War Changes Cities

Trace how wartime industry reshaped Alabama communities.

SS24.AS.23 "Describe the impact of World War I and World War II on industrialization and urbanization in Alabama."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing how war increased industrial production, and circle two details showing how that production changed Alabama cities.

From War Orders to City Streets

1 In 1917, war orders reached Alabama's mills and docks. The Birmingham district already mined coal and iron ore and made steel. World War I increased demand for metal used in rails, ships, and military supplies, so factories needed more workers. Shipbuilding also expanded in Mobile as the nation built vessels to carry troops and goods. People left farms and smaller communities for these industrial jobs. More paychecks flowed through growing cities, but the rush for workers also strained housing and services. The war did not create Alabama's industries from nothing; it sped up growth in places with factories and ports.

2 During World War II, federal contracts again pushed Alabama's industrial production upward. Birmingham mills supplied steel, while Mobile shipyards built and repaired ships for the war effort. The Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company hired thousands of workers in Mobile. War plants also made ammunition and other military supplies elsewhere in the state. Many people moved from rural communities to industrial cities, and women entered industrial jobs in greater numbers. Black workers sought these jobs too, but discrimination limited their opportunities. As city populations swelled, families competed for homes, and crowded streets tested local services.

3 The two wars did not leave the same-sized mark. World War I accelerated existing industries, but World War II mobilized factories and shipyards on a much larger scale. When fighting ended, wartime orders fell, so not every new job lasted. Still, roads, workplaces, and communities built around wartime employment helped reshape Alabama's urban economy. Movement from farms to cities continued as farm machines reduced the need for labor. Cities gained workers and businesses, yet unequal access to jobs and housing shaped who benefited. Alabama's wartime story is both an industrial story and a story of people changing where they lived.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did World War I change industrial work in Birmingham and Mobile?

2. How did World War II affect Alabama's industrial production compared with World War I?

3. How did wartime industrial jobs change where people lived in Alabama, and what problem did growing cities face?

4. What happened to wartime industrial jobs after the fighting ended, and how did the wars still affect Alabama's cities?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence recommendation to an Alabama city council planning for a new defense plant. Use evidence from both wars to predict changes in industry and population, recommend one way to handle a likely problem, and explain who might not share equally in the new jobs.

ANSWER KEY

War Changes Cities

HIGH SCHOOL · SS24.AS.23

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing how war increased industrial production, and circle two details showing how that production changed Alabama cities. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did World War I change industrial work in Birmingham and Mobile?	**Demand for metal increased work in Birmingham's mills, while shipbuilding expanded in Mobile. Both industries needed more workers.**
2	How did World War II affect Alabama's industrial production compared with World War I?	**Both wars increased production, but World War II mobilized Alabama's factories and shipyards on a much larger scale.**
3	How did wartime industrial jobs change where people lived in Alabama, and what problem did growing cities face?	**People moved from farms and smaller communities to industrial cities for jobs. The growth strained housing and city services.**
4	What happened to wartime industrial jobs after the fighting ended, and how did the wars still affect Alabama's cities?	**Wartime orders fell, so some jobs ended. Workplaces and communities built around those jobs helped reshape cities, where migration from farms continued.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Past wars show that a new defense plant could bring more production and more industrial jobs to our city. During World War I, metal orders expanded Birmingham factories, and during World War II, ship contracts drew thousands of workers to Mobile. New jobs could bring people from rural communities and increase demand for housing and city services. The council should fund more housing before the plant hires widely, rather than waiting for neighborhoods to become crowded. It should also require fair hiring, since Black workers faced discrimination during World War II.

Accept other passage-supported examples of wartime production and migration. For the recommendation, look for evidence from both wars, a plausible city response, and recognition that benefits were unequal.