

World War II: On the Home Front

While many Americans were fighting overseas during World War II, their wives, children, parents, sisters or brothers remained at home. The activities in this lesson are designed to engage students with primary sources and help them to better understand the impact that World War II had on those living on the home front. This lesson is designed for high school students but is flexible enough that it can be modified with alternate readings and activities for middle school students. All readings in this lesson are available in EBSCO's History Reference Source.

Unit Objectives

1. Students will recognize the impact that World War II had on Americans at home and the sacrifices they made to support the war effort.
2. Students will examine the role of civilians, including women and children, during times of war.
3. Students will understand how the rationing of food and supplies could affect their own lives.

Curriculum Standards

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1** - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2** - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.9** - Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.4** - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.8** - Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.9-10.9** - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Essential Questions

1. How did families at home support the war effort?
2. Why was rationing so important during WWII?
3. There were benefits to rationing. With less gasoline and rubber, traffic deaths dropped sharply. Can you think of other ways in which rationing might have benefitted Americans?
4. How would you change your eating habits if your foods were rationed tomorrow as in 1943?

Readings

Musto, R. J. "Struggle, Strife And Sacrifice On The Home Front. (Cover Story)." *History Magazine* 10.6 (2009): 12-15. *History Reference Source*. Web. (AN 43825289)

Ossian, Lisa L. "Grenades In Toyland." *World War II* 26.3 (2011): 62-67. *History Reference Source*. Web. (AN 64442843)

Studebaker, John W. "30,000,000 SOLDIERS For Our New Third Front." *Saturday Evening Post* 215.13 (1942): 15. *History Reference Source*. Web. (AN 18992583)

Procedure

This suggested procedure can be modified as the teacher sees fit.

Day 1

1. Assign readings to students 2-3 days before the class lesson, or have students complete one of the readings during class time on the first day of the lesson. The remaining two readings can be assigned for homework.
2. After completing the readings, have students answer the following questions in complete sentences (individually or in small groups).
 - Which goods were rationed? List as many items as you can.
 - Identify two tactics the government used to urge Americans to conserve gasoline.
 - What were Victory Gardens?
 - What did the federal government do to help reduce the nation's debt? How did movie star Lana Turner help this campaign?
 - How did children support the war effort?
 - How did World War II affect the manufacturing of children's toys?
 - How did World War II influence clothing fashions?

Day 2

1. Review readings and comprehension questions.
2. Distribute Handout 1 (see back of packet for handouts)
 - Talk about the items on the list of rationed goods
 - Look at the historical photos of war ration books and people using them. Explain that there were **four war ration books** issued during WWII, each containing stamps that were valid on specific goods during specific times. An image gallery with additional images of war ration books can be found here: <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/take-a-closer-look/ration-books.html>
3. Homework: Complete the Meal & Snacks Log (Handout 2)

Day 3

1. Working in small groups, use library resources and/or the internet to find 3-5 images of advertisements from World War II that encourage citizens to conserve fuel, food or other supplies. How does each image influence the consumer? Consider both the images, words or slogans used.
2. Present your findings to the class.

Extension Activities

1. **Technology:** Assign students to create a poster, infographic or other visual representation showing the economic, social and political benefits of rationing using a tool such as Canva or Piktochart. This can be an individual or group activity.
2. **Art:** Have the students design a flyer in the style of the WWII rationing flyers. Ask them to include persuasive wording and visuals to boost the morale of citizens being asked to ration. Include one or more specific items to be rationed (based on your research) and emphasize how those items are needed for the war effort.
3. **Math:** Provide students a mock war ration book with stamps worth a certain number of points. Assign point values to food items and ask students to determine a grocery shopping list that makes the most of the points allotted.
4. **Interviewing/Writing/Oral Presentation:** Have students interview grandparents or great-grandparents about their experiences on the home front during World War II and then present what they learned to the class.
5. **Writing:** Write a five-paragraph essay answering the following question: *Why was rationing so important during World War II?* Be sure to address the ways in which it helped both soldiers on the war front and civilians on the home front. Your essay should contain an introduction that states your thesis, three body paragraphs with clear topic sentences and supporting evidence, and a conclusion that ties your ideas together and leaves an impression that stays with your readers after they've finished reading your essay.
6. **Role Play:** Select students in the class to assume the roles of a child, homemaker, factory worker, or wounded soldier on leave. Ask remaining students to interview them about their experiences in a panel discussion format.

Assessment

Formative Assessments

- Evaluate student participation in class discussion.
- Evaluate individuals taking part in group work.

Sample Summative Assessments

- Infographic – Review infographic and/or student presentation of the infographic. Visuals accurately reflect the economic, social and political benefits of rationing.
- Essay – Look for a clear thesis, effective development of ideas, use of relevant supportive evidence, and proper structure, spelling and grammar.

Additional Resources for Educators

“Enough to Go Around.” America in WWII. Web. <http://www.americainwwii.com/articles/enough-to-go-around/>

“Primary Sources: Ration Books.” *National WWII Museum of New Orleans*. Web.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/take-closer-look-ration-books>

Handout 1: Rationed Goods in the USA During World War II

Name: _____ Date: _____

A wide variety of commodities were rationed in the United States during World War II. Rationing ended when supplies were sufficient to meet consumer demand. Rationed items included:

Tires	Rubber	Coffee
Cars	Shoes	Processed Foods (canned soups, canned fruit, canned vegetables, baby food)
Bicycles	Typewriters	Meats, canned fish
Gasoline	Scrap metal (iron, steel, copper and tin)	Milk, eggs, cheese & fats (butter, lard, etc.)
Fuel oil & kerosene	Scrap Paper	Chocolate
Solid Fuels (wood, charcoal, coal, etc.)	Silk stockings (nylons)	
Stoves	Sugar	

The instructions inside ration booklets read as follows:

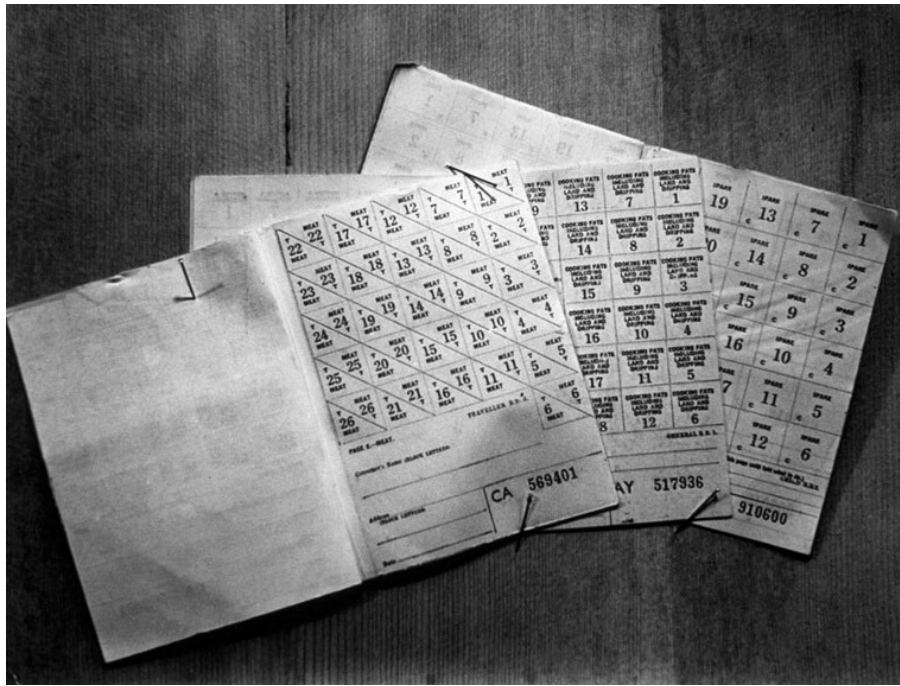
1. This book is valuable. Don't lose it.
2. Each stamp authorizes you to purchase rationed goods in the quantities and at the times designated by the Office of Price Administration. Without the stamps you will be unable to purchase these goods.
3. Detailed instructions concerning the use of the book and the stamps will be issued. Watch for those instructions so that you will know how to use your book and stamps.
4. Do not tear out stamps except at the time of purchase and in the presence of the storekeeper, his employee, or a person authorized by him to make delivery.
5. Do not throw this book away when all of the stamps have been used, or when the time for their use has expired. You may be required to present this book when you apply for subsequent books.

Rationing is a vital part of your country's war effort. This book is your Government's guarantee of your fair share of goods made scarce by war, to which the stamps contained herein will be assigned as the need arises.

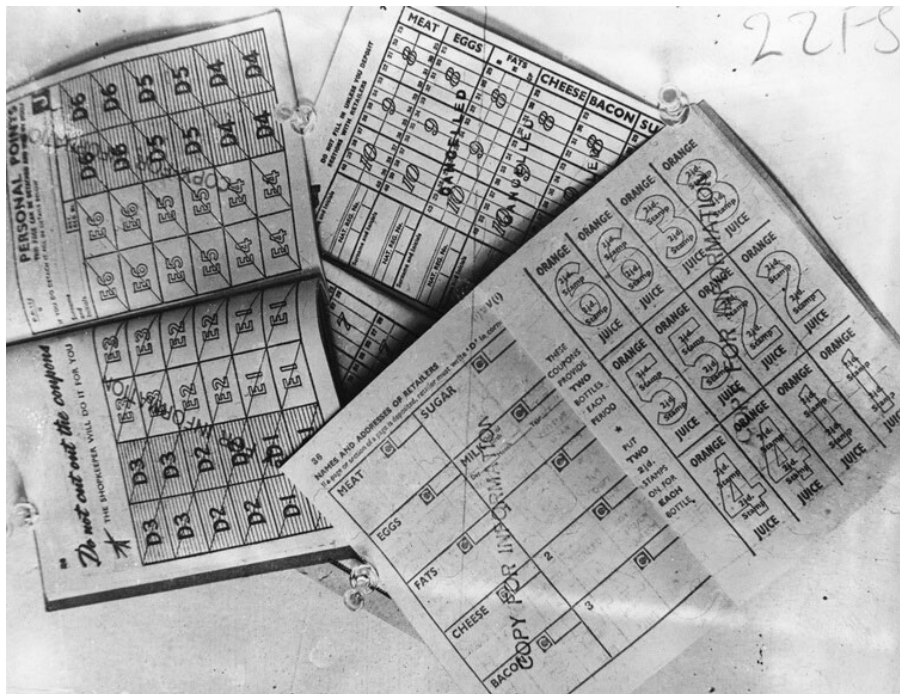
Any attempt to violate the rules is an effort to deny someone his share and will create hardship and discontent. Such action, like treason, helps the enemy.

Give your whole support to rationing and thereby conserve our vital goods. Be guided by the rule: "If you don't need it, DON'T BUY IT."

— US Government Printing Office 1943



Rationing books for meat, cooking fat, and other foods. Getty Images ©1942.



Three copies of the new ration book, which combines the previous three books; the main food book, the clothing book and the sweet and chocolates ration book, opened at various pages.

(Photo by Keystone/Getty Images) Image date: May 15, 1943



Small school boy using a family "War Ration Book Two" during World War II, 1943. ©National Archives



Mrs. Whitham, mother of sixteen, works out her ration quota for the family.

Image Date: 6/30/1945 ©Hulton Archive, Source: Getty Images

