

D-Day – The Greatest Invasion – A People's History by Dan Van Der Vat.
Bloomsbury 2004.

Of all the books on D-Day published to coincide with the 60th anniversary of Operation Overlord, this is the one that I enjoyed the most and which cries out to be used as a teaching aid in schools.

Lavishly illustrated throughout, D-Day gives the history of the invasion in full, its planning by the Allies, its execution, and the response of the Germans. What makes it so powerful and poignant is that the landings are personified in the experience of individual Allied participants, soldiers, sailors and airmen, and their stories are compelling, moving and inspiring.

The story ends with the breakout from the Normandy beachheads that were the precursor of the Allied sweep through occupied western Europe, but the last photographs, of gravestones in military cemeteries at La Cambe and Coleville-sur-Mer are a reminder of the terrible cost in human life of this most heroic military operation.

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