

Lesson Title: The Sojourner—Geography

Lesson Grade Level: 4-6

DPI Theme Area: The World Wars and Wisconsin's Response to 20th Century Change

Standards: Geography: A.4.5, A.4.7, A.8.4; History: B.4.1, B.4.3, B.4.4, B.4.9

Introduction/Background

World War II was a conflict that began in 1939 and ended in 1945. By the time the war ended most of the world was involved in one way or another. Fighting took place in Europe, Africa, and Asia, on land, in the air, and on the seas. The Axis consisted of Germany, Italy, and Japan and the Allies were Great Britain, France, the United States, the Soviet Union, and to a lesser degree, China. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online* states that the “war was in many respects a continuation, after an uneasy 20-year hiatus, of the disputes left unsettled by World War I.” (“Word War II.” *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. 8 July 2005 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9110199>>.)

In many respects life on the “home front” in Manitowoc County during the World War II years mirrored that in countless other American communities. Men enlisted or were drafted. Women went to work. People coped with rationing and bought war bonds. There were scrap drives and victory gardens, black-out drills and USO dances.

But some of Manitowoc County's World War II experiences were unique, at least for a fairly small county in the nation's heartland. Most notably, the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company built 28 submarines for the U.S. Navy, side-launching them into the Manitowoc River and sending them via inland waterways to the Gulf Coast at New Orleans. Manitowoc Shipbuilding also produced LCT landing vessels which were tested in practice “invasions” on Lake Michigan beaches in the northern part of the county. Burger Boat Company built another 55 vessels for the Navy, including wooden minesweepers. Other companies in Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and other county communities manufactured war goods ranging from airplane parts to condensed milk in camouflaged cans. Employment boomed. A federal project built hundreds of housing units to accommodate some of the newcomers, and bus lines were established to transport workers to Manitowoc from other northeastern Wisconsin cities. Submarine crews stationed in Manitowoc for training as their vessels were being built brought more diversity to the community, and the Coast Guard had a strong presence. Hollywood celebrities came to tour the shipyards and promote war bond sales. German prisoners of war worked on county farms. Manitowoc even claimed credit for establishing a new “Citizenship Day” observance that for a time gained national recognition.

“The Sojourner” was a unique monthly newsletter that was published in Two Rivers, Wisconsin from April 1942 through December 1945. “The Sojourner” documents home front activity in Two Rivers, Wisconsin as well as stateside and overseas postings and experiences of Manitowoc County service personnel, particularly those from Two Rivers.

More than just a hometown paper, “The Sojourner” provided a forum for local military personnel to keep in touch with “home” and with each other through letters in the newsletter, which was mailed to more than 600 Two Rivers service men and women stationed around the globe. The “entity” responsible for creating this newsletter and keeping the ever-changing mailing list up to date was a group of young women—mostly girls—from Two Rivers, Wisconsin, who called themselves the “Civic Understudies.” The Two Rivers Vocational School printing instructor served as an “advisor” for this publication, although it was not an official school publication. Initially, the Civic Understudies did their own fund-raising by holding dances, etc. to support the publication. The local Veterans of Foreign Wars post provided additional financial support. The first two issues were not titled. The Civic Understudies held a contest for service personnel to name the newsletter.

Letters in general and the Sojourner newsletter in particular were vitally important to men and women in the armed services. The mail was the only contact they had with their friends around the world and loved ones back home. They generally did not have access to telephones and email did not exist yet, therefore the instantaneous communication with which we are familiar was unknown.

Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Locate on a map the places to which Manitowoc County service personnel were sent during World War II
2. Identify the activities of people on the home front.
3. Define what the home front was during WWII (or any war)

Information Sources/Resources

<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.HomeFront>

Materials

Computer lab with at least one computer per 2-3 students and an Internet connection

OR

Instructor’s computer with an LCD and an Internet connection

Outline map of Wisconsin and a separate outline world map

Atlases or wall maps

Suggested Activities:

1. Ask students what they know about World War II and then discuss WWII in general. Using an encyclopedia for this part is helpful.
2. A quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the war can help put this lesson into context: “But there is one front and one battle where everyone in the United States – every man, woman, and child – is in action...That front is right here at home, in our daily lives.” Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1942 (Taken from the American Memory web site lesson about the home front at <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/homefront/index.html>)
3. Discuss what the war front is. Then discuss what the home front is.

4. Discuss that some women enlisted in various branches of the military to support the war effort. These women's groups included the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), Women's Reserve of the Coast Guard, Semper Paratus – Always Ready (SPAR).
5. Ask students if they where Manitowoc or Three Rivers is. Have them locate these places on a map of Wisconsin.
6. Give students the above instructions how to get to the Sojourner site.
7. Give students time to browse through the newsletters. They just need to look at the names and locations of the letter writers. They may read some of the letters to see what topics concerned the letter writers.
 - a. In a notebook, they should make not of places in the US and around the world where the service men and women were sent.
 - b. Students might want to keep track of who went where, to see how many trained in or went to the same destination.
8. After they have made their lists, students should locate where Wisconsinites were stationed during WWII on their outline maps of the world and the United States.

Glossary:

Home front, barracks, Three Rivers (T.R.), SPAR, Manty (Manitowoc), rationing, Edith Nourse Rogers, WAVES, Oveta Culp Hobby, WAC, WASP, war front, blackout, victory gardens

Conclusion:

Students will know where Wisconsin military personnel trained and were stationed during WWII in the US and around the world. They will know what efforts people back home took to support the service personnel with news from Wisconsin.

Assessment:

The finished maps will show student understanding of the lesson. Class discussion about the newsletter and the letters from the service personnel will show student understanding of using primary sources to study history.

Additional Information:

For more information about the Women's Army Corps see <http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.htm>. You may choose to read this and summarize it for students as it contains some sexual content that might be inappropriate for young students.

<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm>

The Navy Historical Center has a web site that has information about the WAVES and great photographs of recruitment and training, quarters and meals, recreation, occupations, etc.

<http://www.scc.;rutgers.edu/njh/ww2/ww2women/womenintro.htm>

You can find information about women in WWII at this site. All of the women's service organizations are described here.

Possible Lesson Extensions:

The lesson can be extended by doing research on the role of the women in the military in the WAC, SPAR, WASP, WAVES, etc.