

World War II: The Home Front

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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Table of Contents

Introduction	iv
Lecture Notes	S1
Student Handouts	H1
Backwards Planning Curriculum:	
World War II: The Home Front Backwards Planning Activities.....	1
Project #1: The Impact of the War in Your Town.....	3
Project #2: World War II Propaganda Filmmaking	8
Project #3: Letters from the Home Front	13
World War II: The Home Front Multiple-Choice Quiz	19
World War II: The Home Front Multiple-Choice Quiz Answer Key	24

How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
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World War II: The Home Front Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- World War II was a major political, social, and economic event of the 20th century
- The U.S. government attempted to stay neutral in the early days of the conflict
- U.S. entry into the war caused major changes to and disruptions in citizens' lives
- WWII allowed the U.S. government to become greatly involved in and have more control over citizens' daily lives
- The war caused significant economic changes that ended the Great Depression and solidified America's position as the world's leading economic power
- Some American citizens were singled out for prejudicial treatment because of race or nationality; members of such groups still sought to prove their patriotism and loyalty
- While the war caused significant hardship and demanded sacrifice, it united the nation in an unprecedented and unrivaled way

Essential questions:

- How did America initially respond to the events leading to WWII?
- How did the war change the American home front, both culturally and socially?
- How did the war transform the U.S. economy both immediately and in the long term?
- How did the war affect minority groups during the period?
- What effect did the war have on American industry?
- How did the war unify America in a common purpose?

Learning experiences and instruction:

Students will need to know...	Students will need to be able to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Events leading to U.S. entry into WWII 2. Early policies established by the U.S. government prior to and immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor 3. What impact the war had on ethnic groups in the U.S. 4. Government regulations and policies that affected the economy 5. What methods the federal government used regarding psychological mobilization (propaganda) 6. How the government and citizens dealt with the shortage of staple goods and allocation of resources 7. Government policies that helped returning servicemen adjust to civilian life 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and interpret primary source documents from the WWII era 2. Make conclusions and inferences regarding various programs, writings, and philosophies from the era 3. Identify key persons involved in developing economic and political policies during the era 4. Recognize emerging trends in society and culture during the first half of the 1940s 5. Determine how the war affected the development of government policy and philosophy which continued into the Cold War 6. Determine how the war affected American life in the long term (beyond the early 1940s)

Teaching and learning activities that will equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

- An overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of questions posed in the PowerPoint presentation
- Introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Providing students with primary source materials from which they will complete the unit's related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and cooperative projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Delivering feedback and evaluations on projects and research reports
- Student creation and presentation of their projects
- A posttest on the presentation, made up of multiple-choice questions and one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: The Impact of the War in Your Town

Overview:

In this lesson, students research the World War II–era defense industry as well as government programs from the era that directly affected their community, and speculate on the impact and effectiveness of those projects regarding the war effort overall. Using their research, student groups create blogs in which they analyze those projects and make conclusions as to their importance in helping the war effort as well as boosting the local economy. If desired, you may publicize the blogs so that persons in the community with memories of the World War II era can post to them.

Objectives:

Having completed this lesson, students will have:

- Understood the impact of the war on their local community and local economy
- Developed research skills targeted at gathering information on their local community
- Synthesized this information and made conclusions regarding the effect of the war economy and war policy on their town or geographic region
- Made conclusions about the long-term impact of the effect of the war economy and war policy on their community to the present day

Time required:

Five to seven class periods, depending on time allotted for student research of local history and economics

Materials:

Computer (s) with Internet access, access to a blog-hosting site, sources of local historical information (if available), scanner or digital camera (if desired), tape recorder or pen and paper for interviewing local people with memories of the WWII home front (if desired and available); scanner for adding pictures to blog (if available and desired)

Methodology:

Begin the lesson by discussing how the war impacted local communities and economies during the early 1940s. It may be helpful for the class to review the slides in the PowerPoint presentation that deal with programs in which individual citizens across the country would have participated, such as women in the war effort (slides 23–28), scrap drives (40–41), sale of war bonds (47–48), rationing (50–51), Victory Gardens (53), or other slides you deem suitable. In