Virginia Hall: The Remarkable Woman Who Turned the Tides of WWII

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Our National History Day project highlights the life and accomplishments of the United States’ most famous and influential female spy, Virginia Hall. Hall’s story relates to the theme “Frontiers in History” by sharing the story of an incredibly prominent figure in the frontier of women’s espionage and communications. Without her, the invasion of D-Day would not have succeeded due to the sheer influx of enemy forces. Hall’s actions exhibited how minorities (Virginia was both a woman and a handicapped person) should not be underestimated, something that our group was encouraged and intrigued by.

When first introduced to National History Day, our group brainstormed many different topics, but we ended up settling on the broad topic of “Women in War.” We knew that we had to narrow our topic down quite a bit, so we chose to focus on World War II, a war in that we knew women were involved on multiple fronts. We are all interested in espionage, having previously made a film about spies, so we decided to highlight a revolutionary female spy in WWII. When researching woman spies, we found the most, as well as some of the most impressive, information focusing on a particular person, Virginia Hall. We decided that she was the best person to focus on for our project, not only because she intrigued us the most, but also because she was the one that we felt fit the theme of “Frontiers” best.

Once focusing solely on Hall, we found many helpful sources and facts. We had been eyeing a book, *A Women of No Importance* by Sonia Purnell, as we thought it would help us in our research, but we did not know how to get our hands on it. Fortunately, we stumbled upon Purnell’s adaptation for young readers, *Agent Most Wanted*, in our own school’s library. We fully annotated this book, having access to Virginia’s full life story, quotes, and pictures from actual interviews and documents. We organized all of our sources, as well as the dates we accessed
them and the information that we collected from them, in a Google Doc. Overall, we believe that our research went incredibly smoothly, which made it very easy to compile all our information to write our script and bibliography.

To create our final product, we first wrote a script to know exactly what we were going to say and included quotes based on what we prepared. We collected numerous images from websites, archives, and Agent Most Wanted to use. To create our actual documentary, we used the video editing app CapCut to compile our photos with audio recordings of us speaking.

Our historical argument is as follows: Virginia Hall, the first female spy of the Second World War, used her skills in espionage as well as her innocent appearance to help collect essential information that aided America and contributed to overthrowing the Axis Powers. Hall, the most famous female in federal communications during WWII, advanced the frontiers for woman espionage all over the world.
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources:

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ml. Accessed 16 Feb. 2023. Through this source, we found a photo of a WW2 battle,
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Demetrios, Heather. “Virginia Hall Resources.” *Heather Demetrios >> Author + Mentor*, heatherdemetrios.com/virginia-hall-resources. This source provided us with eleven images depicting newspaper articles and Virginia herself. These are primary sources as they come from Hall’s lifetime.


Accessed 16 May 2023. This source allowed us to find photos of the United Kingdom during the Second World War.

“Hall, Virginia “Cuthbert”.” *WW2 Gravestone*, ww2gravestone.com/people/hall-virginia/. This source provided us with photos of Virginia as well as other important people from WWII, which qualify as primary sources.

Hatala, Greg. “Those on the Front Lines through Garden State History.” *Nj*, www.nj.com/galleries/ADCSDSKPR5FXJPCRHQKF7JTVQ4/. Accessed 14 May 2023. This source helped us find photos of examples of medical care that would have been offered during this time period.

“Holocaust Encyclopedia.” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/en. Accessed 2 Feb. 2023. This source provided us with primary sources (photos) for our documentary, helping viewers visualize topics such as the locations mentioned.


This source provided us with photos of Vichy, France during World War Two, making it a primary source.


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Shapira, Ian. “The Nazis Were Closing in on a Spy Known as “the Limping Lady.” She Fled across Mountains on a Wooden Leg.” Washington Post,


“Spy Museum Collection Highlights.” International Spy Museum,

www.spymuseum.org/exhibition-experiences/about-the-collection/collection-highlights/. Through this source, we found three images of items used by Virginia Hall, which we used as visuals in our documentary.
This source provided us with a photo of Harry Truman which was used as a visual in our documentary.


This source provided us with a photo of the French Resistance (primary source) during WWII.


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“Virginia Hall, the “Limping Lady of the OSS,” Receives the Distinguished Service Cross, the Nation’s Second Highest Award for Valor in Combat. She Was the Only Civilian Woman to Receive the Award during World War II. Photo by Rudi Williams.” www.defense.gov, www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2001088184/. Accessed 12 May 2023. This source allowed us to find even more photos of Virginia Hall.


Secondary Sources:


Myre, Greg. “A Woman of No Importance” Finally Gets Her Due.” National Public Radio, 18 Apr. 2019,

Purnell, Sonia. Agent Most Wanted. Penguin, 9 Aug. 2022. This book was incredibly useful in our research, providing an overview of Virginia’s achievements, as well as a large number of quotes and additional resources.


Wikipedia. 2022, en.wikipedia.org. Accessed 1 Feb. 2023. This source was used to obtain links to other, more credible sources. We also found several basic images depicting maps and Nazi swastikas on this website, helping to visually explain Hall’s movement across Europe.
Images and Audio Used:


Perry, BP. “The Polish Cryptographers Who Cracked the Enigma Code.” Sky HISTORY TV Channel, www.history.co.uk/articles/the-polish-cryptographers-who-cracked-the-enigma-code. This source was used to find photos of replicas of coding devices that are similar to those that Hall used.


Unsplash. 2022, unsplash.com/. This source provided us with background photos for our documentary. Their use was plainly for aesthetic purposes.