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America Joins the War

Standard/Objective

- Apply ideas, theories, and modes of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to inform and evaluate actions concerning public policy issues. (NCSS)
- Students will research the effect that the Pearl Harbor attack had on the ships of the Pacific Fleet and share their knowledge in visual presentations.



The Hirano family at the Colorado River Relocation Center (Corbis)

Materials

copies of both sides of the *Attack on Pearl Harbor* photo card; copies of the historical background information (page 20); access to dictionary, map, and globe

Discussion Questions

- What were Japan's reasons for the attack?
- What made Pearl Harbor a major turning point?
- How did life in the United States change after the attack?

Using the Primary Source

Use the discussion questions above for introduction and/or review. Have students analyze the photo, read the background information, and complete activities. The activities on the back of the card can be done individually or in groups.

After the class discussion, divide the students into groups to further investigate the Pearl Harbor attack. Have the groups choose ships that were at Pearl Harbor to research. For each ship, the students should determine: initial damage (fires, sinking, etc.), loss of life (if any), necessary repairs, length of time out of service, and other important factors. The groups should find at least two to three photographs or video clips of their ships. Using the visual graphics, students should prepare brief visual presentations (either by hand or on the computer) to share the information about the ships.

Extension Ideas

- Provide audio, video, or text copies of Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech and also the speech by President George Bush after September 11, 2001. Have students compare and contrast the speeches.
- Provide copies of the photograph of the Hirano family shown above (filename: hirano.jpg). Have students research the Japanese-American internment camps that sprang up after Pearl Harbor. Relate to the contemporary issues of "racial profiling" and the treatment of Muslim-Americans after September 11, 2001. How could racial profiling be avoided? Brainstorm and highlight the most plausible solutions. Have students design a poster or write and record a "public service ad" to encourage people to remember the rights of others, even in times of war.

America Joins the War *(cont.)*



Pearl Harbor during Japanese aerial attack (Corbis)

Historical Background Information

After a devastating surprise attack by Japanese naval and air forces, the U.S.S. *Arizona* is ablaze in Pearl Harbor. The attack brought the war to America. Although war had been raging in Europe and Asia for years, the United States had limited involvement, sending materials and supplies to the Allied forces. Many Americans, called isolationists, were reluctant to send armed forces overseas. Feelings changed radically after Pearl Harbor. The timing—on a Sunday morning when many soldiers were at church services—made the attack especially repugnant to the American public.

The damage was severe. Several battleships were sunk, many damaged, and a few had escaped. The death toll was over 2,300 military and civilian personnel. Many aircraft and supply trucks were destroyed.

Why would Japan attack America? Japan had invaded the mainland of China and was conquering Southeast Asia. The United States had led an embargo of oil, which the Japanese needed for their conquests. Pearl Harbor was the home of the United States Pacific Fleet, and also a major air base for the Army Air Corps.

Overnight the attack galvanized American public opinion in favor of war. The next day, President Franklin Roosevelt addressed Congress and the American people. Roosevelt declared that December 7, 1941, was “a day which will live in infamy” Inspired by the President’s eloquent speech, Congress declared war on Japan. A few days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. In response, the United States declared war on the Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, and Japan. America was fully committed to World War II.



Attack on Pearl Harbor

Historical Background Information

After a surprise attack by Japanese naval and air forces, the USS *Arizona* is ablaze in Pearl Harbor. This devastating attack brought America into World War II. Until then, many Americans did not want to send our armed forces overseas. These isolationists did not believe the United States should interfere. However, the timing—early Sunday morning when many soldiers were at church services—made the attack especially repugnant. More than two thousand people lost their lives. Overnight, Pearl Harbor galvanized American public opinion in favor of war. On December 8, 1941, after Roosevelt’s famous “day of infamy” speech, Congress declared war on Japan. A few days later they declared war on Germany and Italy. America was fully committed to World War II.



Analyzing History

Knowledge

Locate Pearl Harbor on a map. Determine the date that Hawaii became a state. Why was it important to the United States in 1941?

Comprehension

What do you think the word *repugnant* means? Look up the word in a dictionary and use it in a sentence.

Application

Write a paragraph that explains why December 7, 1941 was called a “day that would live in infamy.”

Analysis

Compare and contrast December 7, 1941 to September 11, 2001.

Synthesis

Create a diorama, poster, or video that shows how America reacted to December 7, 1941.

Evaluation

If the Japanese had not attacked Pearl Harbor, do you think the United States would have entered the war at a later date? Why or why not?

Historical Writing

Fiction

Imagine that you are a Japanese-American teen in 1941. You and your parents were born in this country, but your grandparents came from Japan. Write a letter or diary that tells how you feel about Pearl Harbor, and how your American friends feel about you.

Nonfiction

Are you willing to give up some of your personal freedoms during war? For example, to be alert to terrorist attacks, are you willing to let the government listen to all private phone calls, even yours? Why or why not? Write a paper explaining your point of view.

History Challenge

Watch a movie of a World War II battle, either an “old” movie or a new one. Research the historical background behind the film. After you do your research, watch the movie again. How much of the movie was fact and how much fiction? Do you think the film gave a fair account of the event? Were events changed, exaggerated, or omitted? How? Why do you think they added or omitted certain facts? Write a paper to compare and contrast the movie to the actual event.

“We Can Do It!”

Standard/Objective

- Apply ideas, theories, and modes of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary developments, and to inform and evaluate actions concerning public policy issues. (NCSS)
- Students will analyze how the roles of women have changed since World War II and share their information in a graphic organizer.

Materials

copy of the “Rosie the Riveter” poster; copies of the historical background information (page 60); copies of the student activity sheet (page 61)

Discussion Questions

- What is the feminine ideal expressed by this poster?
- Who was “Rosie the Riveter”?
- How does this symbolize a real turning point for American women?
- How did things change for Rosie and others after the war?



“Rosie the Riveter” poster by J. Howard Miller (Corbis)

Using the Primary Source

Have students look at the poster and tell what they think it means. Then have them read the background information sheet (page 60). Use the student activity sheet after the class discussion, sparked by the questions above.

On the board or on chart paper, write *World War II*, *Vietnam*, and *War on Terrorism*. Have the students research to discover how the roles of women have changed throughout these conflicts. Students should record their findings in graphic organizers (e.g., Venn diagram, three-column chart) Would a “Rosie the Riveter” poster be effective today? Why or why not?

Extension Idea

- There are many personal accounts of the working women of World War II available online and in the library. Using *Rosie the Riveter* as a keyword, have each student locate and read at least two accounts of these personal experiences. Students can work individually or in groups. They can present brief oral reports or more elaborate presentations, such as “live” interviews with the women.

"We Can Do It!" (cont.)

Historical Background Information

The woman on this poster, Rose Will Monroe, became the poster child for women workers in the military plants during the 1940s. She was actually working in a Michigan plant riveting parts when she was cast for a war movie being filmed at the factory. Her poster became well known as a symbol for working women. After the war, she drove a taxi, operated a hair salon, and started a home building company called *Rose Builders*. Rose died in 1997 in Indiana at age 77.

Because of Rosie, many women, who had never before worked outside of their homes, entered the high-paying world of war production. Prior to World War II, most women worked in the home raising the family, while the men pursued careers outside. Women who did work were usually young women who worked as secretaries, clerks, and salespersons. As more and more men were drafted into the armed forces or volunteered, more airplanes, tanks, and trucks were needed. Women flocked to fill the job vacancies.

Women were anxious to fulfill their patriotic duty and help the war effort. Besides, they were offered high wages, which was welcome after the Depression of the 1930s.

Women were not the only ones given job opportunities by the war. Minority men and women were given the opportunity to work alongside white workers. This was in contrast to the Great Depression, when minority workers were either denied employment or given low-wage and low-skill jobs. Teenagers also pitched in the war effort by collecting recyclables including rubber, tin, and steel. They also worked in factories and farms and helped around the home.

After the war was over, the men came home. They replaced the women at the factory jobs, which sometimes caused problems. Many women wanted to stay in their jobs because they were proud of their skills and enjoyed making money. Many men were jealous of the skills their "stand-ins" had received. It was a period of adjustment for America in more ways than one. The factories turned from producing war machines—tanks and bombers—to automobiles and passenger planes. Returning veterans had lots of cash to spend. So there was no more rationing. Thus began the largest building, buying, and spending spree in the United States. Some women remained in the factories, but most (replaced by returning soldiers) had to use their newfound skills in other industries. Some returned home to contribute to America's other post-war industry: the Baby Boom.



War production aides (Corbis)



Name _____

“Rosie the Riveter”

Background Information

The woman on this famous poster is Rose Will Monroe. Rose became the poster child for women workers in the military plants during the 1940s. Because of Rosie, many women who had never before worked outside of their homes entered the high-paying world of war production. As more and more men were drafted into the armed forces or volunteered, more airplanes, tanks, and trucks were needed. Women flocked to fill the job vacancies. After the war was over, some of these women remained in the factories, but most, replaced by returning soldiers, had to use their newfound skills in other industries. Many women returned home to contribute to America’s other post-war industry: the Baby Boom.

Activity

Directions: Examine the “Rosie the Riveter” poster, and read the background information on page 60. Then, complete the following activities.

Knowledge

Who is the “we” in the poster?

Comprehension

What is it that “we” can do?

Application

Would you say that the message is mostly visual, verbal, or both? Why?

Analysis

How did the artist use Rosie to symbolize strength and determination? What other qualities do you think Rosie symbolizes?

Synthesis

Many historians believed that the United States would ultimately win the war “on the farms and in the factories of the nation.” How does this poster represent this idea?

Evaluation

Explain why this is such an effective and well-known image.

Challenge

American ingenuity flourishes, even in wartime. Sometimes technology moves forward even faster in a war, because the government is more concerned with the outcome than the costs. Many innovative items created for warfare ended up as products we use everyday. For example, during the war in the Pacific, scientists were called on to invent something to kill mosquitoes—in order to stop the spread of malaria among the troops. The scientists came up with a “pressurized bug bomb,” which, when modified for peacetime, became the first aerosol cans. Everything from nylon stockings to can openers to Jeeps can be traced to World War II. Research and report on one of these “inventions of war.”

“Rosie the Riveter” Poster



Name _____

Soldiers of War



An American Marine (Corbis)



A German Soldier (Corbis)

1. Describe the facial expressions of these two men.

2. What appears to be the location of each photograph? How can you tell?

3. By knowing the location of the photos, can you estimate the dates?

4. Compare and contrast the two photographs by drawing a Venn diagram on the back of this paper.