

Using Primary Sources in the Classroom: World War I Unit

This lesson was created by educators working with the Alabama Department of Archives as part of the "[Using Primary Sources in the Classroom](#)" project in 1996.

Lesson 4: The Home Front - "Food Will Win the War"

Background information for teachers:

When America went to war in 1917, the United States government attempted to mobilize all aspects of society in support of the effort. Patriotic propaganda on the home front combined with economic controls over essential resources to bring government into the lives of citizens to an unprecedented extent. Conservation, along with increased production of foodstuffs, was urged upon Americans, including Alabamians, as the surest means of defeating the enemies of democracy. Food prices were set and home "Victory Gardens" were encouraged by the government intent on supplying Allied troops even as manpower was siphoned off the farms to fill the ranks of the military and industry. Women and children of both races were exhorted to enlist to do battle for the cause on the home front.

Content Standards:

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies (2010)

- 4th Grade:
 - 11. Describe the impact of World War I on Alabamians, including the migration of African Americans from Alabama to the North and West, utilization of Alabama's military installations and training facilities, and increased production of goods for the war effort.
 - Recognizing Alabama participants in World War I, including Alabama's 167th Regiment of the Rainbow Division
 - Identifying World War I technologies, including airplanes, machine guns, and chemical warfare
- 6th Grade:
 - 3. Identify causes and consequences of World War I and reasons for the United States' entry into the war.
 - Examples: sinking of the Lusitania, Zimmerman Note, alliances, militarism, imperialism, nationalism
 - Describing military and civilian roles in the United States during World War I
 - Explaining roles of important persons associated with World War I, including Woodrow Wilson and Archduke Franz Ferdinand
 - Analyzing technological advances of the World War I era for their impact on modern warfare
 - Examples: machine gun, tank, submarine, airplane, poisonous gas, gas mask

- Locating on a map major countries involved in World War I and boundary changes after the war
 - Explaining the intensification of isolationism in the United States after World War I
 - Example: reaction of the Congress of the United States to the Treaty of Versailles, League of Nations, and Red Scare
 - Recognizing the strategic placement of military bases in Alabama Grade:
- 11th Grade:
 - 4. Describe causes, events, and the impact of military involvement of the United States in World War I, including mobilization and economic and political changes.
 - Identifying the role of militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism in World War I
 - Explaining controversies over the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, and the League of Nations
 - Explaining how the Treaty of Versailles led to worsening economic and political conditions in Europe, including greater opportunities for the rise of fascist states in Germany, Italy, and Spain
 - Comparing short- and long-term effects of changing boundaries in pre- and post-World War I in Europe and the Middle East, leading to the creation of new countries

National Standards for History

- Era 7 The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)
 - Standard 1: How Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption
 - Standard 2: The changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I
 - Standard 3: How the United States changed from the end of World War I to the eve of the Great Depression:

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Standard 2 – Time, Continuity, and Change
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy
- Standard 3 – People, Places, and Environments
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments
- Standard 5 – Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions
- Standard 6 – Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define and identify propaganda.
2. Analyze the multiple sides of an issue (problem resolution skills).
3. Discuss the racial environment of Alabama during World War I.
4. Create a poster reflecting the concerns of the time period.

Suggested Activities:

1. Make copies of the documents for the students.
2. Use the suggested [guidelines for analyzing a written document](#) and a [photograph](#) at the beginning of this unit of information.
3. Define the term **propaganda**. Ask the students to identify forms of propaganda in the posters and newspaper advertisements.
4. Select several students to describe and discuss individual documents.
5. Have all students answer the following questions after having discussed each of the documents.
 - a. Why do you believe there were such differences of opinion concerning the Food Administration Bill?
 - b. Why is the Official Garden Calendar compiled by Home and School Garden Association of Birmingham of importance? Why would the white and black participants be separated?
 - c. Why was it important for everyone to conserve food and to plant home gardens?
 - d. How was this idea of home production of food beneficial to the entire war effort? Could this be considered "propaganda?"
 - e. What kinds of skills could be learned by young Americans by keeping the records of a home garden?

For younger students:

1. Create a poster to encourage people to:
2. Plant a "victory" garden
3. Can or preserve food to support the war effort
4. Draw a plan of your "victory" garden. What kinds of vegetables would you choose to plant? How large would your garden be? How many rows of each type of vegetable would you plant?

Primary Sources:

[Document 1](#): Bell, S. J., J. A. Jones, R. C. Smith, C. V. Ingram, Jr., W. E. Davis, John Banks, J. C. Thompson, H. A. Bedell, C. C. Torbert, J. T. Hamilton, W. R. Williams, and C. R. Hodge, Opelika, Alabama, to Hon. John H. Bankhead, Washington, D.C., 3 July 1917. John H. Bankhead Papers, LPR 49, Container 30, Folder 3, Alabama. Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 2](#): Lee, Robert, Birmingham, Alabama, to Hon. John H. Bankhead, Washington, D.C., 1 July 1917. John H. Bankhead Papers, LPR 49, Container 30, Folder 3, Alabama. Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 3](#): Birmingham Printing Pressmen's Union, Birmingham, Alabama, to Hon. John H. Bankhead, Washington, D.C., 16 July 1917. John H. Bankhead Papers, LPR 49, Container 30, Folder 3, Alabama. Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 4](#): "To All Thinking People." *The Montgomery Advertiser*, 5 April 1917, 1. Micro #284, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 5](#): *Sugar Means Ships*. n.d. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 6](#): *Our Flags*. n.d. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 7](#): City of Birmingham. Home and School Garden Association. *Official Garden Calendar*. [Birmingham]: City of Birmingham, Home and School Garden Association, [1916]. John H. Bankhead Papers, LPR 49, Container 30, Folder 1, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 8](#): "Americans Asked to Limit Use of Sugar." *Washington County News*, 29 August 1918, 3. Micro #455, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 9](#): Department of the Interior. Bureau of Education. *Daily Record Book of Boys' and Girls' Home Gardens*. [Washington, D.C.]: Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, [1917]. Alabama Council of Defense (1917-1919), Program Administrative Files, SG 18904, Folder 26, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

General Suggestions for Analyzing a Written Document

1. Describe the document. Is this a letter, a will, a bill of sale or some other kind of document?
2. What is the date of the document? Is there more than one date? Why?
3. Who is the author of the document? Is this person of historical significance? Do you believe that the author of this document is credible? Is this document written as a requirement of the author's occupation or is this a personal document?
4. For what audience was this document written?
5. List or underline three (3) points that the author made that you believe are important.
6. Why do you think that the author wrote this document? Use quotes from the document to support your position.
7. List two (2) things from the document that describes life in the United States or in Alabama.
8. Write one (1) question to the author that is unanswered by the document.

General Suggestions for Analyzing a Photograph

1. Study the photograph for two (2) minutes.
2. What subject does this photograph present?
3. What is the time period of the photograph? Look at clothing fashions, cars or other means of transportation, architecture and advertisements that may be present in the photograph.
4. List any people, activities, or objects in the photograph.
5. List three (3) suggestions about the type of activity being presented in the photograph.
6. Why do you believe that this photograph was taken? Why was this an important event?
7. List two (2) things from the photograph that describes life in the United States or in Alabama.
8. Write two (2) questions about the photograph that remains unanswered in your mind.
9. Where might you be able to locate more specific information concerning the time period or event being recorded by the photograph?

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	NM
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check, number of words this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check, number of words this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

RECEIVED AT WYATT BUILDING, COR. 14th AND F STS., WASHINGTON, D C.

1917 JUL 1 PM 9 35

A282AN 48 NL

BIRMINGHAM ALA 1

HON J H BANKHEAD

1920

U S SENATE WASHINGTON DC

FOR LIBERTYS SAKE DONT VOTE GOVERNMENT FOOD CONTROL I HAD
 RAHTER PAY THIRTY DOLLARS PER BARREL FOR FREE DEMOCRATIC DO
 AS YOU PLEASE FLOUR THAN THREE DOGLARS PER BARREL FOR GGVERNMENT
 CONTROLLED FLOUR GGVERNMENT CONTROL WILL NOT CREATE MORE
 FOOD BUT RATHER LESS AND WILL LIKELY DEMORALIZE EVERYTHING
 ROBERT LEE.

To the Mayors of Alabama Towns:---
To the Chamber of Commerce:---
To the Newspapers of the State:---
To the Women of Alabama:---
To All Thinking People:---

Alabama—as well as the entire South—is confronted today by the most serious food situation since the Civil War. Flour, meats, vegetables, are already beyond the means of many people and they will go beyond the means of many more.

Something must be done—and done at once. No amount of loans, credits or money made can solve the situation. **WE MUST RAISE MORE FOODSTUFFS.** Get the people together in your community **AT ONCE—NOW.** Help the farmers to get seed to increase the corn acreage, planting velvet beans with corn and peanuts between the corn rows. Help your farmers get all the livestock they can—particularly hogs.

Good women, hold a mass meeting in every community. You can do a vast deal. You have no idea what you can do until you get together and make an effort. Often you can do more—and will do more—than the men. Start a big movement for **HOME GARDENS** on the farm and in town. See that all vacant lots in the towns are producing something to eat. See that the boys and girls get seed for gardens. Make your community produce what it eats.

The Advertiser, realizing to an extent how serious this situation is and how much more serious it will become unless we act **AT ONCE**, urges you for your own sake, for the sake of your community, and for the sake of Alabama to put forth your utmost effort—concerted and systematic—to increase the food supply of our people.

UNITED STATES
FOOD ADMINISTRATION

WAR
HURRY

SUGAR

E. Fisher

Sugar *means* Ships

*The Consumption of
Sugar Sweetened Drinks
Must be Reduced.*

For your beverages **400 million lbs. of sugar** were imported in ***Ships*** last year. Every ***Ship*** is needed to carry soldiers and supplies ***now***.



AMERICANS ASKED TO LIMIT USE OF SUGAR

**Must Use No More Than Two Pounds
Per Person a Month if the Present
Meagre Allied Sugar Ration
Is Maintained.**

**Stocks Will Be Short Until Beginning of New
Year—Ration May Be Enlarged Then.**

Two pounds of sugar a month—half a pound a week—that is the sugar ration the U. S. Food Administration has asked every American to observe until January 1, 1919, in order to make sure there shall be enough for our Army and Navy, for the Allied armies and for the civilians of those nations.

By New Year's the world sugar situation will be relieved somewhat by the new crop. Cuban sugar of this year's crop will be arriving in this country.

Every available sugar source will be drawn on by the Food Administration during the next winter months to maintain sufficient stocks here to keep up our national sugar supply. During October the first American beet sugar will arrive in the markets. By the middle of November some of our Louisiana cane crop will be available. All of this sugar and more may be needed to keep this nation supplied on a reduced ration and to safeguard the Allied sugar ration from still further

reduction. In Europe the present ration is already reduced to a minimum.

Our Situation.

The situation which the United States faces in its efforts to maintain a fair distribution of sugar to the Allied world is as follows:

Sugar supplies throughout the country, in homes, stores, factories and bakeries are at a low ebb. We must make increased sugar shipments to the Allies.

Production of American beet and Louisiana cane crops have been disappointing.

Porto Rico crops have been curtailed.

Immense sugar stocks in Java cannot be reached on account of the shipping shortage; ships are needed for troop movements and munitions.

Army and Navy sugar requirements have increased as well as those from the Allies.

Most industries using sugar have had their allotment reduced by one-half; some will receive no sugar.

Households should make every effort to preserve the fruit crop without sugar, or with small amounts of sugar. Later, when the sugar supply is larger, the canned fruit may be sweetened as it is used.

