

Section IV: World War II



Title: Mobilizing Children

Grade Level: Middle School

Objectives: Analyze objects and images to determine their effect on society during World War II.

National History Standards:

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension; Era 8:3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.

Time: 45 minutes

Background:

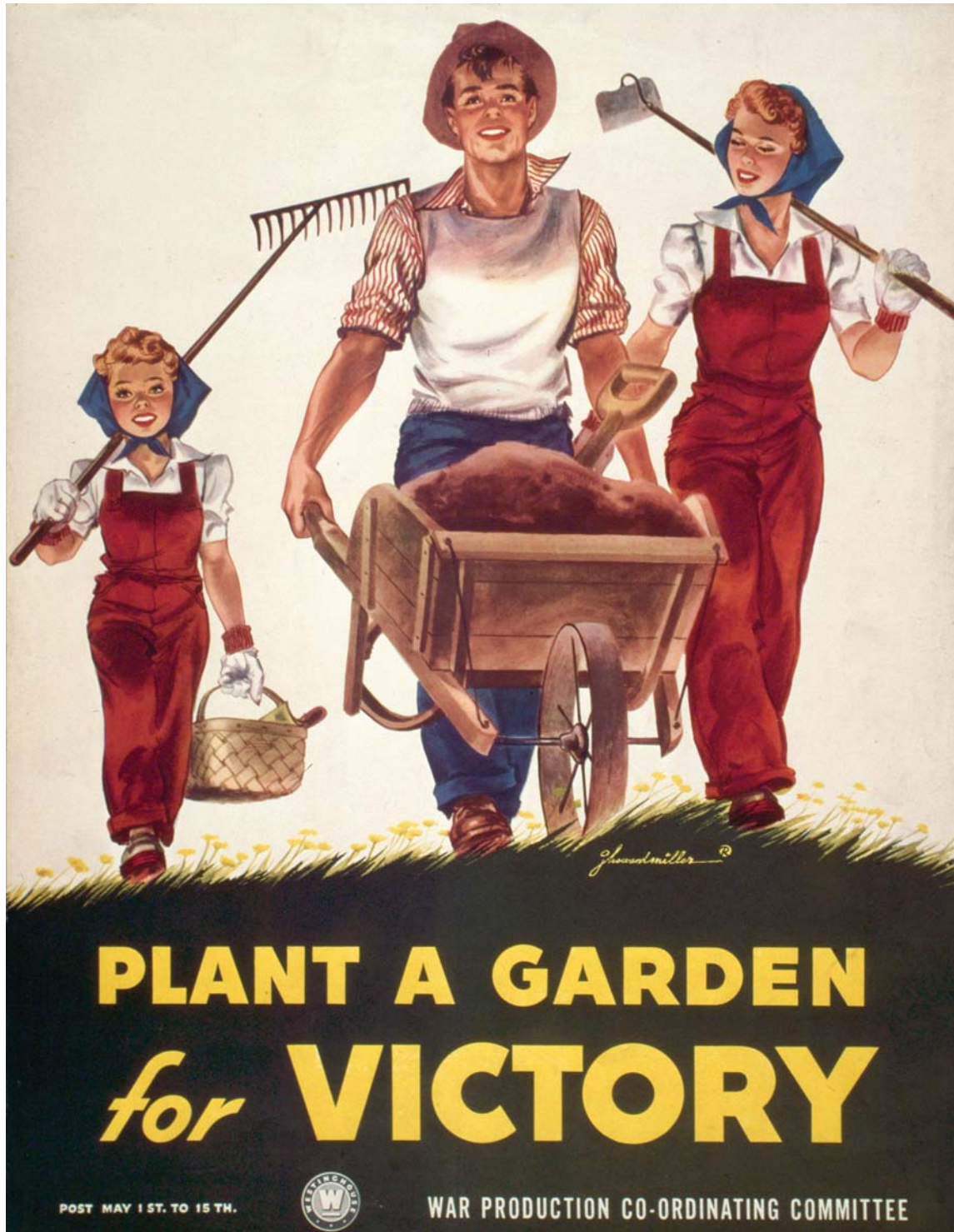
“We are all in it—all the way,” President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Americans during a radio broadcast on December 9, 1941. “Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history.” The United States had just joined the Allies in a global war against Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and imperial Japan that had been raging for two years. Sixteen million Americans donned uniforms. The millions more who stayed home were a vast civilian army, mobilized by the government to finance the war effort, conserve natural resources, and produce a continuous flow of war matériel.

The war permeated nearly all aspects of everyday life in America. As natural resources—even agricultural output—were diverted to support war production and the troops, Americans endured shortages and rationing. Newspapers, radio broadcasts, and newsreels tracked the war’s progress. Movie theaters were filled with patriotism-building, morale-boosting movies that pitted heroic Americans against villainous Nazis and fanatical Japanese, and depicted a home front united for victory. And thousands of government-produced posters directed a massive effort to transform the nation into an efficient war machine.

Even for children, the reality of a nation at war could not be avoided. Many of their favorite characters from the funny pages and comic books went off to fight. Superman—classified 4-F when his X-ray vision skewed a preinduction eye test—encouraged them to use their pennies for victory bonds. Toys and games enabled them to play make-believe combat, albeit with wooden guns and paper soldiers—all metal was needed for war production. And government campaigns encouraged them to assist in scrap drives or to help in their family’s victory gardens.

“Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history.”

—President Franklin Roosevelt



Victory garden poster *National Museum of American History*

- Materials:**
- [Online Video—World War II Cartoons](http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/video/Lesson9.aspx)
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/resources/video/Lesson9.aspx>
 - Child in Junior Bombardier uniform
 - Superman Junior Defense League of America application
 - America at War trading cards
 - Victory garden poster

Lesson:

Introduce the lesson using the quote from President Roosevelt, “We are all in it—all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history.” Have a class discussion about what Roosevelt meant by this. Discuss how and why, during World War II, the government launched a campaign to unite Americans behind the war effort. Watch the video of Disney war cartoons, and ask the students what the intention of these cartoons could have been.

Next, pass out the images accompanying this lesson. Have students—on their own or in groups—answer the following questions about the images: What does this image show? What was its purpose? Who was the intended audience? What effect might it have had on American society during World War II? Do you think this image is a form of propaganda? Why?

Bring the class together for a discussion of the objects and images they examined. What were some characteristics of this social mobilization campaign? Many underage boys ran away to join the military and lied about their age. Might this have been partly a result of the materials targeted at kids? Finally, have students share with the rest of the class the results of their image analysis.

Follow-up Activity:

Have students search for images of Topps’ 1991 Operation Desert Storm trading cards. Point out the similarities and differences between the wartime images in World War II and those from this more recent conflict. For homework, have the students answer the same questions about the Desert Storm images. Also, ask them to write a paper comparing the propaganda aimed at children during World War II to the trading cards during Desert Storm. What were the similarities? What were the differences? What about today? Ask students to consider their own reactions to America’s current military actions.



America at War trading cards National Museum of American History

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STOP!
Be Sure To
Save Your
Membership
Card and
Number

Lucky
Number
Prizes
Coming
Fun!
Surprises!

Do not write here . . . This part will be signed and returned to you.

Has made his National Defense Pledges and is now a Certified Member of the Superman Junior Defense League, and entitled to wear his Membership Badge.

This Certifies That

SUPERMAN JUNIOR DEFENSE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

APPLICATION

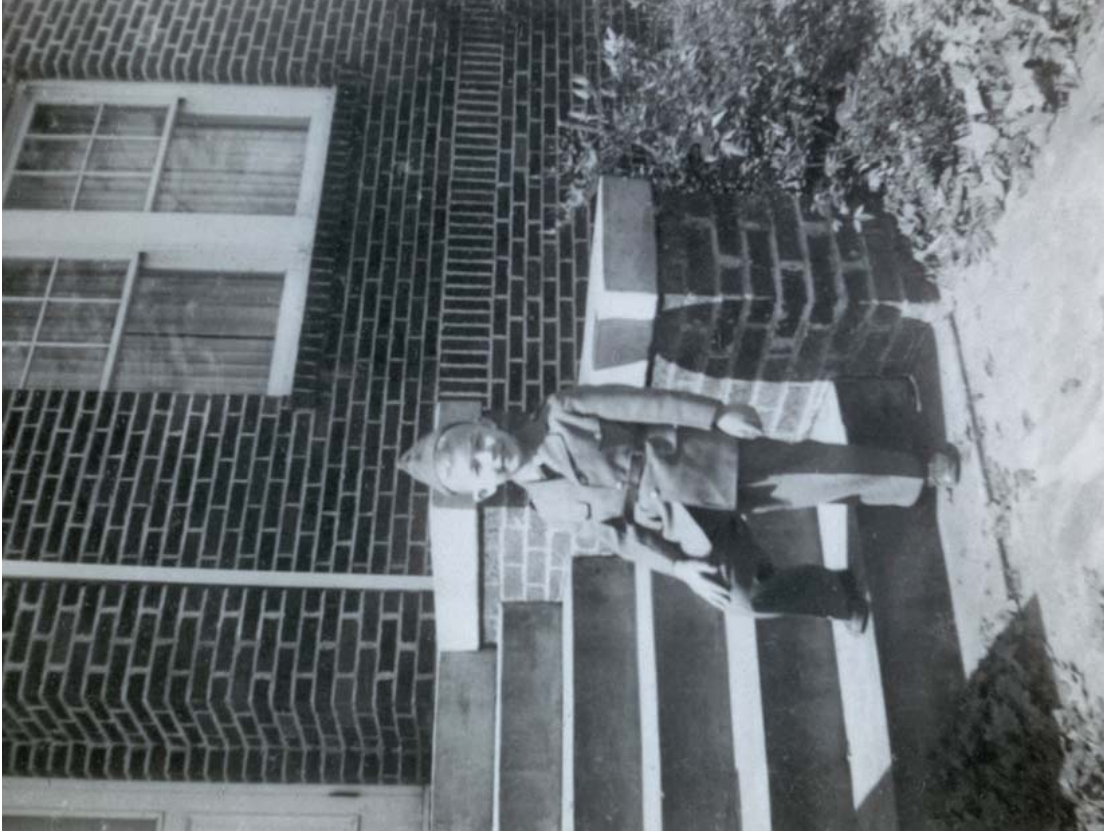
My name is: #

Address: City

Grocer's name: Birthday

Address: #

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Leland Jackson, about 1945, dressed as a junior bombardier National Museum of American History



Superman Junior Defense League of America application National Museum of American History

Bibliography

General

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Section I: War of Independence

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Section III: Civil War

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Section IV: World War II

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Section V: Cold War/Vietnam

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The Price of Freedom: Americans at War Teacher's Manual DVD Menu

***Americans at War*, produced by The History Channel**

An introduction to the themes of the exhibition

War of Independence

First-Person Accounts, produced by Pyramid Studios:

- Lydia Minturn Post, Long Island housewife, 1776
- James Collins, teenage soldier, no date
- Doonyontat, Wyandot chief, 1779
- Elijah Churchill, recipient of the first Purple Heart, 1783

Mexican War

First-Person Accounts, produced by Pyramid Studios:

- José María Tornel y Mendivil, Mexican secretary of war, 1837
- George Ballentine, English volunteer for the United States, 1853
- Juan Bautista Vigil y Alarid, acting governor of New Mexico, 1846
- Ulysses S. Grant, American soldier, 1885

Civil War

First-Person Accounts, produced by Pyramid Studios:

- Louis Myers, Third West Virginia Infantry, 1862
- William G. Christie, Minnesota soldier, 1863
- Eugenia Phillips, spy for the South in Washington D.C., 1861
- Spottswood Rice, African American Union soldier, 1864

World War I

World War I Overview, produced by The History Channel

World War II

World War II Cartoons, produced by The History Channel

**World War II Overviews in the Newsreel format,
produced by The History Channel**

- From World War I to World War II
- The North Atlantic and North African Theater
- The European Theater
- The Pacific Theater

The USO in World War II, produced by The History Channel

First-Person Accounts, produced by Pyramid Studios:

- George Hynes, U.S. Army, a last letter home, 1942
- Robert Morris, U.S. Coast Guard, fighting in Italy, 1943
- Robert Sherrod, journalist, the beach at Tarawa, 1943
- Ann Darr, Women Airforce Service Pilots, 1997
- Daniel Inouye, Medal of Honor recipient, 2000

Vietnam

**Excerpt from *Huey Helicopter—Air Armada*, The History Channel
documentary, 2002**

First-Person Accounts, produced by Arrowhead Film & Video:

- Hal Moore, commander of a Seventh Cavalry Regiment
battalion, 2003
- Fred Castleberry, veteran of the Twenty-fifth Infantry Division, 2002
- Clarence Sasser, recipient of the Medal of Honor, 2004,
(produced by Pyramid Studios)



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