New Hands, New Jobs

Wartime work in Alabama shipyards

SS24.5.10c "Explain how women and Black Alabamians sought and received new employment opportunities during World War II that were not previously available."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline why the shipyard needed more workers. Circle ways women and Black Alabamians sought or gained jobs, and number two barriers that remained.

Who Could Build the Ships?

1 Before World War II, many Alabama shipyard jobs went to white men. Women and Black Alabamians faced rules and customs that kept them out of many better-paying positions. Then the United States needed ships to carry troops and supplies. At the Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company in Mobile, orders increased fast. The yard needed more workers, so people who had been shut out looked for a way in.

2 Women applied for jobs at the Mobile yard and learned tasks they had rarely been hired to do before the war. Some worked as welders, joining pieces of metal for ships. Wartime demand made employers willing to hire them, and training helped them qualify. Their pay helped support families, but many people still believed shipbuilding was men's work. Women had to prove they belonged there.

3 Black Alabamians also sought shipyard work and training. Black workers and their supporters pushed defense employers to hire more fairly. In 1941, a federal order banned racial discrimination in defense hiring. The Mobile yard hired Black workers, and some gained skilled jobs that had long been denied to them. Yet unfair treatment and separate work areas remained. Black women could face barriers based on both race and sex.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the need for ships open jobs that had earlier been closed to many women and Black Alabamians?

2. How did women seek and qualify for new shipyard work?

3. What did Black workers and their supporters do to seek more job opportunities, and what changed?

4. Why did gaining shipyard jobs not end every barrier? Give one example for women and one for Black workers.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 4- to 5-sentence museum label for two imagined Mobile shipyard work badges, one for a woman and one for a Black Alabamian. Explain why jobs opened, how each worker could seek and gain one, and a barrier that remained.

ANSWER KEY

New Hands, New Jobs

GRADE 5 · SS24.5.10c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline why the shipyard needed more workers. Circle ways women and Black Alabamians sought or gained jobs, and number two barriers that remained. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the need for ships open jobs that had earlier been closed to many women and Black Alabamians?	**Ship orders increased, so the Mobile yard needed more workers and hired people who had previously been shut out.**
2	How did women seek and qualify for new shipyard work?	**Women applied for jobs and learned tasks, including welding, that they had rarely been hired to do before the war.**
3	What did Black workers and their supporters do to seek more job opportunities, and what changed?	**They pushed defense employers to hire more fairly. A federal order banned racial discrimination in defense hiring, and the Mobile yard hired Black workers, including some for skilled jobs.**
4	Why did gaining shipyard jobs not end every barrier? Give one example for women and one for Black workers.	**Women still faced the belief that shipbuilding was men's work. Black workers still faced unfair treatment and separate work areas.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

These badges represent two workers who helped build ships in Mobile during World War II. As ship orders grew, a woman applied for work, learned to weld, and was hired for a job women had rarely held before. A Black Alabamian sought training and a skilled job after workers pushed for fair hiring and a federal order banned racial discrimination in defense hiring. The woman still faced people who thought shipbuilding was men's work. The Black worker could still face unfair treatment and separate work areas.

Accept answers that explain a link between wartime demand and new hiring, as well as a specific way workers sought access. Students should not suggest that the new jobs ended discrimination.