Geography and History Activity

Island Hopping in the Pacific, 1942–1945

Caption: This map shows the naval and army advances across the Pacific from 1942–1945.

United States History and Geography: Modern Times
The Difficulties of Island Hopping
By the fall of 1943, the U.S. navy was ready to launch its island-hopping campaign, but the geography of the central Pacific posed a problem. Many of the islands were coral reef atolls. The water over the coral reef was not always deep enough to allow landing craft to get to the shore. If the landing craft ran aground on the reef, the troops would have to wade to the beach. Wading ashore under enemy fire led to very high casualty rates among U.S. troops.

Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

Understanding Concepts
1. What geographic challenge led to the use of island hopping?
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2. What were some of the dangers posed by the island hopping strategy?
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3. What did the United States gain by capturing the Mariana Islands?
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Applying Concepts
4. How do you think U.S. bombing of the Japanese mainland contributed to the end of the war in the Pacific?
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5. Do you think the United States was justified in the use of atomic weapons in the Pacific? Why or why not?
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