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Geography and History Activity

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World War I and the Russian Revolution

The Second Battle of the Marne (July 15–18, 1918)

Why was the Marne River so important to the French and their allies? One reason is the site of the Marne River, and another reason is its **situation**. *Site* is a geographic term referring to the physical location of a place, and *situation* refers to the location of a place based on its relation to other places. The Marne River is located in northeastern France, flowing in an arc generally northwest into the Seine River near Paris. With a total length of 326 miles (525 kilometers) and a series of canals regulating its flow and that of the Seine, the Marne is an important transportation and commerce route. The Marne, along with rails joining Paris and Verdun, was a valuable means of movement and trade. It was important for the French to protect all these assets and locations.

Political geography, which is concerned with the state and its territory, is greatly affected by the international conflicts—such as war—that change borders and create new countries. The political geography of France was in danger of being changed by the events of World War I, but the Second Battle of the Marne proved to be a turning point in the war. This one last German offensive on the Western Front quickly resulted in Germany's loss.

The German supreme commander, General Erich Ludendorff, had a plan to capture the town of Reims and split France's armies as preparation for his final offensive against the French troops. He was surprised to discover that French general Ferdinand Foch had anticipated this plan and was ready with strong resistance and counterattacks. The Germans crossed the Marne River in several places, but their advance was quickly stopped. Assisted by British, American, and Italian troops, the French attacked the bulge of German soldiers that had crossed to the south side of the Marne and protruded into the Allied lines. The Germans were soon forced to call off their offensive and retreat. This battle shifted the balance of power in the West.

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Geography and History Activity *Cont.*

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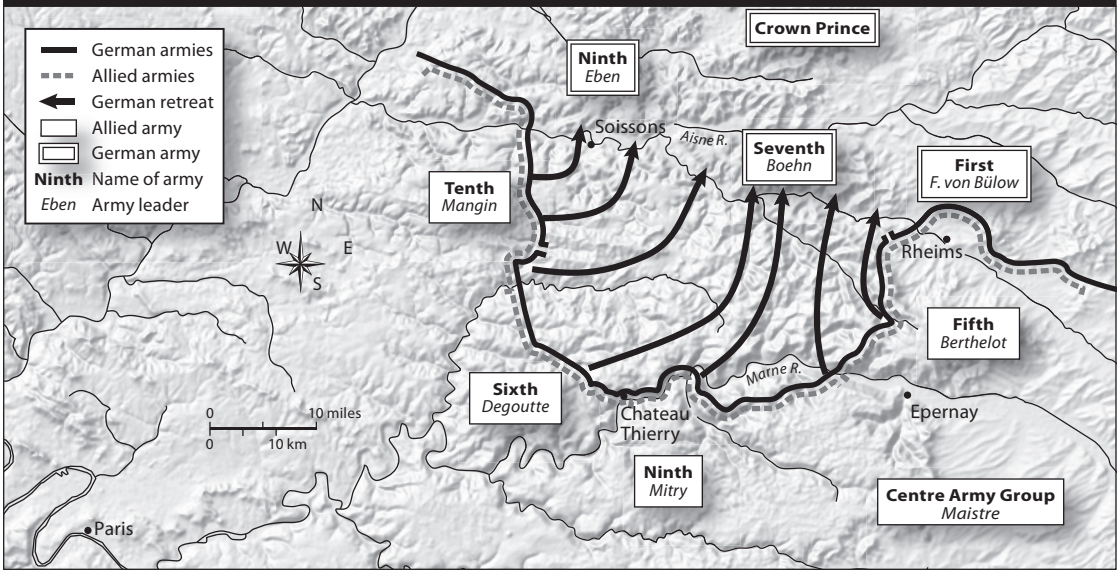
World War I and the Russian Revolution

The Second Battle of the Marne



Caption: The Second Battle of the Marne marked the turning point of World War I as the Allied troops forced the German troops to retreat.

Directions: *Answer the questions below in the space provided.*

Understanding Concepts

1. **Interpreting** According to the map, about how close did the Germans get to Paris before they were forced to retreat?

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **Explaining** Explain why the Second Battle of the Marne was a turning point in the war.

_____

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_____

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World War I and the Russian Revolution

3. **Naming** Complete the following graphic organizer naming the officers in charge of each army.

Officers in Charge during Second Battle of the Marne	
German First Army	
	Berthelot
Allied Sixth Army	
	Maistre
Allied Ninth Army	
German Ninth Army	
	Boehn
	Mangin

Applying the Concept

4. **Speculating** What was the geographic significance of the Marne River? Based on your answer, what do you think would probably have happened if the Germans had won the important Second Battle of the Marne?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. **Making Connections** Think about the site and situation in another important World War I battle. What might make this place an attractive or unattractive target for an enemy attack?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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