

# The Flight To Excellence – Home Front USA Lesson Plan

*The Home Front USA exhibit is located in the National Museum of Naval Aviation at NAS Pensacola. This exhibit contains displays representing American lifestyle in the early 1940's. The store fronts are from downtown Pensacola. This lesson plan is intended for use as part of the Museum's Flight to Excellence program to help teachers and parents plan productive field trips for their children.*



**Location:** The Home Front USA exhibit is located on the second floor of the Museum above the Buehler Library at the northwest side of the carrier deck.

**Directions From the Main Entrance:**

Proceed left from the front entrance. Stay left until passing the Emil Buehler Library and proceed up the stairs. At the top of the stairs continue straight ahead to Home Front USA.

**Objective:** Students will research and share how day to day life might have been during World War II in America.

**Materials:** Pencil or pen, Student worksheet.

**Extensions:** This lesson plan may be extended to Economics, History, Mathematics, Social Studies and Video Production.

**Prerequisite:**

**Teacher:**

- ^ Read the accompanying Teacher's Synopsis (below), Home Front USA.
- ^ Preview the Home Front USA Lesson Plan.
- ^ Reproduce the Home Front USA Student Handout.
- ^ Locate the Teacher's Answer Key.

**Student:**

- ^ (Optional) Read the Teacher's Synopsis, Home Front USA.
- ^ Visit the Hometown USA Exhibit at the National Museum of Naval Aviation.

**About the Exhibit:** From the entrance to Home Front USA:

- Saenger Movie Theater (on the right).
- Martines (restaurant) (on the right).
- Private home, living room and kitchen (on the left).
- Norris Drug Store (on the right).
- L & L Pawn (on the right).
- Jake's Garage, Motorcycle and Auto Repair (on the right).
- Sandy Ridge Grocery (on the right).

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## Teacher's Synopsis:

America entered World War II unprepared industrially for global high technology warfare. Our involvement in the war came much earlier than the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In fact, U.S. Navy ships escorted British and allied convoys loaded with essential war material destined for Great Britain.

With the onset of the war, America rationed food, electricity, gasoline and many other commodities. In order to give Americans their fair share a rationing system was instituted. The consumer was required to pay for a commodity and to provide an appropriate number of points from a ration book. This can be seen inside the Sandy Ridge Grocery. Note the price of chicken was \$ .33/lb with no ration points while pork sold for \$ .42/lb. and 9 ration points. Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup was \$.10/can with no ration points.



In front of the grocery store is a gas pump (photo left). The pump had a glass top. Inside the glass top is a metal device with sequential numbers. In the 1940's there were no electronic pumps therefore gas was measured by eye. There is a crank on the side of the pump which forced gasoline into the glass container on top. When the desired amount of gas was pumped into the glass container, the attendant computed price and the gas was transferred into the automobile gas tank by gravity. Most purchases were made with cash because the credit card had not been developed. Gas was strictly rationed during World War II. While the prices seem a bargain, at the beginning of the War much of America was still suffering from the grip of a terrible economic depression and the minimum wage was \$.40/hour.

Purchasing a rationed commodity required the consumer to surrender a specific number of ration points from a ration book. Thus, you could find yourself with enough money, but not enough ration points to buy basic commodities.



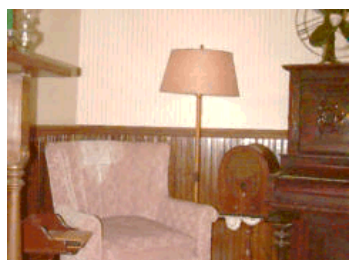
One thing that was not rationed were movies. Movies were considered essential to morale, but were not an essential war commodity like gasoline. The price of a child's ticket ranged from \$ .10 for a matinee to \$.12 for a regular feature (photo right).

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Norris Drug Store displays pictures of local residents who joined the military. Typical of the World War II era many shop owners put pictures of friends and family serving in the military in prominent view. These pictures were a source of great pride to shop owners and town folk alike. The pictures in Norris Drug Store are young men and women who joined the armed forces during World War II and at present many are volunteers at the National Museum of Naval Aviation.

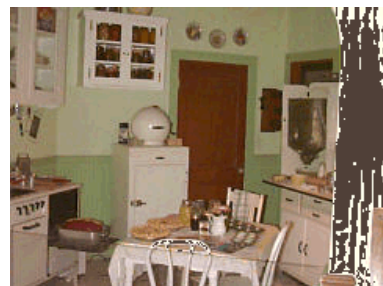
Adjacent the drug store is an alley way garage home to Jake's Garage, Motorcycle and Auto Repair with a 1941 Harley-Davidson motorcycle parked in it. The Harley is in running condition and will start with a few kicks. Typical of that day, it did not have an electric starter. Also, the motorcycle had a 'suicide clutch.' Unlike the clutches of today, as you released the clutch the drive train engaged immediately. There was no half way out which made the motorcycle more difficult and dangerous to ride.

Many remember that Nazi Germany began waging unrestricted warfare with their submarine fleet at the beginning of World War II. German submarines threatened to sever the crucial life line between the United States and Europe. Germany sank U.S. and allied shipping along the Atlantic seaboard. From the movie theater exhibit at Hometown USA you can see a Grumman *Widgeon* (photo right) high wing sea plane with U.S. Coast Guard markings and international yellow painted on top of the wing. World War II was not fought solely in the Pacific and Atlantic. That particular *Widgeon* aircraft took off from Houma, Louisiana on August 1, 1942 and successfully attacked and sank a German submarine approximately 100 miles south of Houma in the Gulf of Mexico or approximately 200 miles from the National Museum of Naval Aviation. World War II had arrived in the Gulf of Mexico.



In the 1930s and 1940s the radio was the focal point for family entertainment and news about the war. The car took family members away from home, but the radio brought them together. After Franklin Roosevelt was elected, he began his 'Fireside Chats' where he talked to the American public. For many, it was the first time they had ever heard a President's voice. While television had been invented there were no televisions available for the general public and virtually no one had even heard of the device (photo left). Also, the VCR had not been invented.

The kitchen is most revealing for what it does not contain (photo right). There is no dishwasher, microwave, electric knife, air conditioning, garbage disposal and the refrigerator is very small.



World War II would eventually affect every American. About 16,000,000 Americans would join the armed services during World War II which was about 1 out of every 11 citizens. Virtually every family had a relative or close friend in uniform. Those at home faced rationing and constant worry about their loved ones serving overseas. Among the servicemen during World War II who would become the President of the United States were Dwight Eisenhower (Army), John Kennedy (Navy), Lyndon Johnson (Navy), Richard Nixon (Navy), Gerald Ford (Navy), Ronald Reagan (Army) and George Bush (Navy).

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## **Additional Reading:**

Bailey, Ronald, H. et al, The Home Front: U.S.A. World War II, Time-Life Books, Inc., 1977.

## **Teacher Prep Notes:**

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## Home Front USA Student Work Sheet

- List the prices for the Saenger Theater and compare them to prices for a movie in a conventional movie today.
  - Matinee \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Adult \_\_\_\_\_.
- At the Saenger Theater, there were no ration points required to purchase a ticket. Why?
- What was the price of
  - Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Ration Points \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Pork \_\_\_\_\_ Ration Points \_\_\_\_\_.
- Explain how automobile gasoline was sold at the Sandy Ridge Grocery Store. Also, explain how the quantity of gas was determined.
- Make a list of modern appliances available today which were not present in the kitchen or living room of the home at the Hometown USA exhibit.
- Develop a list of questions to use in an interview of a relative or other person about his or her experiences during World War II at home in America.
- Interview a relative or other person who experienced World War II. Write a short essay about their experience at home in the USA during that time.

### For Extra Credit:

- Using a video camera and the interview questions developed in Item 6 above, interview a person about their experiences in America during World War II.
- Fill in the blanks in the table below to compare the wages and costs between 1942 and today. You'll need to find out the current minimum wage and the price per pound of chicken and pork as well as the typical cost of a movie ticket. Divide the cost per pound of chicken by the minimum wage rate for both years – this will let you see whether the items were more or less expensive than they are today.

		1942		This Year
Minimum Wage		\$.42/hour		
Item	Price	#minutes to work	Price	Hrs/Unit
Chicken	\$ per pound			
Pork	\$ per pound			
Movie Ticket	\$ per ticket			

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## Home Front USA Student Answer Sheet

- List the prices for the Saenger Theater and compare them to prices for a movie in a conventional movie today. **Answer:**
  - Matinee \$ .10**
  - Adult \$ .35**
- At the Saenger Theater, there were no ration points required to purchase a ticket. Why? **Answer: Only commodities essential to the war effort were rationed. Movies were considered important to morale, but were not an essential commodity like gasoline.**
- What was the price of
  - Chicken **Answer \$ .33/lb Ration Points 0**
  - Pork **Answer \$ .42/lb Ration Points 9.**
- Explain how automobile gasoline was sold at the Sandy Ridge Grocery Store. Also, explain how the quantity of gas was determined. **Answer: The volume of gas was measured by sight with before and after readings on a glass container at the top of the pump.**
- Make a list of modern appliances available today which were not present in the kitchen or living room of the home at the Hometown, USA exhibit. **Answer:**
  - VCR.**
  - TV.**
  - Electric knife.**
  - Electric garbage disposal.**
  - Microwave oven.**
  - Portable telephone.**
  - Pagers.**
  - Computers of any type.**
  - Walkman.**
  - Electronic calculator.**
  - Many others.**
- Develop a list of questions to use in an interview of a relative or other person about his or her experiences during World War II at home in America. **Answer (examples of possible questions):**
  - What was it like traveling in America during World War II?**
  - What role did the radio playing in bring the family together during the War?**
  - How did servicemen and servicewomen who were assigned overseas keep in touch with their families?**
  - What items were rationed during World War II?**
  - How did President Roosevelt communicate with Americans?**
  - What was it like when President Roosevelt died?**
  - What was it like the day World War II ended?**
- Interview a relative or other person who experienced World War II based on the questions you wrote above and write a short essay about their experiences.

### For Extra Credit:

- Using a video camera and the interview questions developed in To Do, interview a person about their experiences in America during World War II.
- Fill in the blanks comparing the Minimum Wage of 1942 (\$ .42/hr.) and the Minimum Wage of today along with the prices of food products. By dividing \_\_\_\_\_ the commodity price by the \_\_\_\_\_

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Minimum Wage to determine if commodities are more expensive now than in 1942 relative to the Minimum Wage. **Example.** A steak costs \$ 4.98/lb today. The Minimum Wage is \$5.15/hour.  $\frac{\$4.98/\text{lb}}{\$5.15/\text{hour}} = .96$  hours of work to purchase one pound of steak. Based upon the result, explain whether a commodity is more or less expensive today than 1942.

### 1942

Minimum Wage \$ .42/hour.

Chicken,  $\frac{\$.33 \text{ Price/Pound}}{\$.42/\text{hour}} = .79$  hours, or about 48 minutes of labor at minimum wage to buy a pound of chicken.

Pork,  $\frac{\$.42 \text{ Price/Pound}}{\$.42/\text{hour}} = 1$  hour of labor at minimum wage to buy a pound of pork.

Movie,  $\frac{\$.12/\text{ticket}}{\$.42/\text{hour}} = .28$  hours or about 15 minutes of labor at minimum wage to buy a movie ticket.

### Currently

Minimum Wage \$ 5.15/hour

Chicken,  $\frac{\$2.98/\text{Pound}}{\$5.15/\text{hour}} = .578$  hours or about 40 minutes of labor at minimum wage to purchase a pound of chicken.

Pork,  $\frac{\$2.58/\text{Pound}}{\$5.15/\text{hour}} = .5$  hours or about 30 minutes of labor at minimum wage to purchase a pound of pork.

Movie,  $\frac{\$4.75/\text{ticket}}{\$5.15/\text{hour}} = .92$  hours or about 54 minutes of labor at minimum wage to purchase a movie ticket.