



Teacher Inquiry Kit: K-5 Charles Norman Shay

Title	A Penobscot Humble Hero: Army Medic Charles Norman Shay
Author(s)	U'ilani Chai
Grade Level	K-5
Soldier	Charles Norman Shay
Tribal Affiliation	Penobscot
Branch of Service	Army Air Force
Dates of Service	1943-1952 1952-1964
Essential Question	How did serving in WWII and the Korean War strengthen Charles Norman Shay's identity with his native culture and impact his life after service?
Contextual Paragraph	The sound of bullets popping through the air and piercing the water haunts Charles Norman Shay to this day. He doesn't remember how many wounded men he pulled from the water that day he landed on Omaha Beach, he does

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remember the tide rising fast, the blood red ocean and the machine gun rounds streaming past him. The 19-year-old Penobscot from Indian Island, Maine was an Army medic in the 16th Infantry Regiment, he was one of three combat regiments of the 1st Infantry Division that led the D-Day assault in Normandy, France.

Charles Norman Shay was born on June 27, 1924, Shay lived on the Penobscot Indian Reservation in Maine. He later moved to Boston, Massachusetts with his parents, they worked at the Naval shipyard. In 1943, Shay was drafted into the Army and assigned to combat medic duty with the 1st Infantry Division. He completed basic training at Fort Pickett in Virginia and surgical school in Indiana, where he trained as a surgical technician. In 1943, he boarded the Queen Elizabeth in New York and sailed across the ocean to England. Shay shared the trip took about five to six days on the ship. Once he got to England, he began training for the invasion on Normandy, France. The training consisted of training on ships, landing on smaller landing crafts, digging foxholes, and eating MREs. Shay shared, the evening before the invasion, he had a surprise visit from a fellow Penobscot, Melvin Neptune. He knew Neptune from his home reservation, he thought it destiny that he was aboard the same transport ship. They shared stories of home and despite being in combat, Neptune didn't share combat experience or offer advice. However, Shay knew, "all hell was about to break loose on me".

On June 6, 1944, at about 6:00 a.m., Shay stormed the beach at Normandy. Under heavy German fire, he shared that it seemed impossible to get to the beach, but they needed to debark the ship immediately or get blown up. His main concern was survival, to get to the beach and treat the wounded men. When he got to the beach he looked back and noticed many wounded men floundering in the water. He also noticed the tide rising fast and the sea red with blood, he knew that if he didn't act fast, many more men would die. Armed with only his two satchels of medical supplies he pulled the living up on the beach. Shay shared, "I am a great believer in a spiritual way of life. My mother's prayers must have guided me." Shay went on to participate in the Battle of Aachen, the Battle Hurtgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge. On March 25, 1945, after crossing the Rhine on the bridge at Remagen he was captured by the Germans. A month later on April 18, he was repatriated and taken behind American lines. He was then taken to France and returned to Boston. For two months, Shay's mother thought Charles had perished during the war. He said he would never forget her expression when she opened the door and saw him standing there.

Charles Shay received the Silver Star for his service and actions on June 6. Despite being a decorated Penobscot veteran, jobs were scarce on the reservations. Shay reenlisted in the Army in 1946 and served in Austria where he met his wife, Lilly. He returned to combat in Korea and was awarded the Bronze Star with two Oak Leaf clusters for valor for

	<p>saving lives. In 1952, he joined the Air Force Reserve, before retiring as a master sergeant in 1964. Then he worked in Vienna for the International Atomic Energy Commission and later for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, before finally returning home to Indian Island in 2003. Shay was also awarded the French Legion d'Honneur for his heroic efforts in the Liberation of France and his connection to the French nobility.</p>
C3 Standards	<p>C3 Standards: https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3 D2.His.2.K-2. Compare life in the past to life today D2.His.9.K-2. Identify different kinds of historical sources</p>
Primary Source 1: Permanent Link 	<p>Interview with Charles Norman Shay</p>
Title of Primary Source	<p>Veterans History Project: Interview with Charles Norman Shay (1:35:30)</p>
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where was Mr. Shay from? 2. What was Mr. Shay's job in the Army? 3. What was one thing you learned? 4. What is one thing you wonder about the war?
Primary Source 2: Permanent Link	<p>Charles Norman Shay with Penobscot Family</p>

	
Title of Primary Source	Charles Norman Shay with his Penobscot Family
Suggested questions for the source	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe what you see in the photograph. 2. What do you think is happening in the photo? 3. When do you think this photo was taken? 4. What are you are wondering about the photo?
Primary Source 3 Permanent Link Footage from D-Day	Footage From D-Day
Title of Primary Source	Normandy Landings
Suggested questions for the source (3-5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Watch 3:00 minutes of video with sound off and answer following questions: 2. What is happening in the video? 3. When do you think the video was made? 4. How does this video make you feel? 5. How do you think the people in the video are feeling? 6. What can we learn from the video?
Primary Source 4 Permanent Link 	Charles Shay gives tribute to all Native Americans who fought on the shores of Normandy on D-Day.

Title of Primary Source	Charles Shay gives tribute to all Native Americans who fought on the shores of Normandy on D-Day.
Suggested questions for the source (3-5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe what you see. 2. What do you notice first? 3. Where is the setting? 4. What is happening in the picture? 5. How might the people in the picture be feeling? Why?
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions. (2)	Have you gotten an award before? How did that make you feel?
Primary Source 5 Permanent Link 	Shay recalls landing on Omaha Beach
Title of Primary Source	Charles Shay - Returning to the Beaches of Normandy 74 Years later
Suggested questions for the source (3-5)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe what you see in the video. 2. What did you learn from the video? 3. What can you tell about Mr. Shay? 4. What is something you are wondering about?
Possible discussion prompts beyond the questions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What culture do you identify with? 2. How can we continue to share the story of Charles Norman Shay and the impact of Native American Veterans of World War II?
Works Cited	<p>Du Houx, R. (2018). Medic set D-Day: The Humble Heroism of Charles Norman Shay. Magazine of Smithsonian's National Museum of The American Indian, Vol. 19, 2. https://www.americanindianmagazine.org/story/humble-heroism-charles-norman-shay</p> <p>Imperial War Museums. (2013). Footage from D-Day [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PjCR9YrU2Q0</p>

Shay, Charles Norman. Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center. Library of Congress, 2006. Video. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <<https://memory.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/bib/loc.natlib.afc2001001.85252>>

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