

HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

THE CENTURY: AMERICA'S TIME THE HOMEFRONT

Reporter Peter Jennings hosts this important series that chronicles the events and experiences of America in the twentieth century, the century that Henry Luce dubbed “The American Century.” Using archival footage and interviews with historians, veterans, activists and every-day people, this documentary explores the social, political, cultural, and economic changes that have transformed this nation from a burgeoning, isolationist economic power to one of the world’s leaders. *The Century: America’s Time* would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Women’s History, Political Science, Civics, Science and Technology, Military History and Ethics. It is appropriate for middle school, high school and college.

THE HOMEFRONT

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, America was a country steeped in isolationist policies and ill prepared for war. Within a matter of weeks, the country made an amazing turnover from a peacetime nation suffering the final throes of a depression to the most efficient and productive “arsenal for democracy” that the world had ever seen. This was accomplished by the unity and sheer willpower of the American people, who backed the war effort almost unanimously. This episode examines the American homefront during World War II, how it came together in a unified effort, and the ways in which the war changed the lives of those left behind, especially the women whose contributions to the war effort helped to win the war.

OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze the effects of the twentieth century on American life, political institutions, economics, foreign policy and culture. They will also investigate how events in the twentieth century influenced America’s position as a world leader, and how global and domestic events created change, and sometimes turmoil, in America itself.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

The Homefront fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: Chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, historical issues-analysis and decision-making for Era 8.

VOCABULARY

interminable	somber	premeditated	endeavor
naiveté	fascism	invulnerable	unprecedented
immersed	despicable	vigilant	celestial
incarcerated	embarkation	precocious	magnitude

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Why did Japan bomb Pearl Harbor?
2. How did the American people react to the bombing of Pearl Harbor?
3. What is a citizen soldier? Why does the United States have a particular history of citizen soldiers?
4. Discuss the transition from a peacetime economy to wartime economy that occurred in the United States during World War II.
5. Women workers increased dramatically during the war. Why was there resistance at first to women working in war plants?
6. Why were women accepted in the defense industries after some initial reservations and resistance?
7. World War II was not fought on American soil. Nevertheless, the impact of the war was tremendous. How did World War II alter the American homefront?
8. How did the United States use propaganda to unify the American people behind the war effort?
9. Why were Japanese-Americans banished to internment camps? Why weren't German-Americans or Italian-Americans interned? Why is this one of the greatest civil rights violations in American history?
10. Discuss the impact of Frank Sinatra on American culture during World War II.
11. Discuss the impact of D-Day on the course of the war.
12. Discuss the impact of FDR's death.

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Create a recruitment poster for World War II.
2. Create a poster commemorating the end of World War II.
3. Write an obituary for Franklin Delano Roosevelt that conveys his importance in the Great Depression and World War II.