

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?**YOUR TASK**

Imagine it is 1944. In June the Allies will invade France. Field Marshal Montgomery has been put forward as the man to command the land forces in France. Your task is to look at his record and decide whether you think he is the right man. Organise your report along the following lines:

1. Does Monty have a good track record?
2. Is he well organised in terms of planning campaigns?
3. Is he respected by the troops?
4. Does the public respect him?
5. Are the complaints about his personality justified?
6. Are any of the criticisms of him as a leader justified?

WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS FIELD MARSHAL MONTGOMERY?

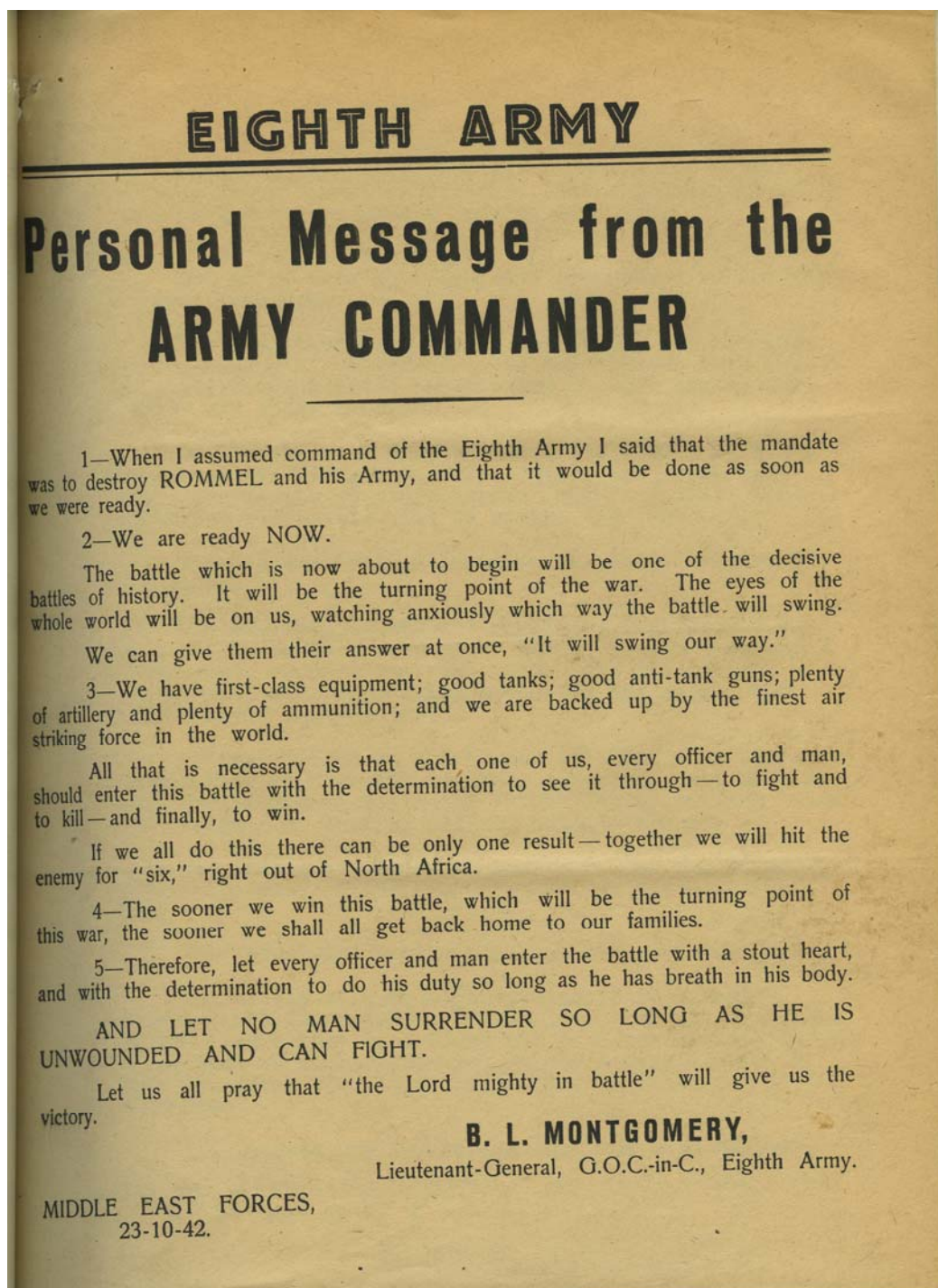
Bernard Montgomery was probably the most famous British commander in WW2. He was also a controversial character. Here is one comment on him:

As commander of the victorious British Army in North Africa, "Monty" enjoyed enormous popularity among both his troops and the British people. His military achievements won him the respect of his fellow soldiers, including his Desert War opponent, Erwin Rommel. But his arrogant, rigid, and abrasive manner earned him a reputation as one of the most difficult and controversial commanders of World War II. He was unreceptive to suggestions, and his cautious approach to combat led other Allied commanders to view him as weak and indecisive.

The National World War II Museum, New Orleans.

Notice sent out to all troops in the British Eighth Army,
October 23rd 1942

Catalogue ref: WO 214/19



MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What is this source?

This is a printed notice sent out to all troops in the British Eighth Army before the Battle of El Alamein. The battle began on October 23rd and lasted for 12 days.

A notice like this was a most unusual step for a British commander. Until Montgomery's arrival the battle plans were kept strictly secret and senior commanding officers had very little contact with their troops.

What's the background to this source?

One of the key battlegrounds in WW2 was in North Africa. The area contained important oil reserves in Libya, which was controlled by Hitler's ally, Mussolini, the leader of Italy. Next door to Libya was Egypt, which was controlled by the British. Egypt had valuable ports that helped British forces in the Mediterranean Sea. Egypt also had the Suez Canal that was a vital supply line for troops and equipment to India and other parts of the British Empire. As a result, Italian and German forces fought constantly against British forces in North Africa from June 1940-late 1942.

At first, the campaign went well for British Empire forces against the Italians. However, the Italians were then reinforced by German Afrika Korps troops. They were well trained, well equipped and well led by General Erwin Rommel. The open spaces of the desert were ideally suited to German tactics that used fast moving tanks, armoured vehicles and aircraft. By the autumn of 1942 Rommel's forces had pushed deep into Egypt as far as El Alamein. It was here that the decisive battle of the campaign would be fought.

It's worth knowing that...

Montgomery was only appointed to take over command of the 8th Army on August 15th 1942.

He upset the commanders he was replacing by taking charge two days earlier than he was supposed to.

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. What three key points does Montgomery want his troops to understand?
2. Is it clear that this battle is important?
3. Why is Montgomery confident of victory?
4. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Extracts from Montgomery's report on the North Africa campaign
1942-43

Catalogue ref: WO 214/19

Source a

Divisions were split up into bits and pieces all over the desert; the armour was not concentrated; the gunners had forgotten the art of employing artillery in a concentrated form.

If changes in the higher command had not been made early in August, we would have lost EGYPT.

Source b

In Eighth Army we had:

A new Army Commander.

Three new Corps Commanders.

Of all these new appointments at G.H.Q. and at Eighth Army only one Officer had fought in the desert before and that was General LUMSDEN, 10 Corps. All the rest, including myself, were from England and were fit and fresh - new brains on an old problem.

GOTT was to have commanded Eighth Army. I am convinced that this appointment was not sound and might have led to disaster. GOTT was one of the old regime

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Source c

An essential feature of my plan was that every Commander in the Army, right down to the Lt. Col. level, should know my whole plan, how I meant to fight the battle, what issues depended on it, and the chief difficulties the enemy was up against.

I was also determined that the soldiers should go into the battle having been worked up to a great state of enthusiasm.

This was essentially an Army battle, fought on an Army plan, and controlled carefully from Army H.Q. Therefore, everyone must know how his part fitted in to the whole plan; only in this way could perfect co-operation be assured.

I therefore assembled all Commanders in each Corps, down to and including Unit Commanders, and addressed them on the following dates:

14 October :	30 Corps.
	13 Corps.
20 October :	10 Corps.

As a result of these addresses all Commanders knew exactly what I wanted, and how I intended to fight the battle.

What is this source?

These extracts come from Montgomery's official report to the government on the North Africa campaign.

The report went into great detail about the battle plans and how they were carried out.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What's the background to this source?

North Africa was a key battleground in WW2. From 1940-42 British Empire forces fought against German and Italian forces to control the area. By the summer of 1942 the campaign did not seem to be going well for the British. German forces had pushed deep into British controlled Egypt as far as El Alamein. By October 1942 the British commander General Montgomery had prepared his forces for an attack to drive the Germans back. The battle began on October 23rd 1942 and lasted 12 days. It resulted in a major victory for the British 8th Army. It was the first decisive defeat of German forces in WW2.

Montgomery took control of the 8th Army in August 1942. He ruthlessly removed officers he considered not up to the job. He also set about building up large numbers of troops, tanks, artillery, aircraft and ammunition. By the time the battle started he had almost twice as many troops, tanks and aircraft as the German commander Rommel. Montgomery was a great believer in training troops over and over again. However, he did not have time to do this and so his battle plan relied on relatively simple, but very clear instructions. This basically meant a very aggressive face-to-face fight rather than a fast moving motorised battle that would have suited the Germans.

It's worth knowing that...

Montgomery accurately predicted the length of the battle as 12 days and the number of casualties as 13 500. He faced criticism from some commanders and politicians in Britain before El Alamein because he took too long to prepare his forces. Montgomery was knighted for the victory at El Alamein. The battle was the first decisive defeat of German forces. Churchill saw it as a turning point in the war.

Montgomery also faced some criticism after he won the Battle of El Alamein. This was because he refused to let his tanks chase after the retreating Germans. Montgomery believed that fast moving, motorised action like this favoured the Germans and did not play to British strengths.

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. According to Montgomery, what problems were there with British forces before he took over?
2. What was the cause of these problems?
3. Gott was unable to take over because he had been killed in an air crash. Do you think Montgomery's comments were a little insensitive?
4. Why do you think Montgomery was so keen that all the commanders should know his plan?

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5. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Montgomery enjoys a cup of tea with a tank crew November 1942

Catalogue ref: IWM E 19096



MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What is this source?

This is an official photograph showing Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery in 1942 taking tea in the desert during the North African campaign where he was commander in the Eighth Army.

Immensely liked by his troops, Montgomery was less popular in Whitehall and with other commanders. "You may be great to serve under," General Eisenhower's Chief of Staff, Walter Bedell Smith told him, "but you sure are hell to serve over."

What's the background to this source?

In 1942 Montgomery took charge of the British 8th Army in North Africa. After intensive preparations he defeated the Germans and Italians at El Alamein in October 1942. This proved to be a turning point and by May 1943 the Germans and Italians had been driven out of North Africa. The next Allied campaign was the invasion of Sicily and then Italy. Montgomery played a key role in this campaign as well. He was extremely popular with the troops and the public. This was partly because he was successful. It was also because he valued the lives of his troops very highly. Although some other Allied commanders thought Montgomery was too cautious, he would always try to assemble enough of the right weapons and equipment before going into battle, as well as making sure his troops were properly trained.

Montgomery proved to be a big draw for audiences of troops and for audiences back in Britain as well. This was very unusual for a commander of the time. His huge public profile meant that in 1944 when he was announced as Commander of British forces for the D-Day landings, an actor was used to impersonate him in Gibraltar to make the Germans believe no invasion was imminent.

It's worth knowing that...

Montgomery suffered only one serious defeat during the whole of the war.

Operation Market Garden was launched in September 1944, part of the Allied advance through Holland into Germany. But British forces, after early success, failed to secure the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem and were forced to withdraw back over the river. Montgomery called the operation "90% successful" but casualties were high and a significant breakthrough was not made.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. What do the photographs suggest about the relationship between Montgomery and his troops?
2. Is it possible to rely on these photographs to show an understanding of this relationship?
3. Compare these photographs to other sources in the box to learn about this relationship.
4. What does the fact that Monty had a double tell us about him?
5. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Montgomery talking to Canadian soldiers in Sicily 1943.

Catalogue ref: INF 2/4



MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What is this source?

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MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Lieutenant Clifton James who visited Gibraltar on 27th May 1944
disguised as Field Marshal Montgomery

Catalogue ref: WO 208/4374



MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What is this source?

This is a photography of Monty's double, Lieutenant Clifton James, taken in Gibraltar in 1944.

Lieutenant Clifton James really did double up as Montgomery on a number of occasions. It was very useful for Montgomery to be able to appear to an audience but also be working at the same time! James went to Gibraltar to help distract German attention from the Normandy landings, due only ten days later.

What's the background to this source?

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Montgomery proved to be a big draw for audiences of troops and for audiences back in Britain as well. This was very unusual for a commander of the time. His popularity meant that having a double was extremely useful!

It's worth knowing that...

In 1954 Clifton James published a book called "I was Monty's double". In 1958 it was made into a film and James actually played himself and Montgomery in the film!

War Office files show that Clifton James was actually third choice to play Monty. First was the actor Miles Mander, famous for a series of roles in Hollywood 'Three Musketeers' movies but MI5 discovered he was too tall. Their second choice broke his leg in a car accident in the middle of training. James was discovered working in an army pay office.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

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3. Compare these photographs to other sources in the box to learn about this relationship.
4. What does the fact that Monty had a double tell us about him?
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Use the table to write your report.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Examples of deception tactics used by Montgomery's forces in the Battle of El Alamein

Catalogue Ref: WO 204/7977

Dummy pump houses were erected at three points; water points and overhead storage reservoirs were made at two of these points and a "Dish" reservoir at one of them.

Work began on 26 September and ceased on 22 October.

The work was carried out by one section of 578 Army Troops Company.



K.4497

K.4498

Dummy Pumphouse and Reservoir.



K.4499

K.4500

"Vehicles" Filling Up.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

What is this source?

These photographs come from an official report into the use of deception in the North African campaign.

There were many other examples of deception. Other examples included dummy tents, dummy water reservoirs and even dummy soldiers operated by wires!

What's the background to this source?

North Africa was a key battleground in WW2. From 1940-42 British Empire forces fought against German and Italian forces to control the area. The decisive battle came in October 1942 at El Alamein in Egypt. British commander General Montgomery built up a large force of troops and equipment to attack the Germans and drive them out of Egypt. One of the main attacks by Montgomery's forces was to take place at the northern end of the battle area. As a result, his forces created large numbers of fake storage dumps, camps, tanks and other features to make the Germans think the British were building up their forces in the south.

The battle began on October 23rd 1942 and lasted 12 days. It resulted in a major victory for the British 8th Army. It was the first decisive defeat of German forces in WW2.

It's worth knowing that...

The main aim of the deception measures was to disguise the actual build up of forces taking place and also to make the Germans think that forces and supplies were being built up in the wrong area of the battle zone. From the air, it would be very difficult to tell that these dummy pieces of equipment were not the real thing.

Deception was found to be a very effective tactic in this battle, and it was used many times elsewhere. The Allies invested a huge amount of effort in deception measures in the run up to the D-Day invasion of France in June 1944.

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. Can you tell that the fuel dump is a fake?
2. Do you think these deception tactics are effective?

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/>

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

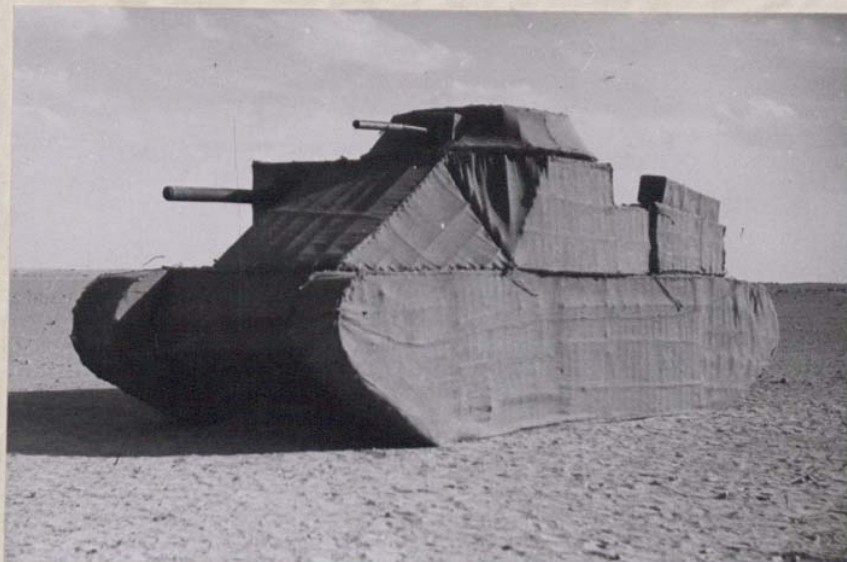
3. Does the use of deception tactics tell us anything about Montgomery's qualities as a commander?
4. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

Use the table to write your report.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Examples of deception tactics used by Montgomery's forces in the Battle of El Alamein

Catalogue Ref: WO 204/7977



K.4201

Dummy GRANT Tank.



K.4207

Vehicles Loaded with Dummy Tanks.

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Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. Can you tell that the fuel dump is a fake?
2. Do you think these deception tactics are effective?

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MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

3. Does the use of deception tactics tell us anything about Montgomery's qualities as a commander?
4. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

Use the table to write your report.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?**Extract from film "Forging ahead in Sicily", British newsreel on the invasion of Sicily 1943**

Catalogue ref: BP060743108903

Courtesy of [ITN/Source](#)

What is this source?

This is an extract from a British newsreel broadcast in 1943.

Official camera operators would have shot this footage. It would then have been brought back to England to be edited and to have a commentary added.

What's the background to this source?

After defeating the German and Italian forces in North Africa in 1943, the Allies launched a new attack on their enemies. Combined land, sea and air forces attacked Sicily in July 1943 and the island fell in August 1943. The British 8th Army under Montgomery landed in Italy in September 1943. Soon afterwards US forces landed at Salerno. The Italian government surrendered on September 8th but German forces continued to hold Italy and resist the Allies. There would be continued hard fighting through Italy until April 1945.

The terrain of Italy was especially well suited to defending, and the German forces were well led by Field Marshal Kesslering.

It's worth knowing that...

Montgomery commanded the British 8th Army in the invasion of Sicily and then Italy in the summer of 1943. For most of the campaign in North Africa he had been the leading figure in the British war effort. However, in the invasion of Sicily and Italy he had to work with the US generals Patton and Bradley. The relationship was very difficult.

Montgomery was called away from the Italian campaign in December 1943. In his view the Allied forces were badly co-ordinated and the planning was not thorough enough. He said he was glad to leave the 'dog's breakfast' of a campaign.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Does this source help us decide if Montgomery is the right man to command the land forces in France?

1. How does the newsreel describe Montgomery?
2. What impression do you get from the clip of the relationship between Montgomery and his troops?
3. What impression do you get of the way the Allied forces worked together?
4. Montgomery was actually very unhappy with the way this campaign was run. Does this cast doubt on the reliability of the newsreel?
5. Does this source help you to answer any of the questions you have to tackle in your report?

Use this table to write your report.

MEDITERRANEAN & NORTH AFRICA: WHAT KIND OF MAN WAS MONTY?

Report on Field Marshal Montgomery

Field Marshal Montgomery has been put forward as the man to command the land forces in France for D-Day. Your task is to look at his record and decide whether you think he is the right man. Study all the sources in the box to help you write your report.

Organise your report along the following lines:

Does Montgomery have a good track record?	
Is he well organised in terms of planning campaigns?	
Is he respected by the troops?	
Does the public respect him?	
Are the complaints about his personality justified?	
Are any of the criticisms of him as a leader justified?	
Montgomery should/should not lead the troops in France because...	