

Topic: the united states home front during world war ii

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Topic: The United States Home Front During World War II Essential Question:

“ How important was the home front to the United States’ victory in World War II? National Standard for United States History: Era 8, Standard 3 The origins and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the United States role on world affairs.

Instructional Objectives:

Students will be able to: 1. Explain and evaluate extensive economic and military mobilization on the home front by the United States during World War II and its impact of the success of the war effort. 2. Explain how the whole country, across all economic and social levels, was involved in a unified effort to produce the goods of war and of the common sacrifice made by every citizen through rationing, victory gardens, bond drives, etc. 3. Analyze and assess the effects of World War II on culture, family, gender roles, and technology in American society.

Background Description/Historical Significance: Although there were no military battles fought on the mainland of the United States, World War II had a profound effect on the nation as the Federal government mobilized its economic, financial, and human resources to defeat Axis aggression. This war returned the nation to economic prosperity after a decade of dismal depression, promoted the growth of big business, and enhanced a close relationship between industry and the military.

Politically, the power of the presidency and influence of the Federal government increased, and socially and economically, the war, through common sacrifice made by all, became a vehicle for improving the status of

Americans. In short, the war became a catalyst for significant economic and social change whose impact extended well-beyond its duration. For example, before the war women had traditionally played a secondary role in the job market and men had dominated the industrial job sector.

However, with millions of men being drafted or joining the military, women were needed to man the factories and supply centers producing goods for the war. (Over 400, 000 women also served in the military during World War II.) They also had traditionally faced jobdiscriminationand lower pay levels, but some of these inequities began to fade as they took on more and moreresponsibilityin factories and production centers. Posters extolling “ Rosie the Riveter” were printed, recognizing the need and importance of recruiting women for the work force.

Between 1941 and 1944, the number of women working outside the home rose by 5, 000, 000. By 1944, 72% of the female workforce were married women and their average age was over thirty-five. The war could not have been won without them. The war also began to create a more level playing field for minorities who had traditionally faced discrimination. All Americans were needed in the war effort and so black American, Hipic Americans, and Japanese Americans (where in California whole families had been sent to military detention camps), were being drafted and joining the military.

In the case of African and Japanese Americans, separate and segregated military units were created... yet, they fought on the same battlefields with their fellow citizens. Changes also occurred on the home front. Factory workers were needed in the industrial north, and a migration of black

workers to northern factories began and would continue until many years after the war had ended. What happened in the country during this time was really remarkable.

America's entry into the war had brought the Nation together, united in a common and just cause, like at no other time in its history. The sacrifice being made by families and citizens was equally and fully shared. At the same time, social change was occurring which would carry over into the post-war years and ultimately result in more equal rights for everyone. What was happening on war front was linked to the home front. The combination would result at war's end with America emerging as the world's pre-eminent economic super power.

Instructional Activities and Primary Source/Document Excerpts: The following document excerpts, photographs, and posters can be selected, read, discussed, analyzed, and assessed by students, either individually for subsequent general class discussion, in a pair-and-share format, or in small groups with a cooperative learning activity. At the discretion of the teacher, document excerpts, photographs, and posters could be grouped at designated "stations" in the classroom, and small groups of students could rotate from station to station during the instructional period.

As the groups of students examine, explain, and evaluate the pictures and texts of the following selected documents, they will begin to ascertain and assess the pivotal role that the American home front played in the Allied victory in World War II. The teacher can select (as a menu) which of the following photographs, posters, and document excerpts are most appropriate

for the instructional needs of their students on this historical topic. Following these photographs, posters, and document excerpts there is a menu of thought-provoking questions to stimulate student discussion and interaction.

As a discussion prompt for either small group or whole class discussion, the teacher can present the following adage to the students: “ If ‘ every picture tells a story,’ describe what story about the American home front in World War II is being told by the following photographs and posters. ” The photographs and posters of women and African Americans during World War II have been selected from the following websites: [www. womenshistory. about. com](http://www.womenshistory.about.com) and [www. archives. gov/research/african-americans/ww2](http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2) [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] [pic] Document “ A”: Whereas it is the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders, and Whereas there is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of considerations of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment workers’ morale and of national unity: Now, therefore, . . .

I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations . . . to

provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin. . . . All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color, or national origin. " ----- Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941 by President Franklin Roosevelt Document " B": It is the policy of the Government of the United States to encourage full participation in the National Defense program by all citizens, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders. The policy was stated in my Executive Order signed on June 25, 1941. The order instructed all parties making contracts with the Government of the United States to include in all defense contracts thereafter a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color, or national origin. Questions of race, creed, and color have no place in determining who are to man our ships.

The sole qualification for a worker in the maritime industry, as well as any other industry, should be his loyalty and his professional or technical ability and training. " ----- Letter from President Franklin Roosevelt to Mr. Joseph Curran, President of the National Maritime Union, January 14, 1942 Document " C": " I welded . . . lying on the floor while another welder spattered sparks from the ceiling and chippers like giant woodpeckers shattered our eardrums. I . . . have sat at a bench welding flat and vertical

plates. . . I did overhead welding, horizontal, flat, vertical. . . I made some good welds. . . I had a good taste of summer today, and I am convinced that it is going to take backbone for welders to stick to their jobs through the summer months.

It is harder on them than on any other of the workers---their leathers are so hot and heavy, they get more of the fumes, and their hoods become instruments of torture. There were times today when I'd have to stop in the middle of a tack and push my hood back just to get a breath of fresh air. It grows unbearably hot under the hood, my glasses fog and blur my vision, and the only thing to do is to stop. . . . Yet, the job confirmed my strong conviction. . . [that] what exhausts the woman welder is not the work, nor the heat, nor the demands upon physical strength. It is the apprehension that arises from inadequate skill and consequent lack of confidence, and this can be overcome by the right kind of training. I've mastered tacking now, so that doesn't bother me.

I know that I can do it if my machine is correctly set, and I have learned enough of the [ways] of machines to be able to set them. And so, in spite of the discomforts of climbing, heavy equipment, and heat, I enjoyed the work today because I could do it. " ----- Augusta Clawson, a female welder in a shipyard, quoted from Augusta Clawson, *Ship Diary of a Woman Welder* (New York: Penguin, 1944). Document " D": In the figure below the development of the United States labor force by gender during the war years. | Year | Total labor force (*1000) | of which Male (*1000) | of which Female (*1000) | Female share of total (%) | | 1940 | 56, 100 | 41, 940 | 14, 160 | 25. | | 1941 |

57, 720 | 43, 070 | 14, 650 | 25. 4 | | 1942 | 60, 330 | 44, 200 | 16, 120 | 26. 7
| | 1943 | 64, 780 | 45, 950 | 18, 830 | 29. 1 | | 1944 | 66, 320 | 46, 930 | 19,
390 | 29. 2 | | 1945 | 66, 210 | 46, 910 | 19, 304 | 29. | | 1946 | 60, 520 | 43,
690 | 16, 840 | 27. 8 | Source: Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of
the United States (1976), Chapter D, Labor Series D 29-41. Document “ E”: “
It is nearly five months since we were attacked at Pearl Harbor. . . . Since
then we have dispatched strong forces of our Army and Navy, several
hundred thousand of them, to bases and battlefronts thousands of miles
from home. We have stepped up our war production on a scale that is testing
our industrial power, and our engineering genius and our economic structure
to the utmost. . . . This is a tough job---and a long one. . . To build the
factories, to buy the materials, to pay the labor, to provide the
transportation, to equip and feed and house the soldiers, sailors and
marines, and to do all the thousands of things necessary in a war---all cost a
lot of money, more money than has ever been spent by any nation at any
time in the long history of the world. We are now spending, solely for war
purposes the sum of about one hundred million dollars every day in the
week. . . . All of this money has to be spent. . . if we are to produce within the
time now available the enormous quantities of weapons of war which we
need. . . . All of us are used to spending money for things that we want,
things which are not absolutely essential.

We will all have to forego that kind of spending. Because we must put every
dime and every dollar we can possibly spare out of our earnings into War
Bonds and Stamps. Because the demands of the war effort require the
rationing of goods of which there is not enough to go around. Because the

stopping of purchases of non-essentials will release thousands of workers who are needed in the war effort. . . . I know the American farmer, the American workman, and the American businessman. I know that they will gladly embrace the economy and equality of sacrifice, satisfied that it is necessary for the most vital and compelling motive in all their lives---winning through to victory. . . . As we here at home contemplate our own duties, our own responsibilities, let us think. . . . hard of the example which is being set by our fighting men. . . . They are the United States of America. That is why they fight. We too are the United States of America. That is why we must work and sacrifice. It is for them. It is for us. It is for victory. " ----- President Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Radio Chat, April 28, 1942 Document F " In late May 1940, with the fall of France imminent, [President] Roosevelt requested huge funds for the development of military and naval requirements. On December 20, 1940, he established the Office of Production Management with industrial leader William S. Knudsen as Director....

On December 29, 1940, in a fireside chat on the radio, he called for a national production effort that would make the United States the world's "arsenal of democracy". [After the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941,] at the beginning of 1942 Roosevelt announced a compulsory production program: ' Let no one say that this cannot be done, and we are committed to doing it. ' He issued a clarion call for 60, 000 planes, 45, 000 tanks, 20, 000 anti-aircraft guns, 500, 000 machine guns, and 8 million tons of merchant shipping in one year.... The entire world was amazed by the pace of American production. By 1943, the production schedule was

increased to 125, 000 planes, 75, 000 tanks, 35, 000 antiaircraft guns, and 10 million tons of merchant shipping....

During the course of the war the productive capacity of the United States gave the allied coalition more than half its armaments, 35% of those used against Nazi Germany, and 86% of those employed against Japan. While providing the United Kingdom, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, and Nationalist China with arms and loans, the United States at the same time doubled its industrial output. " Louis L. Snyder's Historical Guide to World War II Greenwood Press: Westport, Conn: Louis Snyder: 1982 Sample Thought-provoking Questions To Develop Student Group or Whole-Class Discussion: 1. If the adage, " Every picture tells a story," is applied to each of the above-listed photographs and posters, how did World War II affect the lives of women and African Americans? " 2.

How did World War II affect American family life? 3. Explain the meaning of President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, and how did this Executive Order affect African Americans? 4. To what extent did Executive Order 8802 lay the foundation for the upcoming civil rights movement in the years after World War II? 5. Describe the experiences of women who worked in factories during World War II. (Example: female welders). Why was it important for woman to work in factories during World War II? 6. How did the contributions of women on the home front contribute to the American victory in World War II? 7. How did World War II serve as a catalyst for social change in American society? Prior to discussing Question 8 provide a brief overview and background as to the role of A. Philip Randolph, the most important African

American labor leader of the time, and how he threatened to organize a March on Washington if the Defense Industries were not desegregated. 8. Explain the meaning and significance of the following quotation and slogan of A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, in 1941, in proposing a massive March on Washington: " WE LOYAL NEGRO AMERICAN CITIZENS DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK AND FIGHT FOR OUR COUNTRY. " Why did Randolph cancel the march after President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802?

Do you think that Randolph made the right decision? Explain your viewpoint. 9. How did World War II end the Great Depression and return the United States to economic prosperity? 10. Why did President Roosevelt describe the United States as an " arsenal of democracy? " Summary: The teacher can refer the students back to the " essential question" which was posed at the start of the lesson: " How important was the home front to the United States' victory in World War II? " The students are directed to respond and take a position (develop a viewpoint) on this historical issue concerning the pivotal role that the home front played in the victory of the United State in World War II.

At the teacher's discretion, the pupils' responses can be presented orally as closure to small group and/or whole-class discussion, or in written form, such as a response to an essay prompt or a journal entry into a " learning log" to bring effective closure to the lesson. Thus, as a circular approach to teaching and learning, the lesson was " opened" with a thought-provoking " essential question" as its primary learning objective at the start of the instructional

period, developed through an examination, explanation, and evaluation of primary source document excerpts through group work, cooperative learning, pair-and-share, etc. , and closed with a critical assessment through the lens of the lesson's evaluative " essential question. "

Application (" Transfer Task"): Students can compare the pivotal role and significant impact of the American home front to military victory in World War II to the role and impact of the American home front today as the as the United States fights wars againstterrorism and to promote democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Students can also compare the roles of women and African Americans in the armed services today with the roles and opportunities that were presented to them during World War II. World War II at the Memorial: [pic] 1. Study the images of sculptor Ray Kaskey's bas-relief panel that depict the following: • Lend-Lease/War Declared • News of Pearl Harbor Men and Women at Work/Aircraft Construction • Agriculture • West Coast Shipbuilding • War bond Parade 2. How does Kaskey's relief panel capture the essence of the heroism of the men and women who worked on the home front in factories and on farms to secure Allied victory? Do you think Kaskey's panels reflects what you learned in this lesson? If, so explain how. 3. Study images of the two types of ornamental wreaths used around the memorial on the fifty six pillars. The oak leaves represent American industrial strength and the wheat sheaves represent America's agricultural ability to feed the world. Why do you think Kaskey chose these particular metaphors for the home front? 4.

Examine the image of the pillars of states and territories. Notice that they are all connected by ropes. What does this tell you about the memorial's design based on what you have learned in this lesson? What does this design tell you about the nation and the American people from 1941-1945. 5. Read the memorial inscription by Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby. (marker stone on northeast side of the plaza, south face). How is what you have learned in this lesson reflected in Hobby's quote? [pic] 6. Read the memorial inscription by President Franklin Roosevelt (marker stone on northeast side of the plaza, west face). How is what you have learned in this lesson reflected in Roosevelt's quote? [pic]

Image 1: Pacific Victory Arch and State and Territory Pillars [pic] Image 2: Atlantic Victory Arch and State and Territory Pillars [pic] Image 3: Bas-relief panel " Lend-Lease/War Declared" [pic] Image 4: Bas-relief Panel " News of Pearl Harbor" [pic] Image 5: Bas-relief panel, " Men and Women at Work/Aircraft Construction" [pic] Image 6: Agriculture [pic] Image 7: Bas-relief panel " West Coast Shipbuilding" [pic] Image 8: Bas-relief panel " War Bond Parade" [pic] The Friends of the National World War II Memorial would like to thank the generous support of the AT&T Foundation, General Motors Foundation and USAA as major sponsors of our education program who helped make these lesson plans possible.