



## **WWII In the Pacific: Mapping Island Hopping**

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**Target Audience:** High School - World or US History

**Time:** 90-120 minutes

### **Objectives:**

- Students will be able to explain and analyze in writing the concept of Island-hopping.
- Students will be able to show how the Island-hopping strategy was implemented on two maps.

**Essential Question:** How was the concept of island hopping implemented by American military strategists during WWII?

### **Resources:**

- Computer/Internet Access
- Copies of the handout: "WWII in the Pacific - Mapping Island Hopping" - one per student
- Access to Google Maps
- National WW2 Museum Article: "The Pacific Strategy, 1941-1944"  
<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/pacific-strategy-1941-1944>
- Youtube video: ["World War II in HD Colour: The Island War"](#)

### **Lesson:**

1. Using the National WWII Museum article "The Pacific Strategy, 1941-1944" and other supporting resources, as assigned by individual teachers, students will use Google Maps to:
  - a. Map the Japanese military expansion in Asia and the Pacific through 1942; and
  - b. Map the American military strategy known as island-hopping between 1942-1945 that set the stage for the final defeat of Japan. (Teachers can also supply students with a map of Japanese expansion and start the lesson by asking students to complete only the second map.)
2. After mapping activity, students will write short responses to assess understanding:
  - a. Write a short essay response identifying the defining elements of Island-hopping strategy.
  - b. Reflect upon mapping activity to write analyses of causes behind shifting American strategies in Island-hopping.

**Assignment:** Create a map using [Google Maps](#).

You will use this resource: <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/pacific-strategy-1941-1944> as well as additional research, to:

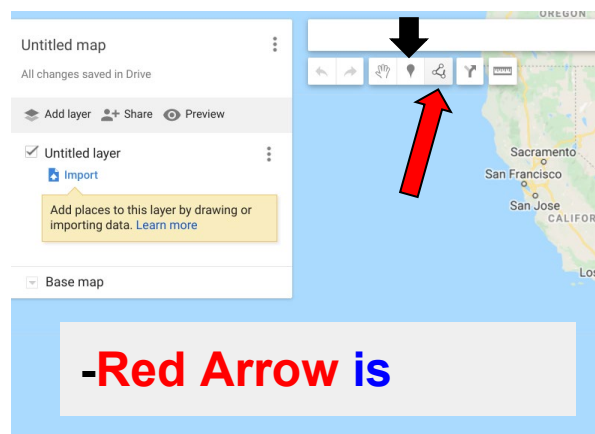
- 1) Map the Japanese military expansion in Asia and the Pacific through 1942; and
- 2) Map the American military strategy known as island-hopping between 1942-1945 that set the stage for the final defeat of Japan.

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**Carefully follow these directions to create your Google Map:**

1. Identify the Japanese military victories through the end of 1942. **Drop RED Marker Pins** in your Google map for the following events, and in the text boxes for each pin, include the dates of the specific events:

- a. Manchuria
- b. China
- c. Pearl Harbor Attack
- d. French Indochina
- e. Philippines
- f. Dutch East Indies
- g. Burma
- h. Singapore
- i. Caroline Islands
- j. Gilbert and Marshall Islands
- k. Mariana Islands
- l. Battle of Midway



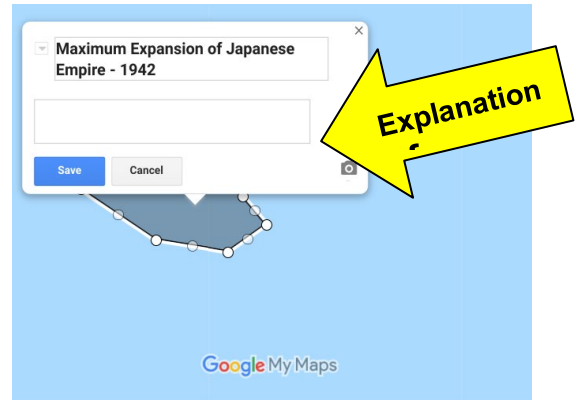
2. Draw a line representing the border of the maximum expansion of the Japanese Empire by the end of 1942 from Manchuria to Kurile Islands to Aleutian Islands to Marshall Islands to Dutch East Indies and on to Burma.

[In your Google Map - Use the "Draw a Line" button to draw a border around the area, which will create a new layer in your map]

3. Label the new Layer: "Maximum Expansion of Japanese Empire - 1942"

4. In the description box under the label of this Layer - write the following:

- a. Questions you have about Japanese military successes, after review of this topic.
- b. A paragraph summary of the Japanese actions displayed on this map.
- c. Your “takeaways.” (What did you learn by doing this activity?)



5. Identify the American counter-attacks that make clear the process of island hopping. Drop BLUE Marker Pins in your Google map for the following events, and in the text boxes for each pin, include the dates of the specific events:

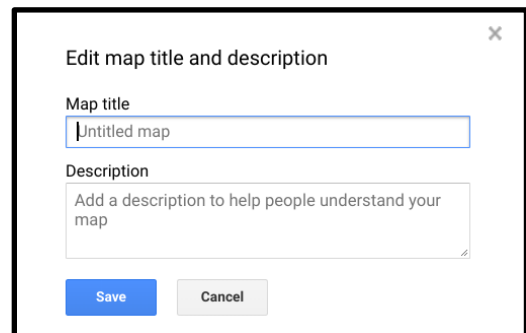
- a. Guadalcanal
- b. Tarawa
- c. Marshall Islands
- d. Mariana Islands
- e. Philippines
- f. Iwo Jima
- g. Okinawa

6. Using the “Draw a Line” feature, draw a line connecting the chronology of the American attacks, and number the marker pins for the events/locations in chronological order.

7. In the description box under the label of this line - write the following:

- a. Questions you have about the American attacks, after review of this topic.
- b. A paragraph summary of the American military successes displayed on this map.
- c. Your “takeaways.” (What did you learn by doing this activity?)

8. Open the title & description box for your map, then: Label the map “[Your last name] Japanese Expansion in the Pacific & American Island-hopping Campaign”



## **Part 2: Post-Mapping Assignment:** **Short Responses**

1. Read the text below and respond to the question that follows.

American strategic planners found that “that steady, island by island progression... would prove too costly, and by extension, would take years --perhaps a decade-- to reach Japan itself... [Leaders] decided to bypass the next fortified island... The lifesaving purpose of this “island-hopping” or “leapfrogging” strategy was to avoid Japanese strongholds so far as possible and leave isolated Japanese garrisons to wither on the vine, cut off from communication and supply. This thinking would soon reshape... the tactics of the war all over the Pacific.”

(Source: David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, 563-564)

**According to historian David Kennedy, what are the main elements of island hopping?**

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**2. Refer to the map you created as well as the resources provided to answer the following questions:**

Identify a Japanese-occupied island that was not reconquered. Why did the Americans by-pass some Japanese held Islands and focus on attacking others?	
After the recapture of the Mariana Islands in 1944 (Guam, Saipan and Tinian), what changed about the American military campaign against Japan?	
What challenges might the US planners have had in deciding to bypass Japanese occupied islands in late 1944 and 1945?	