While he was running, George was riddled by bullets twice. Although he was now mortally wounded, he crawled forward until close enough to throw hand grenades. When the grenades exploded, the enemy machine gun nest was eliminated. Shortly thereafter, George died of his wounds. He remained forever 21.



Frederick D. Melton

Frederick became one of the youngest officers in the U.S. Army. As a Second Lieutenant, he commanded a platoon of a reconnaissance unit. On October 3, 1944, his platoon attacked the German village of Havert but was pinned down by heavy enemy small arms fire. Frederick's unit suffered a number of casualties and was ordered to withdraw from the village. When the unhurt men had found some cover outside Havert, Frederick went back into the village and rescued four wounded soldiers. One by one he carried them over his shoulder. As he was bringing back a fifth wounded man, Frederick was killed by enemy machine gun fire or a German sniper. He remained forever 20.



James L. Diel

James was promoted to Second Lieutenant after D-Day. During Operation Market Garden, he commanded a platoon of paratroopers, with whom he landed near the Dutch village of Son on September 17, 1944. Two days later, on September 19, 1944, his platoon was attacked by several German tanks. James began packing demolition charges in his hands and then started running towards the first enemy tank. It was his intention to knock out this tank with the explosives he was carrying. However, his one-man attack failed, because as he was running a shell fired by the German tank killed him. As a result, James remained forever 22.

Assignment 3

Draw lines between the words and the correct soldier.

In some cases you can link a word to more than one soldier.

Frederick D. Melton



December 3, 1944

Died of wounds

October 3, 1944

Forever 20 years old

September 19, 1944

Rescued four wounded soldiers

George J. Peters



Was shot while he was carrying a wounded soldier

Used hand grenades

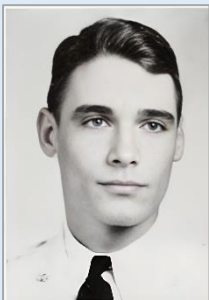
Ran towards a German tank

Knocked out two German machine guns

March 24, 1945

Forever 22 years old

Creswell Garlington Jr.



Died during a blood transfusion

Was severely wounded by an enemy artillery shell

Wanted to rescue a fifth wounded soldier

Paratrooper

Forever 21 years old

Sniper

James L. Diel



Eliminated one German machine gun nest

Was struck by bullets twice before he died

Carried one wounded soldier to safety

Was killed by a German tank shell

Machine gun fire

Assignment 4

One of these four soldiers was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

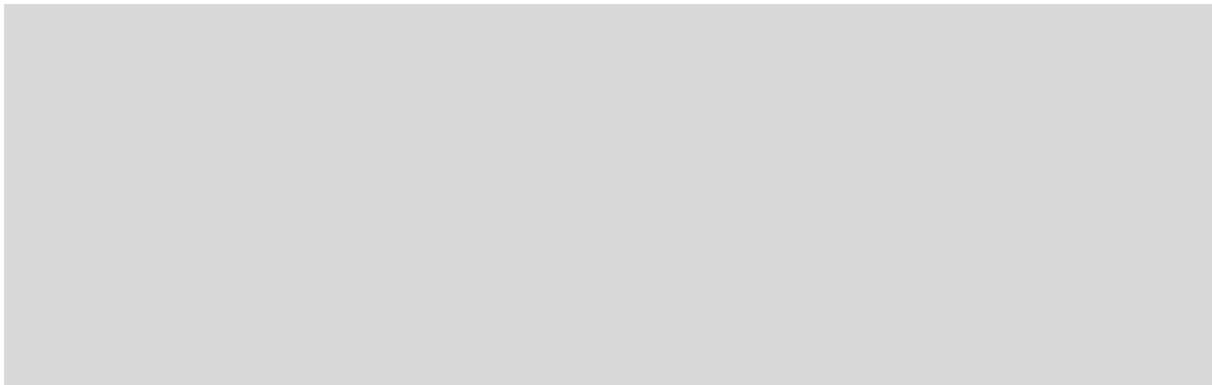
What do you think: which of these four soldiers was awarded the Medal of Honor?

Circle the name of this soldier:

- A. Frederick D. Melton
- B. George J. Peters
- C. Creswell Garlington Jr.
- D. James L. Diel

Assignment 5

What do you think: why was this soldier awarded the Medal of Honor while the three others did not receive this prestigious military decoration?



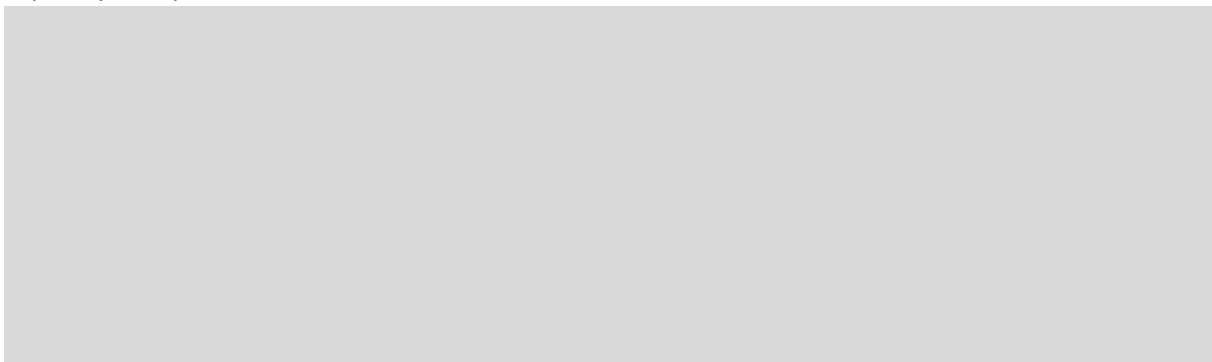
Assignment 6

Were these four soldiers heroes or were they just doing their jobs?

Circle your opinion:

- A. All four of them were heroes.
- B. Three of them were heroes, namely _____, _____ and _____.
- C. Two of them were heroes, namely _____ and _____.
- D. Only _____ was a hero.
- E. All four were just doing their jobs as soldiers.

Explain your opinion:

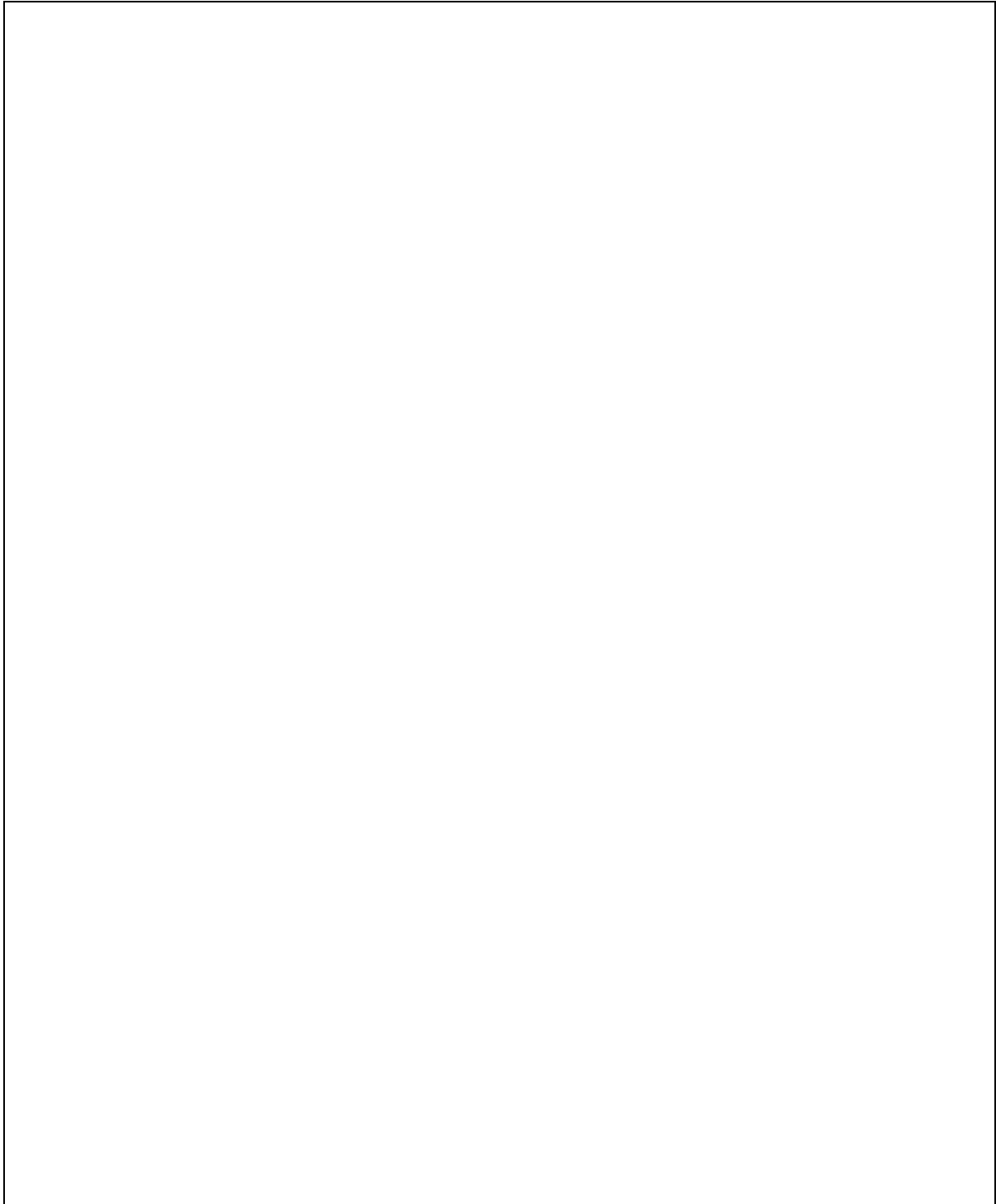


Step 3

Imagine: the U.S. Army wants to honor the soldier that, according to you, received the Medal of Honor in a special way. They ask you to create a monument or something else (for example, a poem or song lyrics) for this soldier.

Assignment 7

Design a monument or statue for this soldier below. Or work out a different idea.



Mission 4

An indestructible friendship

This assignment focuses on two American soldiers who joined the paratroopers during World War II:

Richard Klein
'Dick'



Jacob Wingard
'Jake'



Dick and Jake quickly became good friends during their service. Together they participated in two airborne operations: D-Day in Normandy and Operation Market Garden in Holland.

Step 1

Scan the **QR code** to watch a short video about Dick and Jake:



Step 2

The video you just watched was filmed in 2017, at the Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten. Why did Dick Klein visit this cemetery that year at the age of 94?

Step 3

Years before the video was recorded, Dick Klein wrote the following about Jacob Wingard:

‘Jake, who was my best buddy, was picked off by a German sniper and took a rifle round into his chest. He matter of factly said, “I’m dead, I’m dead!” He was.’

Dick personally witnessed how his best friend was shot.

What do you think: what were Dick’s thoughts and feelings at that terrible moment inside the windmill of Eerde?

Jacob Wingard was born on August 8, 1922. On what date was he killed in action?

Calculate at what age Jacob made the ultimate sacrifice:

How many years was Jacob older than you are now when he was killed in action?

Step 4

At the end of the video, Dick Klein says, ‘Jacob did not die in vain.’

What do you think: why did Dick Klein think that?

Step 5

World War II veteran Dick Klein unfortunately passed away in 2021. But imagine that you would have had the opportunity to meet him in person before his death.

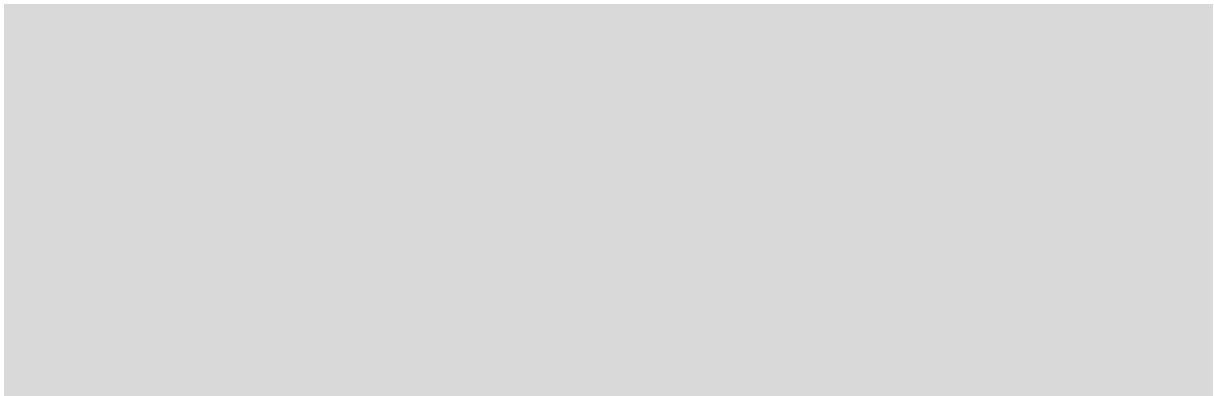
What questions would you have liked to ask Dick Klein?



What do you think you could have learned from him through that meeting?



What would you have liked to say to Dick Klein after listening to his story?



Step 6

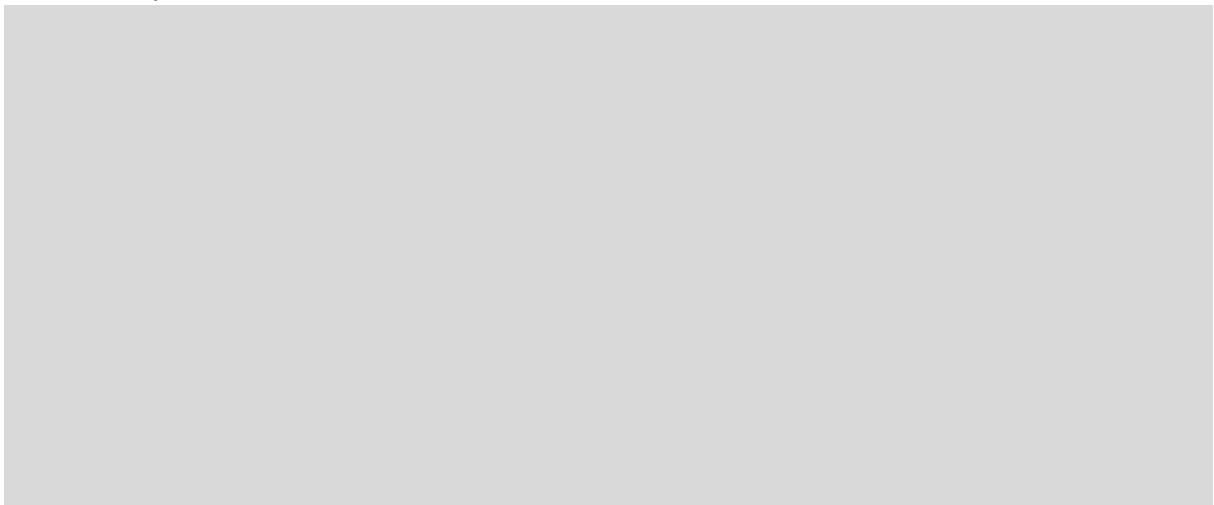
Again, we will use Dick Klein as an example.

What should you consider / be aware of when meeting a World War II veteran?

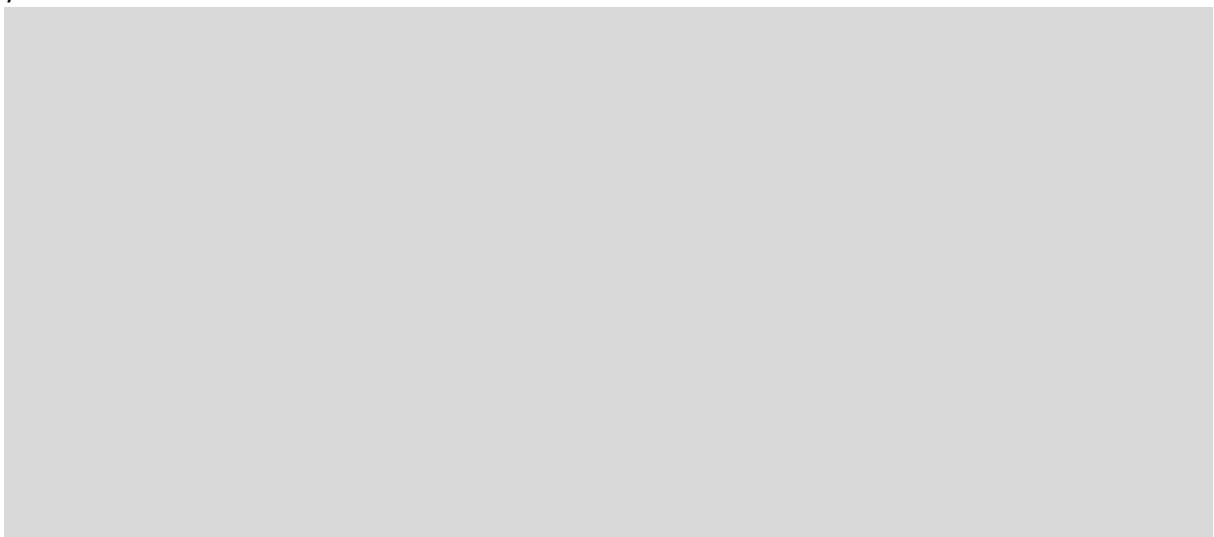
Think about, for example:

- What could possibly happen during the meeting?
- What should you do and what is better not to do during such a meeting?

Write down your answers here:



What do you think: why do many World War II veterans find it important to meet young people like you?



Mission 5

The Four Freedoms of President Roosevelt

The American soldiers buried or commemorated in Margraten have sacrificed their own lives so that others like us can live in freedom.

This assignment focuses on the important concept of **freedom**.

Step 1

Read the text below:

De Four Freedoms

On January 6, 1941, then-U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed the U.S. Congress. During his speech, known as the 'Four Freedoms speech', Roosevelt said that there are four fundamental freedoms that people everywhere in the world ought to enjoy:



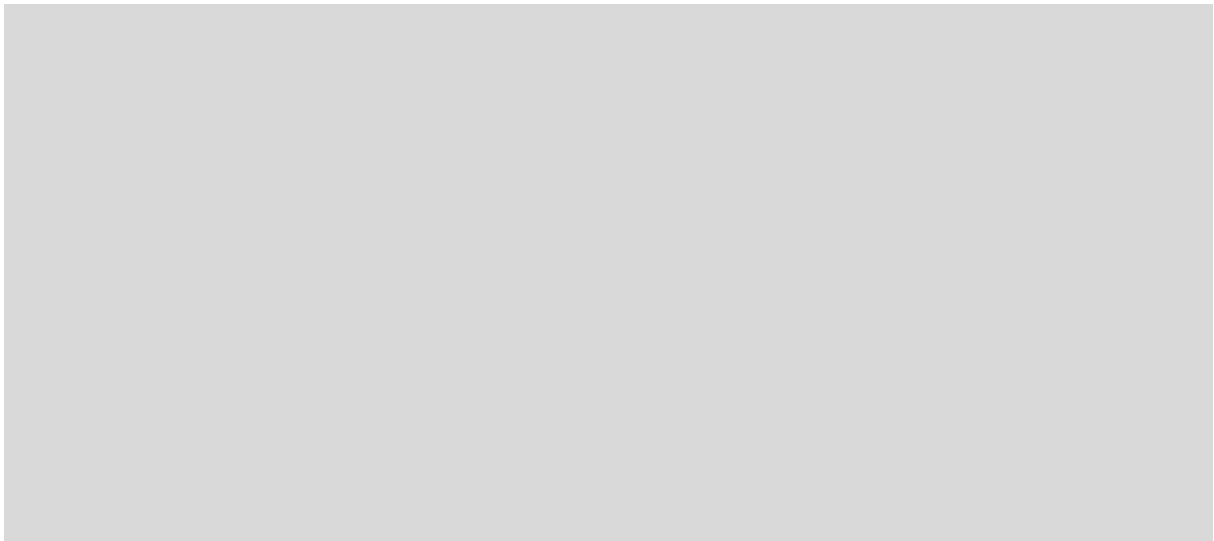
- **Freedom of speech** (you are free to articulate your opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship or legal sanction).
- **Freedom of worship** (you are free to decide for yourself whether or not to worship a god and how you want to manifest religion).
- **Freedom from want** (you don't have to live in poverty and you have to be able to live a healthy life).
- **Freedom from fear** (for new wars, oppression, persecution or other violence).

Step 2

What does freedom mean for you?

Which of the four fundamental freedoms Roosevelt talked about you consider the most important?

Choose one of the four freedoms and explain your choice:



Step 3

Fill in the chart on the next page.

Circle your opinion in the **Rating** column:

- 1 means: this particular person has no freedom at all.
- 5 means: this particular person has as much freedom as people who are not affected by this.

How much freedom does a person have who....	Rating:	Explain your rating. Use examples from everyday life.
Lives in poverty?	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	
Has mobility issues? (because of age, injuries or a physical handicap).	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	
Is severely ill?	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	
Is very lonely? (For example, many elderly).	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	
Is being bullied and/or threatened by others (For example, in school or on social media).	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	
Is struggling with trauma and/or severe anxiety?	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5	

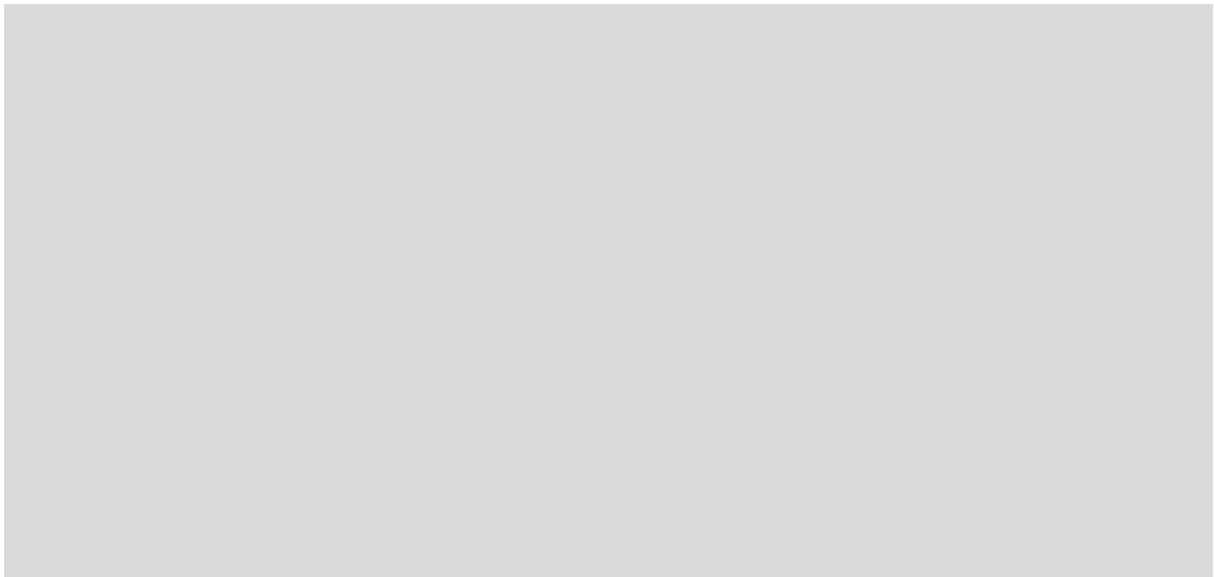
Step 4

For this final assignment, choose **2 persons** from the chart you just filled in.

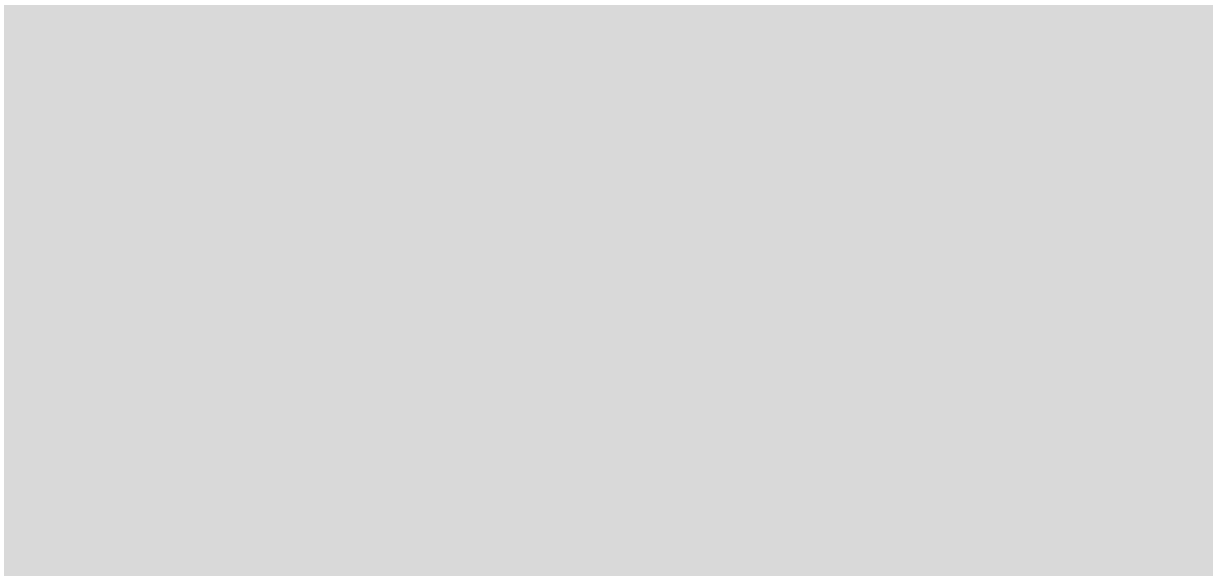
For each person, think of things you could do for such a person to increase their freedom.

List your ideas below.

1. Things I could do to increase the freedom of a person who _____:



2. Things I could do to increase the freedom of a person who _____:



You have reached the end of this assignment booklet.