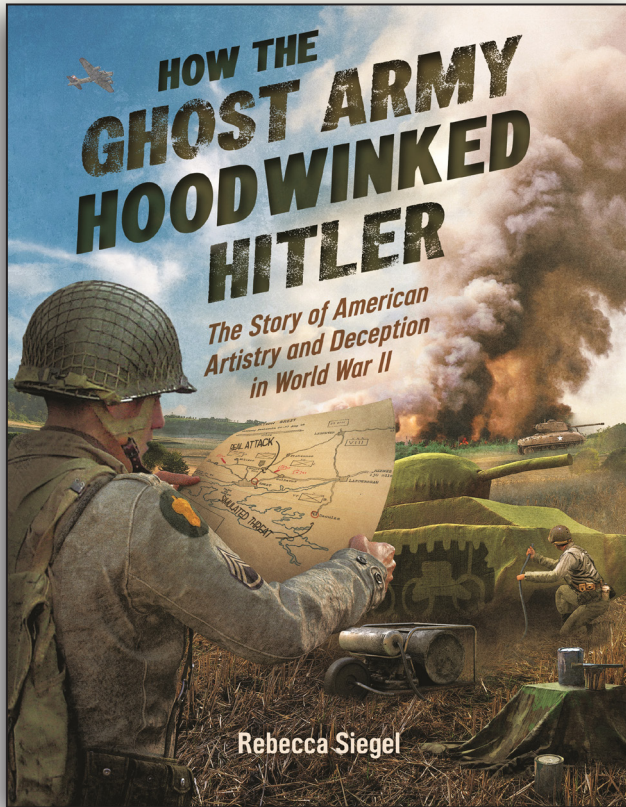


PEACHTREE EDUCATOR'S GUIDE



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How the Ghost Army Hoodwinked Hitler *The Story of American Artistry and Deception in World War II*

by **Rebecca Siegel**

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is the unbelievable true story of the American soldiers who used inflatable tanks and fake radio broadcasts as weapons in World War II.

Right around D-Day of World War II, a small, unarmed American army unit deployed to Nazi-occupied France. Instead of artillery, this unit fought with stagecraft, artistry, and deception. Their “weapons” included inflatable rubber tanks and giant speakers broadcasting fake military maneuvers. The soldiers called themselves the Ghost Army. Many of them had creative backgrounds in fashion, theater, and music,

and they used their talents to trick and confuse the enemy. Often, their mission was to draw enemy fire away from other soldiers and toward themselves.

One of the most stunning parts of this story is just how effective the Ghost Army was. They successfully carried out mission after mission and undeniably helped secure Allied victory.

Rebecca Siegel uses original research, declassified records and photos, and a boots-on-the-ground narrative style to tell the incredible experiences of these heroic soldiers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The United States didn't enter World War II until 1941. Discuss why it took the United States so long to join the Allied Forces?
- What was the mood of the country after the bombing of Pearl Harbor? How did men consider serving in the military their patriotic duty? Discuss how American women contributed to the war effort.

- Who were the Axis powers? Why was Germany considered the “greatest threat of all”? In what way did Germany begin their “quest for glory”? What did “glory” look like to the Germans?
- Explain the concept of the Ghost Army. Why were they called a “deception unit”? Discuss why deception was considered “a cheater’s move” among top military leaders. At what point did these leaders realize that “deception” could help win the war?
- Why was the existence of the Ghost Army top secret, even to other American military units?
- What type of men were recruited for the Ghost Army? How were they considered a “ragtag” army? Why were their skills perfect for their mission?
- The Ghost Army’s most “potent weapons were smoke, mirrors and the German imagination” (p. 14). What were the smoke and mirrors they created? Why was Germany’s imagination so important to the success of the Ghost Army?
- What was D-Day? Study the map on page 28. Explain the importance of the beaches of Normandy in the war against Germany. What was the most perilous battle at Normandy?
- Explain Operation Elephant. How did the Ghost Army blunder this operation? Discuss what Lt. Fred Fox and Colonel Harry Reeder meant, “There is too much military . . . and not enough SHOWMANSHIP” (p. 36). How did D-Day change the function of the Ghost Army?
- Chart the Ghost Army’s most successful plots. What was their greatest failure? Discuss what they learned from their mistakes.
- Discuss why the strategic location of Luxembourg was so important during World War II. What did the Ghost Army discover in Luxembourg that helped them understand the country’s unique situation? Explain the following metaphor, “If the war was the Ghost Army’s stage, then liberated Luxembourg City became the unit’s dressing room” (p. 72).
- Describe General George Patton. What was his initial view of the Ghost Army? At what point did he change his opinion?
- Discuss the visit that Generals Eisenhower, Patton, and Bradley made to the Nazi’s Buchenwald concentration camp. Why did they think American soldiers should see the camp?
- What was the humanitarian crisis in Europe at the end of World War II? How did the Allied troops deal with displaced persons in Europe? What was the attitude of the displaced persons toward German citizens? How did some of the Ghost army soldiers share the same sentiments?
- How did the American public receive the Ghost Army after the war ended? Explain why their story made headline news.

Guide created by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rebecca Siegel is the author of more than 200 nonfiction books and essays for audiences ranging from early readers to adults. Her book *To Fly Among the Stars* was named a Mighty Girl’s Book of the Year and was a National Science Teaching Association’s Outstanding Science Trade Book for Students. Rebecca lives in Chicago with her husband and two daughters.