War Comes Home

How World War II changed daily life and work

USH.C.5.1.G "Describe the war's impact on the home front (e.g., rationing, the Bracero program, bond drives, conversion of factories for wartime, federal regulation of production and labor..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline three changes to daily life or work. Number each change, then circle the wartime need it helped meet.

A Town on the Home Front

(1) By 1943, a family shopping for dinner could not buy as much meat or gasoline as its money allowed. Federal ration books limited purchases so the military and civilians could share scarce supplies. Families also saved cooking fat for explosives and planted victory gardens. Bond drives urged people to lend money to the government for war expenses, with repayment promised later. These choices made the war visible at grocery counters and in household budgets. Yet access to goods was unequal: people who drove long distances to work felt gasoline limits differently from neighbors who could walk.

(2) Factories changed as quickly as kitchens. An automobile plant that once made cars could turn out aircraft engines instead. Federal agencies set production priorities, allocated scarce materials, and helped settle labor disputes to keep supplies moving. With many men in uniform, women entered industrial jobs in large numbers, while Black workers sought defense jobs despite discrimination in hiring and promotion. To ease farm labor shortages, the United States and Mexico began the Bracero program in 1942, bringing Mexican men on temporary contracts to work mainly on farms. Their labor supported food production, but many faced poor housing and unfair treatment.

(3) War also reshaped communities far from factories. The United States held captured enemy soldiers in prisoner of war camps, including camps where prisoners did farm work when labor was scarce. Meanwhile, some Americans of German or Italian descent faced suspicion because of their family backgrounds. The government detained some German and Italian nationals, including some long-term residents, and restricted certain immigrants' movement and property; these measures did not apply to everyone with those ancestries. A town might benefit from extra workers while another neighbor faced scrutiny. Home-front mobilization expanded production, but it also tested who received trust, opportunity, and fair treatment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did rationing and bond drives ask households to support the war in different ways?

2. How did factory conversion and federal regulation work together to meet wartime needs?

3. How did labor shortages change who worked in factories and on farms? Include one barrier workers faced.

4. How did prisoner of war camps and suspicion of people of German or Italian descent affect communities in different ways?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence museum label explaining how at least one household change and one workplace change were connected to wartime needs. Include an unequal impact on one group, and use details from the passage in your own words.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.5.1.G

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline three changes to daily life or work. Number each change, then circle the wartime need it helped meet. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did rationing and bond drives ask households to support the war in different ways?	**Rationing limited purchases to share scarce supplies with the military. Bond drives asked households to lend the government money for war expenses.**
2	How did factory conversion and federal regulation work together to meet wartime needs?	**Factories switched from civilian goods to war supplies, while federal agencies directed materials and production priorities to keep those supplies moving.**
3	How did labor shortages change who worked in factories and on farms? Include one barrier workers faced.	**More women entered industrial jobs, and the Bracero program brought Mexican men to work mainly on farms. Black defense workers faced discrimination, and many Bracero workers faced poor housing or unfair treatment.**
4	How did prisoner of war camps and suspicion of people of German or Italian descent affect communities in different ways?	**Some prisoners of war supplied farm labor. Some people of German or Italian descent faced suspicion, and some German and Italian nationals were detained or restricted.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1944, war reached both the supper table and the factory gate. Ration books limited what families could purchase so soldiers and civilians could share scarce supplies. At the same time, automobile plants switched to making aircraft engines, and federal agencies directed materials toward urgent production. Women gained more chances to earn industrial wages, yet Black workers still met discrimination when seeking defense jobs or promotions. These changes show how a community could support the war while its residents experienced wartime demands very differently.

Accept other passage-supported examples of household and workplace changes. The museum label should connect each change to a wartime need and identify a specific unequal impact.