

## Guide to Reading

### Main Idea

World War II placed tremendous demands on Americans at home and led to new challenges for all Americans.

### Key Terms and Names

Rosie the Riveter, A. Philip Randolph, Sunbelt, zoot suit, rationing, victory garden, E bond

### Reading Strategy

**Categorizing** As you read about the challenges facing Americans on the home front, complete a graphic organizer listing opportunities for women and African Americans before and after the war. Also evaluate what progress still needed to be made after the war.

	Opportunities		
	Before War	After War	Still Needed
Women			
African Americans			

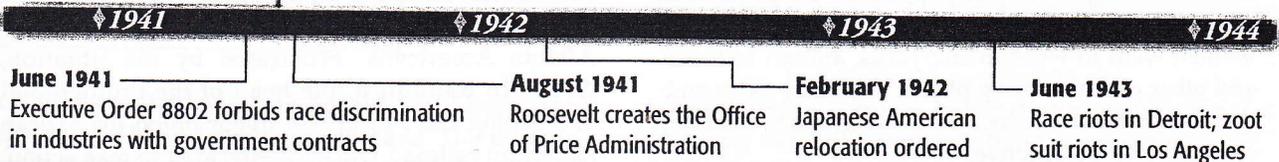
### Reading Objectives

- **Describe** how the wartime economy created opportunities for women and minorities.
- **Discuss** how Americans coped with shortages and rapidly rising prices.

### Section Theme

**Civic Rights and Responsibilities** To win the war, American citizens at home made countless changes in work patterns and lifestyles.

### Preview of Events



"Rosie the Riveter" symbolized new roles for women

## ★ An American Story ★

Laura Briggs was a young woman living on a farm in Idaho when World War II began. As with many other Americans, the war completely changed her outlook on life:

“When I was growing up, it was very much depression times. . . . As farm prices [during the war] began to get better and better, farm times became good times. . . . We and most other farmers went from a tarpaper shack to a new frame house with indoor plumbing. Now we had an electric stove instead of a wood-burning one, and running water at the sink. . . . The war made many changes in our town. I think the most important is that aspirations changed. People suddenly had the idea, ‘Hey I can reach that. I can have that. I can do that. I could even send my kid to college if I wanted to.’”

—quoted in *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front*

## Women and Minorities Gain Ground

As American troops fought their first battles against the Germans and Japanese, the war began to dramatically change American society at home. In contrast to the devastation the war brought to large parts of Europe and Asia, World War II had a positive effect on American society. The war finally put an end to the Great Depression. Mobilizing the economy created almost 19 million new jobs and nearly doubled the average family’s income.

When the war began, American defense factories wanted to hire white men. With so many men in the military, there simply were not enough white men to fill all of the jobs. Under pressure to produce, employers began to recruit women and minorities.

**Women in the Defense Plants** During the Depression, many people believed married women should not work outside the home, especially if it meant taking jobs away from men trying to support their families. Most women who did work were young, single, and employed in traditional female jobs. The wartime labor shortage, however, forced factories to recruit married women to do industrial jobs that traditionally had been reserved for men.

Although the government hired nearly 4 million women for mostly clerical jobs, it was the women in the factories who captured the public's imagination. The great symbol of the campaign to hire women was "**Rosie the Riveter**," a character from a popular song by the Four Vagabonds. The lyrics told of Rosie, who worked in a factory while her boyfriend served in the marines. Images of Rosie appeared on posters, in newspapers, and in magazines. Eventually 2.5 million women went to work in shipyards, aircraft factories, and other manufacturing plants. For many older middle-class women like Inez Sauer, working in a factory changed their perspective:

"I learned that just because you're a woman and have never worked is no reason you can't learn. The job really broadened me. . . . I had always been in a shell; I'd always been protected. But at Boeing I found a freedom and an independence I had never known. After the war I could never go back to playing bridge again, being a clubwoman. . . . when I knew there were things you could use your mind for. The war changed my life completely."

—quoted in *Eyewitness to World War II*

Although most women left the factories after the war, their success permanently changed American attitudes about women in the workplace.

**African Americans Demand War Work** Although factories were hiring women, they resisted hiring African Americans. Frustrated by the situation, **A. Philip Randolph**, the head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters—a major union for African American railroad workers—decided to take action.

He informed President Roosevelt that he was organizing "from ten to fifty thousand [African Americans] to march on Washington in the interest of securing jobs . . . in national defense and . . . integration into the military and naval forces."

In response, Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, on June 25, 1941. The order declared, "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin." To enforce the order, the president created the Fair Employment Practices Commission—the first civil rights agency established by the federal government since the Reconstruction era.

### **Mexicans Become Farmworkers**

The wartime economy needed workers in many different areas. To help farmers in the Southwest overcome the labor shortage, the government introduced the **Bracero Program** in 1942. *Bracero* is Spanish for worker. The federal government arranged for Mexican farmworkers to help in the harvest. Over 200,000 Mexicans came to the United States to help harvest

## Profiles IN HISTORY

### **The Navajo Code Talkers** 1942–1945

When American marines stormed an enemy beach, they used radios to communicate. Using radios, however, meant that the Japanese could intercept and translate the messages. In the midst of the battle, however, there was no time to use a code machine. Acting upon the suggestion of Philip Johnston, an engineer who had lived on a Navajo reservation as a child, the marines recruited Navajos to serve as "code talkers."

The Navajo language was a "hidden language"—it had no written alphabet and was known only to the Navajo and a few missionaries and anthropologists. The Navajo recruits developed a code using words from their own language to represent military terms. For example, the Navajo word *jay-sho*, or "buzzard," was code for bomber; *lotso*, or "whale," meant battleship; and *na-ma-si*, or "potatoes," stood for grenades.

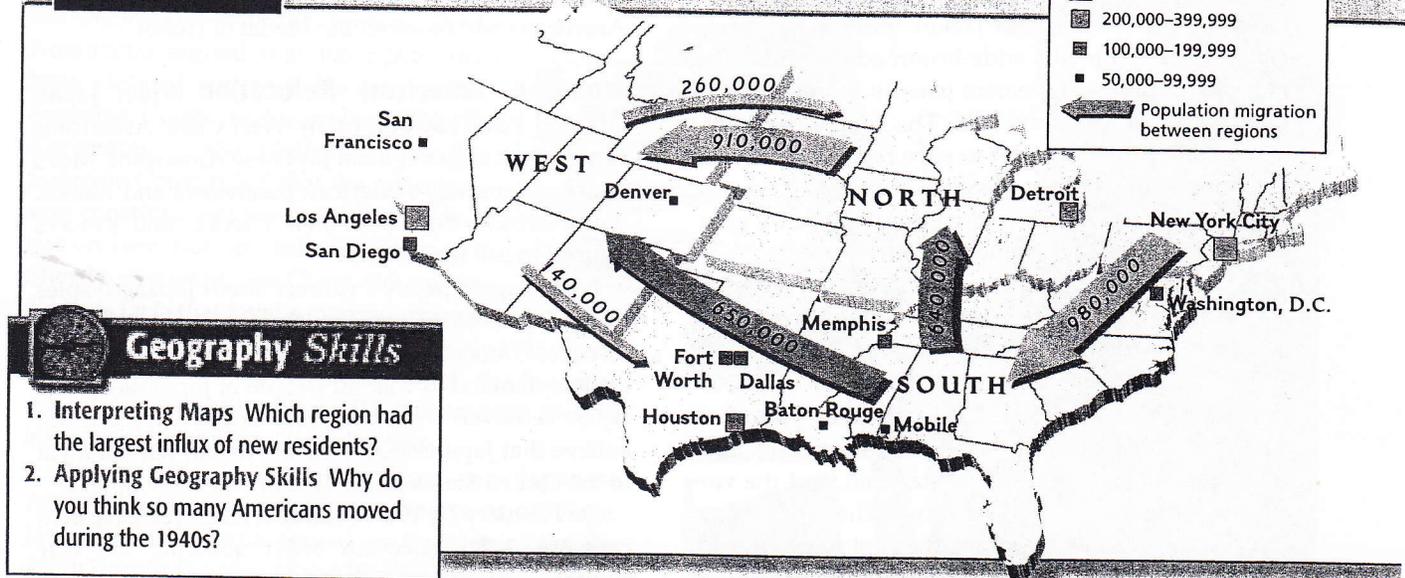
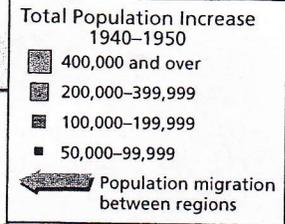
Code talkers proved invaluable in combat. They could relay a message in



minutes that would have taken a code machine operator hours to encipher and transmit. At the battle of Iwo Jima, code talkers transmitted more than 800 messages during the first 48 hours as the marines struggled to get ashore under intense bombardment.

Over 400 Navajo served in the marine corps as code talkers. Sworn to secrecy, their mission was not revealed until many years after the war. In 2001 Congress awarded the code talkers the Congressional Gold Medal to recognize their unique contribution to the war effort.

## Migration in the United States, 1940–1950



### Geography Skills

1. **Interpreting Maps** Which region had the largest influx of new residents?
2. **Applying Geography Skills** Why do you think so many Americans moved during the 1940s?

fruit and vegetables in the Southwest. Many also helped to build and maintain railroads. The Bracero Program continued until 1964. Migrant farmworkers became an important part of the Southwest's agricultural system.

**Reading Check** **Describing** How did mobilizing the economy help end the Depression?

## A Nation on the Move

The wartime economy created millions of new jobs, but the Americans who wanted these jobs did not always live nearby. To get to the jobs, 15 million Americans moved during the war. Although the assembly plants of the Midwest and the shipyards of the Northeast attracted many workers, most Americans headed west and south in search of jobs.

Taken together, the growth of southern California and the expansion of cities in the Deep South created a new industrial region—the *Sunbelt*. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution began in the United States, the South and West led the way in manufacturing and urbanization.

**The Housing Crisis** Perhaps the most difficult task facing cities with war industries was deciding where to put the thousands of new workers. Many people had to live in tents and tiny trailers. To help solve the housing crisis, the federal government allocated over \$1.2 billion to build public housing, schools, and community centers during the war.

Although prefabricated government housing had tiny rooms, thin walls, poor heating, and

almost no privacy, it was better than no housing at all. Nearly two million people lived in government-built housing during the war.

**Racism Explodes Into Violence** African Americans began to leave the South in great numbers during World War I, but this “**Great Migration**,” as historians refer to it, slowed during the Depression. When jobs in war factories opened up for African Americans during World War II, the Great Migration resumed. When African Americans arrived in the crowded cities of the North and West, however, they were often met with suspicion and intolerance. Sometimes these attitudes led to violence.

The worst racial violence of the war erupted in Detroit on Sunday, June 20, 1943. The weather that day was sweltering. To cool off, nearly 100,000 people crowded into Belle Isle, a park on the Detroit River. Fights erupted between gangs of white and African American teenage girls. These fights triggered others, and a full-scale riot erupted across the city. By the time the violence ended, 25 African Americans and 9 whites had been killed. Despite the appalling violence in Detroit, African American leaders remained committed to their Double V campaign.

**The Zoot Suit Riots** Wartime prejudice erupted elsewhere as well. In southern California, racial tensions became entangled with juvenile delinquency. Across the nation, crimes committed by young people rose dramatically. In Los Angeles, racism against Mexican Americans and the fear of juvenile crime became linked because of the “zoot suit.”

A zoot suit had very baggy, pleated pants and an overstuffed, knee-length jacket with wide lapels. Accessories included a wide-brimmed hat and a long key chain. Zoot-suit wearers usually wore their hair long, gathered into a ducktail. The zoot suit angered many Americans. In order to save fabric for the war, most men wore a "victory suit"—a suit with no vest, no cuffs, a short jacket, and narrow lapels. By comparison, the zoot suit seemed unpatriotic.

In California, Mexican American teenagers adopted the zoot suit. In June 1943, after hearing rumors that zoot suiters had attacked several sailors, 2,500 soldiers and sailors stormed into Mexican American neighborhoods in Los Angeles. They attacked Mexican American teenagers, cut their hair, and tore off their zoot suits. The police did not intervene, and the violence continued for several days. The city of Los Angeles responded by banning the zoot suit.

Racial hostility against Mexican Americans did not deter them from joining the war effort. Approximately 500,000 Hispanic Americans served in the armed forces during the war. Most—about 400,000—were Mexican American. Another 65,000 were from Puerto Rico. They fought in Europe, North Africa, and the

Pacific, and by the end of the war, 17 Mexican Americans had received the Medal of Honor.

**Japanese American Relocation** When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, many West Coast Americans turned their anger against Japanese Americans. Mobs attacked Japanese American businesses and homes. Banks would not cash their checks, and grocers refused to sell them food.

Newspapers printed rumors about Japanese spies in the Japanese American community. Members of Congress, mayors, and many business and labor leaders demanded that all people of Japanese ancestry be removed from the West Coast. They did not believe that Japanese Americans would remain loyal to the United States in the face of war with Japan.

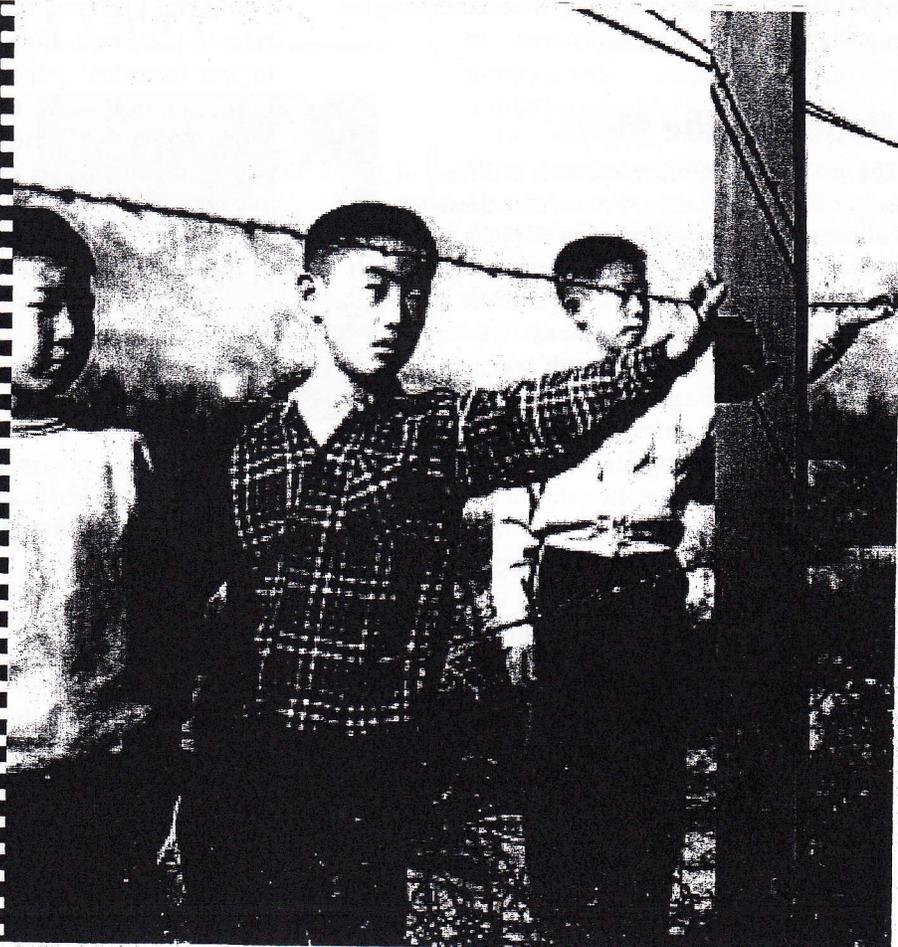
On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt gave in to pressure and signed an order allowing the War Department to declare any part of the United States to be a military zone and to remove anybody they wanted from that zone. Secretary of War Henry Stimson declared most of the West Coast a military zone and ordered all people of Japanese ancestry to evacuate to 10 internment camps.

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

### WOMEN IN HISTORY

#### BEHIND BARBED WIRE

As wartime hysteria mounted, the U.S. government rounded up 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry—77,000 of whom were American citizens—and forced them into internment camps in early 1942. Given just days to sell their homes, businesses, and personal property, whole families were marched under military guard to rail depots, then sent to remote, inhospitable sites where they lived in cramped barracks surrounded by barbed wire and watchtowers. By 1945, with the tide of war turned, most had been released, but they did not get an official apology or financial compensation until 1988.



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Not all Japanese Americans accepted the relocation without protest. Fred Korematsu argued that his rights had been violated and took his case to the Supreme Court. In December 1944, in *Korematsu v. the United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that the relocation was constitutional because it was based not on race, but on "military urgency." Shortly afterward, the Court did rule in *Ex Parte Endo* that loyal American citizens could not be held against their will. In early 1945, therefore, the government began to release the Japanese Americans from the camps.  (See page 963 for more information on *Korematsu v. the United States*.)

Despite the fears and rumors, no Japanese American was ever tried for espionage or sabotage. Japanese Americans served as translators for the army during the war in the Pacific. The all-Japanese 100th Battalion, later integrated into the 442nd **Regimental Combat Team**, was the most highly decorated unit in World War II.

After the war, the **Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)** tried to help Japanese Americans who had lost property during the relocation. In 1988 President Reagan apologized to Japanese Americans on behalf of the U.S. government and signed legislation granting \$20,000 to each surviving Japanese American who had been interned.

 **Reading Check** **Comparing** Why did racism lead to violence in Detroit and Los Angeles in 1943?

## Daily Life in Wartime America

Housing problems and racial tensions were serious difficulties during the war, but mobilization strained society in many other ways as well. Prices rose, materials were in short supply, and the question of how to pay for it all loomed ominously over the entire war effort.

### ECONOMICS

**Wage and Price Controls** As the economy mobilized, the president worried about inflation. Both wages and prices began to rise quickly during the war because of the high demand for workers and raw materials. To stabilize both wages and prices, Roosevelt created the **Office of Price Administration (OPA)** and the **Office of Economic Stabilization (OES)**. The OES regulated wages and the price of farm products. The OPA regulated all other prices. Despite some problems with labor unions, the OPA and OES were able to keep inflation under control.



### **Picturing History**

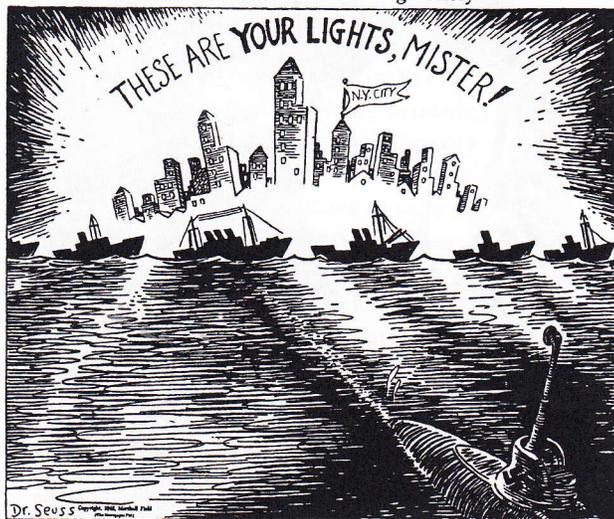
**Rationing Products** War rationing affected everyone. Women painted seams on their legs to make it appear they were wearing stockings, because silk was needed to make parachutes instead of stockings. Why was rationing so vital to the war effort?

While the OPA and OES worked to control inflation, the War Labor Board (WLB) tried to prevent strikes that might endanger the war effort. In support, most American unions issued a "no strike pledge," and instead of striking, asked the WLB to serve as a mediator in wage disputes. By the end of the war, the WLB had helped to settle over 17,000 disputes involving more than 12 million workers.

**Blue Points, Red Points** The demand for raw materials and supplies created shortages. The OPA began rationing, or limiting the availability of, many products to make sure enough were available for military use. Meat and sugar were rationed to provide enough for the army. To save gasoline and rubber, gasoline was rationed, driving was restricted, and the speed limit was set at 35 miles per hour.

Every month each household would pick up a book of ration coupons. Blue coupons, called blue points, controlled processed foods. Red coupons, or red points, controlled meats, fats, and oils. Other coupons controlled items such as coffee and sugar. When people bought food, they also had to give enough coupon points to cover their purchases.

Illumination for the Shooting Gallery



### Analyzing Political Cartoons

**Turning Off the Lights** Early in the war, lights from eastern cities silhouetted ships along the east coast, making them easy targets for German submarines. Americans were asked to turn out lights or put up dark curtains. What point is the cartoon making to Americans?

**Victory Gardens and Scrap Drives** Americans also planted gardens to produce more food for the war effort. Any area of land might become a garden—backyards, schoolyards, city parks, and empty lots. The government encouraged *victory gardens* by praising them in film reels, pamphlets, and official statements.

Certain raw materials were so vital to the war effort that the government organized scrap drives. Americans collected spare rubber, tin, aluminum, and steel. They donated pots, tires, tin cans, car bumpers, broken radiators, and rusting bicycles. Oils and fats were so important to the production of explosives that the WPB set up fat-collecting stations. Americans would exchange bacon grease and meat

drippings for extra ration coupons. The scrap drives were very successful and one more reason for the success of American industry during the war.

**Paying for the War** The United States had to pay for all of the equipment and supplies it needed. The federal government spent more than \$300 billion during World War II—more money than it had spent from Washington’s administration to the end of Franklin Roosevelt’s second term.

To raise money, the government raised taxes. Because most Americans opposed large tax increases, Congress refused to raise taxes as high as Roosevelt requested. As a result, the extra taxes collected covered only 45 percent of the cost of the war.

To raise the rest of the money, the government issued war bonds. When Americans bought bonds, they were loaning money to the government. In exchange for the money, the government promised that the bonds could be cashed in at some future date for the purchase price plus interest. The most common bonds were **E bonds**, which sold for \$18.75 and could be redeemed for \$25.00 after 10 years. Individual Americans bought nearly \$50 billion worth of war bonds. Banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions bought the rest—over \$100 billion worth of bonds.

**“V” for Victory** Despite the hardships, the overwhelming majority of Americans believed the war had to be fought. Although the war brought many changes to the United States, most Americans remained united behind one goal—winning the war.

**Reading Check Evaluating** How did rationing affect daily life in the United States? How did it affect the economy?

## SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

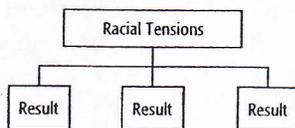
- Define:** Sunbelt, rationing, victory garden.
- Identify:** Rosie the Riveter, A. Philip Randolph, zoot suit, E bond.
- Explain** how the federal government expanded during the war.

### Reviewing Themes

- Civic Rights and Responsibilities** What changes did American citizens and industry have to make to adapt to the war?

### Critical Thinking

- Evaluating** If you had been a government official during the war, how would you have proposed paying for the war?
- Categorizing** Use a graphic organizer like the one below to list the results of increased racial tensions during the war.



### Analyzing Visuals

- Examining Maps** Study the map on page 627. Which cities had populations over 400,000?
- Analyzing Photographs** Study the photograph on page 628. Why were Japanese Americans interned?

### Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Write a newspaper editorial urging fellow citizens to conserve resources so that these resources can be diverted to the war effort.

