

## **Maritime Heritage of Chuuk Lagoon (From Operation Hailstorm to Underwater Graveyard)**

**Background:** Students should have a basic understanding of major concepts (i.e., causes, battles, strategy) associated with World War II. This activity is divided into two parts which can be implemented in succession or independently. The first part of the activity begins with a historical review of one of the most epic naval battles during World War II. A condensed version of the online narrative of Operation Hailstorm is accompanied by a web quest designed to encourage reading comprehension skills. The second part of this activity allows students to explore the history of the ships, planes, and submarines that were destroyed during Operation Hailstorm. Background information on each wreck, along with photographs of the submerged remains, can be found using the websites shown with this activity.

**Pre-activity:** Review the following terms and phrases with the students prior to the Operation Hailstorm narrative section:

atoll	interrogation	Battle at Guadalcanal	Pacific war strategy
reconnaissance	Imperial Fleet	European war strategy	Maru = Ship

**Classroom Resources:** Access to computers with Internet access for each student

Websites: [http://www.geocities.com/danimal\\_57/hailstorm.htm](http://www.geocities.com/danimal_57/hailstorm.htm)  
<http://www.truk-lagoon.com/ships.html>

(More information about WWII battles and engagements can be found at this website:  
[http://www.cv6.org/noumea/default.asp?uri=browse/event/battles\\_engagements.](http://www.cv6.org/noumea/default.asp?uri=browse/event/battles_engagements.))

**Follow-up Activities:** Engage students in a class discussion to share their thoughts on the following:

- Variation of marine life found at different wrecks or depths
- Contrasting influences between Operation Hailstorm (1944) and Diving Mecca (1994)
- Journal thoughts as a child living in Chuuk in 1944 verses 2004

## Maritime Heritage of Chuuk Lagoon

### PART I: Operation Hailstorm

Log on to the website: [http://www.geocities.com/danimal\\_57/hailstorm.htm](http://www.geocities.com/danimal_57/hailstorm.htm). Begin your reading with the section: **Photographic Overflight**, then continue with each section as they appear in the web quest.

In the section, **Photographic Overflight**, U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft flew over Truk Lagoon on February 4, 1944 and photographed many vessels of Japan's Imperial Fleet. What was the purpose of this mission?

According to the second paragraph in section, **The Origins of Operation Hailstorm**, in 1944 World War II was about to come to an end in Europe and the war in the Pacific was also showing signs of fatigue. Japan had suffered severe weaponry losses and the United States was gaining a hold in the Pacific. In paragraph three, which island victory was noted that enabled the U.S Navy to set up the attack on Truk?

Paragraph four describes the size of the attacking forces used by the U.S. Navy in its attack on Truk and compares the quantity and quality of equipment with that of Japan's Imperial Navy. Why were the Japanese considered to be "severely overmatched" by the U.S. Navy during Operation Hailstorm?

In the section, **Overview of the Attack**, the different task groups launched by the U.S. are described. Task groups were divided into 3 groups for Air Operations and 1 group for Surface Operations. According to paragraph three, why was it important to divide the air operations task groups into a low, medium, and high altitude defense?

The Day 1 air strikes are described beginning with the section, **Initial Fighter Sweep**, which began before dawn on February 17, 1944. Based on information in these two paragraphs, why did the Japanese Combined Fleet suffer such devastating losses at Truk?

Six air strikes were launched over Truk in the first day of attacks. Summarize each air strike using the table and example below:

AIR STRIKE:	DAMAGE REPORT:
Strike A	Destroy shipping and shore installations
Strike B	
Strike C	
Strike D	
Strike E	
Strike F	

Aerial attacks on Truk Lagoon continued through the night and the following day but the U.S. military never set foot on the islands. If you have time, you can read about the night and Day 2 attacks by following the links in the left-hand margins. Operation Hailstorm caused devastating losses for the Japanese Imperial Navy and further secured the United States' stronghold in the Pacific. Today, more than 60 artifact-laden WWII ships and planes rest on the seafloor of Truk Lagoon. Enjoy your virtual dive as you observe how the negative effects of a war from decades before have been replaced by beautiful habitats for a wide variety of coral and fish species that call the wrecks their home.

## **PART II: Virtual Dive in Truk Lagoon**

Log on to the Truk Lagoon website and locate the list of ships for your virtual dive: <http://www.truk-lagoon.com/ships.html>. Follow the ship name links for each ship listed on the table to learn more about the maritime heritage and final resting place for each ship. Be sure to follow the links that include photography and videos of the wrecks as they appear today.

### Exploring the Wrecks of Truk Lagoon

Start with the link for the **Aikoku Maru** and review the information in this example to assist you in completing your research with other wrecks. After you complete the first three columns, open the **Ship Title** link to see underwater photographs of the wreck. As you browse the photos, look for the artifacts and the various corals and marine life that have made the former WWII wrecks their home. After exploring a wreck, use the **Ships** link in the left-hand margin to return to the list of ships and locate the next wreck on the table.

Wreck Name	Type of Wreck	Size of Wreck	Resting Depth on Seafloor	Artifacts Remaining	Interesting Information
Aikoku Maru	Freighter/ Passenger liner	10,438 tons	73m	Large anti-aircraft gun on deck	Dangerous to penetrate this wreck
Fujikawa Maru					
Hanakawa Maru					
Kiyozumi Maru					
Nippo Maru					
San Francisco Maru*					
Shinkoku Maru					
Unkai Maru*					
Yamagiri Maru					

\* The San Francisco Maru and Unkai Maru also have a short video clip of the wreck. Follow the link and take a close-up look at the world of diving.