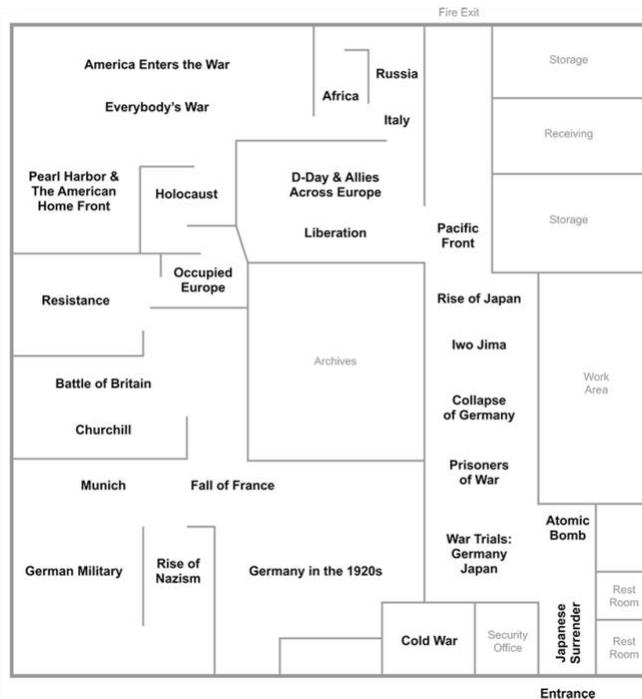


Visit to The International Museum of World War II

Welcome to The International Museum of World War II. The artifacts and documents here are authentic. Every object played a role in World War II. Please treat everything with respect and care.



This map will help you navigate the exhibitions and find documents and artifacts that will be helpful to you.

Name _____

Date _____

Lesson Plan: Black Americans and the War

When WWII began, racism, discrimination and inequality were strong forces in America. In the South, Jim Crow reigned, creating a rigidly segregated and unequal society. The KKK, then in its second iteration, terrorized blacks and prevented them from voting or integrating more fully into white society. Economic inequality existed in both the North and South with many jobs and high paying positions offered exclusively to white men. The extraordinary demands of World War II on U.S. military forces and industrial production necessitated significant changes to the status quo. Americans, regardless of race and gender, were called upon to serve their country in a variety of ways. Many took advantage of the new opportunities created by the War, experienced significant personal changes, and pushed for greater and more permanent equality and opportunity.

Patriotic Black Americans enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces. Two and a half million black men registered for the draft and 1 million served as draftees or volunteers in all branches of the Armed Forces. Black women volunteered to serve in non-combat military positions and made up 10% of the WAC (Women's Army Corps) recruits. Black American men and women were attracted by the prospect of more lucrative work in new industrial defense jobs located mainly in the North, Midwest and West. Their movement from the South to these new destinations and jobs contributed to what has become known as the Second Great Migration. While blacks experienced new opportunities, they also faced segregation, discrimination, and even violent opposition to their efforts to serve their country and improve their lives.

In this lesson, you will learn more about the military, economic, and social experiences of Black Americans in WWII. In the end, you will be asked to determine how the War changed their lives and to what degree you believe the War created lasting change.

Pre-U.S. Entry into WWII

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. declaration of war on Japan, what reasons did the government give to support America's involvement in the War (short of sending fighting forces), and why might those reasons have inspired people at home to push for change?

1. Locate Norman Rockwell's *Four Freedoms* posters in the America gallery. Write down the freedoms below:

2. These posters were based on President Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech which he delivered as part of his State of the Union Address on January 6, 1941. In this speech, Roosevelt made his case for continued aid to Great Britain and increased industrial war production. While unable to bring the country fully into the War, Roosevelt argued that the nation was, indirectly, fighting for these universal freedoms.

As a member of any disadvantaged minority at the time, why might you have found Roosevelt's words inspirational? Why might they have motivated you to push for change, equality, and justice?

ADDITIONAL/OPTIONAL RESOURCES

3. A. Philip Randolph, leader of the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, an all-black, independent union of railroad porters and maids, was inspired to push for change early in the War. He was determined to make sure that black workers were not discriminated against as tens of thousands of jobs opened up in defense industries. In fact, he threatened a march on Washington unless blacks were hired equally for those jobs.

A. Randolph letter to White (NAACP): <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/world-war-ii-and-the-post-war-years.html#obj1> In this letter labor leader A. Philip Randolph suggests to Walter White "a mass March on Washington" by thousands of African Americans to protest discrimination in defense industries and the armed forces.

B. March on Washington flyer: https://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/historical_docs/hist_doc_proposedmow41.html This is a flyer designed to generate support for the March on Washington. It clearly shows the link between this civil protest and FDR's Four Freedoms.

4. Concern over the threatened march, potential for riots, and international embarrassment caused President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941. This Order prohibited defense contractors from discriminating based on race and established the Committee on Fair Employment Practices to enforce the Order. This is an early example of how black Americans used the War environment to create positive change for themselves.

Executive Order 8802: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=72#>

America during WWII

1. Find the Tuskegee Airman's uniform in the America gallery. The uniform pairs well with this poster:



A. As you look at the uniform and this poster, what are 3 observations you have of the Tuskegee Airmen?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

B. What are 3 questions you'd like answered about this U.S. Army Air Corps?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

2. Find the letter from President Roosevelt to Mr. Prattis in the America gallery. According to Roosevelt, why were approximately 28,000 black enlistees passed over for the Selective Service?

A. In your own words, what is Roosevelt saying here?

B. What does this letter tell you about race relations in the U.S. Armed Forces during WWII?

3. Find the “Showers” sign on the wall in the America gallery. What additional information does this provide about race relations in the U.S. military during the War?

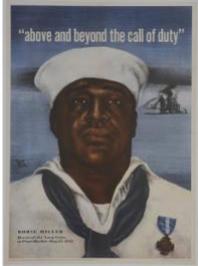
4. This photograph comes from the Museum’s collection, though it is not out on display currently. This is Company “C” 95th Engineer Battalion from Fort Belvoir, Virginia.



A. What do you make of the four white men sitting front and center? Who do you think they were? Why do you think this?

B. What general conclusions can you draw about Black Americans' positions in the armed forces during WWII?

5. Find this poster



Dorie Miller was a hero at Pearl Harbor and received the distinguished Navy Cross for his bravery there.

A. What makes this such a powerful image? (Write down 3 ideas)

1.

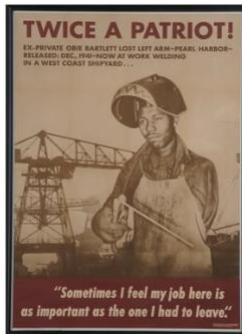
2.

3.

B. Why might this poster encourage other young black American men to enlist in the U.S. military?

6. During the War, thousands of southern black Americans moved to the North, Midwest and West to take jobs in defense industries, becoming part of what is known today as the Second Great Migration.

Consider these two posters:



A. What message on race relations is depicted in the “United We Win” poster? Why would the government wish to promote such a message? Why might this be an appealing message?

B. In “Twice a Patriot!,” what is the government hoping other black Americans will do after learning of Obie Bartlett’s service?

ADDITIONAL/OPTIONAL RESOURCES

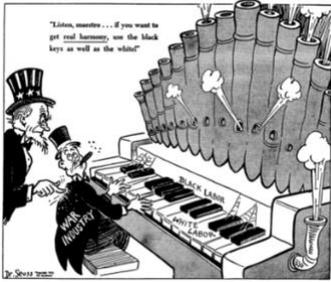
1. Read more about the Tuskegee Airmen: <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tuskegeeairmen.htm>

2. Prattis was the editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a newspaper that led what became known as the “Double V” campaign. The Double V campaign pushed for “victory from without” over the Axis powers and “victory from within” the U.S. to end discrimination. The *Courier* launched the campaign using the idea of a “double V.”

This campaign began because of a letter to the editor from James G. Thompson. Read that letter here:

https://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/resource_archive/resource.php?unitChoice=19&ThemeNum=3&resourceType=2&resourceID=10106

3. Dr. Seuss published a series of cartoons during the War that could be used to further one's understanding of issues raised in this lesson. We do not think of Dr. Seuss as a political cartoonist, but for two years, 1941-1943, he was the chief editorial cartoonist for the New York newspaper *PM* (1940-1948). He drew over 400 editorial cartoons for that journal. The link to many of those cartoons is: <https://library.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dswenttowar/index.html>



Summary—Find a partner and complete the chart below together

Having looked at the museum collection with a focus on Black Americans' experiences, you should now have an understanding of how they benefitted from the War militarily, economically, and socially as well as the limits of those changes. In the chart below, list as many examples as you can for each category.

	Pros/Benefits	Cons/Limitations
Military		
Economy		
Society		

America after WWII

WWII's influence lasted well beyond 1945 and directly impacted the future of race relations in the U.S. The following information touches on a few of the issues raised in this lesson.

1. Ku Klux Klan: The Klan reached its peak membership in the 1920s and extended beyond the South to have a national presence. The War, however, put the racial hatred, intolerance, and violence promoted by the Klan out of favor. Klan membership declined steadily after WWII.

The following excerpt comes from the Southern Poverty Law Center:

([https://www.splcenter.org/20110301/ku-klux-klan-history-racism#combat boots](https://www.splcenter.org/20110301/ku-klux-klan-history-racism#combat%20boots))

Powerful social forces were at work in the United States following World War II. A new wave of immigrants, particularly Jewish refugees, arrived from war-torn Europe. A generation of young black soldiers returned home after having been a part of a great army fighting for world freedom. In the South, particularly, labor unions began extensive campaigns to organize poorly paid workers. The migration from the farms to the cities continued, with a resulting shakeup in old political alliances.

Bigots began to howl more loudly than in years, and a new Klan leader began to beat the drums of anti-black, anti-union, anti-Jew, anti-Catholic and anti-communist hatred. This man was Samuel Green, an Atlanta doctor. Green managed to reorganize the Klan in California, Kentucky, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Florida and Alabama. But both federal and state bureaus of investigation prosecuted Klan lawlessness, and Green found that his hooded order was surrounded by enemies. The press throughout the South had become increasingly hostile; ministers were more and more inclined to attack the Klan, and state and local governments passed laws against cross burnings and masks.

By the time of Green's death in August 1949, the Klan was fractured internally by disputes and hounded by investigations from all sides in response to a wave of Klan violence in the South. Many Klansmen went to jail for floggings or other criminal acts. By the early 1950s, the Invisible Empire was at its lowest level since its rebirth on Stone Mountain in 1915.

2. The U.S. Armed Forces: Black Americans' military service during WWII influenced military desegregation in 1948. As the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. entered the Cold War era, concerns over national defense gave added importance to Black Americans' military service. In addition, Black threats to boycott the segregated armed forces could not be ignored. In July, 1948, President Truman issues Executive Order 9981. The Order integrated the armed forces and established an advisory committee to examine the rules, practices, and procedures of the armed services and recommend ways to make desegregation a reality. There was considerable resistance to the Order from the military but the Army's units were fully integrated by 1954.

Executive Order 9981: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=84>

3. The G.I. Bill (Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944): This bill provided important benefits to all returning service members, regardless of gender or race. Benefits included low-cost mortgages, high school or vocational education, payments for college tuition and living

expenses, and low-interest loans for entrepreneurs wishing to start a business. The G.I. Bill is often heralded as an act that created fairly widespread educational and economic advancement. For black service members, however, the G.I. Bill was implemented in a discriminatory way. While many black men used the G.I. Bill to pay for a college-level education, low-cost mortgages and unemployment benefits were a major problem. Black veterans' frustration with their inability to participate in all of the G.I. Bill's benefits, and in the postwar economic boom more generally, motivated them to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Link to a short and very readable article on Blacks and the G.I. Bill: <http://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/After-the-War-Blacks-and-the-GI-Bill.pdf>