

Pointe du Hoc Speech – Teacher Answer Guide

OVERVIEW

Documents included:

- ▶ “President’s Backup Copy” – June 6, 1984
- ▶ Press Release of the President Reagan’s “Remarks of the President to Assembled Veterans at Pointe du Hoc,” June 6, 1984
- ▶ White House Staffing Memorandum – May 21, 1984
- ▶ “Presidential Address: Pointe du Hoc,” Draft, May 21, 1984
- ▶ Excerpts from *The Longest Day*, Cornelius Ryan, 1959
- ▶ Excerpt from The Book of Joshua, The Bible

EXAMINE THE SPEECH:

Document #1

1. This document was originally printed on large index cards. It was used by the president as he delivered his speech.
2. The speech was delivered at Pointe du Hoc, Normandy. The title refers to this and the second paragraph reads, “We stand on a lonely, windswept point on the northern shore of France.”
3. This speech was delivered on June 6, 1984. This is noted on the upper right corner of the document.”
4. This date marked the 40th anniversary of D-Day.

READ THE SPEECH:

5. Pointe du Hoc is a cliff located on the coast of Normandy, France four miles west of Omaha Beach. President Reagan referred to this cliff when he remarked on page 2, “The Rangers looked up and saw the enemy soldiers at the edge of the cliffs shooting down at them with machine guns and throwing grenades.”
6. The Rangers were from the United States. In the first paragraph on page 2, President Reagan remarked, “At dawn on the morning of the 6th of June, 1944, 225 American Rangers jumped off the British landing craft and ran to the bottom of these cliffs.”
7. The mission of the Rangers was to capture the cliffs of Pointe du Hoc. Given that the Rangers landed at the bottom of the cliffs, this was a very difficult strategic position because the enemy could fire down on them as they tried to take the cliffs.
8. Bill Millin played the bagpipes (Page 4). The significance was that his playing the bagpipes in the middle of the battlefield provided a sense of purpose and patriotism.
9. Other countries that fought at Normandy against the Nazis included the Britain, Canada, and Poland.

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10. The Marshall Plan was an aid plan sponsored by the United States after World War II to help rebuild Europe.
11. According to President Reagan, the Marshall plan was created to help both the U.S. allies and enemies in Europe rebuild and it led to the Atlantic Alliance (page 10).
12. According to President Reagan, the western forces maintained a presence in Europe to protect and defend democracy (Page 11).
13. President Reagan felt that Americans learned it is better to protect peace in Europe than to pursue a policy of isolationism. It is important to be prepared to work towards reconciliation and arms reduction (pages 11-12).
14. At the writing of this speech, President Reagan wanted to reconcile with the Soviet Union.
15. Answers will vary.

Document #2

1. This document originated from the office of the press secretary. We know this because it is in the title of the document below the phrase “The White House.”
2. The purpose of the document was to provide a written transcription of the speech to the press. I would presume this because it is a transcription of the speech released by the Office of the Press Secretary.
3. This document was sent at 1:20 pm.

Document #3

1. The title of this document is “White House Staffing Memorandum.”
2. The date of this document is May 21, 1984.
3. There are so many names written on the document because each of the people whose names are checked is expected to look at the speech.
4. This document was used for communication purposes – sharing the speech among members of the executive branch.
5. This White House Memorandum was circulated fourteen days prior to the delivery of the “Pointe du Hoc” speech.
6. The concern expressed is a factual question about whether or not the enemy was firing from on top of the cliffs.
7. Answers will vary.

Document #4

1. This document was written May 21, 1984.
2. This was written fourteen days prior to the delivery of the “Pointe du Hoc” speech.
3. This document is one of the drafts of the final speech.
4. Answers will vary.
5. Answers will vary.

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Document #5

1. These documents are excerpts from the book, *The Longest Day*. You can tell because the title is at the top on the left.
2. One story relates to the placement of the Rangers at the bottom of the cliffs. The following are specific stories which were used in the speech:
 - Bill Millin playing the bagpipes surrounded by enemy fire.
 - Colonel Wolverton asking his parachute troops to bow with him in prayer.
 - Matthew Ridgway quoting the Book of Joshua from the Bible, “I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.

Document #6

1. This document is an excerpt from The Book of Joshua in The Bible.
2. This document is included in the file because the underlined quote is quoted in the speech.