HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Second World War, which started with Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, was the largest and most lethal war in global history. Estimates for military and civilian deaths during the war range from 72 to 80 million people. More than 30 countries, including the United States who entered the war in 1941, fought in the conflict. When the war ended with the surrender of the Japanese on September 2, 1945, the world had been irrevocably changed. The atrocities committed by Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich against European Jews shocked the world; numerous nations such as France and Germany faced the daunting task of rebuilding in the wake of immense loss of life and property; and the use of the atomic bomb by the Americans against the Japanese heralded the coming of the Atomic Age.

Much like the rest of the world, America emerged a changed nation after WWII. The number of women in the workforce and armed forces grew exponentially during the war, with 310,000 women employed in the aviation industry alone. Charged with fighting fascism abroad, African Americans veterans returned to a segregated nation where they were denied basic citizen rights. This launched the Double V Campaign, a movement to win democracy at home and abroad. The United States birthrate exploded in 1945 as veterans returned home. The G.I. Bill, passed in 1944, built hospitals and provided low-interest mortgages and tuition stipends for veterans of WWII. Finally, the deteriorating relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, combined with the unleashing of the atomic bomb, resulted in the beginning of the Cold War. No longer would the United States promote an isolationist strategy, instead emerging a global power with the ending of WWII.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:
- Today in History—October 23 “The Lend-Lease Act”
- A Guide to World War II Materials
- American Treasures of the Library of Congress, WWII
- Today in History—December “Air Raid of Pearl Harbor”
- After the Day of Infamy: "Man-on-the-Street" Interviews Following the Attack on Pearl Harbor

ALSO SEE:
- Atomic Appalachia: the History of Oak Ridge, Tennessee—Albert Gore Research Center
- World War II—History Channel
- The Double V Campaign—MTSU TPS
SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
This primary source set is organized thematically by page and reflect a small sample of the materials available from the Library of Congress’s collections for WWII. The sources here reflect an American-centric view of the war. Educators may choose to have students focus on a single theme for deeper exploration or may use the entire set for a more comprehensive study of the war.
If you choose to use the entire set, have students analyze the sources to determine if each represents a home front or battle front issue. As they determine which category to place each source, have them analyze the source using the E-S-P analysis worksheet. Have the class create a gallery of the sources and their analysis notes. Give students time for a gallery walk to review all sources and their classmates notes. Then have students reflect on the larger impact of WWII on the nation and the world.

“Quarantine” Speech Recalled.
The key to the Roosevelt policies in this respect is in the Chicago “quarantine” speech of October, 1937. Toward the goal set up in this address the President has proceeded as far as the state of public opinion at any given time would let him go. He was able to procure, for example, the repeal of the arms embargo, so that munitions could be sold to the allies, but he was unable to win the full measure of the discretionary powers that he felt the executive should have.
Since that time, the apparent growth of isolationist sentiment in the country, joined with the imminence of the presidential election, has caused him to move with extreme caution, as in the matter of the Finnish loan. But never has there been any weakening of the President’s conviction that this country, in its own selfish interest, should go the limit—short of war—to check the spread of the dictatorships.

The United Nations flag, an unofficial design by Brooks B. Harding, with four bars symbolizing the Four Freedoms beside the Stars and Stripes [1943]

Lend Lease in Action: Vegetables for British Children [1941]

Isn’t this what we really want? [1939]

“Quarantine Speech Recalled,” The Evening Star [1940]
Staff Sergeant John Horn, Letter to Max and Elizabeth
[10/30/1945] [1945]

Wall of Remembrance at the U.S. National Holocaust Museum,

[Five starving men in German concentration camp at time of liberation by U.S. Army] [1945]
"Roosevelt Working on Plans for Setup If War Breaks Out,” The Evening Star [1939]

"1938–A Year”, The Evening Star [1939]

83 Christmas packages for French war prisoners [1941]

"Fight on Britain--Fight On.” [1941]

"Pearl Harbor naval base and U.S.S. Shaw ablaze after the Japanese attack" [1941]
The Second Battalion, Twenty-Seventh Marines land on Iwo Jima / B. Campbell, Defense Dept. photo (Marine Corps), [1945]

“Tightening the Ring About Nippon,” The Wilmington morning star [1945]

“Losses by Japanese Fleet in Coral Sea and Midway Battles Alter Pacific Picture,” Evening Star [1942]

“D Day Plus 365 And the War Goes On!” The Wilmington morning star [1945]

[June 6, 1944], HQ Twelfth Army Group situation map. [1944]
New Britain, Connecticut. Women welders at the Landers, Frary, and Clark plant [1943]

The more women at work the sooner we win! [1943]

Urgent - volunteers needed at once! [1941]

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, Third Platoon, Company 1, Fort Des Moines, Iowa [1942]

High school Victory Corps, Members of the Victory Corps of Roosevelt High School [1942]
Los Angeles, California. A store in Little Tokyo [1942]

Airmen with Lena Horne and Noel Parrish

The Return of the Soldier, 1946 [1946]

Off to war [1942]

Los Angeles, California [1942]
CITATIONS: The Underground Railroad

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is 10/18/2018.


Palmer, Alfred T. “High school Victory Corps. Members of the Victory Corps of Roosevelt High School, Los Angeles, California, have an opportunity to learn first aid. Here, one of the groups practice on a classmate.” Photograph. 1942. From Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Division. http://www.loc.gov/item/2017695303/ 


