

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS

Activity Title: The Flying Tigers

Activity Objectives: The student understands the impact of U.S. participation in World War II, specifically the volunteerism and actions of the Flying Tigers in China.

TEKS:

U.S. History:

113.41(c)(7)(A,E,G)

- 1. Introduction:** American airmen have a history of volunteering to fight in wars in which the U.S. was not yet involved in. These groups included:

Lafayette Escadrille—American volunteers in the French Air Service during World War I
Kościuszko Squadron—American volunteers fighting for Poland in the Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921).

Yankee Squadron – American volunteers fighting in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) engaging Nazis and fascist Italian forces.

Eagle Squadron—American volunteers in the RAF during World War II

In China this group was the American Volunteer Group, known as the Flying Tigers.

They painted sharks' teeth on the noses of their airplanes yet they were called the "Flying Tigers". Ask the students why?

In truth, Chennault didn't know either, when asked about it, he said:

"Before I left the United States in the summer of 1941, I asked a few friends in Louisiana to watch the newspapers and send me any clippings about the A.V.G. Now I was being swamped with clippings from stateside newspapers, and my men were astonished to find themselves world famous as the Flying Tigers. The insignia we made famous was by no means original with the A.V.G. Our pilots copied the shark-tooth design on their P-40's noses from a colored illustration

in the India Illustrated Weekly depicting an R.A.F. squadron in the Libyan Desert with shark-nose P-40's. Even before that the German Air Force painted shark's teeth on some of its Messerschmitt 210 fighters. With the pointed nose of a liquid cooled engine it was an apt and fearsome design. How the term Flying Tigers was derived from the shark-nosed P-40's I never will know. At any rate we were somewhat surprised to find ourselves billed under that name. It was not until just before the A.V.G. was disbanded that we had any kind of group insignia. At the request of the China Defense Supplies in Washington, the Walt Disney organization in Hollywood designed our insignia consisting of a winged tiger flying through a large V for victory."

2. Lesson: Use the provided PowerPoint presentation.

3. Post lesson: The Flying Tigers were one of the most famous groups of American volunteers serving under a foreign flag. In July 1942 they were brought into the U.S. Army Air Forces as the 23rd Fighter Group. In the 1990s a U.S. visitor to China reported seeing an old Chinese man wearing a leather flight jacket with the Flying Tiger patch on it so their legacy still lives on in China as well as in the U.S. Air Force.

Activities Flying Tigers

1. Even though they had the support of the American public and support of the White House, some still considered them mercenaries because they fought for another country for pay. Have the class discuss and/or debate this.
2. Have the students design their own squadron insignia using your school mascot.
3. Have the students research one of the other groups of American volunteer flyers that served in other conflicts.

Vocabulary:

mercenary insignia tactics legacy disbanded derived

Resources: One copy of handout per student, computer, projector, screen

Materials:

Technology Utilization:

Accommodations: