

World War II Portraits of Service: Why I Served



*WACs at basic training at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, March 6, 1945.
(National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)*

Created through a partnership with the Veterans Legacy Program



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National Cemetery Administration

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TEACHING LITERACY
TH THROUGH HISTORY



World War II Portraits of Service: Why I Served

BY JOE WELCH AND REBECCA LUEBKER (CREATED 2024)

Joe Welch, the 2018 National History Teacher of the Year, has taught middle and junior high school American history in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for seventeen years. Rebecca Luebker, the 2017 Arkansas History Teacher of the Year, has taught American history and government in Arkansas for eighteen years.

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Five 45-minute classes

UNIT OVERVIEW

This lesson plan is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on primary source materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate documents of historical significance.

The five lessons in this unit explore how Americans who served in segregated and specialized units during World War II described their enlistment. It investigates these stories against the backdrop of their civilian experiences, which included racial or gender discrimination. Students will read and view materials created by or about Veterans and service members who served in 761st Tank Battalion, in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, as code talkers, and in the Women's Army Corps. They will investigate newspaper articles, oral histories and interviews, correspondence, and visual materials. You will assess students' understanding as demonstrated through a poster or creative written project.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Veterans and service members explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinguished the enlistment experience of service members who served in segregated and specialized units from the enlistment experience of other Americans?
- What distinctive skills from civilian life did service people in specialized roles bring to their positions?



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.8: Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.7: Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account.

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Mary McLeod Bethune, "We, Too, Are Americans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1942. Available online at newspapers.com, newspapers.com/article/the-pittsburgh-courier-we-too-are-amer/1152250/.
- Activity Sheet 1: John "Johnny" Holmes interviewed by Larry Crowe on December 12, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, thehistorymakers.org/biography/sgt-johnny-holmes. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker. Some repeated phrases in this interview have been deleted in the transcript for readability.
- Activity Sheet 2: Johnnie Stevens interviewed by Carol Fowler and National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey, April 5, 2002. Transcript by Rebecca Luebker. Johnnie Stevens Collection, National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey (Center for US War Veterans Oral Histories), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. loc.gov/item/afc2001001.04127/.
- Activity Sheet 3: George "E. G." McConnell interviewed by Robert von Hasseln and Wayne Clarke, May 24, 2001. Transcript by Barb Tyler. New York State Military Museum. Video and transcript available on YouTube: youtube.com/watch?v=TjbbXuvl4to.
- Source 2: War Relocation Authority Questionnaire titled "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry," Form DSS 304A, 1943. Digitized copy available from the Densho Encyclopedia, encyclopedia.densho.org/media/encyc-psms/en-denshopd-p72-00004-1.pdf.
- Source 3: Ted Fujioka, "This Is the Army: Foo Finds Soldiering Fun If One Has a Purpose," *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, September 4, 1943, *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress, loc.gov/resource/sn84024756/1943-09-04/ed-1/?sp=4.
- Source 4: Hiro Higuchi ("Dad") to his wife, Hisako (Watanabe) Higuchi ("Mom"), April 7, 1944, Hiro Higuchi Papers, University of Hawai'i in Manoa, Archives & Manuscripts Department, manoa.hawaii.edu/library/wp-content/uploads/archives/mss/aja/higuchi/april_1944/h440403.pdf.



- Source 5: Susumu “Sus” Ito interviewed by Stephen Fugita on July 3, 1998, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0, Densho Digital Repository, ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-29-9/.
- Activity Sheet 4: Evidence-Based Responses–Why They Served
- Activity Sheet 5: Before You Read
- Source 6: Louis Levi Oakes Interview by Joseph R. Messineo, October 9, 2017. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker. Louis Levi Oakes Collection (AFC/2001/001/116147), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.116147/.
- Source 7: Clarence Wolf Guts Interview by KOLC TFVOglala Lakota College Television, October 17, 2011. Available on YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=-ET-gl8Fp9E.
- Source 8: Chester Nez Interview by Don Chalmers Ford on October 1, 2003. Chester Nez Collection (AFC/2001/001/54891), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.54891/.
- Source 9: Haddon Codynah Interview by Joe L. Todd for the Oklahoma Historical Society, April 8, 1987, printed in “Veteran Recalls Being a Code Talker during War,” *Bartlesville (OK) Examiner-Enterprise*, November 16, 2015, examiner-enterprise.com/story/news/military/2015/11/16/veteran-recalls-being-code-talker/27352040007/.
- Activity Sheet 6: While Reading
- Activity Sheet 7: Compare and Contrast
- Source 10: Women’s Army Corps Recruitment Poster, *Are You a Girl with a Star-Spangled Heart?*, art by Bradshaw Crandell, Recruiting Publicity Bureau, US Army, Washington DC, 1943, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, loc.gov/item/90712746/.
- Source 11: Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps Advertisement, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1943, page 28, Google News Archive, news.google.com/newspapers?id=6zcxAAAAIBAJ&sjid=AWoDAAAAIBAJ&pg=2639%2C4750246.
- Source 12: Alice Tetsuko Kono Interview by James Tetsuji Tanabe, March 8, 2004. Transcribed by Joe Welch. Military Intelligence Service Veterans Club of Hawaii, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.18094/.
- Source 13: Millie L. D. Veasey Interview by Hermann Trojanowski, June 25, 2000, Millie Dunn Veasey Collection, Women Veterans Historical Project, Gateway, UNC Greensboro, gateway.uncg.edu/islandora/object/wvhp%3A20826/transcript.
- Source 14: Sara Whalen Interview by Joseph Welch (grandson), September 11, 2016. Courtesy of Joseph Welch’s personal collection.
- Activity Sheet 8: Evidence-Based Responses–Why They Served
- Source 15: World War II Recruiting Poster, *“I Want You for the U.S. Army,”* artwork by James Montgomery Flagg, Office of War Information, Washington DC, [1941], National Archives, 513533.
- Activity Sheet 9: Summary Brainstorm List
- Activity Sheet 10: Recruiting Poster Template
- Source 16: Excerpt from Charles Collins Aldridge, “The Skirted Soldier,” 1943, Alabama State Council of Defense, Alabama Department of Archives and History, digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/voices/id/3921/rec/1.
- Activity Sheet 11: Project Planning
 - o Where to Start Your Research



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

BUILDING THE US MILITARY IN WORLD WAR II: SERVICE AND CONSCRIPTION

by Kara Dixon Vuic, Texas Christian University

When war began in Asia and Europe in the late 1930s, most Americans hoped that the conflicts would remain local and end quickly. But as violence spread and the world moved ever closer to a global war, US efforts both to remain neutral and to supply the Allies proved increasingly difficult to maintain. A war-weary public hesitant to become involved in another world war resisted government calls to mobilize industry and the military. But as Europe fell to Nazi Germany's rapid advances, the United States began to prepare for what increasingly seemed inevitable.

US mobilization for World War II marked the most expansive and extensive growth of the federal government to date. As the wartime state expanded its reach into the daily lives of Americans, the nation grappled with questions about the meanings of service and conscription in a democracy, as well as the extent of the government's power to manage guns and butter. Although Americans had long prized the ideal of citizen-soldiers who willingly rose up to defend the nation when necessary and then seamlessly transitioned back to civilian society, the demands of total war ultimately relied on conscription to meet personnel needs and to balance the complex, interwoven needs of industry and the military.

Hotly debated and contested, the Selective Service and Training Act (SSTA), signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in September 1940, marked the nation's first peacetime draft. Like all military conscriptions, this one sparked widespread public debate about who served and in what capacities, about who decided where and how individuals could best be utilized, and about how best to balance military and civilian needs in a total war. In its power to raise the military, Congress set the parameters of service, requiring men 21 to 35, then 18 to 64, to register, while outlining exemptions and deferments for marital, parental, religious, and occupational status. As they had in World War I, local communities operated Selective Service, through 6443 boards of volunteers who classified, selected, and sent inductees to the military for training. Although public opinion of the draft's fairness declined throughout the war, even at the lowest point of public confidence, most Americans thought the demands of conscription were distributed fairly.

Ten of the sixteen million Americans who served in uniform did so as draftees, and most of those served in the Army. Volunteers often signed up in the hope of exercising some control over their branch of service. The attack on Pearl Harbor prompted the war's greatest rush of enlistees, but the government ended voluntary enlistments a year later so that the military could better determine where and how individuals served. Those who volunteered early on, or volunteered to serve as officers, were motivated by a spectrum of reasons, including patriotism, revenge, opportunity, adventure, economic security, and a widely held understanding that wartime service was a man's obligation. Nearly three-quarters of military members served overseas, with half of those troops serving in battle zones. Even in battle zones, the majority of American troops served in supply and support positions, as opposed to on the front lines of battle.

Only men were obligated to register or serve, and so the 350,000 women who joined the military all volunteered. Like men, they were motivated by a desire to contribute to the war effort, as well as to achieve a modicum of independence and adventure unavailable to many women of the era, to seek educational opportunities, and to develop work skills.

While the SSTA forbid racial discrimination in mobilization, selection, and training, segregation prevailed in the military both at home and abroad. Many African Americans—as well as many Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Japanese Americans—hoped that military service would demonstrate their patriotism and sacrifice, while earning them equal rights at home. Military service also offered opportunities for occupational training, education, and mobility that were seldom available to marginalized groups of people.

Sharp divisions similarly separated service members and civilians at home. The Office of War Information, which sought to explain the war's aims to the American public, described manufacturing workers as “soldiers of production,” but many in uniform resented civilians' safety and good wartime wages. Some in the military and government called for a compulsory labor law or a broader mandatory national service that would ease the coordination of industrial and military needs, but neither effort proved successful. Despite complaints about workers who changed jobs to earn higher wages or who went on strike for better working conditions or wages, most Americans thought such extensive control represented an unnecessary and too great expansion of federal power.



At the war's end, the nation reintegrated a large Veteran population of 16.5 million men and women. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the GI Bill, offered them unprecedented education, training, and housing benefits that, while entrenching existing racial and gender divides, ultimately transformed the American middle class.

Kara Dixon Vuic is the LCpl. Benjamin W. Schmidt Professor of War, Conflict, and Society in 20th-Century America at Texas Christian University. She is the author of The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front Lines (2019) and Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War (2019) and the editor of The Routledge History of Gender, War, and the US Military (2018).



LESSON 1

AFRICAN AMERICAN ENLISTMENT: STORIES FROM THE 761ST TANK BATTALION

BY REBECCA LUEBKER (CREATED 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on the 761st Tank Battalion, with special emphasis on why the African American men serving in the unit made this commitment. Students will consider their enlistment against the backdrop of ongoing segregation and civil rights campaigns. They will read a newspaper article by a civil rights leader as well as three interviews with Veterans from the 761st.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

Rebecca Luebker, the 2017 Arkansas History Teacher of the Year, has taught American history and government in Arkansas for eighteen years.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore how Americans who served in segregated and specialized units during World War II described their enlistment.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did African American Veterans explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinguished the enlistment experience of African American soldiers from the enlistment experience of other Americans?

MATERIALS

- Source 1: Mary McLeod Bethune, "We, Too, Are Americans," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 17, 1942. Available online at newspapers.com, newspapers.com/article/the-pittsburgh-courier-we-too-are-amer/1152250/.
- Activity Sheet 1: John "Johnny" Holmes interviewed by Larry Crowe on December 12, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, thehistorymakers.org/biography/sgt-johnny-holmes. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker. Some repeated phrases in this interview have been deleted in the transcript for readability.
- Activity Sheet 2: Johnnie Stevens interviewed by Carol Fowler and National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey, April 5, 2002. Transcript by Rebecca Luebker. Johnnie Stevens Collection, National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey (Center for US War Veterans Oral Histories), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. loc.gov/item/afc2001001.04127/.
- Activity Sheet 3: George "E. G." McConnell interviewed by Robert von Hasseln and Wayne Clarke, May 24, 2001. Transcript by Barb Tyler. New York State Military Museum. Video and transcript available on YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=TjbbXuvl4to.



PROCEDURE

1. Students should have general information about the origins of World War II, which nations fought on which sides, and the history of segregation and civil rights. Explain the history of the 761st Tank Battalion: The men of the 761st Tank Battalion endured 183 days of continuous combat, destroyed German munition locations, and liberated the Gunskirchen concentration camp in Austria. This was a segregated African American unit; the Armed Forces were not desegregated until President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948, after World War II.
2. Begin with the motivating activity.
 - a. Distribute Source 1, a newspaper article written by civil rights leader Mary McLeod Bethune in January 1942 (soon after Pearl Harbor). It was published in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a Black newspaper founded in 1907. At the time she wrote this article, Bethune had already founded a college, led voter registration initiatives, and served as founding president of the National Council of Negro Women, and was serving at President Roosevelt's request as director of Negro Affairs within the National Youth Administration. She was a member of President Roosevelt's unofficial "Black Cabinet" and had the ear of Eleanor Roosevelt.
 - b. Divide students into small groups or pairs to read the article. Then have the class reconvene for a brief class discussion. You may prompt conversation with the following questions:
 - i. Where was this newspaper published? What type of audience did Bethune seem to be addressing?
 - ii. What obstacles to African American enlistment did Bethune anticipate?
 - iii. According to Bethune, what opportunities would open up for Black men and women in the military and war industries?
 - iv. What is the meaning of final line in the article?
3. Distribute Activity Sheets 1–3, all of which elevate the voices of African Americans who served in the military.
 - a. "Share read" one or more of the documents with the students. Have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
 - b. Place students into small groups or pairs to discuss and complete the activity sheets.
4. Students should be prepared to share out their conclusions and the evidence used with the rest of class. You may pose the Essential Questions:
 - How did African American Veterans explain their reasons for enlisting?
 - What distinguished the enlistment experience of African American soldiers from the enlistment experience of other Americans?



LESSON 2

JAPANESE AMERICAN ENLISTMENT: STORIES FROM THE 442ND REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

BY JOE WELCH (CREATED 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan explores the experiences of Nisei (the children of Japanese immigrants) soldiers who served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II, with special emphasis on why they made this commitment. Students will consider the soldiers' enlistment in the US military against the backdrop of Japanese American internment under Executive Order 9066. They will read an interview and personal correspondence.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

Joe Welch, the 2018 National History Teacher of the Year, has taught middle and junior high school American history in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for seventeen years.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore how Americans who served in segregated and specialized units during World War II described their enlistment.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Japanese American service members and Veterans explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinguished the enlistment experience of Japanese American service members from the enlistment experience of other Americans?

MATERIALS

- Source 2: War Relocation Authority Questionnaire titled “Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry,” Form DSS 304A, 1943. Digitized copy available from the Densho Encyclopedia, encyclopedia.densho.org/media/encyc-psms/en-denshopd-p72-00004-1.pdf.
- Source 3: Ted Fujioka, “This Is the Army: Foo Finds Soldiering Fun If One Has a Purpose,” *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, September 4, 1943, [loc.gov/resource/sn84024756/1943-09-04/ed-1/?sp=4](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/resource/sn84024756/1943-09-04/ed-1/?sp=4).
- Source 4: Hiro Higuchi (“Dad”) to his wife, Hisako (Watanabe) Higuchi (“Mom”), April 7, 1944, Hiro Higuchi Papers, University of Hawai’i in Manoa, Archives & Manuscripts Department, manoa.hawaii.edu/library/wp-content/uploads/archives/mss/aja/higuchi/april_1944/h440403.pdf.
- Source 5: Susumu “Sus” Ito interviewed by Stephen Fugita on July 3, 1998, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0, Densho Digital Repository, ddr.densho.org/interviews/ddr-densho-1000-29-9/.
- Activity Sheet 4: Evidence-Based Responses—Why They Served



PROCEDURE

1. Students should have general information about the origins of World War II, which nations fought on which sides, and the history of Japanese American internment camps. Explain the history of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, which was composed almost entirely of Japanese American soldiers and remains the United States' most decorated regiment for its size and length of service. Within the Japanese American community, "Issei" referred to the immigrant generation and "Nisei" referred to the generation that followed. "Hapa" referred to someone who had some Asian or Pacific Islander ancestry, but wasn't exclusively of Asian or Pacific Islander descent.
2. Motivating Exercise: Distribute the War Relocation Authority's questionnaire.
 - a. Explain to students that, with President Franklin Roosevelt's approval, the War Department decided to create a segregated unit of Nisei soldiers in 1943. This questionnaire was completed by all military-aged men living in Japanese American internment camps.
 - b. Divide students into small groups or pairs to analyze the questionnaire. Then have them reconvene for a brief class discussion.
 - i. What is the title of the questionnaire? What does that suggest about the interned or incarcerated population?
 - ii. What do the questions suggest about what the US government understood "loyalty" to mean, and how was "loyalty" demonstrated?
 - iii. Which questions might be especially difficult or complicated to answer?
 - iv. Which questions seem especially important?
 - v. If you were able to ask the questionnaire's designer some of your own questions, what would you ask?
3. Distribute the rest of the sources, which elevate the voices of Japanese Americans who enlisted in the military, with Activity Sheet 4.
 - a. You may choose to "share read" the first text or all three of the texts with the students. Have them follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
 - b. Students should then complete the activity sheet. In their evidence from the source, they should include at least one quotation from the text.
4. Students should be prepared to share out their conclusions and the evidence used with the rest of the class. They should deliberate about their responses to the Essential Questions:
 - How did Japanese American service members and Veterans explain their reasons for enlisting?
 - What distinguished the enlistment experience of Japanese American service members from the enlistment experience of other Americans?



LESSON 3

NATIVE AMERICAN ENLISTMENT: STORIES FROM THE CODE TALKERS

BY REBECCA LUEBKER (2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on American Indians who served as code talkers, with special emphasis on why the Native American men in this role chose to serve. Students will consider their enlistment against the backdrop of Native American history, which includes many examples of the US government seizing Native land, separating Indigenous children from their families, and delaying the classification of Native Americans as US citizens. Students will read oral history interviews featuring four Veterans from different tribal nations.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore how Americans who served in segregated and specialized units during World War II described their enlistment.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Native American Veterans explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinctive skills did the men selected as code talkers bring to the position?

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheet 5: Before You Read
- Source 6: Louis Levi Oakes Interview by Joseph R. Messineo, October 9, 2017. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker. Louis Levi Oakes Collection (AFC/2001/001/116147), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.116147/.
- Source 7: Clarence Wolf Guts Interview by KOLC TFVOglala Lakota College Television, October 17, 2011. Available on YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=-ET-gl8Fp9E.
- Source 8: Chester Nez Interview by Don Chalmers Ford on October 1, 2003. Chester Nez Collection (AFC/2001/001/54891), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.54891/.
- Source 9: Haddon Codynah Interview by Joe L. Todd for the Oklahoma Historical Society, April 8, 1987, printed in "Veteran Recalls Being a Code Talker during War." *Bartlesville (OK) Examiner-Enterprise*, November 16, 2015, examiner-enterprise.com/story/news/military/2015/11/16/veteran-recalls-being-code-talker/27352040007/.



- Activity Sheet 6: While Reading
- Activity Sheet 7: Compare and Contrast

PROCEDURE

1. Students should have general information about the origins of World War II, which nations fought on which sides, and the history of US policy toward Indigenous nations. Explain the history of the code talkers—men from fifteen Native nations (with the Navajo Nation most prominent) who used their tribal languages to develop codes and send secret communications about military movements. These codes were valuable for two reasons: the codes were never broken by Axis code-breakers, and they transmitted information far more quickly than previous encryption systems. Native languages that the US government had often prohibited in Native schools and boarding schools turned out to be one of the most potent tools for saving American lives and winning the war.
2. Begin with the motivating activity.
 - a. Distribute Activity Sheet 5.
 - b. Students should be encouraged to discuss and brainstorm their prior knowledge about American Indian history to answer the questions.
 - c. They should provide the source of their information—class discussion, a textbook, a book read independently, family history—and should articulate the reliability of this source of information. This can be begun in small groups and then shared with the whole class.
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 6 and Sources 6–9, the transcripts excerpted from four oral history interviews, all of which elevate the voices of Native Americans who served in the military. You might choose to model one of the interviews with the whole class.
 - a. Begin modeling with a “share read.” Have the students follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading after a few sentences while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model for the class. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
 - b. Either by modeling the process or by recording class responses, work with the students to respond to the three questions associated with the interview that the class just read. They should use at least one quotation from each interview in their responses.
 - c. Break students into small groups to complete the rest of Activity Sheet 6.
4. When they have completed analyzing the four interviews, have students share their answers, discuss their findings, and support their responses with evidence from the texts. You might choose to distribute Activity Sheet 7 so that students can take notes on this class discussion.



LESSON 4

WOMEN'S ENLISTMENT: STORIES FROM THE WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS

BY JOE WELCH (CREATED 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson provides students with an introduction to women who enlisted in the Women's Army Corps during World War II. Within the lesson, students will have opportunities to discuss a recruitment poster and three oral histories.

Students will be able to

- Use reading strategies to analyze, summarize, and interpret the content of primary sources
- Draw comparisons between primary sources
- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

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GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did women who enlisted in the Women's Army Corps explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinguished the enlistment experience of women service members from the enlistment experience of other Americans?

MATERIALS

- Source 10: Women's Army Corps Recruitment Poster, *Are You a Girl with a Star-Spangled Heart?*, art by Bradshaw Crandell, Recruiting Publicity Bureau, US Army, Washington DC, 1943, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, loc.gov/item/90712746/.
- Source 11: Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Advertisement, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 21, 1943, page 28, Google News Archive, news.google.com/newspapers?id=6zcxAAAIBAJ&sjid=AWoDAAAIBAJ&pg=2639%2C4750246.
- Source 12: Alice Tetsuko Kono Interview by James Tetsuji Tanabe, March 8, 2004. Transcribed by Joe Welch. Military Intelligence Service Veterans Club of Hawaii, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/afc2001001.18094/.
- Source 13: Millie L. D. Veasey Interview by Hermann Trojanowski, June 25, 2000, Millie Dunn Veasey Collection, Women Veterans Historical Project, Gateway, UNC Greensboro, gateway.uncg.edu/islandora/object/wvhp%3A20826/transcript.
- Source 14: Sara Whalen Interview by Joseph Welch (grandson), September 11, 2016. Courtesy of Joseph Welch's personal collection.
- Activity Sheet 8: Evidence-Based Responses—Why They Served



PROCEDURE

1. Students should have general information about the origins of World War II, which nations fought on which sides, and Representative Edith Nourse Rogers's bill to permit women's enlistment. Explain the history of how the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was converted into the Women's Army Corps in 1943.
2. Begin the motivating exercise.
 - a. Distribute the recruitment materials, Sources 10 and 11.
 - b. Divide students into small groups or pairs to analyze the materials.
 - c. Have them reconvene for a brief class discussion.
 - i. What text or graphics stand out in these sources (a poster and an advertisement)?
 - ii. What about the featured women's appearance stands out?
 - iii. What mood or tone is created? What evidence within the poster and advertisement inspires that mood or tone?
 - iv. What do the materials suggest should motivate women's enlistment?
 - v. How do these materials explain why it was important for women, in particular, to enlist?
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 8 and the remaining sources, which are excerpts from transcripts of oral history interviews. Each woman was from a different geographic location: the Southeast, Northeast, and Hawai'i.
 - a. Depending on class time available, students could read the excerpts from all three of the interviews or you can divide the class into three or six groups that each analyze one source and share it with the class.
 - b. Students should then complete the activity sheet. Each response should include at least one quotation from the interview.
4. The students should be prepared to share their conclusions and the evidence used with the rest of class.



LESSON 5

VETERANS EXPLAIN WHY THEY SERVED

BY JOE WELCH (CREATED 2024)

OVERVIEW

This lesson provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the overarching content and themes that they analyzed in Lessons 1–4. Whether it was the men of the 761st Tank Battalion, the men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Native American code talkers, or the women of the Women’s Army Corps, it is clear that these Veterans and service members had a variety of reasons that compelled them to enlist and serve their country in World War II. This summative assessment asks that students explore the collective and individual throughlines of what military service might have provided to Americans during World War II. You will assess student learning through either a creative project or a research project. You may choose to submit student work to the Veterans Legacy Project World War II Portraits of Service Award (deadline: May 3, 2024).

Students will be able to

- Understand the significance of a historical event (e.g., World War II)
- Explain how identity shapes historical experience (e.g., sex, religion, age, race)

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How did Veterans and service members explain their reasons for enlisting?
- What distinguished the enlistment experience of service members who served in segregated and specialized units from the enlistment experience of other Americans?
- What distinctive skills from civilian life did service people in specialized roles bring to their positions?

MATERIALS

- Source 15: World War II Recruiting Poster, “*I Want You for the U.S. Army*,” artwork by James Montgomery Flagg, Office of War Information, Washington DC, [1941], National Archives, 513533.
- Activity Sheet 9: Summary Brainstorm List
- Activity Sheet 10: Recruiting Poster Template
- Source 16: Excerpt from Charles Collins Aldridge, “The Skirted Soldier,” 1943, Alabama State Council of Defense, Alabama Department of Archives and History, digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/voices/id/3921/rec/1.
- Activity Sheet 11: Project Planning
 - o Where to Start Your Research

Joe Welch, the 2018 National History Teacher of the Year, has taught middle and junior high school American history in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for seventeen years.

GRADE LEVELS: 7–12

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute’s Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual and textual primary and secondary source materials. The five lessons in this unit explore how Americans who served in segregated and specialized units during World War II described their enlistment.



PROCEDURE

1. Distribute or digitally display the poster, Source 15: World War II Recruiting Poster. As a class, brainstorm what the prevailing themes of the poster are and make a list. Ask students what emotions the creator of the poster may have wanted to evoke. Focus on the idea that it was meant to evoke patriotic sentiments.
2. Distribute Activity Sheet 9: Summary Brainstorm List.
 - a. Depending on your class size or grade level, you may ask students to work as a whole class, in small groups, in pairs, or individually.
 - b. Explain that they are to compile a brainstormed list of all the reasons that the individuals they learned about during Lessons 1–4 enlisted.
 - c. Provide students three to five minutes to make their list based on recalled information.
 - d. Briefly review the lists as a class, recalling that possible reasons may include, but are not limited to *adventure, brotherhood, comradery, escaping difficult family circumstances, opportunity to be independent, opportunity to escape discrimination, a chance to prove something, concern for the nation, demonstrating loyalty, sacrifice for a family member, a sense of serving others, helping to establish/ensure justice and democracy, being drafted, escaping boredom, etc.*
 - e. Explain the concept of a throughline, or a connecting theme. Challenge students to find three to five connecting themes explaining why these individuals served that differ from themes promoted by the government in posters like the one in Source 15.
3. There are two choices for a summative assessment that can help students demonstrate the knowledge they gained throughout the unit.
 - a. Option 1: Provide students with Activity Sheet 10: Recruiting Poster Template. Encourage them to create a new recruiting poster that looks beyond the government-promoted themes for enlisting and addresses some of the reasons that emerged in the stories included in Lessons 1–4. Students should provide a title, a graphic element, and a slogan that reflects the stories of the Veterans and service members featured in Lessons 1-4.
 - b. Option 2: This option can be submitted to the Gilder Lehrman Institute for the Portraits of Service contest (<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/veterans-legacy-program/student-contest>). For contest participants, students may conduct independent research into the life of one World War II service member or Veteran who is buried in a Veterans Affairs National Cemetery or a VA grant-funded state, territorial, or tribal Veterans cemetery, and develop a project based on the theme “Portraits of Service.” This will take longer than one class period and could include homework time. They should present their research through a creative outlet such as
 - i. A written report or eulogy of 250–400 words (You may need to define and share a eulogy with the students.)
 - ii. A poem or song of at least 7 lines
 - iii. A mini-documentary or mini-podcast that is 2–4 minutes in length

To help students develop their research and their project

- i. Ask students to review Lessons 1–4. What types of primary sources do historians use to learn about Veterans and service members? Ask students to brainstorm a list, and record their answers where everyone can see them.
- ii. Where might these types of sources be located? Invite students to consider what sources are likely to be online, in the library, or in an archive.
- iii. Review Where to Start Your Research at the end of Activity Sheet 11 in order to help students understand how to get started on their projects. Explain to students that this handout identifies a few specific places to help them find primary sources. They should consider both what the class discussed and this handout when developing a research plan.



- iv. The creative piece should focus on specific aspects of their service in the military, whether the reason they served, a specific military action they were involved in (were they injured or did they receive an award?), or something that made their experience stand out from the experience of other military personnel. You can share the brief excerpt from the 1943 poem “The Skirted Soldier” with your students as an example of a creative way of communicating a Veteran’s or service member’s story.
- v. If you plan to submit student work for the Veterans Legacy Program World War II Portraits of Service Award (providing ten \$500 prizes for students across the country), please review and discuss the contest guidelines provided here: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/veterans-legacy-program/student-contest>. The deadline is May 3, 2024.

Source 1

Mary McLeod Bethune, "We, Too, Are Americans" (1942)

We, Too, Are Americans

By MARY McLEOD BETHUNE

In every national crisis that this country has faced since Negroes have been in America, our people have stood shoulder to shoulder with all other groups of Americans, in defending the ideals of this country.

The present situation is no exception. From a state of emergency we have moved into a state of war. Hostilities have begun. Lives have been lost. Bombs are falling on American soil. Enemies of Democracy and Freedom are training their treacherous guns upon us.



Despite foolish prejudices and discriminations, we as Negroes must move in and offer our services and demand the right to serve shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Americans—just as we have always done. This is no time for hysteria, for bickering, for indecision. Victory **MUST** be ours—or worse than slavery **WILL** be.

America needs us, fellow Negro citizens. No longer is there room for discrimination and exclusion of any American from any phase of our all-out victory program. It is our solemn duty to demand the unity of all of the forces of this country, without which America cannot hope to conquer.

To deprive America's production efforts of needed skilled hands because those hands are black is to thrust a knife of disloyalty into the back of Uncle Sam. All industry has been called upon by our courageous President for seven-day week effort. Negroes are ready, anxious and able to give their share of service. There is no need or time to classify the color of hands able to render these skilled services.

It is your duty and my duty as American Negroes to see that our youth realize and appreciate the opportunities for preparation, the opportunity to acquire skills which will serve them in the future as well as in the present, the opportunity to become an integral part of America's victory program.

All of us can serve, and we must. We must have our share of responsibility in order to contribute our share of service. Civilian defense needs every volunteer hand available. We know what is happening and we are as ready and as capable as any other American group to go into industry, into the armed forces, into civilian defense or other services.

May we re-dedicate ourselves, fellow citizens? If the spirit and the necessity for complete unity has not yet dawned, then it is your duty to America, in the interest of a **COMPLETELY UNITED FRONT**, to push your way into the volunteer efforts of your community and, shoulder to shoulder with other Americans, give to America all you have got.

THIS IS AMERICA'S WAR. AND WE, TOO, ARE AMERICANS.

Pittsburgh Courier, January 17, 1942 (newspapers.com)



NAME

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Activity Sheet 1

Sergeant John “Johnny” Holmes (2006)

Johnny Holmes was born in Alliance, Ohio, in 1921 and grew up in Evanston, Illinois. He joined the US Army at the age of seventeen after he dropped out of school. Sgt. Holmes became a tank commander in the 761st Tank Battalion. After the war, he worked for the City of Chicago and eventually worked in real estate.



“Double V” for Victory banner (Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture)

Interview Excerpts	Questions and Responses
<p>Holmes: “[As a kid I was interested in] war. [I knew people from World War I]. . . . These were black soldiers that were fighting over in France, and Germany and what have you. And World War I, good god. But they didn’t want—they had nobody to help them along like they do today. Like you all are interested in us, they didn’t have that. . . . When I was over there I met many black soldiers that would not come back to this country. . . .”</p> <p>Interviewer: How did you like living with your dad?</p> <p>Holmes: “I didn’t. . . . I dropped out of high school because I thought it was the right thing to do. . . . So I said, ‘Mom,’ I said, ‘I tell you what I wanna do.’ I said, ‘I wanna go to Army,’ I said, ‘because it doesn’t make sense for me to stay here and, you know, filch off of you.’ It didn’t make sense to me. So back during that time, it was, oh, it was nice to be kind of thinking of, on, on your own. So she says, ‘Okay.’”</p>	<p>According to Sgt. Holmes, what motivated him to join the US Army?</p>



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Holmes: “You know who was behind that, was Mrs. [Mary McLeod] Bethune Cookman.* . . . What actually—she was a staunch believer in integrating the Army. Now, you might think that [President Harry] Truman was actually the guy that was behind, the, the person of blacks fighting in World War II, unh-uh. . . . That was done actually by Mrs. Bethune Cookman. Her and her and Eleanor Roosevelt. They were very much interested of us being integrated. You gotta fight together, . . . you’re gonna die together. That was it.”

Who does Holmes credit for building public support for African American enlistment in the Black community? Within the American government?

Source: John “Johnny” Holmes interviewed by Larry Crowe on December 12, 2006. The HistoryMakers® African American Video Oral History Collection, 1900 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, thehistorymakers.org/biography/sgt-johnny-holmes. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker.

*The use of “Bethune Cookman” is an understandable misstatement of Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune’s name, given that she was the co-founder of what became Bethune-Cookman University.



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Activity Sheet 2

Staff Sergeant Johnnie Stevens (2002)

Johnnie Stevens was born in Oglethorpe, Georgia, in 1920. His father had served in World War I and his brother signed up for the Army when he was only 16, but was killed at 17 when his ship sank. Stevens enlisted in 1942 and was assigned to the 761st Tank Battalion. When Stevens returned home after World War II, the Jim Crow South proved to be intolerable, so he moved to New Jersey, where he was the first Black bus driver in Middlesex County and coached youth sports.

Interview Excerpts	Questions and Responses
<p>“Well, actually, I didn’t give too much thought to [joining the military]. To me, it was just another move, and it was mostly a democratic move on my part as far as the war was concerned, because it was my belief that the war itself was good for me. I believe that the service offered me an opportunity that I didn’t have in my own home state because of racial segregation and discrimination. Opportunities didn’t present themselves to me. Although I was qualified to do a lot of things, I couldn’t do them because I was black. . . .”</p> <p>“Opportunities were better in the service. And also it was belief that I had to prove something. It’s just like the members of my outfit, the 761st Tank Battalion. We had to prove to the world that we could do anything that anybody else could do. They had a propaganda lie that was put out by members of the society that said we didn’t have the qualifications to fly planes. They said we couldn’t handle tanks. We couldn’t use gyro stabilizers, panoramic sight depth devices, and all these technical things that you use in the service. They said we weren’t qualified to do this. And we set out to prove different. And we did. . . .”</p>	<p>What, in your own words, was Johnnie Stevens’s main motivation to join the US Army?</p> <p>According to Staff Sgt. Stevens, why did he and other African American soldiers have to prove themselves more than their White counterparts did?</p>

Source: Johnnie Stevens interviewed by Carol Fowler, April 5, 2002. Johnnie Stevens Collection, National Guard Militia Museum of New Jersey (Center for US War Veterans Oral Histories), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.



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Activity Sheet 3

Private First Class George “E. G.” McConnell (2001)

George “E. G.” McConnell was born in New York City in 1925 and was raised in Jamaica, Queens. He was the son of immigrants from the Caribbean. He enlisted at age sixteen and was assigned to the 761st Tank Battalion.



US 761st Tank Battalion patch (US military photo from National WWII Museum)

Interview Excerpts	Questions and Responses
<p>“Finally, the war erupted in Europe, and this was a great concern to everyone. I was a Boy Scout in Troop 61 right here in Jamaica, New York. We didn’t have any all black Boy Scout troops, so I went to a church up on Jamaica Avenue, and I joined Troop 61, which was entirely white. . . . The news reports that we got back from overseas, there were reports of German submarines being off the coast of the US. This is before we were even involved. And I was a busy little bee in the Boy Scouts. I learned the Morse code and I learned the Semaphore code for signaling and whatnot. I knew map reading and all these different things. And fear was in so many of us. Till finally, I’ll never forget the day, December 7th of 1941, when Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. And we never had anyone walking through the neighborhood selling papers, but this paperman, ‘Extry extry, read all about it. Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor,’ and there was so much fear in us, and America was in this thing. I’ll never forget the feeling in the neighborhood from all the neighbors, the concern. So many of them hadn’t even received their American citizenship. . . . Well, I went down to Whitehall Street, that was induction center, and I got an application from him, see? And this application your parents had to sign and all I get, well, I lied about my age and so that I wouldn’t have any trouble remembering just what it was, I took my sister’s birth date and day of birth and all like that, and that’s what I put on my application. . . .”</p>	<p>In your own words, explain how Pfc. E. G. McConnell was influenced to enlist.</p>



<p>“A lot of other guys were shipped out to different places: quartermasters, engineers, and all like that. Finally, we did get the call. And we boarded trains for Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Blacks rode in the forward two cars of the train and the remainder of the train was occupied by white troops. As this train climbed through the hills of Kentucky, slowly going up them all like that, orders came down for us to pull the shades down in our cars in the Black part of the train, occupied by Blacks. Anyway, the conductor pulled the shades down. And I, being a curious person the way I was, I wanted to know why. How come the next car they didn’t pull the shades down where the whites were? And none of the other cars up there? Well, I went between the two cars to look out and see. And as I climbed between the two cars this conductor came up to me and told me ‘no, you can’t ride here.’ I said, ‘Well, I’m interested in seeing why we have to pull the shades down.’ So then he grabbed one of the porters and says ‘tell him why.’ The porter was a Black man and he told me that we had to pull the shades down for our own safety because there had been incidents in the past where some of these hillbillies had fired guns at the cars with the Blacks. Can you imagine how this was registering with me?”</p>	<p>Why did the conductor ask Black soldiers to pull down the blinds? What evidence supports your interpretation?</p> <p>What does this story suggest made the WWII experiences of Black soldiers and White soldiers different?</p>
<p>“We fought for 183 consecutive days through six European countries. We fought with three different armies. We fought with, I’d say, at least eight different divisions. Never once did we withdraw for a rest. Never once did our American Red Cross coffee donut truck come to visit us. When I think about the horrors of war and all I get. We had no trouble fighting along with the different divisions. One general, the general of 17th Airborne Division, it was said, it’s written in several books that he stated at one time he’d rather have five tanks from 761st Black Panther Tank Battalion than any greater amount from any other unit. Why were we flattered? Was this something? We were recommended way back then for different awards. One of my combat buddies, Ruben Rivers, who was killed in battle, November 19, 1944, he was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor. He didn’t get it, but his family got it. January 13, 1997, some fifty years after the war, we finally got the presidential citation from Jimmy Carter, thirty-three years after [the] war, having been recognized for it. These are some of the better things in my life. I often say this, and I can say it with a smile on my face. My country, tis of thee, O sweet, sweet land of bigotry. That’s my story. . . .”</p>	<p>How does Pfc. McConnell’s description of the success of the 761st reflect the larger aims of the Civil Rights Movement?</p>

Source: George “E. G.” McConnell interviewed by Robert von Hasseln and Wayne Clarke, May 24, 2001. New York State Military Museum.



Source 2

War Relocation Authority Questionnaire (1943)

FORM APPROVED
BUDGET BUREAU No. 33-R045-43

(LOCAL BOARD DATE STAMP WITH CODE)

STATEMENT OF UNITED STATES CITIZEN OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY

1. _____
(Surname) (English given name) (Japanese given name)

(a) Alias _____

2. Local selective service board _____
(Number)

_____ (City) _____ (County) _____ (State)

3. Date of birth _____ Place of birth _____

4. Present address _____
(Street) _____ (City) _____ (State)

5. Last two addresses at which you lived 3 months or more (exclude residence at relocation center and at assembly center):

_____ From _____ To _____

_____ From _____ To _____

6. Sex _____ Height _____ Weight _____

7. Are you a registered voter? _____ Year first registered _____

Where? _____ Party _____

8. Marital status _____ Citizenship of wife _____ Race of wife _____

9. _____
(Father's Name) (Town or Ken) (Birthplace) (State or Country) (Occupation)

10. _____
(Mother's Name) (Town or Ken) (Birthplace) (State or Country) (Occupation)

**In items 11 and 12, you need not list relatives other than your parents, your children, your brothers and sisters.
For each person give name; relationship to you (such as father); citizenship; complete address; occupation.**

11. Relatives in the United States (if in military service, indicate whether a selectee or volunteer):

(a) _____
(Name) (Relationship to you) (Citizenship)

_____ (Complete address) _____ (Occupation) _____ (Volunteer or selectee)

(b) _____
(Name) (Relationship to you) (Citizenship)

_____ (Complete address) _____ (Occupation) _____ (Volunteer or selectee)

(c) _____
(Name) (Relationship to you) (Citizenship)

_____ (Complete address) _____ (Occupation) _____ (Volunteer or selectee)

DSS Form 304A (1-23-43) (If additional space is necessary, attach sheets) 16-32905-1

War Relocation Authority, "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry," Form DSS 304A, 1943, p1.
(Courtesy Densho Encyclopedia)



12. Relatives in Japan (see instruction above item 11):

 (Name) (Relationship to you) (Citizenship)

 (Complete address) (Occupation)

 (Name) (Relationship to you) (Citizenship)

 (Complete address) (Occupation)

13. Education:

Name	Place	Years of attendance	
----- (Kindergarten)	-----	From -----	to -----
----- (Grade school)	-----	From -----	to -----
----- (Japanese language school)	-----	From -----	to -----
----- (High school)	-----	From -----	to -----
----- (Junior college, college, or university)	-----	From -----	to -----
----- (Type of military training, such as R. O. T. C. or Gunji Kyoren) (Where and when)			
----- (Other schooling)		----- (Years of attendance)	

14. Foreign travel (give dates, where, how, for whom, with whom, and reasons therefor):

15. Employment (give employers' names and kind of business, addresses, and dates from 1935 to date):

16. Religion ----- Membership in religious groups -----

17. Membership in organizations (clubs, societies, associations, etc.). Give name, kind of organization, and dates of membership.

16-32565-1

War Relocation Authority, "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry," Form DSS 304A, 1943, p2. (Courtesy Densho Encyclopedia)



18. Knowledge of foreign languages (put check mark (✓) in proper squares):

(a) Japanese	Good	Fair	Poor	(b) Other..... (Specify)	Good	Fair	Poor
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. Sports and hobbies

20. List five references, other than relatives or former employers, giving address, occupation, and number of years known:

(Name)	(Complete address)	(Occupation)	(Years known)
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

21. Have you ever been convicted by a court of a criminal offense (other than a minor traffic violation)?

Offense	When	What court	Sentence
.....
.....
.....
.....

22. Give details on any foreign investments.

- (a) Accounts in foreign banks. Amount, \$.....
Bank Date account opened
- (b) Investments in foreign companies. Amount, \$.....
Company..... Date acquired
- (c) Do you have a safe-deposit box in a foreign country?
What country? Date acquired
- Contents

War Relocation Authority, "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry," Form DSS 304A, 1943, p3. (Courtesy Densho Encyclopedia)



23. List contributions you have made to any society, organization, or club:

Organization	Place	Amount	Date
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

24. List magazines and newspapers to which you have subscribed or have customarily read:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

25. To the best of your knowledge, was your birth ever registered with any Japanese governmental agency for the purpose of establishing a claim to Japanese citizenship?

(a) If so registered, have you applied for cancellation of such registration?
(Yes or no)

When? Where?

26. Have you ever applied for repatriation to Japan?

27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?

(Date)

(Signature)

NOTE.—Any person who knowingly and willfully falsifies or conceals a material fact or makes a false or fraudulent statement or representation in any matter within the jurisdiction of any department or agency of the United States is liable to a fine of not more than \$10,000 or 10 years' imprisonment, or both.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 16-32565-1

War Relocation Authority, "Statement of United States Citizen of Japanese Ancestry," Form DSS 304A, 1943, p4. (Courtesy Densho Encyclopedia)

Source 3

Private Ted Fujioka, "This Is the Army," *Heart Mountain Sentinel* (1943)

Ted Fujioka joined the United States Army in 1943 when he was eighteen. When he enlisted, his family and girlfriend remained at the Heart Mountain internment camp in Wyoming. He wrote this letter from basic training at Camp Shelby in Mississippi. It was printed in the Heart Mountain Sentinel, a newspaper written and edited by the people held in the camp and overseen by the War Relocation Authority. When Fujioka was killed in action in France in 1944, his obituary (see image below) was published in the paper.

Dear Gang,

I'm in the army now— and what's more I'm enjoying every bit of it, even K.P. [kitchen patrol].

. . . Seriously, this army life is swell—the food is excellent, the men friendly and helpful, the work hard but pleasant, if one makes up his mind to make it so.

I like it because I'm doing my small bit for victory—helping to establish once and for all a place of equality and justice in America for the nisei who hope to live in this land after the war—paying back America for all that she has done for myself and my family.

Perhaps I'll never see the day when America will be truly democratic in the real sense of the word, but I'll have helped toward that goal. I'll have done my best.

It's such a change from the artificial, purposeless life spent in a relocation center, marking time, when all around people were suffering and sacrificing for our country. It has given me a wonderful feeling, new pep, a higher spirit—something that I can't fully put down in mere writing.

The people that I have met, men from every walk of life—youngsters of 18, married men with children, Caucasians, Negroes, Mexicans and nisei—have taught me much about human natures, emotions, loves and dislikes.

One young, intelligent fellow about my age, a Negro, taught me the most. His thoughts, ideas, hopes and goals, why he volunteered, his thoughts on race prejudice, and inequality ran parallel to mine.

The problems of the nisei are tiny, unimportant in comparison to the nation-wide, world-wide, problems of all minorities whether large or small. Ours is but a part of the overall scheme. The nisei will have to realize this sooner or later.

We must work for not only ourselves, but for all other minorities as well, for if we don't we can never hope to make this country the melting pot of the world.

Source: Ted Fujioka, "This Is the Army: Foo Finds Soldiering Fun If One Has a Purpose," *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, September 4, 1943. *Chronicling America*, Library of Congress.

One Killed, Three Wounded in France 'Ted' Fujioka Dies Performing 'Special Mission'

One Heart Mountain youth was reported killed in action in France this week while three others were reported wounded, according to telegrams received here from the War department by "the next of kin."

Pfc. Teruo "Ted" Fujioka, outstanding student of Heart Mountain high school where he was first president of the student body was killed Nov. 6 while "on a special mission" according to the War department.

The wounded are:
Pfc. Joe M. Arakaki, son of Taro Arakaki, 27-21-E, who was slightly wounded Nov. 5 in France.

Pfc. George Munetoshi Horinouchi, brother of Mrs. Y. Nakamura, 28-4-A, who was wounded Oct. 18. He had previously won the Purple Heart Cross in Italy.

Pfc. Samal Nagata, son of Mrs. Yukiko Nagata, 1-16-7, who was slightly wounded Nov. 6 in France.

Ted Fujioka, son of Mr. and Mrs. Etsuro Fujioka, 23-14-CD, was 19 on June 12 while fighting in Italy where he was a member of the famous 42nd combat team. After winning his

(Continued on Page 6)

(The following story was written by Pfc. Albert Saito, who was Pfc. Ted Fujioka's closest high school friend. Private Saito returned to the center Sunday night on his furlough from Camp Shelby only to learn the next day of the death of his friend. Ed. Note)

By Pfc. Albert Saito
The War department's telegram to Ted's folks simply said that he had been killed "on a special mission."

His friends here, particularly those with whom he attended school, know that Ted's life was entirely a "special mission". It was a "special mission" to make life better, to make people happier.

That's the kind of pal Ted Fujioka was.

That's why the American flag flew at half mast at the high school on Monday and that's also the reason that his friend's heart's were sad.

Ted was one soldier who knew what he was fighting for—he told me about it.

It was after he had graduated and we were both working on *The Sentinel*.

One day after we had covered our runs, Ted said he wanted to talk to me about some-



PFC. TED FUJIOKA

thing. It was spring and there was a tinge of color coming into the McColloughs and the shadows were deepening and the evening shadows shifting.

We walked slowly toward Heart Mountain, beyond the victory gardens, beyond the cemetery with its scraggly plants and up the hillside. We sat down, picked up pebbles and tossed

(Continued on Page 6)

Ted Fujioka's obituary, Heart Mountain Sentinel, November 25, 1944 (Chronicling America, Library of Congress)



Source 4

Chaplain Hiro Higuchi to Hisako Higuchi (1944)

Hiro Higuchi volunteered to serve as a chaplain with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. After enlisting in 1943, he served with the unit in both Italy and France before returning home in December 1945. Higuchi wrote this letter to his wife from Camp Shelby in Mississippi.

. . . As I said, do not worry about me—I know that if I were to do this all over again—I would have volunteered. You wouldn't have it any other way—knowing my responsibility as a minister for the many boys that are in the army with me now. Propaganda of any kind does not effect me—you know that.

I would have been ashamed of myself for the rest of my life if I did not come into the army with them—and feel that it is not only a duty but a privelege to serve these boys wherever they may go and through whatever dangers they may face. I miss you and the children so much, but I always thought of the boys too as part of my Church family—and I would not have slept with that thought in my mind. That they needed me and I did not come through.

I hope I am not being over dramatic—but know that you will feel better knowing how I feel. Let us pray that this war will be over with very soon. . . .

Source: Hiro Higuchi to Hisako (Watanabe) Higuchi, April 7, 1944. Hiro Higuchi Papers, University of Hawai'i in Manoa, Archives & Manuscripts Department.



Source 5

Lt. Susumu “Sus” Ito Interview (1998)

Susumu “Sus” Ito was drafted into the US Army in 1940. He was first placed into an interracial civilian unit. While Sus’s family was incarcerated at the Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas, he began serving in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and participated in high-profile missions in Europe. More than fifty years later he participated in an oral history project and told his story.

Well, I got drafted in 1940, but before that I went to an auto mechanic school and the reason for this was that there were very few opportunities for young Nisei to get into business or some profession unless you’re a physician or a lawyer or dentist or—so [my mother] realized that I was quite adept mechanically so they thought I should go to an auto mechanic school, and they scrimped and saved very hard. . . .

I suppose I felt relieved and fortunate that I was drafted. My number came up very early, soon after the initial draft, maybe the second or the third lot came along. And I accepted this as another stage in my life and so did many of my classmates in high school and others who were drafted at this time. And as I recall the Japanese community was very proud to have young Niseis in the US military. They had, I remember, the Buddhist church had a big party for us, big dinner. This was before we even went to get our physical. There was five or six of us and people would bring us envelopes with money, going away present, and I figured it was thirty or forty dollars, but it was a lot of money then. And then when they sent us off to take the train for a physical in Sacramento, we went to the railroad station in Stockton. I think it was six o’clock in the morning or so and half the Japanese community shows up, several hundred. And there were many more Caucasian draftees, but only a handful, maybe the parents or wife or girlfriend would come along. But the place was completely inundated with Japanese well-wishers. . . .

[In Oklahoma] I’m fixing these rickety old trucks and stuff, which was terribly, terribly boring. So when a few of us as cadre got shipped off, we didn’t know where we were going. We were given no advance information on the unit being formed so we went completely blind. . . . So you get on the train and you end up in Hattiesburg and trucks take you to the area and here you are, you’re in the, part of the 442nd. . . . And I was in the motor pool completely bored. . . .

It was, to me, totally unlike what war was supposed to be like so the first chance I got—there was a hapa sergeant in Charlie Battery. He was from New York City, John Nishimura. He’s since passed away, but he was the Chief of Detail or Instrument Sergeant for the battery. And what an instrument sergeant did was, did the work of helping laying in the guns, orienting the guns, and most important to fire, direct artillery fire. And this was a bit more demanding than ordinary. You had, for instance, learn to add and subtract three digit figures while standing out and directing artillery fire, shoot left, right, amongst other things. And this fellow thought it was a bit too much so he refused. I mean, he gave up the position. So I heard about this and so I says gosh, I think I’m going to volunteer—not volunteer, but ask for this position. So I went to talk to the captain, Captain Ratcliffe from West Virginia, and I says, “I hear your chief of detail is giving up the position, and I’d like to give it a go.” And he had whiskers like this, and he says well, uh—we had a long talk and I realize that my mother had told me not to get into any dangerous situation, and I knew what this job entailed, but I thought it would be much less boring than sitting in the back repairing trucks. Well, to make a long story short, he accepted me and I took the job.

Source: Susumu “Sus” Ito interviewed by Stephen Fugita on July 3, 1998. Densho Digital Repository, CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0.



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Activity Sheet 4

Evidence-Based Responses—Why They Served

Directions: You read accounts by three Japanese Americans who served in the military during World War II. Each of them had different reasons for serving. What evidence in the sources helps to answer the question “Why did you serve?”

Circle all reasons that apply for each Veteran or service member.

Name of Veteran or Service Member:
Reason for Enlisting: Patriotism Friendship Opportunity Education Adventure Other: _____
Evidence from the Source:

Name of Veteran or Service Member:
Reason for Enlisting: Patriotism Friendship Opportunity Education Adventure Other: _____
Evidence from the Source:

Name of Veteran or Service Member:
Reason for Enlisting: Patriotism Friendship Opportunity Education Adventure Other: _____
Evidence from the Source:



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Activity Sheet 5

Before You Read

Directions: Answer the following questions. Your responses will help guide your examination of four different perspectives on World War II service.

<p>What US policies regarding American Indian nations or individuals do you recall?</p> <p>Source of information:</p>	
<p>What do you know about how the US government interacted with Native American tribes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries?</p> <p>Source of information:</p>	
<p>What do you know about why Native Americans have served in the US military?</p> <p>Source of information:</p>	



Source 6

TEC 5 Louis Levi Oakes Interview (2017)

Akwesasne Mohawk Code Talker | St. Lawrence Cemetery, NY | 442nd Signal Battalion
Served in New Guinea, the Philippines, and the South Pacific

- Interviewer: All right, let's fast forward a bit to around the time of Pearl Harbor. You were kind of young at the time, but when you heard about Pearl Harbor, what was going through your mind? What did you think?
- Oakes: Well, anyways, in my age, I had to go into service on the States side because I worked there all the time. In the States. You working in the States at that age, they got you.
- Interviewer: All right, so you were working. Where were you working at the time?
- Oakes: Buffalo, New York. . . . Steelworker. . . .
- Interviewer: So let's digress a little bit. How is it that you decided to fight for this country? You were born native Mohawk. Did you feel an obligation to do that? . . .
- Oakes: When I was in Canada, the Mounties were bad at us people, really bad. They dropped my brother, put him in a handcuff, and about three blocks down to the jail, you couldn't see him. That's how bad he was beat up. And I remember that. And then I went to see him in a small hole on a cellar window. I started talk to him. Boy was all broke up, with face and everything.
- Interviewer: Why did they do that, do you know?
- Oakes: Because he wouldn't report right away for service on the Canadian side.
- Interviewer: On the Canadian side. So they wanted to draft him.
- Oakes: So I says, I don't want to be in this army. It too goddamn mean. The Mounties were bad over there. It took them in, and I took off, went to the States. I had a family in Buffalo, and I worked up there since just the right age. Then they grabbed me. . . .
- Interviewer: Did you feel good about joining the service?
- Oakes: I didn't mind it. I was young.

Source: Louis Levi Oakes Interview by Joseph R. Messineo, October 9, 2017. Transcribed by Rebecca Luebker. Louis Levi Oakes Collection (AFC/2001/001/116147), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.



Source 7

Private First Class Clarence Wolf Guts Interview (2011)

Rosebud Lakota Code Talker | Black Hills National Cemetery | 81st Infantry Division
Served in Japan

- Wolf Guts: So I went to St. Francis Mission School for ten years, and now after I came back, I didn't graduate. I was in 11th grade when I enrolled. Volunteer draftee, that's what I was. I was 18 and five months old when I went into service. . . . [after December 7] I'm going to enlist. I'm going to volunteer.
- Interviewer: Why?
- Wolf Guts: Well, a lot of my buddies are in the service, and they're in Hawaii and some were in Alaska. I want to join the service, too. . . .
- I and my buddy Albert Crow Eagle, we went to the same camp in Alabama, Camp Rucker, Alabama. . . . I was out ranger training out in the boondocks. . . . And the general's jeep drove me to headquarters, and the first thing they said was, Clarence Wolf Guts, report right away the general wants to see you, and it's urgent. I went, now, what the heck did I do? Now I was kind of confused you know why the general's jeep was there. I went over there and they said, you're Indian?
- Wolf Guts: Yes, I'm 100% Indian, Lakota Indian. I didn't say Sioux because we're not Sioux. They gave us that name. Some other tribe gave us that name. So we're not Sioux. We're Lakota. There's three dialects in South Dakota, Nakota, Lakota, and Dakota. And we used them all when we were overseas. There was four of us.
- Interviewer: Who were they?
- Wolf Guts: Albert Crow Eagle, Roy Bad Hand, and Benny White Bear Sr., and me. Those four of us. But this was a camp record. . . .
- Interviewer: Where were you?
- Wolf Guts: Pacific. I was in Japan. We was occupation forces. That's what we were. 81st Division, Wildcat Division, they call us. And we were the occupation forces in Japan. . . . We had bodyguards and nobody can come within 10 feet of us without them knowing it. And they will have machine guns. "Hey, we're not that important." "Yes, you are. You're a Lakota Code Talker. That's what you are. You're more important than anything. We got to protect you." Those two boys, I don't know if they're still alive or not, but those two boys were my bodyguards, one was from Nebraska and the other was from Wisconsin. Some old soldiers, if they knew I was one of the code talkers, they probably kill me over there. But I was just one of the boys. I wasn't supposed to be in a firing line, but I had my radio, and these guys were all ready to fight, ready to fire.

Source: Clarence Wolf Guts Interview by KOLC TFVOglala Lakota College Television, October 17, 2011. Available on YouTube.



Source 8

Corporal Chester Nez Interview (2003)

Navajo Code Talker | Santa Fe National Cemetery | First Marine Division; 3rd Marine Division
Served in Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, and Peleliu

- Interviewer: Okay. You were one of the first code talkers?
- Nez: I was one of the first twenty-nine Navajo code talkers that enlisted in 1942. I came out of high school to join the Marine Corps.
- Interviewer: Can you tell me how that happened? Where were you?
- Nez: This high school is located in the northern part of Arizona, a place called Tuba City. I was there for about seven or eight months, and Marine Corps recruiters came onto campus, and they wanted some young Navajos to join the Marine Corps. That's what they were looking for. So, I had a roommate by the name of Royal Begay, and I told him, I said, "Let's go and join the Marine Corps, and see what we can learn as a serviceman." So he agreed with me and we went and told the recruiters that we would like to enlist in the Marine Corps.
- Interviewer: What did the recruiters--were they looking for somebody specific, or just all Navajos to be recruited?
- Nez: They just wanted some young men—Navajos—to join the Marine Corps. They didn't tell us where we were going to be trained or anything like that, or why they wanted to recruit some young Navajos. The only thing they told us was they needed some young Navajo to join the Corps. . . .
- It's just something that came into my mind—that I wanted to leave the reservation, to see what the other people—the way they lived, the way they carried on. To see something different—this was my idea to decide to join the Marine Corps, and on top of that I wanted to do something for my country, to defend my country, and my people, and all the Native American Indians. . . .
- Interviewer: How did they select 29 of you? Were there more than 29 that volunteered?
- Nez: The first time that they got us together, there was between 150 to 200 young Navajos gathered at Fort Defiance. What happened was that a lot of these young Navajos didn't have a good education. They didn't speak good English. And being recruited was mostly based on how you speak English, or if you finished high school, and this was the way they picked the first 29.

Source: Chester Nez Interview by Don Chalmers Ford on October 1, 2003. Chester Nez Collection (AFC/2001/001/54891), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress.



Source 9

Staff Sergeant Haddon Codynah Interview (1987)

Comanche Code Talker | Walters Cemetery | 4th Signal Infantry Division
Served in France

- Interviewer: Did the teacher allow you to speak Comanche in school?
- Codynah: Yes, but they didn't at the Fort Sill Indian School. Some of the boys said they would get onto them for talking Comanche.
- Interviewer: What year did you graduate from high school?
- Codynah: 1936. I didn't go to college I just messed around and in about 1936 or 1937 they started the Civilian Conservation Corps for the Indians it was the CCCID. It was under the Indian Agency and had a camp over here in the mountains. . . .
- Interviewer: Tell me about Bill Karty that had the idea for the Code Talkers.
- Codynah: He didn't have the idea for the Code Talkers. An Army officer came to our superintendent at Anadarko at the agency about the Code Talkers. The draft was coming on and the idea for the Code Talkers came from World War I and the Choctaw Code Talkers. When I was young I heard some of the elders that were in that war talk about the Code Talkers and how it was used over there. It was in 1938 or 1939 when this Colonel came to the Agency. He said some of the young Comanches were going to be drafted anyway and it was brought up about the Code Talkers at that time. The Colonel said it would be a good idea if some of the boys wanted to volunteer before they got drafted and the program could be started. They called Bill Karty and he was already working for the agency and they asked him what he thought about it. He thought it was a good idea and turned it over to him as a recruiter for the program. He went around and talked to the Comanche people and explained the program and what it was about. He said this Army officer wanted to use the Comanche boys and the Comanche language in the Army. . . .
- Interviewer: So you left the CCC program and went into the Army?
- Codynah: Yes.
- Interviewer: When?
- Codynah: It was late 1939. Bill Karty got a group ahead of us and took them over to Oklahoma City to the Army recruiting office. He explained it to the recruiting people what the program was about and to send them all together. There were 8 or 9 ahead of us and they enlisted them and processed them and sent them down to Fort Benning, Ga. In my group there were just 4 of us who went to Oklahoma City and they signed us up and we took our physicals. On New Year's Day 1940 they put us on the train and shipped us to Fort Benning where the other boys were.

Source: Haddon Codynah Interview by Joe L. Todd for the Oklahoma Historical Society, April 8, 1987, from "Veteran Recalls Being a Code Talker during War;" *Bartlesville (OK) Examiner-Enterprise*, November 16, 2015.



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Activity Sheet 6

While Reading

Directions: While reading each interview, highlight or underline phrases that explain why the interviewee served in the US military. Then answer the questions below.

Louis Levi Oakes	Clarence Wolf Guts
Where was he located before joining the military?	Where was he located before joining the military?
What influenced his decision to serve?	What influenced his decision to serve?
Why did he serve?	Why did he serve?
Chester Nez	Haddon Codynah
Where was he located before joining the military?	Where was he located before joining the military?
What influenced his decision to serve?	What influenced his decision to serve?
Why did he serve?	Why did he serve?



NAME

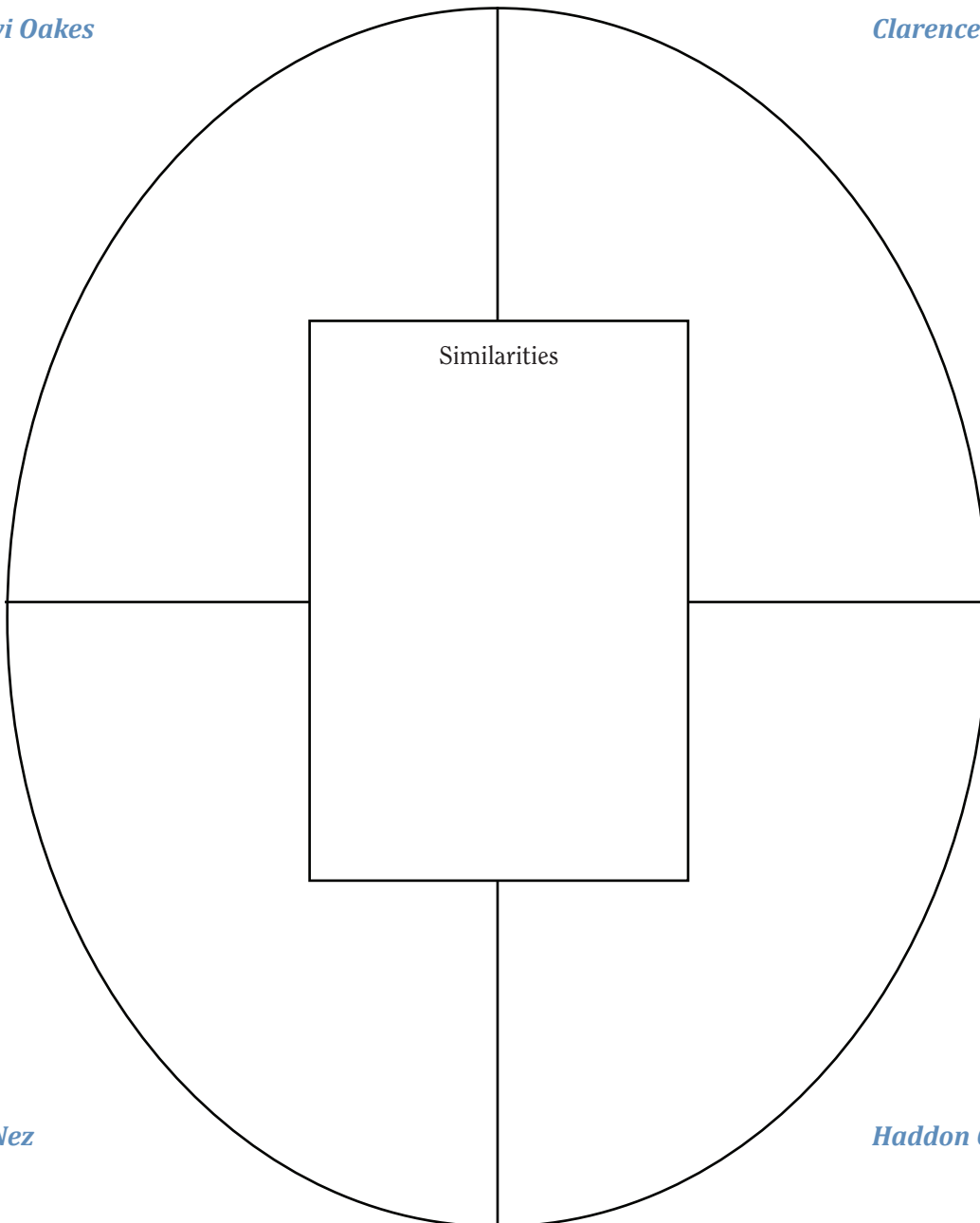
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Activity Sheet 7
Compare and Contrast

Louis Levi Oakes

Clarence Wolf Guts



Chester Nez

Haddon Codynah

Source 10

Women's Army Corps Recruitment Poster (1943)



Artwork by Bradshaw Crandell, US Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau, Washington DC, 1943
(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Source 11

Women's Army Auxiliary Corps Advertisement, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (1943)

The WAAC
is on the
March!

**JOIN THEM AND HELP
SHORTEN THE WAR.**

Interesting work—good pay—and
a chance to be of *real service* to
your country by releasing a man
for the fighting front.

APPLY AT WAAC RECRUITING AND INDUCTION OFFICE,
OLD POST OFFICE BUILDING, PITTSBURGH

RIECK-McJUNKIN DAIRY COMPANY

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, May 21, 1943, p. 28. (Google News Archive)

Source 12

Tec 4 Alice Tetsuko Kono Interview (2004)

Kono: I was working at Del Monte. And I had vacation coming so I took a vacation in October. I went to Honolulu. At that time, they were recruiting WACs, so I told my parents that I'm going join. So my dad said go ahead. But my mother didn't say anything. So, while in Honolulu, I went for registration and then took all my physicals and I passed. So I came home and told my folks that I passed my physical and I'm going go into the service. My mom was fit to be tied and she didn't speak to my dad for a while.

Interviewer: She blamed your dad, huh?

Kono: Because he said I was so short that they didn't think they would take me. But they fooled my dad. And I didn't get to report until November sometime. And then we got a call to active duty in December.

Interviewer: Was their reason they didn't want you to go into the army [that] they wanted to hold onto you? Or was there some other reason?

Kono: I guess, being parents, they didn't want to lose their daughter.

Interviewer: There was nothing about how come you going into the US Army and that kind of stuff?

Kono: See I wanted to volunteer because my [older] brother wasn't in the service and there was nobody in our family that was in the service. So I thought somebody should be loyal to the country. So I went in.

Interviewer: Did your parents— What words of encouragement or what feelings did they give you?

Kono: When I was ready to go, finally, to leave, they said do my best. And not to shame their country.

Interviewer: Same like all the Issei parents did. . . . And then, so there were lots of WACs from Hawai'i?

Kono: When we left Hawaii, there were 59 of us. All ethnic races. There were Japanese, Filipinos, mixed races, Korean, Chinese.



Alice Tetsuko Kono's company at basic training at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, March 6, 1945. (National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)

Source: Alice Tetsuko Kono Interview by James Tetsuji Tanabe, March 8, 2004. Alice Tetsuko Kono Collection. Military Intelligence Service Veterans Club of Hawaii, Library of Congress.



Source 13

Staff Sergeant Millie L. D. Veasey Interview (2000)

- Interviewer: Do you recall why you joined the service? Do you recall seeing posters, or did you have family members in the military? What was the reasoning for joining, for you wanting to join?
- Veasey: The reason was that, actually, I talked about these three girls, and just two of us really went down. Mary Alston is now up in Chicago, but she's working for North Carolina Mutual. I think it was because my brother was in the army; however he did not care for me to come into the army.
- I joined because they really were asking, and that changed. When I got to Fort Clark, Texas, they were saying that the women were releasing a man for active duty. Of course, they said, "She came in, and she released her own brother to go overseas, to get into combat," but that was the whole thing. When I went in, I was doing clerical work, and I really went in as a clerk typist. That is just about all I did.
- Most of the women, of course, a number of them—you were put into various units according to the experience one had had. A goodly number of black women were on the hospital wards, or they helped and that kind of a thing as assistant nurses. A whole number of people that I come in contact with now, most of the women or a goodly number of them in World War II, were actually in the Nursing Corps. . . .
- Interviewer: You said your brother was not in favor of your going in. What about your other siblings and your mother? How did they feel?
- Veasey: Well, my mother did not feel at all, really, actually. She actually agreed to let me go take the exam because she didn't think that I was going to pass. I had always been what was said grossly underweight—not grossly underweight, as I was saying, but about nine pounds at that time. If it was raining or all these kinds of things, I had a lot of trouble with my throat.
- My mother said as a youngster they had thought that they were going to lose me because of maybe some medical kind of thing, and she didn't know whether I was subject to pneumonia and diphtheria and that kind of a thing. She really didn't think I was going to pass. That was the reason why they decided to let me go and take the test. However, also, as far as the weight is concerned, as I said, I understand that I made a pretty good mark on the exam.
- Then when we were selected to go overseas, there were 600 of us, and of course, the units of your battalion, the first, second and third, and fourth. The girl who was selected to be the clerk for the first battalion was a college graduate. I was selected . . . and I only had a high school education.

Source: Millie L. D. Veasey Interview by Hermann Trojanowski, June 25, 2000. Millie Dunn Veasey Collection, Women Veterans Historical Project, Gateway, UNC Greensboro.

Source 14

Sergeant Sara Whalen Interview (2016)

Interviewer: How did you end joining the service?

Whalen: Well, my mother, well, my uncle, he kind of talked her into getting married. And, so she did. And, I had a stepfather, and he was a coal miner. He had rheumatism and arthritis, and he couldn't do much of anything, but they got her to marry him. So, she was keeping him.

Interviewer: So how did that inspire you or how did that affect you to go join the military?

Whalen: No, the stepfather was very mean. He was, you know, always, you know, he was a coal miner, but he was kind of full of himself. He thought he was the, you know, the top guy, but he never did anything because he had rheumatism and arthritis. . . .

He was very abusive, too, and I would pick up anything handy and hit him with them and then I'd run because he couldn't catch me. . . . well, I told my mother that I'm getting fed up with it. And, I said, either divorce him or I'm leaving. I'm not going to, you know, be there. . . .

She didn't believe in divorce, so, I went downtown, and I seen the sign, "Join the Service," Auxiliary Service. It was the AA. That was downtown at the courthouse. So, I went in, they gave me a test. I took the test, and they gave me a physical and then they said to me you leave in three weeks. . . .

I went home and told her that I was leaving. I kind of felt bad but, well, it was done. . . .



Sara Whalen

Source: Sara Whalen Interview by Joseph Welch (grandson), September 11, 2016. Courtesy of Joseph Welch's personal collection.



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Activity Sheet 8

Evidence-Based Responses—Why They Served

Directions: The interviews with the three women who served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/Women's Army Corps demonstrate different reasons women had for joining. Additionally, these reasons may differ from the recruitment poster and newspaper advertisement you examined. While reading each interview, highlight or underline phrases that explain why the interviewee served in the US military. Then answer the questions below.

Name of the WAC Veteran:
What was the main reason for her enlistment?
What evidence in the oral history transcript supports your response?
Name of the WAC Veteran:
What was the main reason for her enlistment?
What evidence in the oral history transcript supports your response?
Name of the WAC Veteran:
What was the main reason for her enlistment?
What evidence in the oral history transcript supports your response?



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What are some themes that the United States government used to encourage women to serve during World War II?

What are some themes that the three women who served in the Women's Army Corps gave for serving during World War II?

Reflection Question: Why might these themes be similar to or different from one another?

Source 15

World War II Recruiting Poster (1941)



Artwork by James Montgomery Flagg, Office of War Information,
Washington DC, [1941] (National Archives, 513533)



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Activity Sheet 9

Summary Brainstorm List

Directions: Recall the reasons that the Veterans and service members featured in the previous lessons served during World War II. If several of them shared the same reason, you only need to list it once. After creating the list, circle the three themes that seem to be universal themes throughout all of the readings.

	<i>Why I Served</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	



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Activity Sheet 10

Recruiting Poster Template

Directions: Imagine you worked for the US Office of War Information during World War II. Create a new government recruiting poster that broadens the thematic reasons why an individual should enlist based on the stories of Veterans and service members you learned about in the previous lessons. You may focus on the 761st Tank Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Native American code talkers, the Women's Army Corps, or all of these groups. Provide a title, at least one graphic element, and at least one slogan that clearly draw on evidence from the readings.

Title: _____

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the student to draw their recruiting poster. The box is currently blank.



Source 16

Charles Collins Aldridge, "The Skirted Soldier" (1943)

The first verse of the poem:

I am a WAAC.
I am a Soldier in Skirts.
Don't laugh, Mister. It is no laughing
matter.
I wear the uniform of my country
Because my country is at war.
I'm no super-patriot. Millions of
Young men have laid aside pencils,
Typewriters, golf clubs to shoulder guns,
To fight, to bleed....and to die
That this great United States of America
May remain free.
There's Joe and Pete and Herbert and Al
and George.
They were told their country was in peril
and
They did something about it.
Why should I sit back in ease and let Joe
and Pete
And George fight my war for me?
However you add it, subtract it or multi-
ply it,
It is my war, too. Not just Joe's war
Or Pete's or George's.
Those grand fellows -- fellows I know
and love --
Did not have to be told twice that their
country
Was in grave danger -- just once.
Neither did I.

First verse of "The Skirted Soldier" by Charles Collins Aldridge, 1943 (Alabama Department of Archives and History)



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Activity Sheet 11

Project Planning

Directions: You have read stories of World War II Veterans and service members that answered the question “Why did I serve?” Your next task is to research a World War II Veteran or service member who is buried in a National Cemetery or State, Territory, or Tribal Veterans Cemetery and tell their story to the best of your ability. There are many ways to conduct your research and guides to some research resources are provided below.

After conducting your research, you may submit your finished project in the form of a written report or eulogy, a poem or song, or a mini-documentary or mini-podcast that focuses on some important aspect of your subject’s service. Reports/eulogies should be 250–400 words, poems/songs should be at least 7 lines in length, and audio/visual work should be 2–4 minutes in length.

Note: Projects that meet the contest guidelines may be submitted to the Gilder Lehrman Institute for the Veterans Legacy Project World War II Portraits of Service Award (ten \$500 prizes). See the contest rules here: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/veterans-legacy-program/student-contest>

Submission Type (Circle One):

Written Report/ Eulogy - Poem/Song – Mini-Documentary/Mini-Podcast

Basic Information (where available)

Veteran/Service Member’s Name: _____ Birth date: _____

US Armed Forces Branch: _____ Enlistment Date: _____ Discharge Date: _____

Date of death: _____ Burial Location: _____

Note-Taking Organizer:

Background Facts about the Veteran/Service Member

Background Fact #1: _____

Source: _____

Background Fact #2: _____

Source: _____

Background Fact #3: _____



NAME

PERIOD

DATE

Source: _____

Reasons for Enlisting

Possible Supporting Evidence #1: _____

Source: _____

Brief written summary of the Veteran's or service members' service in the military and other interesting or useful facts about their life.



Where to Start Your Research

Websites

These are a few websites that could prove useful for your research. Please be aware that websites like Ancestry, Family Search, Fold3, Newspapers.com, and others may require subscriptions, but it is worth checking whether your school or local library system provides free access to those sites.

- The National Cemetery Find a Cemetery Administration’s webpage: <https://www.cem.va.gov/find-cemetery/index.asp>
 - o Most National Cemetery Administration sites have a home webpage that lists selected Veterans and service members interred at the site under the “Notable Persons” section.
 - o For example: <https://www.cem.va.gov/cems/nchp/cypresshills.asp>
- US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) resources
 - o National Gravesite Locator: <https://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>
 - o Search for burial locations of Veterans or service members and their family members in VA National Cemeteries, state Veterans cemeteries, various other military cemeteries.
- Veterans Legacy Memorial: <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/>
- Armed Services websites
 - o US Army Heritage and Education Center: ahec.armywarcollege.edu/
 - o Naval History and Heritage Command: history.navy.mil/
 - o Marine Corps History Division: grc-usmcu.libguides.com/marine-corps-archives/main
 - o Air Force Historical Research Agency: afhra.af.mil/
- Other useful websites
 - o National Archives: archives.gov/research/military/veterans/online
 - o Most of the military records at the National Archives are not online, but you may find some useful records here that have been digitized.
- Military Indexes: www.militaryindexes.com

This site is run by an individual genealogist. Select the war you are researching and scroll down to the “Records by State” section.

- Find a Grave: www.findagrave.com

This website is run by private individuals and compiles crowd-sourced information

Community Resources

- Contact your local historical societies, veterans’ organizations, and libraries to assist you in your research. Your local libraries or school librarian or media specialist may have access to newspaper databases to locate news articles about your research subject.
- Search your community for memorials, historic sites, and displays that honor local Veterans and service members. Visit one of these locations to identify someone you would like to honor by telling the story of why they served.