

## Part 2: World War II for the United States: On the Home Front and Frontlines, 1939-1945

### Lesson Overview

Students will explore how social, economic, and political aspects of World War II affected people of different demographics throughout the United States, both on the home front and on the front lines of the war. Through research and collaboration, students will analyze and discuss the treatment of different members of society from a sociocultural aspect and evaluate how policies, acts, and laws influenced the U.S. economy from 1939 to 1945.

### Wyoming State Social Studies Standards

- SS12.3.5: Evaluate how values and beliefs influence microeconomic and macroeconomic decisions.
- SS12.4.4: Describe the historical interactions between and among individuals, groups, and/or institutions (e.g., family, neighborhood, political, economic, religious, social, cultural, and workplace) and their impact on significant historical events.
- SS12.5.3: Analyze, interpret, and evaluate how conflict, demographics, movement, trade, transportation, communication, and technology affect humans' sense of place.
- SS12.6.3: Use digital tools to research, design, and present social studies concepts (e.g., understand how individual responsibility applies in the usage of digital media).

### Objectives

- Students will analyze and reflect on the ways social values and beliefs in the United States affected different groups of people during World War II.
- Students will identify and describe major political policies internationally and domestically and place them in the context of social and economic change in the United States.
- Students will discuss how World War II impacted all aspects of life and extended beyond military and combat actions.

## Materials

- Provided timeline/synopsis of World War II (attached to lesson plan)
- Primary and secondary sources documents (see Compilation of Sources)
- Internet access to conduct research
- Poster paper (preferably colored - for the students to choose from)
- Print-outs (on the last page)
- Scissors
- Glue/tape
- Writing utensils
- Notebook

## Classroom Activities

### Social Impact Analysis

In this activity, students will create an infographic poster, slideshow, or journal entry from the perspective of a person within their chosen demographic to present the experiences of different groups of people throughout the United States during World War II. Students will be asked to research and collaborate in partners or groups to complete this activity.

1. Begin this activity by explaining its purpose to explore how the Second World War was experienced by various groups of people within the United States and with a reviewing the significant international events noted in the provided synopsis.
  - a. Discuss with the class what “home front” and “front line” means, and explain the significance of the American home front in WWII:
    - i. Home front: the aspects of life of civilians within a country during a war.
      1. Because the mainland United States was not involved in combat during WWII, the home front became uniquely involved in the war through the economy, manufacturing, rationing, social change, etc.
    - ii. Frontline: the areas where the soldiers of a country are closest to, and often engage in combat with, their enemy.
2. This activity may be completed in partners or groups. Decide which best fits your class and assign or allow them to pick their partner/group. Walk the students through the expectations and directions for the activity as follows:
  - a. Ask students to sit with their partner/group. In each group, they will either choose or be assigned a demographic within the United States to study and

present on. For their presentation, they may create an infographic poster, a slideshow, or a video interview, where students emulate an interview to present the information they have gathered. They will choose from this list:

- i. Women
  - ii. Japanese Americans
  - iii. Jewish People
  - iv. Mexican Americans
  - v. African Americans
  - vi. Native Americans
  - vii. Enlisted male soldiers – on the front lines
  - viii. Enlisted female soldiers
  - ix. Men ineligible for service (i.e., 4F medical deferment) – on the home front
  - x. Older men and women (i.e., those who have children in the war, must rejoin the workforce, etc.)
  - xi. Factory workers
  - xii. Farmers
  - xiii. Children
3. Once the students have selected a demographic to research and present on, allow them to spend time researching the experiences of that group and policies that might have affected them. Each group must relate the experience of their chosen demographic to at least two policies, laws, and/or acts in the United States and internationally between 1939 and 1945. This time frame may also be extended to include the interwar period from 1918 to 1938, if needed. See “Resources on Experiences During WWII” in the Compilation of Resources for some credible sources to provide students with to assist their research process.

Provide them with the following (or similar) questions to guide their research and presentation. Emphasize that they must answer them within their presentation. \*If you (the educator) wish to make a rubric for this assignment, these questions may be used as criteria for completion of the assignment.

- a. What roles did this group play on the home front and/or the front lines?
- b. How was this demographic viewed by society during the war? Were they discriminated against, supported, honored, disregarded? Explain.
- c. Which U.S. and international policies/laws/acts affected the experience of the war for this demographic?
- d. Were there any social or political movements this group was involved in? If so, identify and describe them.

4. Either during their research period or at a designated time they are to be finished with research and note taking, provide/pass out any necessary supplies (such as paper, writing utensils, glue, tape, etc.).
5. Give the groups an appropriate amount of time to complete their presentations, ensuring that you or another educator is available to answer questions and provide guidance.

When all presentations are finished, ask each group to present them in front of the class. Each presentation should be 8 to 10 minutes long.

- a. Optionally, ask the students to turn in any research or group for grading in addition to the presentation.

### Political and Economic Policy Connection Game

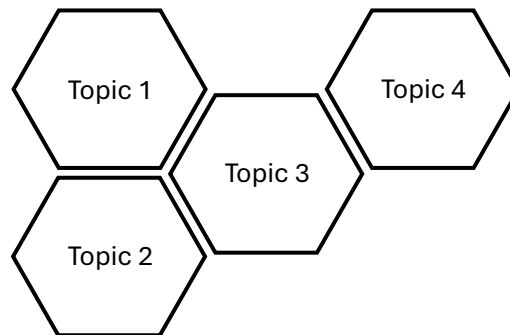
Students will research and connect various U.S. economic events, concepts, and policies from World War II, deepening their understanding of the era's interconnected history. After selecting, researching, and describing a topic, the students will come together as a class to apply their collective knowledge and collaborate to create an idea map.

1. Introduce this activity to the class after reviewing the provided synopsis of World War II. Although this activity is directed toward the economy and economic policies within the United States, it is necessary to understand the international context within which these policies were created. Explain to the students that during this activity, they will explore how the shifts in U.S. policies affected the home front during the war.
  - a. Provide the hexagonal pieces print out in this lesson. If you do not wish to cut out the pieces, ask the students to do this in preparation for the connection game at the end of this lesson.
2. Depending on class size, group students into partners or small groups. Each partner/group will select (or be assigned) one concept, event, policy, etc., relevant to the U.S. economy during WWII. Feel free to add any additional topics to the list or allow students to do the same if they know of or find one. They will be tasked with doing light research on their topic, writing a brief description of it, and relating it to other similar topics of the period. Choose from this list:
  - a. The following are examples of events, policies, acts, and laws in the U.S. during WWII:
    - i. The Great Migration (after World War I)
    - ii. Selective Training and Service Act (1940)

- iii. Executive Order 8875 and the establishment of the Office of Price Administration (1941)
  - iv. Executive Order 8802 and the establishment of the Fair Employment Practice Committee (1941)
  - v. Lend-Lease Act (1941)
  - vi. New Deal (1933-1938)
  - vii. Specifically, the creation of new jobs and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935
  - viii. Women in the military – all in one topic (See “Resources on Experiences of Americans During WWII: Women in World War II”)
    - 1. Women’s Army Corps (WAC)
    - 2. Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)
    - 3. Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)
    - 4. Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and Navy Nurse Corps (NNC)
  - ix. Smith-Connally Act, also called the War Labor Disputes Act (1943)
  - x. “No-Strike Pledge” made by the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1941
- After each partner/group has selected or been assigned a topic, ask them to research it and take notes to later write a one to two-paragraph description of it for the game. Students will conduct research together but will write their descriptions individually, although they may discuss with their group what to include and how to write it. See “Resources on Economic Policies, Laws, Events, and Concepts During WWII” in Compilation of Sources for helpful links and resources for research. Research on their topic should answer these questions (or similar), which they should be provided with before asking them to begin:
  - b. When was this concept, event, policy, act, or law established? What was its purpose? Who created it?
  - c. Who did this topic affect? Did it primarily impact a specific demographic or group, or did it impact everyone in the United States? Did its effects extend internationally?
  - d. What is its relationship to the United States economy? Was it impacted by the economy or did it impact the economy?
  - e. How did this topic influence America’s involvement in World War Two? Was the impact on the home front, front lines, or both? Explain.
  - f. What other concepts, events, policies, acts, or laws can be connected to this one? List at least two and explain the connection in one to two sentences.
- 3. Hand out index cards or paper to each student within a partner/group. Ask each student to write the name of their topic at the top of the card and follow it with their one to two-paragraph description of their topic. Included in the description should be the answers to the questions above that they used to guide their

research. Additionally, hand out one hexagon to each partner/group. Ask them to write the name and year(s) of their topic (e.g. Lend-Lease Act, 1941).

4. Once each group has their topic hexagon and written descriptions, ask them to move their desks or go to a different area of the classroom with floor space. Here, the students will lay down their hexagons and connect the sides with those of other topics, drawing connections between them and stating how they may connect. The students should already have an idea of which other topics relate to theirs after answering the guiding questions. Encourage the students to discuss how their topics relate to one another *and* how they fit in the larger context of the war. As the students are doing this, walk around to observe their connections and occasionally ask students to explain, using their descriptions, how the topics relate.
  - a. For larger class sizes, consider handing out more than one hexagon to each group to write their topic on, breaking the groups up, and dividing the class into larger groups so that there are multiple rounds of the same connection game being played at once with the same topics.
  - b. When put together, the pieces should create an idea map that looks similar to this:



5. Before the end of the class, ask the students to pause the game and clean up the pieces. Optionally, you may ask them to write a 3-4 sentence reflection in their notes explaining their understanding, feelings, and/or interpretations of the relationship between the United States economy from 1939-1945 and World War II.
6. For grading purposes, ask students to turn in their topic descriptions with their name and date at the top along with their reflection (if assigned).

## Compilation of Sources

- Resources on Experiences of Americans During WWII
  - United States Home Front

- <https://www.history.com/articles/us-home-front-during-world-war-ii>
- Women in World War II
  - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-women-world-war-ii>
  - <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/wwii-women.html>
  - <https://www.history.com/articles/american-women-in-world-war-ii>
- Mexican Americans
  - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/mexican-americans-fight-for-equality-after-world-war-ii>
  - <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/risk-takers-and-history-makers-mexican-women-world-war-ii-generation>
  - <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/role-wwii-mexican-american-native-american-soldiers-featured-netflix-s-n1247401> - This article also discusses the experience of Native Americans during the war.
- African Americans
  - Double V Campaign
    - <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-was-black-americas-double-war/>
    - <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/the-double-v-campaign-1942-1945/>
  - In the military
    - <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/07/1134756262/half-american-matthew-delmont-black-wwii>
    - <https://www.history.com/articles/black-soldiers-world-war-ii-discrimination>
- Native Americans
  - <https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/world-war-2/>
  - <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/Story/Article/2786440/native-american-fought-with-distinction-in-world-war-ii-and-korea/>
  - <https://www.uso.org/stories/2914-a-history-of-military-service-native-americans-in-the-u-s-military-yesterday-and-today>
- Japanese Americans
  - <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/japanese-relocation#background>
  - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/topics/asian-pacific-american-world-war-ii>
  - <https://www.history.com/articles/japanese-american-relocation>



- The Jewish Experience in the US
  - <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-united-states-and-the-holocaust>
  - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/topics/jewish-americans-world-war-ii>
  - [https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-was-america-so-reluctant-to-take-action-on-the-holocaust-180980779/?itm\\_source=related-content&itm\\_medium=parsely-api](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/why-was-america-so-reluctant-to-take-action-on-the-holocaust-180980779/?itm_source=related-content&itm_medium=parsely-api)
- Children
  - [https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active\\_learning/explorations/children\\_ww2/children\\_ww2\\_menu.cfm](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/children_ww2/children_ww2_menu.cfm)
- Farmers
  - <https://www.womenshistory.org/resources/general/farm>
  - <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/victory-gardens-on-the-world-war-ii-home-front.htm#:~:text=Faced%20with%20having%20to%20feed,from%20war%20stress%20and%20strain>
- Factory Workers
  - <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/2128446/during-wwii-industries-transitioned-from-peacetime-to-wartime-production/>
- Resources on Economic Policies, Laws, Events, and Concepts During WWII
  - Overview of the U.S. economy during WWII - <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/the-american-economy-during-world-war-ii/>
  - Rationing and the Office of Price Administration - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/rationing-during-wwii>
  - The Great Migration (read the “Background” section of this article) - [https://www.njstatelib.org/research\\_library/new\\_jersey\\_resources/highlights/african\\_american\\_history\\_curriculum/unit\\_9\\_world\\_war\\_i/](https://www.njstatelib.org/research_library/new_jersey_resources/highlights/african_american_history_curriculum/unit_9_world_war_i/)
  - Job creation and the Office of Price Administration - [https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3491](https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtid=2&psid=3491)
  - Lend-Lease Act - <https://www.fdrlibrary.org/lend-lease>
  - Smith-Connally Act and the “No-Strike Pledge” - <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/smith-connally-act-and-labor-battles-home-front>
  - Executive Order 8802 and the Fair Employment Practice Committee - <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/executive-order-8802#:~:text=To%20investigate%20“complaints%20of%20discrimination,banning%20segregation%20in%20the%20military.”>



## Planning a Visit to the NMMV

Although the lessons in this series can be implemented in the classroom without time-consuming or difficult preparation, they are also designed to be taught along with a visit to the National Museum of Military Vehicles, specifically the Marshall Gallery.

For this lesson (World War II for the United States: On the Home Front and Frontlines), pay special attention to these displays and/or highlight the significance of these concepts in the museum. All suggestions are made in a chronological sequence and as they appear in the museum's exhibits. This gallery is large and full of information about WWII. In the following suggestions, specific examples for emphasis will be included along with their location. All information provides an overall foundation for the completion of this lesson's activities.

1. The story of "The Filthy 13" along the reader rail in the Airborne Operations display includes the influence of Native American culture in the war effort.
2. In the "Battle of Bataan, 1941-1943: American Defeat" display, read the reader rail titled "Surrender Negotiations" as well as the "Bataan Death March" flip book next to the informational panel titled "The Philippines During WWII."
3. In the transition between the North Africa display and the "Rotunda of American Combat Vehicles," pay special attention to the series of reader rails discussing war production, manufacturing, and the role of women and African Americans on the home front. These are important concepts for both lesson activities.
  - a. Look briefly at the propaganda posters lining the wall. Encourage students to think about the circumstances under which these posters were made.
4. The entrance of "The Red Ball Express" exhibit (through the end of the "Rotunda of Military Combat Vehicles") includes several concepts and stories that could be incorporated into the lesson's activities. Read the "Black-American Drivers of the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps" reader rail to the left of "The Red Ball Express" introductory panel. When walking down this exhibit, look at the images hanging above the walkway and observe the actions and people captured in them.
5. In the "Battle of the Bulge" and "Battle of Iwo Jima" displays, read the reader rails that describe unique details, specific units, and events of these battles closely. Ask students to consider the contrast between the locations where these two battles were fought and the experiences of the soldiers serving there.
6. The entrance to the Doris Miller Annex tells the story of Doris Miller on a panel titled "U.S. Navy Cook Doris Miller Hero of Pearl Harbor." Ask students to read this story and relate it to the experiences of African Americans serving in the military and on the home front.

- a. While walking through the Doris Miller Annex, encourage students to think about the factors that made the production of this abundance of artifacts possible. This included labor, financing, resources, development, testing, etc. Relate this to the experiences of workers and economic policies that the students studied in the lesson plan's activities.
7. The "War Crimes" section of the Doris Miller Annex provides a brief overview of the European Holocaust and Asian War Crimes. Take a moment in this room to reflect on the conditions of WWII that extended beyond combat and warfare. This history is critical to developing an understanding of WWII, and it heavily affected the post-WWII period.
8. At the end of the Doris Miller Annex, pay close attention to the information, stories, and statistics in the "War Crimes" and "Resilience" rooms. Ask students to read all the panels and reader rails in these sections. They hold information that is incredibly relevant to the activities in this lesson plan.
  - a. Throughout "Resilience," note the experiences of Japanese and African Americans in combat during WWII. The informational panels and reader rails in this room are dedicated to remembering the contribution of these demographics toward the war effort.
9. While walking out of the Doris Miller Annex, through the end of the "Victory in Europe, May 1945" exhibit, ask students to observe the emotions of the people captured in pictures that are on the walls. Also observe the newspaper articles and images hanging above the walkway, and the murals of the destruction of Europe after the end of the war.
  - a. These images are designed to elicit an understanding of the relief of the Allies after the German surrender. Ask the students how different demographics within the U.S. would have viewed this event.
10. After exiting the "Victory in Europe, May 1945" exhibit, remind the students that although the war was over in the European Theater, the Imperial Japanese were still being fought by the Allied Powers in the Pacific Theater.
  - a. Along the walkway toward the end of the Marshall Gallery, read the "Battle of Okinawa," "Operation Downfall," and "A New Weapon Against Japan." Be mindful when reading these excerpts of the people these events and operations affected.

**Directions:** Print out as many pages as necessary for each event, concept, policy, act, and law discussed to have its own hexagon. Many will be listed in the lesson plan, but students may identify more that they wish to explore. Hexagons will be cut out of the page for use in the game.

