Chapter 14
America and World War II
1941–1945

SECTION 1 Mobilizing for War
SECTION 2 The Early Battles
SECTION 3 Life on the Home Front
SECTION 4 Pushing Back the Axis
SECTION 5 The War Ends

1941
• United States enters World War II
• Roosevelt bans discrimination in defense industries

Franklin D. Roosevelt 1933–1945

1942
• Women's Army Auxiliary Corps established
• Japanese American relocation ordered

1943
• Detroit race riots
• Zoot-suit riots in Los Angeles

1941
• Japan attacks Pearl Harbor

1942
• Japan captures the Philippines
• Americans win Battle of Midway

1943
• Germans defeated at Stalingrad
• Allied forces land in Italy

Allied troops land in Normandy on D-Day, 1944.
MAKING CONNECTIONS

What Kinds of Sacrifices Does War Require?

During World War II, millions of Americans enlisted in the armed forces, risking their lives in the struggle. On the home front, Americans also helped the war effort by giving up goods needed by the military and buying war bonds.

• Why do you think so many Americans volunteered to fight in World War II?
• Should civilians have to make sacrifices in wartime?

Summarizing American Life During World War II
Make a Pocket Book Foldable to summarize various aspects of daily life that World War II affected. Label the two pockets as Economic and Social. Include general effects as well as specific programs under each pocket.

1944
- Supreme Court rules in Korematsu v. United States that Japanese American relocation is constitutional
- Eisenhower leads D-Day invasion
- MacArthur’s forces land in the Philippines

1945
- Franklin Roosevelt dies in office; Harry S. Truman becomes president
- U.S. Marines capture Iwo Jima
- United States drops atomic bomb on Japan
- Harry Truman, 1945–1953

History ONLINE Chapter Overview
Visit glencoe.com to preview Chapter 14.
After World War I, America returned to isolationism. When the nation entered World War II in 1941, its armed forces ranked nineteenth in might, behind the tiny European nation of Belgium. Three years later, the United States was producing 40 percent of the world’s arms.

**Converting the Economy**

**MAIN Idea** The United States quickly mobilized the economy to fight the war.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Have you ever changed the way you performed a task in order to do it faster or more efficiently? What steps did you take to speed things up? Read on to learn how the United States changed the way factories produced goods during World War II.

Shortly after 1:30 P.M. on December 7, 1941, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox phoned President Roosevelt at the White House. “Mr. President,” Knox said, “it looks like the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor.” A few minutes later, Admiral Harold Stark, chief of naval operations, phoned and confirmed the attack.

Although President Roosevelt remained calm when he heard the news, he later expressed his concerns to his wife Eleanor: “I never wanted to have to fight this war on two fronts. We haven’t got the Navy to fight in both the Atlantic and Pacific. . . . We will have to build up the Navy and the Air Force and that will mean we will have to take a good many defeats before we can have a victory.”

Although the difficulties of fighting a global war troubled the president, British prime minister Winston Churchill was not worried. Churchill knew that victory in modern war depended on a nation’s industrial power. He compared the American economy to a gigantic boiler: “Once the fire is lighted under it there is no limit to the power it can generate.”

Churchill was right. The industrial output of the United States during the war astounded the rest of the world. American workers were twice as productive as German workers and five times more productive than Japanese workers. In 1943 the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin toasted “American production, without which this war would have been lost.” American war production turned the tide in favor of the Allies. In less than four years, the United States and its allies achieved what no other group of nations had ever done—they fought and won a two-front war against two powerful military empires, forcing each to surrender.
The United States rapidly increased its war production after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The expansion was possible in part because the government had already begun mobilizing the economy before the country entered the war. When the German blitzkrieg swept into France in May 1940, President Roosevelt declared a national emergency and announced a plan to build 50,000 warplanes a year. Two months later he asked Congress for $4 billion to build a “Two-Ocean” Navy.

Shocked by the success of the German attack, many Americans were willing to build up the country’s defenses. By October 1940, Congress had increased the defense budget to more than $17 billion. The Army-Navy Munitions Board—the military agency in charge of buying equipment—began signing contracts with American companies for new aircraft, ships, and equipment.

Roosevelt believed that government and business had to work together to prepare for war. He created the National Defense Advisory Committee to help mobilize the economy and asked several business leaders to serve on the committee. The president and his advisers believed that giving industry an incentive to move quickly was the best way to rapidly mobilize the economy. As Henry Stimson, the new secretary of war, wrote in his diary: “If you are going to try and go to war, or to prepare for war, in a capitalist country, you have got to let business make money out of the process or business won’t work.”
Building the Liberty Ships

Normally when the government needed military equipment, it would ask companies to bid for the contract, but that system was too slow in wartime. Instead of asking for bids, the government signed cost-plus contracts. The government agreed to pay a company whatever it cost to make a product plus a guaranteed percentage of the costs as profit.

Under the cost-plus system, the more a company produced and the faster it did the work, the more money it would make. The system was not cheap, but it did get war materials produced quickly and in quantity.

Cost-plus convinced many companies to convert to war production. Other firms, however, could not afford to reequip their factories to make military goods. To convince more companies to convert, Congress gave new authority to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC). That government agency, set up during the Depression, could make loans to companies wanting to convert their factories to war production.

Analyzing What government policies helped American industry to produce large quantities of war materials?

American Industry Gets the Job Done

MAIN Idea Factories built tanks, airplanes, trucks, and jeeps for military use, as well as safer ships.

HISTORY AND YOU Has a coach or an instructor ever challenged you to improve your speed or efficiency at a task? Read on to learn how American industry helped the war effort.

By the fall of 1941, much had already been done to prepare the economy for war, but it was still only partially mobilized. Although many companies were producing military equipment, most still preferred to make consumer goods. The Great Depression was ending, demand was up, and sales were rising. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, however, changed everything. A flood of orders by the government for war materials began, and by the summer of 1942, almost all major industries and some 200,000 companies had converted to war production. Together they made the nation’s wartime “miracle” possible.

1. Interpreting Why would Katie Grant have had to wear leather clothing?

2. Summarizing What was her job?

Primary Source

“I took classes on how to weld. I had leather gloves, leather pants, a big hood, goggles and a leather jacket…. They put me forty feet down in the bottom of the ship to be a tacker. I filled the long seams of the cracks in the ship corners full of hot lead and then brushed them good and you could see how pretty it was. The welders would come along and weld it so it would take the strong waves and deep water and heavy weight.”

—Katie Grant, World War II riveter at Kaiser Richmond Shipyard, California

PRIMARY SOURCE

Building the Liberty Ships

▲ In this 1942 photograph, workers construct a Liberty ship in San Francisco.
Tanks Replace Cars

The automobile industry was uniquely suited to the mass production of military equipment. Automobile factories began producing trucks, jeeps, and tanks. Mass production was critical in modern warfare, because the country that could move troops and supplies most quickly usually won the battle. As General George C. Marshall, chief of staff for the United States Army, observed:

**Primary Source**

“The greatest advantage . . . the United States enjoyed on the ground in the fighting was . . . the jeep and the two-and-a-half ton truck. These are the instruments that moved and supplied United States troops in battle, while the German army . . . depended heavily on animal transport. . . . The United States, profiting from the mass production achievements of its automotive industry . . . had mobility that completely outclassed the enemy.”

—quoted in Miracle of World War II

Automobile factories did not just produce vehicles. They also built artillery, rifles, mines, helmets, pontoon bridges, and dozens of other pieces of military equipment. Henry Ford created an assembly line for the enormous B-24 bomber known as the “Liberator” at Willow Run Airport near Detroit. By the end of the war, the factory had built more than 8,600 aircraft. Overall, the auto industry produced nearly one-third of all military equipment manufactured during the war.

Building the Liberty Ships

Ford’s remarkable achievement in aircraft production was more than matched by Henry Kaiser’s shipyards. Henry Kaiser started in the construction industry, but when World War II began, Kaiser shifted from the construction industry to shipbuilding.

German submarines were sinking American cargo ships at a terrifying rate. The United States had to find a way to build cargo ships as quickly as possible. Kaiser believed that speed was more important than quality and that cost was less important than results. He spent whatever it took to get the job done quickly. To save time, he applied techniques from the construction industry to shipbuilding. Instead of building an entire ship in one place from the keel up, parts were prefabricated and brought to the shipyard for assembly.

Kaiser's shipyards built many different kinds of ships, but they were best known for Liberty ships. The Liberty ship was the basic cargo ship used during the war. Liberty ships were welded instead of riveted. Although welded ships tended to crack, Vice Admiral Emory Land, head of the U.S. Maritime Commission, preferred the Liberty ships:

**Primary Source**

“Every time a riveted ship goes into dock you have a lot of repairs to do. You do not have them in welded ships. . . . On combat damage, comparing the welded Liberty ships and others, everything is in favor of the Liberty. . . . riveted ships are apt to go to the bottom if they are bombed or mined or torpedoed. . . . Never mind about the fractures or the cracks—[the Liberty ships] get into port.”

—quoted in Miracle of World War II

When the war began, it took 244 days to build the first Liberty ship. After Kaiser shipyards applied their mass-production techniques, average production time dropped to 41 days. Kaiser's shipyards built 30 percent of all American ships constructed during the war, including nearly 3,000 Liberty ships.

The War Production Board

As American companies converted to war production, many business leaders became frustrated with the mobilization process. Government agencies argued constantly about supplies and contracts and whose orders had the highest priority.

After Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt tried to improve the system by creating the War Production Board (WPB). He gave the WPB the authority to set priorities and production goals and to control the distribution of raw materials and supplies. Almost immediately, the WPB clashed with the military. Military agencies continued to sign contracts without consulting with the WPB. Finally, in 1943, Roosevelt established the Office of War Mobilization (OWM) to settle arguments among the different agencies.

Explaining What military need led to the production of Liberty ships?
Building an Army

**MAIN Idea** Minorities and women played an important role in the United States armed forces during World War II.

**HISTORY AND YOU** Do you think the United States should have a military draft? Read to learn about the first peacetime draft in American history.

Converting factories to war production was only part of the mobilization process. To fight and win the war, the United States also needed to build up its armed forces.

Creating an Army

Within days of Germany’s attack on Poland in 1939, President Roosevelt expanded the army to 227,000 soldiers. Before the spring of 1940, college students, unions, isolationists, and most members of Congress had opposed a peacetime draft. Opinions changed after France surrendered to Germany in June 1940. Two members of Congress introduced the Selective Service and Training Act, a plan for the first peacetime draft in American history. In September, Congress approved the draft by a wide margin.

You’re in the Army Now

More than 60,000 men enlisted in the month after the attack on Pearl Harbor. At first, the flood of recruits overwhelmed the army’s training facilities. Many recruits had to live in tents rather than barracks. The army also experienced equipment shortages. Troops carried sticks representing guns, threw stones simulating grenades, and practiced maneuvers with trucks labeled “TANK.”

New recruits were initially sent to a reception center, where they were given physical exams and injections against smallpox and typhoid. The draftees were then issued uniforms, boots, and whatever equipment was available. The clothing bore the label “G.I.,” meaning “Government Issue,” which is why American soldiers were called GIs.

After taking aptitude tests, recruits went to basic training for eight weeks. They learned

▲ Soldiers from a Mexican-American platoon train at Fort Benning in 1943.

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**PRIMARY SOURCE**

Creating an American Army

For many Americans, entering the army changed their perspective, as historian Carl Degler recalls:

“Entrance into the Army in August, 1942, widened my horizons literally as well as experientially: for the first time I travelled beyond a 200 mile radius from Newark. I marvelled at the flatness of the prairie in Illinois . . . . Stops at posts in Miami Beach, Florida, and Richmond, Virginia, were my introduction to the American South.”

—from The History Teacher, vol. 23, 1990
how to handle weapons, load backpacks, read maps, pitch tents, and dig trenches. Trainees drilled and exercised constantly and learned how to work as a team.

Basic training helped to break down barriers between soldiers. Recruits came from all over the country, and training together created a “special sense of kinship,” as one soldier noted. “The reason you storm the beaches is not patriotism or bravery. It’s that sense of not wanting to fail your buddies.”

A Segregated Army

Although basic training promoted unity, most recruits did not encounter Americans from every part of society. At the start of the war, the U.S. military was segregated. White recruits did not train alongside African Americans. African Americans had separate barracks, latrines, mess halls, and recreational facilities. Once trained, African Americans were organized into their own military units, but white officers generally commanded them. Most military leaders also wanted to keep African American soldiers out of combat and assigned them to construction and supply units.

Some African Americans did not want to support the war. As one student at a black college noted: “The Army Jim Crows us. . . . Employers and labor unions shut us out. Lynchings continue. We are disenfranchised . . . and spat upon. What more could Hitler do to us than that?” Despite the bitterness, most African Americans agreed with African American writer Saunders Redding that they should support their country:

**Primary Source**

“There are many things about this war that I do not like . . . yet I believe in the war. . . . [We] know that whatever the mad logic of [Hitler’s] New Order there is no hope for us under it. The ethnic theories of the Hitler ‘master folk’ admit of no chance of freedom. . . . This is a war to keep [people] free. The struggle to broaden and lengthen the road of freedom—our own private and important war to enlarge freedom here in America—will come later. . . . I believe in this war because I believe in America. I believe in what America professes to stand for.”

—from “A Negro Looks at This War”

A Segregated Army

Although the U.S. armed forces were segregated, discrimination did not prevent minority groups from performing with courage. Two of the best-known examples are the Tuskegee Airmen (right), comprised of African American volunteers, and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (below), made up of Japanese American volunteers. The 450 Tuskegee Airmen fought in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team became the most decorated unit in U.S. history.

Analyzing VISUALS

1. **Identifying** In what year did the army experience the most rapid growth? Why do you think that is the case?
2. **Evaluating** What do the expressions on the faces of the Tuskegee Airmen convey?
About 400,000 American women played a major role in the military side of the war effort, if not in direct combat. Sixteen American women were awarded the Purple Heart for being injured as a result of enemy action. More than 400 American military women lost their lives.

In early 1941 the air force created its first African American unit, the 99th Pursuit Squadron. The pilots trained in Tuskegee, Alabama, and became known as the Tuskegee Airmen. In April 1943, after General Davis urged the military to put African Americans into combat as soon as possible, the squadron was sent to the Mediterranean. Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., General Davis’s son, commanded the squadron and helped win the battle of Anzio in Italy.

In late 1943 Colonel Davis took command of three new squadrons that had trained at Tuskegee. Known as the 332nd Fighter Group, these squadrons were ordered to protect American bombers as they flew to their targets. The 332nd Fighter Group flew 200 such missions and did not lose a single member to enemy aircraft.

African Americans also performed well in the army. The all-African American 761st Tank Battalion was commended for its service during the Battle of the Bulge. Although the

Pushing for “Double V” Many African American leaders combined patriotism with protest. In 1941 the National Urban League asked its members to encourage African Americans to join the war effort. It also asked them to make plans for building a better society in the United States after the war. The Pittsburgh Courier, a leading African American newspaper, launched the “Double V” campaign. The campaign urged African Americans to support the war to achieve a double victory—over both Hitler’s racism abroad and the racism at home.

In this 1943 photo, Nancy Nesbit checks with the control tower from her plane at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, where the Women’s Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron of the U.S. Army trained.

A doctor and an army nurse tend to a patient at a U.S. Army hospital in Leyte in the Philippines.

Analyzing VISUALS

1. Inferring Why might the military have been reluctant to allow women in combat?

2. Evaluating What does the photo above suggest about conditions in military hospitals?
military did not end all segregation during the war, it did integrate military bases in 1943 and steadily expanded the role of African Americans within the armed forces. These successes paved the way for President Truman’s decision to fully integrate the military in 1948.

**Other Minorities in the Military** Japanese Americans were not allowed to serve in the military at first. As the war progressed, however, second-generation Japanese Americans served in the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Almost half had been in internment camps in the American Southwest. Together these units became the most decorated in the history of the United States military. Many Mexican Americans had joined the National Guard during the 1930s and served on the front lines. Most minorities were allowed only in noncombat positions, such as kitchen workers. Native Americans, who were regarded as fierce warriors, were an exception to that policy. One-third of all healthy Native American men aged 18–50 served during the war.

**Women Join the Armed Forces**

Women joined the armed forces, as they had done during World War I. The army enlisted women for the first time, although they were barred from combat. Many jobs in the army were administrative and clerical. Assigning women to these jobs made more men available for combat.

Congress first allowed women in the military in May 1942, when it established the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and appointed Oveta Culp Hobby, an official with the War Department, to serve as its first director. Although pleased about the establishment of the WAAC, many women were unhappy that it was an auxiliary corps and not part of the regular army. A little over a year later, the army replaced the WAAC with the **Women’s Army Corps** (WAC). Director Hobby was assigned the rank of colonel. “You have a debt and a date,” Hobby explained to those training to be the nation’s first women officers. “A debt to democracy, a date with destiny.”

As early as 1939, pilot Jackie Cochran had written to Eleanor Roosevelt suggesting that women pilots could aid the war effort. The following year, Nancy Love wrote to army officials to suggest that women be allowed to deliver planes. (The air force was not yet a separate branch of the military.) Training programs began in 1942; the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs) began the next year. Although the WASPs were no longer needed after 1944, about 300 women pilots made more than 12,000 deliveries of 77 different kinds of planes.

The Coast Guard, the navy, and the marines quickly followed the army and set up their own women’s units. In addition to serving in these new organizations, another 68,000 women served as nurses in the army and navy.

**Summarizing** How did the status of women and African Americans in the armed forces change during the war?