

**WORLD WAR II (1939-  
1945): LIBERATION OF  
PARIS 1944**



# **WORLD WAR II (1939-1945): LIBERATION OF PARIS 1944**

## **Description**

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the Liberation of Paris, what role French and Allied forces played in taking the city, how the French Resistance in Paris helped precipitate the liberation, and what role the German governor of the city may have played in limiting the bloodshed.

## **Subjects**

US History  
World History  
European History

## **Grade Level**

11-12

## **Duration**

180 minutes

## **Tour Links**

- [Memorial to the Liberation of Paris](#)

## **Essential Questions**

- What was the Liberation of Paris? How was it undertaken?
- What role did De Gaulle and the Free French play in the liberation?
- What role did German commanders in Paris play in limiting the bloodshed during the liberation?
- Why role did the Paris Resistance play in the liberation of the city?

# Academic Summary

## Excerpts from a Speech by General Charles de Gaulle (Free French Forces Leader) Paris, 25 Aug 1944

... Paris! Outraged Paris! Broken Paris! Martyred Paris, but liberated Paris! Liberated by the people of Paris with help from the armies of France, with the help and support of the whole of France, of France which is fighting, of the only France, the real France, eternal France.

Because the enemy which held Paris has capitulated to us France goes home to Paris. She goes home bloody but very resolute. She goes home wiser from the tremendous lesson she has learned, but more sure than ever before of her duties and her rights.

... The enemy totters but is not yet beaten. He remains on our soil. It would not even be enough, after what has happened, if with the help of our dear and admirable allies we chased him out of our country. We want to go to his country as we should, as conquerors. This is why the French advance guard reached Paris with cannon shots. This is why a great French army from Italy landed in the South and is advancing rapidly up the Rhone valley. This is why our courageous and dear Forces of the Interior are going to be armed with modern weapons. It is for revenge for revenge and justice that we shall continue to fight to the last day until the day when victory is total and complete.

... The nation well knows that to conquer, to reconstruct and to be great all Frenchmen are needed. The nation well knows that the sons and daughters of France - all the sons and daughters except for a few unhappy traitors who gave themselves over to the enemy and who are tasting or will taste the rigors of the law - yes! All the sons and daughters of France must march towards France's goal, fraternally and hand in hand.

*Vive la France!*

Allied commanders almost bypassed Paris on their way to Germany. As a strategic objective, the city itself was of little value to the Allied war effort. Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted his troops to concentrate on crossing the Rhine and capturing Berlin before Soviet Red Army units could enter the German capital. "Ike" also knew that Adolph Hitler had issued standing orders to his units in Paris that the German army was to destroy the French capital if the Allies attacked the city. The general sentiment among Allied commanders, then, was not to risk a bloody showdown where Paris would be turned into another version of Stalingrad.

Charles de Gaulle, however, would have none of it. De Gaulle was commander of the Free French Army and the de facto leader of the Free French government in exile. Understanding the political, national and cultural significance of retaking the ancient capital, De Gaulle demanded that Paris be liberated at all costs. When Ike wavered and issued orders for Allied units to stop short of the city, De Gaulle acted on his own.

On 19 Aug 1944, elements of the French Resistance in Paris organized an uprising against the German occupiers inside the city. Street to street fighting raged for days. De Gaulle, sensing an opportunity, ordered the French Second Army to liberate the city, on its own if necessary. Eisenhower finally relented and subsequently ordered the Allied forces to take the city. The French Second Armored Division was allowed to enter the city from the west, making a grand procession on 24 Aug down the Champs-Elysees to the jubilant celebrations of thousands of Parisians.

Dietrich von Choltitz, appointed as German military governor for Paris only days earlier, decided on his own to disobey Hitler and ordered his troops not to destroy the city. On 25 Aug, Choltitz surrendered the city and the men under his command to French Army and Resistance leaders. Paris was liberated with little fighting. Images of French and American troops

marching in the streets and hugging Parisians became powerful and effective propaganda tools in France and around the world.

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the Liberation of Paris, what role French all Allied forces played in taking the city, how the French Resistance in Paris helped precipitate the liberation, and what role the German governor of the city may have played in limiting the bloodshed.

## Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the Liberation of Paris in 1944.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain what role Free French and Allied forces played in liberating the city.
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain what role the German governor in Paris and his officials may have played in limiting the bloodshed as the city was liberated.

## Procedures

### I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Why is Paris so important to the French? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

### II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Liberation of Paris 1944 (20 min)
- Video – Liberation of Paris 1944 (20 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on the Liberation of Paris 1944, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework.
- Suggestion: AP / Advanced students should focus on primary sources.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on the Liberation of Paris (20 min)

### III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay: Explain in detail the events surrounding the Liberation of Paris, what role French all Allied forces played in taking the city, how the French Resistance in Paris helped precipitate the liberation, and what role the German governor of the city may have played in limiting the bloodshed.

## Extension

### On tour: Memorial of the Liberation of Paris

While on tour, students can visit the Memorial of the Liberation of Paris (on the roof of the Mortparnasse train station), where they can see for themselves a museum dedicated to the liberation. The museum contains many artifacts, documents and photographs dedicated not just to the Allied and French armies, but also to the French Resistance.

## Web Links

### Lesson Plan Websites

- [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/liberation\\_of\\_paris.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/liberation_of_paris.htm)  
The Liberation of Paris (website) – from the History Learning Site (UK). Highly recommended for all classes as background material.
- [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/liberation-of-paris](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/liberation-of-paris)  
Liberation of Paris (website) – from the History Channel
- [http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/25/newsid\\_3520000/3520894.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/august/25/newsid_3520000/3520894.stm)  
Paris is Liberated (website) – from the BBC
- [www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/parisliberation.htm](http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/parisliberation.htm)  
The Liberation of Paris 1944 (website) – from Eyewitness to History
- [www.historynet.com/world-war-ii-the-liberation-of-paris.htm](http://www.historynet.com/world-war-ii-the-liberation-of-paris.htm)  
World War II: The Liberation of Paris (website)
- [http://ww2db.com/battle\\_spec.php?battle\\_id=115](http://ww2db.com/battle_spec.php?battle_id=115)  
Liberation of Paris 25 Aug 1944 (website) – from the World War II Database
- [www.pilsch.gatech.edu/INTA4803TP/Lectures/L19-EndEurope.ppt](http://www.pilsch.gatech.edu/INTA4803TP/Lectures/L19-EndEurope.ppt)  
End of the War in Europe (PowerPoint) – Thomas Pilsch, Professor of the Practice of National Security, Sam Nunn School of International Affairs at Georgia Tech
- [www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1](http://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1)  
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and History classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUz2XvgalEo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUz2XvgalEo)  
Paris Delivered (video) - This newsreel, at just over 10 minutes in length, is appropriate for all classes.
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXjVbixh1xA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXjVbixh1xA)  
Liberation of Paris (video) - This 30-minute video is perhaps too long for most in-class showings, but it is well worth it. Highly recommended for all students, even if it is done as an out-of-class assignment.

### Background Information

- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation\\_of\\_Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_of_Paris)  
Liberation of Paris – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_de\\_Gaulle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_de_Gaulle)  
Charles de Gaulle – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Resistance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Resistance)  
French Resistance – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd\\_Armored\\_Division\\_\(France\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Armored_Division_(France))  
2nd Armored Division (France) – Wikipedia article
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietrich\\_von\\_Choltitz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dietrich_von_Choltitz)  
Dietrich von Choltitz – Wikipedia article on the German military governor in Paris

### Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/winston-churchill-speeches-during-the-blitz](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/winston-churchill-speeches-during-the-blitz)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Churchill's Speeches
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plan/england/second-world-war-st-paul-stands](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plan/england/second-world-war-st-paul-stands)  
World War II (1939-1945) – St. Paul's Stands against the Blitz
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/france/world-war-ii-fall-of-france-1940](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-fall-of-france-1940)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Fall of France 1940
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/poland/nazi-invasion-of-1939](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/poland/nazi-invasion-of-1939)  
World War II (1939-1945) – German Invasion of Poland 01 Sep 1939
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/england/miracle-at-dunkirk-1940](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/miracle-at-dunkirk-1940)

- World War II (1939-1945) – Miracle at Dunkirk 1940
- [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/germany/world-war-ii-operation-barbarossa](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/world-war-ii-operation-barbarossa)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Operation Barbarossa: German Invasion of Russia
  - [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/russia/world-war-ii-stalingrad](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/world-war-ii-stalingrad)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Stalingrad: Turning Point of the War
  - [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/france/world-war-ii-dday-invasion-1944](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-dday-invasion-1944)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Operation Overlord: D-Day Invasion of Normandy
  - [www.passports.com/lesson\\_plans/france/world-war-ii-liberation-of-paris-1944](http://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/world-war-ii-liberation-of-paris-1944)  
World War II (1939-1945) – Liberation of Paris 1944

## Key Terms

- Cultural
- French Resistance
- Liberation
- Strategy
- Surrender

