The Ghost Army

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Historical Paper

2,455 Words

Towards the end of World War II, the Ghost Army triumphed over the Nazis by saving American lives and helping to end the war. Tragically, most people don't even know that this small army of artists ever existed and risked their lives for the war effort.

Before Sunday, June 28, 1914, diplomatic relations between European countries had been tense for a few years. But on that date, the final straw sparked the beginning of war: the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to Austria-Hungary, and his wife Sophie. They were assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovnia by a 19-year-old Serbian. After this dreadful event, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and pulled more countries into the war with them. A few days after this declaration of war by Austria-Hungary, Germany called war on Russia, and then France as well two days after. About three years into the war, U.S. troops started to arrive in Europe to help their allies, France and Britain, to fend off against Germany. During the final battles of WWI, the three countries were able to drive the Germans away from France. The Americans drove back the Germans on land, while France and Britain drove the Germans back at sea. Towards the end of the war, many of Germany's allies quit the war, leaving Germany on their own.¹ In the Compiègne Forest on November 11, 1918, the Germans signed the armistice - an agreement to stop fighting. The war between these European nations lasted from July 28, 1914 up to November 11, 1918.²

After this, the Allied Powers enacted a series of treaties on the defeated Axis powers. But seeing Germany as the initiator of the war, the European Allies instead put

¹ "Chapter 23." Holt McDougal United States History: Civil War to the Present, by William Deverell and Deborah G. White, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, pp. 716–742.

² "Treaty of Versailles ." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/treaty-of-versailles.

harsh treaty terms on Germany.³ The Treaty of Versailles was presented to the German delegation to be signed on May 7, 1919. This treaty held Germany accountable for starting WWI and liable for a large amount material damage. Due to this, Germany lost 13% of their territory, losing along with that 10% of their population. France's premier "insisted on imposing Germany enormous reparation payments."⁴ While he was aware that Germany would not be able to pay such a towering debt, the French premiere still feared that the Germans would recoup quickly and launch another war on France. Along with this, the French premiere wanted to limit Germany's chance to get back their economic superiority and their ability to rearm themselves.⁵ So the German army was limited to only 100,000 men, with "conscription being forbidden."⁶ The Treaty of Versailles also limited the German navy vessels to be under 10,000 tons, with a ban on keeping and taking care of their submarines. And Germany was also not allowed to keep an air force either for their army.

In Germany during 1929-1930, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi) was a "small party on the radical right of the German political spectrum."⁷ From 1930-1933, many Germans thought that their current government was weak and unable to solve the problem with their economy since at this time, Germany was in a state of depression. This presented an opportunity for Adolf Hitler and his Nazis to rise. When Adolf Hitler spoke to voters, he used their emotions to his advantage. Adolf Hitler was

³ "Treaty of Versailles ." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/treaty-of-versailles.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "THE NAZI RISE TO POWER." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-rise-to-power.

great at persuasion, so he was able to attract many German voters to his cause. And the Nazi electoral propaganda promised that they would pull Germany out of depression.⁸ Adolf Hitler and his group of Nazis were also able to give the citizens of Germany a scapegoat. He, along with other Nazi propagandists, directed the citizen's anger and fear against mostly the Jewish, as well as against the intellectuals, Communists and Social Democrats for Germany's defeat in WWI along with the economic crisis that occurred after the war.⁹ As they went through their campaign trail, Hitler and other Nazi speakers would carefully create their speeches for each audience so that they would join their campaign.¹⁰ "Hitler was not appointed chancellor as the result of an electoral victory with a popular mandate, but instead as the result of a constitutionally questionable deal among a small group of conservative German politicians who had given up on parliamentary rule."¹¹ When Hitler came to power, he wanted to avenge Germany's defeat in WWI. He also wanted to build an empire, uniting all German speaking people in Europe and wanting to get "living space"¹² for the growing German population.¹³ But under his era, the German economy developed prosperity. In 1939, Hitler declared war.¹⁴ WWII started on September 1, 1939.

In the fall of 1943, a small group of U.S. army planners were in London looking at

⁸ "THE NAZI RISE TO POWER." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-rise-to-power.

⁹ "Chapter 23." Holt McDougal United States History: Civil War to the Present, by William Deverell and Deborah G. White, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, pp. 716–742.

 [&]quot;THE NAZI RISE TO POWER." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-rise-to-power.
¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "Chapter 23." Holt McDougal United States History: Civil War to the Present, by William Deverell and Deborah G. White, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, pp. 716–742.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ Pike, John. "The Germany Economy Under Hitler." Texas Revolution, Military, www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/de-drittes-reich-economy.htm.

how to use deception to give the incoming American soldiers some extra edge for when they came to meet the German Nazis in person. One of these planners was Captain Ralph Ingersoll. When he was in London in 1943, he was helping British Intelligence misdirect the German generals planning the defense of Europe.¹⁵ "Inspired by British deception efforts, Captain Ingersoll suggested that the U.S. Army create a phantom unit designed to fool the enemy right on the front lines. On Christmas Eve, 1943, a memo was sent from London to Washington, requesting the creation of a top-secret "field deception unit" in time for the upcoming invasion."¹⁶

About five years into World War II, eleven hundred artists were recruited from art schools and advertising agencies. They were put into the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops, which is better known as the Ghost Army. These soldiers used their skills and talents to deceive the Germans so the American troops could take over different territories.

The Ghost Army was activated on January 20th, 1944 by the War Department through Army Ground Forces (AGF's) Second Army and had a total of eleven hundred men.¹⁷ But this unit was unlike any other because it was not an army of regular soldiers. Instead, it was an army of artists. They were required to have an IQ of 119 being the minimum number. All of these soldiers specialized in certain fields.¹⁸ They were engineers, sound technicians, actors, artists, set designers, and others in fields where you had to think creatively. They were told to use their brains and talents to help

¹⁵ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Beyer, Rick. "Official History." Ghost Army Legacy Project, www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/official-history.html.

¹⁸ Holley, Joe. "Louis Dalton Porter; Used Artistic Skills to Trick German Army." The Washington Post, WP Company, 8 July 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/07/AR2006070701341.html?noredirect=on.

achieve their main mission: to deceive the German army. The Ghost Army assembled their units and trained very fast while preparing for their overseas movement. This took place at Camp Forrest, Tennessee. The Ghost Army went overseas to Europe during the Normandy invasion in June, 1944 and most of their units were in action against Germany by June 6, 1944. From the time that they operated, (1/20/1944-9/15/1945) they carried out over 20 operations. They worked with the U.S. armies all over Europe without the armies even knowing that they were helping them at all. The Ghost army had operations in England, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

The Ghost Army used different tactics to trick the German army. For their operations, this army of 1,100 soldiers had to make it appear that they were much larger than they actually were. They also had to make it look as though they were more heavily armed. And they did this through three categories. The three parts of their deception were radio, sonic, and visual.

For the radio deception, they had the signal company. The signal company's mission was to recreate the radio transmissions of the units they were pretending to be. This unit had more than 100 radio operators that had been taken from around the country. The reason radio transmissions were very important is because of the data gathered by the German intelligence. "By some estimates, German army units gathered as much as 75% of their intelligence from radio intercepts."¹⁹ And by having very convincing radio transmissions, they could easily direct the attention of the enemy to where they wanted. They could make the Germans believe that American infantries

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¹⁹ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

were in a certain location, when they were really not there at all. To do this, the radio operators that worked in the signal company had to study the U.S. radio transmissions. They needed to know if they were recreating an infantry regiment moving across a certain area and how many times per day these regiments would send messages through their radio transmissions.²⁰ The signal company was able to fool the German intelligence on where different infantries were through their radio transmissions.

For their sonic deception, they had the sonic company. The sonic unit of the Ghost Army was controlled under Captain Hilton Howell Railey. This sonic deception that they used was able to be created with new and advanced technology. In early 1944, Railey sent a team of these soldiers with a portable audio studio down to Fort Knox, Kentucky. With the help of engineers from Bell Labs, this sonic deception was created. Different sounds were recorded over the course of three weeks onto 16-inch transcription disks. Some of these sounds that were recorded were tanks going in different directions, and soldiers building a pontoon bridge. When they finished recording the different sounds, they then put the transcription disks with the sounds on different turntables to then combine the sounds to match the scene they were required to create. All these sonic scenarios they created were recorder onto a wire recorder, with a wire that was two miles long. This recording was enough to broadcast 30 minutes of sound. And when it was played, it never skipped. They would play these soundtracks on huge five hundred pound speakers on the back of their jeeps. This combination was

²⁰ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

so successful that it could be heard up to fifteen miles away from where the trucks were placed.²¹

For the visual effect, the Ghost Army had the 603rd Camouflage Engineers. They used fake props for some of their visual deception. They had inflatable tanks (see Appendix A) and artillery (see Appendix B) that were made out of rubber. They also used many different tactics to create one-night road shows that was able to be packed up for another show the following night. To close potential holes in the line, the unit from the Ghost Army would set up their inflatable tanks and bring in their huge speakers that played the different sound recordings on a fifteen-mile range to make it seem as though a large army was assembling.²² These deceptions that the Ghost Army created were very successful.

They Ghost Army created an illusion of a military force that wasn't actually there. Another form of visual deception they used was through impersonation. Some of the soldiers would pretend to be soldiers from other units (that were usually somewhere else) by sewing on divisional patches onto their uniforms, as well as painting the other units' insignias on their vehicles that they would drive around in.²³ The Ghost Army would also have some of their soldiers drive canvas-covered trucks with two soldiers sitting at the end of the truck on the side closest to the outside to make it look like they were filled with soldiers. They also drove in circles or up and down a street to make it

²¹ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

 ²² Binkovitz, Leah. "When an Army of Artists Fooled Hitler." Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 20 May 2013, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-an-army-of-artists-fooled-hitler-71563360/.
²³ Ibid.

seem that an entire infantry was being transported. Along with this, they also had special effects.²⁴

The Ghost Army had many special effects. These effects were carefully planned out plays that were made to intimidate and/or confuse the Axis powers. And in some of the towns they went into, they knew that there would be some German spies that lingered to collect information. So the Ghost Army would send some of their members, that were actors, into cafes in France near the war front to spread false information.²⁵ The actors were told, "go to the pub, order some omelets, and talk loose,"²⁶ says Captain John Jarvie. And some actors in the Ghost army played parts of Allied generals. They would dress up as these generals and visit towns where the enemy spies were most likely to see them and report this to their commanders.²⁷ Their carefully thought out tactics lured some of the German units into battle or turned the units away from where the U.S. combat units were planned to be.

"These three units, the 603rd with their dummy tanks, the sonic company with its audio equipment, and the signal company with its radios became the deception core of the Ghost Army."²⁸

On May 7, 1945, Germany officially surrendered to the allies, bringing WWII to a soon to be end. The soldiers of the Ghost army started to depart from Europe by June 23, 1945. World War II finally ended on September 2, 1945, thanks to the help of the

²⁴ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

²⁵ PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-armv/.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Garber, Megan. "Ghost Army: The Inflatable Tanks That Fooled Hitler." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 23 May 2013, www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/05/ghost-army-the-inflatable-tanks-that-fooled-hitler/276137/. ²⁸ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

Ghost Army. The Ghost Army was shortly deactivated a little bit over a week after the end of WWII, on September 15, 1945. But from the time they operated, they saved an estimated 15,000-30,000 American lives during the war.²⁹

After the Ghost Army was deactivated, none of the members who had taken part in the Ghost Army were allowed to speak of what they had done during WWII until the documents/information on them were declassified. So unfortunately, their stories didn't make it to the official narratives of WWII. But most of the members carried on with a normal life and got careers in the arts. Although, many members actually became very famous in their careers, such as painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly, as well as fashion designer Bill Blass. The Ghost army was kept a secret until it first came out in the April 1985 issue of the Smithsonian magazine. The official documents on the Ghost army were declassified in 1996. The reason why these documents were classified for so long was so they could use these tactics against the Russians, because they believed the next big world war would be the U.S. against Russia.³⁰ And even though more people are now beginning to hear of the Ghost Army, some people can't believe that it existed. Like what director Rick Beyer who created, "The Ghost Army," experienced with many people he met. One of these instances was at his presentation for seniors at the Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts on the Ghost Army. ""There was one guy, while I was setting up and he was just convinced that the whole thing was bullshit." He told Beyer he had served in General Patton's Third Army and never knew of any Ghost

²⁹ Binkovitz, Leah. "When an Army of Artists Fooled Hitler." Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 20 May 2013, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-an-army-of-artists-fooled-hitler-71563360/.

³⁰ PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

Army."³¹ Currently, the *Ghost Army Legacy Project* is trying to preserve the legacy of this unit. They take donations so that they can keep working to preserve the history of this unit so everyone can learn about what the Ghost Army contributed to during WWII.

³¹ Binkovitz, Leah. "When an Army of Artists Fooled Hitler." Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 20 May 2013, www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-an-army-of-artists-fooled-hitler-71563360/.

Appendix A



18 Feb. 2019AD. http://www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/curtis-collection.html

During the time in which the Ghost Army operated, they used props as part of their visual deception against the Germans. One of the designs of the props were inflatable tanks like the one shown above. These tanks were made of rubber. But this specific tank shown above is a C of E model (one of the models of tanks they used), number four tank of medium size. It weighed 250 pounds and was 33.6 cubic feet when it was shipped. When inflated, the volume would be much larger.

Appendix B



18 Feb. 2019AD. http://www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/curtis-collection.html

One of the other props the Ghost Army used in their visual deception was inflatable rubber artillery. These inflatable artillery props, like the one shown above, were very realistic looking, but it had one flaw with it. The flaw was that the nozzles of the guns would loose air and would point into the ground, so air would have to be added before the daylight would come because the Germans would be very curious as to why the guns would be pointing into the ground and not at them. In the picture shown above, a collection of anti-aircraft guns are shown.

Bibliography

Primary Source:

18 Feb. 2019AD. http://www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/curtis-collection.html

When I was finished with writing my paper and finishing edits, I realized that I needed to add an appendix to my paper because since many people don't know what the Ghost Army was, many people also wouldn't know what the props the Ghost Army had created looked like. So when I looked at pictures on the Ghost Army Legacy Projet's website, it said that all national history day students could use any pictures from their website for free as long as they gave credit to the website. So I used two pictures, one of an inflatable tank and one of some anti-aircraft guns, from the 28 pictures they put on their website from the Curtis Collection. This helped to show my readers what these props looked like in real life which enhances their experience while reading my paper.

Secondary Sources:

Berentsen, William H., and Theodore S. Hamerow. "Germany." Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2 Jan. 2019, www.britannica.com/place/Germany/World-War-II.

During my research, I wanted to know during WWII which sides were winning more or less before the year of 1944. Although I did not include any of my research from this article, it helped me to understand why the U.S. established the Ghost Army in the first place.

Beyer, Rick. "Official History." Ghost Army Legacy Project, www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/official-history.html.

While I was looking for sources that discussed the Ghost Army, it was very hard to find anything except some articles about them that did help with my project, but didn't give me a full view of what the Ghost Army actually was. But when I found this website, it gave me so much help by giving me dates, documents, and so much more. And the official history of the Ghost Army discussed all of their operations, including what they used as deception for their operations, who they would be impersonating, who was involved, and etcetera. Like how the Ghost Army was established. But overall, I am very fortunate to have stumbled onto this amazing website and article.

Binkovitz, Leah. "When an Army of Artists Fooled Hitler." Smithsonian.com, Smithsonian Institution, 20 May 2013,

www.smithsonianmag.com/history/when-an-army-of-artists-fooled-hitler-715633

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This article is one of the first sources I used in the beginning of my research. It helped me understand the main ideas of what the Ghost Army was. It gave me

some of the who, what, why, where, how, and when of the Ghost Army which helped me to branch out my research into all of these categories. And this helped me in the end to construct my entire paper on the Ghost Army, so I would say this is the biggest contributor to my paper.

"Chapter 23." Holt McDougal United States History: Civil War to the Present, by William Deverell and Deborah G. White, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012, pp. 716–742.

While I was researching the Ghost Army, I knew that something had had to happen farther back to begin all of this. This section of the textbook helped me to begin my whole paper by being able to get to the start of why WWII occurred at all. This section, also, talked about why WWI started at all. And from here, this helped me to connect the dots to how the Ghost Army came to be with the help of other sources.

"CULTURE IN THE THIRD REICH: DISSEMINATING THE NAZI WORLDVIEW." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/culture-in-the-third-reich-disseminat

ing-the-nazi-worldview.

During my research of the history before the Ghost Army, I wanted to know how the German lifestyle was during Hitler's reign. And although I didn't include the culture of Germany in my paper, it still contributed to my paper. This is because from seeing how the lifestyle was, I was able to put in what the values and beliefs of the Nazis were because they talked about that throughout the article, so I was able to include that in my paper. This is how this article contributed to my paper.

"CULTURE IN THE THIRD REICH: OVERVIEW." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/culture-in-the-third-reich-overview.

Ibid. The reason I used this is the same reason I used the source above it. This is because this is all the same information as it was in the other article, except here it is shortened up so it gave more of a main point instead of all the extra information and details.

Garber, Megan. "Ghost Army: The Inflatable Tanks That Fooled Hitler." The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 23 May 2013, www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/05/ghost-army-the-inflatable-tan ks-that-fooled-hitler/276137/.

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At the beginning of my research of the Ghost Army, this is one of the articles I found on them. This article gave a me summed up information on the Ghost Army, giving me a little bit of information on all parts of the Ghost Army, which helped me to branch out later in my paper on the three units of the Ghost Army.

Holley, Joe. "Louis Dalton Porter; Used Artistic Skills to Trick German Army." The Washington Post, WP Company, 8 July 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/07/AR2006070701 341.html?noredirect=on.

This article like the article, Artists of Battlefield Deception: Soldiers of the 23rd, was also on the shorter side in terms of details. But as I say this, there were a few details in this article that I didn't here anywhere else while I was researching. But in this article there were real life experiences from one of the soldiers who had take part in the Ghost Army, which helped me to understand what the daily life was for him and other soldiers of the Ghost Army.

Neary, Lynn. "Artists of Battlefield Deception: Soldiers of the 23rd." NPR, NPR, 25 Sept. 2007, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=14672840.

This article was also was one of the first sources I found on the Ghost Army during my research. Although it wasn't one of the most well detailed articles on the Ghost Army, it gave me locations and generic dates that helped me to find out the exact dates of events that occured for well known and not well known

events.

"Operation Bettembourg." Ghost Army Legacy Project, www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org/operation-bettembourg.html.

While in the process of writing my paper, I was finding out what the Ghost Army used to create their deception and what their goals were to deceive the Germans with it. But I wanted to know how it was conducted when they were in battle. So when I found this article on the *Ghost Army Legacy Project's* website, it helped me to understand how they would use these props to deceive the Germans and an overall broader picture of what the Ghost Army did.

PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, 14 Apr. 2013, www.pbs.org/show/ghost-army/.

Watching this documentary contributed to a large portion of my paper. This documentary consisted of soldiers who worked in some of the different units of the Ghost Army and they talked about their experiences while serving. And the documentary talked about the sonic company and the signal company which helped me a lot because this was one of the only sources that went into depth on these two units. This documentary also helped me to tie together the core deceptions used by the Ghost Army.

Pike, John. "The Germany Economy Under Hitler." Texas Revolution, Military,

www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/de-drittes-reich-economy.htm.

This source helped me to understand why the Germans were so loyal to Hitler and his Nazis. I was wondering during my research why the Germans were so loyal and trusted everything that Hitler did even though most of the things he did were humanely wrong. So while we were doing our research, I thought about this and went back into my research and found that Germany had been in a state of depression before Hitler came into power. So as I was looking for how the economy benefited from Hitler, I came across this article that explained how everything turned for the better when Hitler came with his Nazis.

"THE NAZI RISE TO POWER." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-nazi-rise-to-power.

This article like two of the other articles I used, *CULTURE IN THE THIRD REICH*: *DISSEMINATING THE NAZI WORLDVIEW* and *CULTURE IN THE THIRD REICH*: *OVERVIEW*, helped me to understand the Nazis. In this article, I learned how the Nazis rose to power in Germany. This helped me to write my history portion of the paper run smoothly because it gave me more details and tricks that they used so that they could rise up and take control of Germany.

"The Nazi Race Laws – 'The Nuremberg Laws.'" הספרייה הלאומית, web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/collections/personalsites/Israel-Germany/WorldWar-2/Pages/Nuremberg-Laws.aspx.

When I was trying to understand more about what the Nazis were during my research -besides of what I already knew about them- I came across the Nuremberg Laws. When I found this out, I wanted to go further in depth to find out what these laws were. So I found this source and it explained what the laws were, what they did for Germany, how the laws were developed, and so much more.

"Treaty of Versailles ." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,

encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/treaty-of-versailles.

Towards the end of my research, I was given advice by our school librarian, Mrs. Speare, to add information to tie together WWI and WWII. So she directed me to the Treaty of Versailles, which I had heard of but didn't know what it exactly was. So with this article, I learned about what the Treaty of Versailles was and its impacts on Germany. And with the other research I put into my history, this made my history portion of the paper run smoothly.