



**THE HISTORY CHANNEL.**



## **Study Guide for *Band of Brothers – Episode 8: The Last Patrol***

**INTRO:** *Band of Brothers* is a ten-part video series dramatizing the history of one company of American paratroopers in World War Two—E Company, 506<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, known as “Easy Company.” Although the company’s first experience in real combat did not come until June 1944 ( D-Day), this exemplary group fought in some of the war’s most harrowing battles. *Band of Brothers* depicts not only the heroism of their exploits but also the extraordinary bond among men formed in the crucible of war.

The eighth episode highlights the tension between the weary, haggard veterans of the Battle of the Bulge and other soldiers who haven’t suffered what they have. The episode is narrated by Pvt. David Webster, an Easy Company veteran who missed the battle at Bastogne because he had been hospitalized with a relatively minor wound. Webster finds that other members of the company have some difficulty embracing him because he has not gone through their trials. Likewise, some members of the company are wary or resentful of a newly arrived West Point graduate eager for combat experience. With the war apparently winding down, the company is relocated to an Alsatian town in January 1945, where the men are visibly frustrated at having to face more dangerous patrols for negligible gains. The episode reminds us of the pain and sadness brought on by each individual casualty or fatality from the company.

**CURRICULUM LINKS:** *Band of Brothers* can be used in history classes.

**NOTE TO EDUCATORS:** *Band of Brothers* is appropriate as a supplement to units on World War Two, not as a substitute for material providing a more general explanation of the war’s causes, effects, and greater historical significance. As with war itself, it contains graphic violence and language; it is not for the squeamish. Mature senior high school students, however, will find in it a powerful evocation of the challenges of war and the experience of U.S. soldiers in the final phase of the European theatre.

**STANDARDS:** *Band of Brothers* fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretations.

### **PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES:**

*Band of Brothers* is a compelling story which reveals a great deal about World War Two. However, as it is the story of one U.S. Army company, it reflects only a few of the war’s many facets. Topics such as the war’s origins, the prosecution of the war up to 1943, the Pacific Theater, and the Final Solution are beyond its scope. To put *Band of Brothers* in historical context, review a timeline of the entire war. Students should be able to answer questions such as: When did the war begin? When did the United States enter the conflict? What were the war’s major causes and what major events led up to the start of military hostilities? Who were the



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belligerents and what were they fighting for (or against)? What was the Holocaust and how was it part of the war as a whole? What was D-Day and what was its significance in the war's progression? How and when did the war end in Europe and in Asia?

### CRITICAL VIEWING QUESTIONS:

1. What was the reaction of the narrator, Pvt. David Webster, upon his return from the hospital to the condition of Easy Company?
2. Why did he have a different perspective from that of most of the other members of the company? What did *they* think of *him*?
3. Why did the company resent the newly arrived platoon leader, Lt. Hank Jones? Whom do you think they had a harder time accepting, Jones or Webster? Why?
4. What was the goal of the night patrol?
5. Why did Winters decide not to send out the second night patrol?
6. By the time the company left Hagenau, at what stage was the war?
7. What were the major themes of this episode?

### ADVANCED VIEWING QUESTIONS:

1. *Band of Brothers* adapts a book by the historian Stephen Ambrose, based on interviews and scholarly research. How does it affect our understanding of the past to experience it through a dramatic reenactment? Does it matter that the words spoken by the actors were written as dramatic dialogue and do not come from the historical record? What's the difference between something that is *historical* and a *work of history*? In what ways are the goals and needs of filmmakers different from those of people who write history books?
2. There are almost no women in *Band of Brothers*. Women, however, were affected by World War Two as much as men were. American women worked in the war industries in the United States and hundreds of thousands served in the women's divisions of the U.S. armed forces. What is the effect of focusing on the war as essentially a contest fought by male military combatants? What aspects of the war does this leave out?
3. Why do World War Two stories enjoy such widespread popularity—in books, movies, public commemorations? What does this tell us about the war, and what does it tell us about our own times?
4. *Band of Brothers* is not a documentary. It was made as a work of dramatic entertainment. The story—and it *is* a story—depicts handsome, earnest young men who face daunting challenges and bravely achieve great victories. Does *Band of Brothers* romanticize the story of Easy Company? Does it romanticize World War Two, or war in general? Is it significant that The History Channel's on-air broadcast of *Band of Brothers* was sponsored by the U.S. Army?



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### NAMES:

Richard Winters  
Lewis Nixon  
David Webster  
Hank Jones  
Donald Malarkey  
Lynn "Buck" Compton  
Joseph Liebgott  
Edward "Babe" Heffron  
Joseph Ramirez  
Darrell "Shifty" Powers  
Frank Perconte  
Ronald Speirs  
Col. Robert Sink

### EXTENDED ACTIVITIES:

Sending and receiving letters was one of the most important ways soldiers coped with the loneliness and fear of war and with the pain of missing loved ones. For historians, such letters mix personal stories with important firsthand accounts of the war's major (and minor) developments. Imagine you were a member of Easy Company; write a letter (or several) to a loved one back home, describing your experience during the company's stay in Huguenau.

### RESOURCES - WEBSITES:

<http://www.hbo.com/band/landing/currahee.html> - HBO.com's Band of Brothers website  
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/wwii.htm> - World War Two Documents: The Avalon Project of the Yale Law School  
[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/powers\\_of\\_persuasion/powers\\_of\\_persuasion.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/powers_of_persuasion/powers_of_persuasion.html) - Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art of World War II – On-line Educational Program of the National Archives

### RESOURCES - BOOKS:

Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506<sup>th</sup> Regiment, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne from Normandy to Hitler's Eagle's Nest* (New York, 1992)  
David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (1999)