

Name(s) _____

Group Activity: Directions and Devices--How Do We Escape?

Brainstorm Activities:

Quickly jot down what means of transportation you might utilize if you escaped from a prisoner of war camp in a foreign country. Remember, people will be looking for you; you may not speak the language. What types of transportation would you deem safe?

Quickly jot down some items you might want to have with you for your escape. Where will you get these? What advantages do they offer you? How hard are they to obtain, hide and move?

Background Information

Americans are taught that during World War II that the United States interned Japanese Americans in internment camps. Few people know that the United States housed 425,000 German, Italian and Austrians in over 500 major (Prisoner of War) POW camps in the U.S.

Originally it was planned to house these prisoners in England. After seeing the huge numbers, (some 150,000 after the fall of the Afrika Corp in 1943) England requested that the prisoners be housed in America instead. Also, American authorities realized that housing prisoners in England presented several problems. Once the prisoners were housed, they had to be fed and the amount of room for food on ships for prisoners was depriving American soldiers in Europe of valuable food. Medical supplies shipped overseas for American troops would also be needed for POWs. However, POWs there could be used as bargaining chips for Americans held on foreign soil. Initially there was American resistance to holding these prisoners in the United States. The military did not have the experience or manpower to maintain camps with large numbers of prisoners. Most of the military that were fluent in German were already fighting overseas. The government feared that housing so many prisoners would strike fear in the American population.

Camps were generally built to standard specifications. They were usually military barracks covered by tar paper and corrugated tin. Inside, prisoners slept on cots and were issued footlockers to store their belongings. Most of the camps held an average of 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners. The most visible changes between a standard military barracks and a POW camp were the guard towers, double barbed-wire fences, floodlights, and occasionally guard dogs. Guards were usually GI's who were not needed overseas due to health reasons, psychological makeup or a lack of training. Actual discipline was generally enforced by German officers and sergeants.

Since the war had drawn most of the able-bodied men overseas, the War department authorized a program where prisoners would be allowed to work on farms and in factories to replace American workers. These prisoners were generally held in branch camps which could be anything such as a schoolhouse, old Civilian Conservation Corps camps, a fairground and even circus tents. Many of these programs were temporary as prisoners were moved from area to area as they were needed as laborers. Farmers paid the government \$1.50 per day for the workers. The government in turn gave the prisoners 80 cents in canteen coupons with the balance going to the POW program.

Most of the camps were in remote locations in the South and Southwest far from critical war industries. The remoteness of these camps dissuaded prisoners from escape. They were confronted by a vast countryside. They spoke a different language and many people who had family killed overseas were hostile to the prisoners. Many prisoners took to POW camp life. Americans were subject to rationing, but the prisoners had a steady diet of good food, access to many brand name products (they could even order from the Sears Roebuck catalog) and plenty of cigarettes which were unavailable to most Americans. Prisoners even wrote their families in Germany and Italy to stop sending gift parcels because they were not needed in the POW camp.

Some prisoners did attempt to escape, as we see at Papago Park in Phoenix, Arizona. POW camps were, for the most part, segregated by branch of service, rank, or political affiliation. For example, hard-core Nazis were segregated from the other prisoners. The Papago Park POW camp was occupied by submariners. It was these sailors that would attempt a "Great Escape".

Name(s) _____

Physical and Cultural Map Route Analysis Sheet

After examining the Arizona Landforms and Rivers map, you will determine a route that you feel the Germans would take in their attempt to escape from Papago Park and return to Germany. First you will write a short description of the route you are choosing. You must then decide three factors that would make your route a good choice and three factors that make your route a poor choice. Keep in mind that your success may be dictated by both physical geography (mountains, rivers, climate) and cultural factors (means of transportation, language, clothing, food).

Description of Route	Three advantages of this route
	Three disadvantages of this route

Name(s) _____

Transportation Map Route Analysis Sheet

After examining the Major Arizona Railroads and Roads (circa 1940) map, you will determine a route that you feel the Germans may take in their attempt to escape from Papago Park and return to Germany. First you will write a short description of the route you are choosing. You must then decide three factors that would make your route a good choice and three factors that make your route a poor choice. Keep in mind that your success may be dictated by both physical geography (mountains, rivers, climate) and cultural factors (means of transportation, language, clothing, food).

Description of Route	Three advantages of this route
	Three disadvantages of this route

Writing Prompt: We Gotta Get Out of This Place, Escape from Papago Park

After analyzing the two maps, you will now write a minimum three paragraph essay describing your escape from Papago Park. In your description, you will include a description of the physical and cultural environment that you have chosen as your escape route; at least three advantages to the route you have chosen; three vital items that you will need for your escape; and an prediction as to whether you will be successful or not. Be sure to use details to justify your choice.

Category	Exceeds the Expectation 4	Meets the Expectation 3	Approaches the Expectation 2	Does not meet the Expectation 1
Content: Does the essay describe the physical and cultural characteristics of their escape route as well as 3 advantages to using this route.	The essay is extremely detailed and creates a sense of understanding the physical and cultural characteristics of the route and gives 3 advantages to this route.	The essay has the details and expectations that would make a student understand the physical and cultural characteristics of the escape route and gives 3 advantages to this route.	The essay has some details and creates some sense of the physical and cultural characteristics of the escape route but the advantages to this route are vague.	The essay does not demonstrate an understanding of the physical and cultural characteristics of the escape route and/or too few advantages to this route are given.
Accuracy: The essay contains the 3 vital items for a successful escape as well as statements supported by details on what are the escapees' possibilities for a successful escape.	The essay contains 3 vital items in conducting the escape and statements supported by details about chances for a successful escape.	The essay contains 3 vital items in conducting the escape and a statement supported by some details about chances for a successful escape.	The essay contains 2 vital items in conducting the escape and a statement supported by some details about chances for a successful escape	The essay contains items not vital in conducting the escape and/or does not have a statement supported by details about chances for a successful escape
Sentence Fluency: Sentences and paragraphs flowed well and communicated clearly.	The writing was very creative and displayed maximum effort in the structure and fluency.	The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure.	The writing has a flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are fairly well built, with some varied structure.	The writing does not have a flow, rhythm, or cadence. Sentences are poorly built, with little structure.

Student Name _____

Criteria	Points Earned	Comments
Content		
Accuracy		
Sentence Fluency		
Total Score		

The Actual Escape from Papago Park

At Papago Park, east of Phoenix, Arizona, 1,700 German prisoners of World War II were being held. Americans had considered escape from Papago Park virtually impossible. The ground was rocky and much of it was hard caliche, all but impossible to dig through. Sometime in September 1944 the German prisoners, led by Captain Jurgen Wattenberg, began a tunnel that was to lead to an escape attempt from the Papago Park camp. The Germans determined that there was a blind spot where the guards couldn't readily see them. The entrance and exit to the tunnel were out of the sight of the two guard towers on the eastern side of the camp. Faced with the problem of what to do with the dirt they were extracting, the Germans sought permission to build a volleyball court, providing the name for their tunnel Der Faustball Tunnel, the volleyball tunnel. The guards obliged them and even provided them with digging tools. From that point forward the prisoners were digging the tunnel at all times during night hours. The prisoners dug a 178-foot tunnel with a diameter of three feet. To disguise the tunnel, the prisoners built a square box and planted native weeds in it to cover the exit, which was near a power pole 15 feet from the Cross Cut Canal. The lid made the exit appear as part of the desert.

The plan was for each escapee to carry forged papers, clothing, canned goods, medical supplies and anything else they had managed to save. Earlier three U-boat captains had successfully escaped 40 miles into Mexico before they were captured and returned to the camp. Along the way they managed to pick up a lot of valuable information. One key piece of information that the prisoners had managed to obtain was a map of Arizona stolen from a guard's car.

Being submariners, they soon latched onto the idea that they could escape down the Cross Cut Canal to the Salt River, then to the Gila River and on to the Colorado River and south to Mexico or the ocean where they could be free to return to Germany. They observed on the map the blue line marked river and assumed that the Gila would be full of water. In Germany, rivers were rivers.

On December 23, 1944 the prisoners in the camp threw a celebration that turned into a near riot. The guards were preoccupied with the riot and in groups of two and three, 25 prisoners slipped off into the Arizona darkness. Three men had constructed a canoe in three pieces and tested it for water-tightness by flooding the shower. The three escapees were disappointed to find the Salt River nothing more than a trickle from recent rains. But they were not discouraged, and they continued to carry the canoe to the junction of the Gila River, only to discover that the Gila does not run. They sat on the bank of the Gila and cried.

Papago Park camp officials were not aware of the escape until the evening of the 24th when prisoners began to return. Cold, wet and hungry and thinking of his warm bed and a hot meal; one prisoner hitched a ride on Van Buren and asked to be taken to the sheriff's office. Camp officials were dumfounded when the sheriff called and told them he had one of their prisoners. Two more prisoners surrendered that night to a woman in Tempe.

Wattenberg and two fellow prisoners escaped north to an area near Piestewa Peak where they created a hideout in a shallow cave with the idea to wait and see what happened and then later continue their escape. By the first week in January, Wattenberg and his fellow escapees decided to see what had happened to other escapees. Under cover of night, they went into Phoenix and returned with fruit and a newspaper. They had hoped to find a map.

Two more prisoners had been captured in Sells, Arizona, on the Mexican border. One of the escapees decided to sneak back into the camp and find out about the rest of the escapees. He was in camp for three days before he was discovered.

Wattenberg, after a month-long escape, was eventually captured in downtown Phoenix. He did not surrender but made enough of a spectacle of himself in order to be captured. All the prisoners were eventually captured and returned to Papago Park camp.