Homefront Choices

How wartime policies changed daily life and individual rights

9-12.US2.6 "Determine the impact of government mobilization programs, restrictions on civil liberties, and propaganda on the American Homefront."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline government actions or messages, circle their effects on people, and label each underlined example M for mobilization, C for civil liberties, or P for propaganda.

War Comes Home

1 In 1943, a family in Detroit might have saved bacon grease in a tin and carried ration books to the grocery store. During World War II, the federal government limited purchases of scarce goods such as gasoline, sugar, and meat. Rationing aimed to reserve supplies for soldiers and share what remained among civilians. The government also sold war bonds, asking households to lend money to pay for the war. Factories shifted from making cars to making tanks and planes, while government contracts paid for production. These programs drew millions into war work, including women, but families faced shortages and long lines.

2 Not everyone experienced wartime government power in the same way. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in 1942. Military officials used it to force about 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry from their homes on the West Coast; roughly two-thirds were U.S. citizens. Families had to leave jobs, businesses, and property behind, often with little time to prepare. They were held in camps surrounded by fences and guarded by soldiers, without individual hearings to determine whether they posed a threat. Wartime fear and racism helped make this loss of civil liberties possible.

3 On a city bus, a passenger might have seen a government poster urging people to save fuel by sharing rides. The Office of War Information coordinated posters, films, and radio messages to build support for the war. Some messages linked everyday choices, such as conserving fuel, to the needs of troops, making sacrifice seem like a shared duty. Some government war posters used racist stereotypes of Japanese enemies. Such images could deepen prejudice against Japanese Americans, even though ancestry did not make someone disloyal. Propaganda could unite neighbors around common goals while also shaping whom they feared or excluded.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did rationing affect both military supplies and civilians' daily lives?

2. How did government contracts change factory work and employment on the homefront?

3. What impact did the use of Executive Order 9066 have on people of Japanese ancestry and their civil liberties?

4. How could government wartime messages both build support for the war and harm people at home?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising a town council in 1943. Write one paragraph proposing a new local effort to support the war, predicting one benefit and one cost, and explaining how its public message would protect a civil liberty rather than spread prejudice.

ANSWER KEY

Homefront Choices

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.US2.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline government actions or messages, circle their effects on people, and label each underlined example M for mobilization, C for civil liberties, or P for propaganda. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did rationing affect both military supplies and civilians' daily lives?	**It reserved scarce goods for soldiers and shared remaining supplies among civilians, who faced limits on purchases and sometimes long lines.**
2	How did government contracts change factory work and employment on the homefront?	**Contracts paid factories to produce war goods such as tanks and planes instead of cars. War work drew in millions of workers, including women.**
3	What impact did the use of Executive Order 9066 have on people of Japanese ancestry and their civil liberties?	**Military officials forced about 120,000 people from their West Coast homes. They lost access to jobs, businesses, and property and were held in guarded camps without individual hearings about whether they posed a threat.**
4	How could government wartime messages both build support for the war and harm people at home?	**Messages about conserving fuel linked everyday sacrifices to troops' needs and encouraged shared effort. Posters using racist stereotypes could deepen prejudice against Japanese Americans.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend a voluntary repair drive at the town library. Residents could bring worn coats and tools, and volunteers could fix them so households buy fewer new goods while factories focus on wartime production. The drive would save materials, but volunteers would give up time they could use elsewhere. No one should be forced to join or questioned about loyalty because of their ancestry. Our posters would say, "Repair what you can, share what you know." They would show neighbors working together rather than blaming a group for shortages or the war.

Accept historically plausible proposals that identify a specific homefront benefit and cost. The response should explain how its message avoids prejudice and protects a clearly identified liberty.