

## 4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE LESSONS/ACTIVITIES: WWII

### WWII (Reading Level 4.9)

Essential Standard 4.H.1 – Analyze the chronology of key historical events in North Carolina history.

Essential Standard 4.H.2 – Understand how notable structures, symbols and place names are significant to North Carolina.

Essential Standard 4.G.1- Understand how human, environmental and technological factors affect the growth and development of North Carolina.

### WWII on the Outer Banks

On January 19, 1942, a tremble was felt on Hatteras Island. A fireball lit up the horizon. Black smoke filled the sky. A German U-boat sank the U.S. ship, *City of Atlanta*. The torpedo killed all but three of the 47 people on board. Hours later, the same U-boat sank two more ships. War reached North Carolina's beaches.

This wasn't the first time U-boats came to local waters. During the First World War, three German subs sank ten ships off the coast. They did this to prove their power. But now, U-boats were larger, faster, and more deadly. This time they meant war.

Over six months, the Germans attacked at least sixty-five ships in American waters. The ships were carrying important supplies to the Allies in Europe. This included fuel, food, lumber, metal, rubber, and cotton. By July, nearly 400 ships were sunk or damaged. Wreckage and oil washed up on the beaches. More than 5,000 people were killed.

The most U-boat attacks happened off the Outer Banks. It was a busy shipping lane. So many ships were attacked that the waters were named "Torpedo Junction." The government and locals knew what was happening. But reports of the U-boats were kept quiet. They didn't want to worry the public. The islanders got used to the bombings. But it was messy swimming in an ocean of oil. Locals washed themselves with kerosene to remove the oil. In 1942, about 150 million gallons of oil spilled into the sea and on the beaches.

It was a scary time for residents. People were afraid. They thought German spies would sneak ashore. Strangers became suspect. A village postmistress worked as a secret coast watcher. She kept an eye out for unusual activity.

The U.S. added more patrols. It helped prevent the U-boat attacks. Blimps looked for U-boats from the air. Private boats harassed German warships. The military set up secret submarine tracking spots at places like Ocracoke.

People living at the coast turned off their house lights at night. They covered their vehicle headlights to not be seen from the sea.

On April 14, 1942, a German U-boat was sunk by the U.S. Navy. This happened southeast of Nags Head. Within months, three more U-boats were sunk along the coast. North Carolina's total of four sunken U-boats is the most of any state. By July, Germany's U-boat commander became discouraged. He sent his

ships away. Germany didn't win the war. But the attack off the coast was said to be a success. (Source: [www.leanrnc.org](http://www.leanrnc.org))

#### Questions

1. How did everyday life change on the Outer Banks during 1942?
2. What role did the waters off the coast of the Outer Banks play during WWII?
3. How was the environment affected by the bombing of ships off the coast?
4. What roles did island people play during 1942?
5. How did the bombing of American supply ships affect the war effort?
6. What did the Americans do to begin to turn the tide in their favor?
7. Why did the government keep the bombing off the coast a secret?
8. Did the war off the coast have any lasting effects? If so, explain.
9. How did German technology impact the war effort?

#### Create a Secret Code

**Purpose:** To show the importance of keeping information secret and how the military had to learn new things such as codes to communicate.

**Project:** Write out the alphabet in a column on a piece of paper. Assign each letter a number starting with 50 and working down from A to Z. Add the number five to each number for your final code number for the letter. Create a sentence that you consider important that you want your classmates to decode. Give them the message and the code and get them to decipher the message.

**Materials:** Paper, pencils