

Name: _____

Battle of Midway Island

The American Air Force and Navy took heart after the Battle of the Coral Sea. They hadn't defeated the Japanese fleet, but they hadn't been defeated either. The Japanese had marched across the Pacific Ocean. It looked as though no one would be able to stop them. The combined forces from the United States and Great Britain had slowed them down. They had kept the Japanese from taking over Port Moresby. This newly found confidence gave the American forces the push they needed to try and to stop the advance.



In the early part of 1942, the American Air Force came up with a radical new idea. During the air raids that were taking place in the Pacific, it was noted that it might be possible to launch twin-engine planes from an aircraft carrier. This had never been attempted before. These planes were larger and could carry heavier bombs. They had the capability of flying hundreds of miles without refueling. Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle was given command of a new project. He was to train pilots to fly B-25B bombers from carriers in the Pacific to the islands which make up Japan. The whole purpose of this plan was to divert the attention the Japanese were giving to the Pacific Islands back to their homeland. On April 18, 1942, Doolittle and his squadron flew from the deck of the USS *Hornet* to Tokyo. They covered 600 miles of ocean and bombed the cities of Tokyo and Nagoya. They didn't do a lot of damage to the cities. What they did do was embarrass the Japanese military leaders who had promised the citizens of Japan that there was no way the Americans could reach them.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto was the leader of the Japanese combined fleet. He resolved to keep this from ever happening again. It was his goal to destroy every American aircraft carrier there was. His focus on this target was to cost him dearly in the next naval battle. He wanted to draw the U. S. Pacific Fleet out into the open so that he could destroy the aircraft carriers. Without aircraft carriers, he reasoned, there would be no threat from American bombers.

Yamamoto headed toward Midway Island in the Pacific, 1300 miles west of Hawaii. He wanted to attack Midway quickly to secure the land to establish a Japanese air base. He was sure that this activity would draw the Americans into a battle. Yamamoto was certain that his fleet would be able to destroy the American fleet in this battle once and for all. What he didn't count on was the interception of his plans by American communications intelligence. Admiral Nimitz was able to put his fleet into place before the Japanese arrived. He was waiting to ambush the Japanese when they got to Midway on June 4.

The Americans hit the Japanese ships with torpedo bombers first. The Japanese ordered their aircraft to be brought on deck and prepared for flight. Sailors rushed to ready the planes on the flight decks. In five minutes, they would be ready to launch the aircraft. Before the five minutes were up, the Americans had started their second wave of bombings. This time they used dive bombers. No Japanese aircraft were able to take off. They were all destroyed along with the ships they sat on. The Japanese lost four fleet carriers in the battle that followed.

Name: _____

The island of Midway was taken over by the Americans. It became a very important base for the Americans during the rest of the war.

Battle of Midway Island

Questions

_____ 1. Who led the American raid on Tokyo?

- A. Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle
- B. Admiral Nimitz
- C. General MacArthur
- D. Admiral Yamamoto

2. Name two goals that the air raid on Japan accomplished.

3. What did the Japanese think they would accomplish by attacking and taking control of Midway quickly?

_____ 4. The American fleet surprised the Japanese by ambushing them at Midway.

- A. false
- B. true

_____ 5. With what did the Americans attack the Japanese fleet?

- A. anti-aircraft guns
- B. torpedo bombers and dive bombers
- C. submarines
- D. B-25's

_____ 6. How many carriers did the Japanese lose at Midway?

- A. eight
- B. four
- C. two
- D. six

