

Mobilizing for Defense

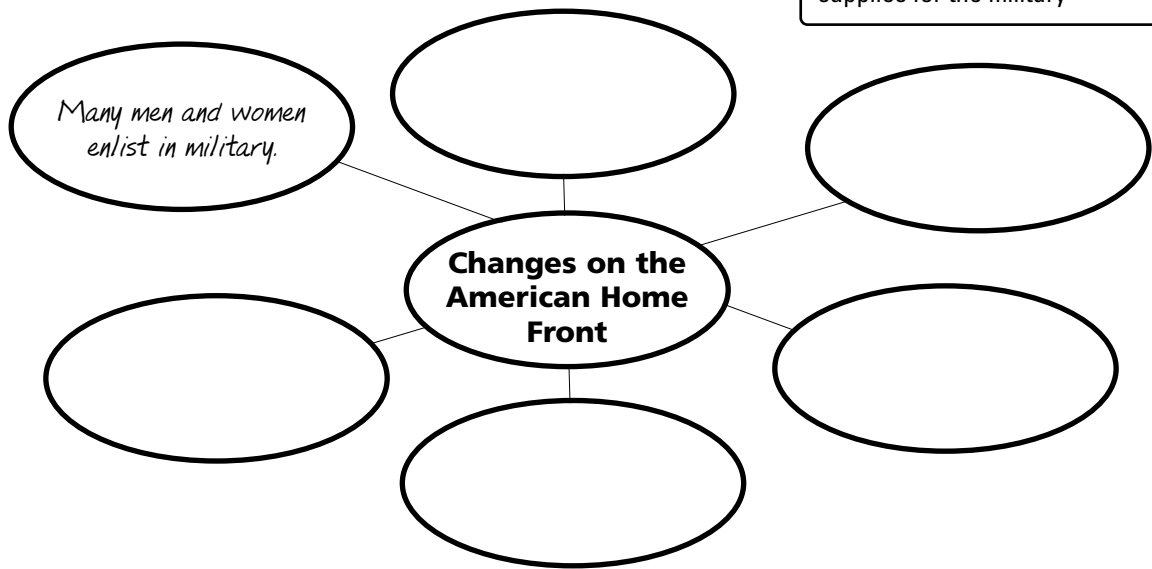
BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you learned the reasons why the United States entered World War II.

In this section, you will learn how Americans joined in the war effort.

AS YOU READ

Use the web diagram below to take notes on the changes on the American home front during World War II.



TERMS AND NAMES

George Marshall Army chief of staff during World War II

Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) Women volunteers who served in non-combat positions

A. Philip Randolph Important African-American labor leader

Manhattan Project Secret research project that resulted in the Atomic Bomb

Office of Price Administration (OPA) Agency of the federal government that fought inflation

War Production Board (WPB) Government agency that decided which companies would make war materials and how to distribute raw materials

rationing Restricting the amount of food and other goods people may buy during wartime to assure adequate supplies for the military

Americans Join the War Effort

How did Americans react to Pearl Harbor?

The Japanese had expected Americans to react with fear and despair to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Instead, Americans reacted with rage. "Remember Pearl Harbor" became a rallying cry. Five million men volunteered for military service.

But fighting a war on two fronts—in Europe and in the Pacific—required huge numbers of soldiers. Another ten million men were drafted. New soldiers received eight weeks of basic training. Then they were officially "GIs," a nickname coming from the term "Government Issue."

To free more men for combat, Army Chief of Staff General **George Marshall** suggested using women for noncombat military tasks. Congress created the **Women's Auxiliary Army Corps**

(**WAAC**) in 1942. About 25,000 women served in the military. They did not receive the same pay or benefits as men.

Men and women from minority groups also served in World War II. They included Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Some African Americans had mixed feelings about defending a country where they were often segregated and denied the basic rights of citizenship. But they also knew they would be worse off under any of the Axis powers. More than a million African Americans served, but in racially segregated units. These units were not even allowed into combat until the last year of the war.

1. How did women and minorities join in the war effort?

A Production Miracle

What changes took place in American life?

The nation's factories quickly switched to war production. Automobile factories made planes and tanks. Pencil-makers turned out bomb parts. Shipyards and defense plants expanded. They produced warships with amazing speed.

About 18 million workers kept these war industries going. Some 6 million new factory workers were women. At first, industry did not want to hire women. Men feared women would not be able to handle the heavy work. Once women proved they could do the work, factories hired them. But they paid women only 60 percent as much as men.

Before the war, most defense contractors had refused to hire African Americans. **A. Philip Randolph**, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was an important African-American labor leader. He threatened to have African Americans march on Washington to demand an end to this discrimination. Roosevelt feared such a march. He issued an *executive order* banning discrimination in defense industries.

Even Hollywood contributed to the war effort with patriotic films. They also made escapist romances and comedies. Public hunger for news of the war made magazines and radio more popular.

The government hired scientists to develop new weapons and medicines. They made improvements in radar and *sonar*; and in "miracle drugs" like penicillin. The government also set up the **Manhattan Project**, which developed the atomic bomb.

2. How did the war change life at home?

The Federal Government Takes Control

How did the federal government get involved in the economy?

The federal government was worried about economic issues. Congress wanted to prevent the high inflation that had occurred during World War I. Congress set up the **Office of Price Administration (OPA)**. It successfully fought inflation by "freezing," or not increasing, prices on most goods. Congress also raised taxes. The **War Production Board (WPB)** decided which companies would make war materials and how to distribute raw materials.

The OPA also set up a system of **rationing**. Families were issued coupons to be used for buying scarce items, such as meat and gasoline. Most Americans cooperated with the rationing system. They also bought *war bonds* and collected goods, such as tin cans and paper, that could be recycled, or reused, for the war effort.

3. How did the federal government regulate American life during the war?
