

Mapping the Meuse-Argonne Offensive Student Answer Key

THE BATTLEFIELD

Q1: What was the area (in square miles) of the Meuse-Argonne battlefield? *700 – 800 square miles*

DAY ONE

Q2: Describe the geography and landscape of Day One using the map and images provided. Answers will vary. *Possible answers – the land was full of craters, barbed wire, destroyed towns, shattered trees, and German defense systems.*

Q3: Look at the advancement lines and describe any patterns you see. Are they close together or spread out? Many lines together suggest that the area met a lot of resistance or encountered fighting. Which areas appear most contested during Day One?

PATTERNS – Day One shows the jumping off line and the area where the Americans met serious resistance from the Germans.

CONTESTED AREAS – It is difficult to tell at this stage of the battle, but Americans met a lot of resistance along the northern advancement line. Notice the “bulge” in the line around Montfaucon.

Q4: What feature(s) on the map appears to have been the AEF’s objective on Day One? *Montfaucon was the objective of Day One. Note the “bulge” in the line near this important heights area.*

Q5: How much ground did the AEF gain during Day One?
100 to 120 square miles.

PHASE ONE

Q6: Describe the geography and landscape of Phase One using the map and images provided. *Cratered land, destroyed villages and farms, and shattered trees in the Argonne forest.*

Q7: Look at the advancement lines and describe any patterns you see. Are they close together or spread out? Many lines together suggest that the area met a lot of resistance or encountered fighting. Which areas appear most contested during Phase One?

PATTERNS – Lines along the southern Argonne forest, around Montfaucon, and along the Meuse River.

CONTESTED AREAS – Areas approaching Montfaucon from the northeast.

Q8: What feature(s) on the map appears to have been the AEF’s objective during Phase One? *Argonne Forest, Montfaucon, and Meuse River to the west.*

Q9: How much ground did the AEF gain during Phase One? *This will be difficult to measure. Encourage your students to do the best they can. The amount of area is about 50 – 70 miles depending on how you measure it. The key take away is that the AEF spent over a week fighting to capture Montfaucon and about one half of the area they captured during Day One.*

PHASE TWO

Q10: Describe the geography and landscape of Phase Two using the map and images provided. *Farmland, destroyed villages, fortified farms, tanks, destroyed wooded areas, and many hills.*

Q11: Look at the advancement lines and describe any patterns you see. Are they close together or spread out? Many lines together suggest that the area met a lot of resistance or encountered fighting. Which areas appear most contested during Phase Two?

PATTERNS – *Advancement lines in the Argonne Forest and along the south edge of Romagne Heights, and continued protection of the Meuse River in the west.*

CONTESTED AREAS – *Lost Battalion area in the Argonne Forest, and the southern portion of Romagne Heights.*

Q12: What feature(s) on the map appears to have been the AEF's objective during Phase Two? *The Argonne Forest, Romagne Heights, and protecting land already gained.*

Q13: How much ground did the AEF gain during Phase Two? *This will be difficult to measure. Encourage your students to do the best they can. The amount of area is about 30 – 50 square miles depending on how you measure it. The key take away is that the AEF spent nearly two weeks to capture the same amount of area as Day One. After these two weeks, they controlled Montfaucon and were at the edge of Romagne Heights and the Argonne Forest.*

PHASE THREE

Q14: Describe the geography and landscape of Phase Three using the map and images provided. *The fighting became extremely intense during Phase Three. Features to note: the arrival of reinforcements, tanks, machine guns, and a lot of contested ground.*

Q15: Look at the advancement lines and describe any patterns you see. Are they close together or spread out? Many lines together suggest that the area met lot of resistance or encountered fighting. Which areas appear most contested during Phase Three?

PATTERNS – *A lot of lines close together suggest intense fighting along Romagne Heights, the Argonne Forest and along the foothills and woods along the base of the Heights of the Meuse (in the west).*

CONTESTED AREAS – *Romagne Heights, Argonne Forest, a lot of woods, hills, farms and towns, and near the Heights of the Meuse. The fighting crossed the Hindenburg Line.*

Q16: What feature(s) on the map appears to have been the AEF's objective during Phase Three? *Romagne Heights, Argonne Forest, and the railroad lines running east/west and north/south.*

Q17: How much ground did the AEF gain during Phase Three? *This will be difficult to measure, but worthwhile. Encourage your students to do the best they can. The amount of area is about 100 - 120 square miles depending on how you measure it. The key take away is that the AEF spent nearly three weeks fighting to capture Romagne Heights and the Argonne Forest. After five weeks, the AEF finally crossed the Hindenburg Line.*

PHASE FOUR

Q18: Describe the geography and landscape of Phase Four using the map and images provided. *Flooded rivers, soldiers celebrating, Americans in control of observation towers, open space that is less rugged than in Phases One to Three.*

Q19: Look at the advancement lines and describe any patterns you see. Are they close together or spread out? Many lines together suggest there was a lot of resistance and fighting in the area. Which areas appear most contested during Phase Four?

PATTERNS – *Lines far apart and stretching for miles all the way to Sedan.*

CONTESTED AREAS – *Heights of the Meuse and some of the railway junctions are the contested area during this phase. After this, the Americans had the Germans on the run and gained tremendous amounts of land.*

Q20: What feature(s) on the map appears to have been the AEF's objective during Phase Four? *Capturing Barricourt Heights, the Heights of the Meuse, liberating towns, and pushing the German forces out the Meuse-Argonne region.*

Q21: How much ground did the AEF gain during Phase Four? *400 – 500 miles depending on how you measure. The key take away is that once the Americans broke through the Romagne Heights, the Argonne Forest, and the Hindenburg Line the last line of defense for the Germans was the Heights of the Meuse and Barricourt Heights. They captured half of the battlefield in a little less than 10 days.*

Q22: What were the German Army's options during Phase Four? *Very few options remain. Try to mount a counter-offensive (unlikely) or surrender or retreat to the Ardennes along the border between Belgium and France.*

Q23: What were the American Army's options during Phase Four? *Pursue the Germans and hold the Meuse-Argonne area. The battle ended with the Armistice on November 11, 1918. Some believe the loss of the Meuse-Argonne compelled the Germans to agree to this cease-fire.*

PRIMARY FOCUS

Q24: What does General Pershing note about the weather during this battle? Why do you think he chose to make note of this when reflecting on the Meuse-Argonne? *This was a battle of more than armies and fortifications. The AEF also had to fight elements of cold temperatures, cold ground, and mud.*

Q25: Pershing's remarks includes the following statements: "The Meuse-Argonne Battle presented numerous difficulties seemingly insurmountable" and "one of the greatest achievements in the history of American Arms." From what you have seen in the maps and images from this battle identify at least three reasons Pershing would make these statements about the Meuse-Argonne Offensive's place in American history. *Answers will vary. Look for your students to make connections with Pershing's statements and the images and landscape of WWI. The offensive took over six weeks in which the AEF captured many German fortifications, five heights, and over 700 square miles of land. This was possibly the most highly fortified area of the Western Front.*