

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 5: Signing Up for Action and Sustaining Morale

Background information for teachers:

Alabama contributed 74,000 draftees to the American forces in World War I, in addition to whole units of the state's National Guard which were federalized soon after war was declared. Among these was the Fourth Alabama which became part of the famed Forty-second "Rainbow Division." Losses in France included 2,401 Alabamians killed in action; another 3,861 of the state's soldiers died from wounds or disease suffered in service.

Maintaining support on the home front in the face of such losses prompted extensive propaganda efforts on the part of governmental agencies. Posters lauding the virtues of those who supported the war at home and damning the atrocities of the German "Huns" abroad were everywhere apparent. Community public programs were held to entertain and enlighten and to sell the audiences on "Liberty Bonds," Red Cross volunteerism, and a host of other war effort-related programs.

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. Create a poster reflecting the concerns of the time period.
3. Discuss the efforts used to maintain morale on the home front.
4. Discuss life for soldiers overseas during the war.

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. Have every student read [Document 9](#), the front page of the *Alabama Defense Record* from October 15, 1918.
 - a. What similarities are found among all of the documents and photographs in the front page example?
 - b. What do these similarities suggest about the war effort?
 - c. In your opinion, how did the public programs impact the public support of the war?
4. Define the term *propaganda*.
 - a. Ask the students to identify forms of propaganda in the posters and newspaper advertisements.
 - b. Using the "Hun" poster, ask the students to define a *hun*. Is this propaganda? Is it a racial slur? Ask the students to determine if this poster might offend some Americans. Why might it be offensive to some Americans?

Suggested activities for younger students:

1. Create a poster to encourage the public to support the war effort by:
 - a. buying liberty bonds or savings stamps
 - b. knitting socks for the soldiers and sailors
 - c. volunteering to help the Red Cross
 - d. having "meatless" Mondays or "wheat less" Wednesdays
 - e. rationing sugar
 - f. saving food
 - g. participating in a savings bond parade
 - h. enlisting to serve in the military

2. Ask the students to list the things that they would include in a "Christmas Care Package" during World War I. Remind the students of the needs of the soldiers as well as the things that would be included at that time period which would not necessarily be included today such as cigarettes.
3. Ask the students to list the things that would be included in a soldier's "comfort kit." These were given to each soldier upon enlistment. (Bibles, sewing kits and stationary were common items. See [Lesson 2](#), Documents [5](#) and [6](#) of the [Civil War Unit](#) for a list of the effects on the soldiers killed in the Civil War.) Students should be encouraged to search for similarities and differences in the needs and supplies of the soldiers from different time periods.

Primary Sources:

[Document 1](#): "Order of Induction into Military Service of the United States." Alabama Diplomas & Certificates Collection, 7N Range A, Section a, Shelf c, Oversize Folder 1, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 2](#): "Honorable Discharge from the United States Army." George Paul Moses World War I Records, 7N Range A, Section 1, Shelf e, Box 21, Folder 4, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 3](#): [ca. 1918]. World War I Troops Marching through Downtown Montgomery, 7N Range A, Section 1, Shelf b, Box 16, Folder 8, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 4](#): *Fight or Buy Bonds*. n.d. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 5](#): American Red Cross. *Our Boys Need Sox*. n.d. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 6](#): _____. *Do Your Bit - Save the Pit*. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 7](#): _____. *10,000,000 Members by Christmas*. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 8](#): *Honor Emblem*. World War I Poster Collection, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 9](#): "Must Mail Christmas Boxes by November 20" and others. *Alabama Defense Record*, 15 October 1918, 1. ADAH Public Information Subject File - Alabamians at War, SG 17110, Folder 11, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

[Document 10](#): *Beat Back the Hun*. n.d. World War I Poster Collection, 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?

Document 4







STOP

SAVE
*Prune pits
Plum pits
Cherry pits
Date seeds
Olive pits*

*Peach Stones
Apricot pits
the shells of
Hickory nuts
Butternuts and
Walnuts*

The carbon produced from these materials when placed in respirators will

SAVE SOLDIERS' LIVES
by absorbing

GERMAN POISON GAS

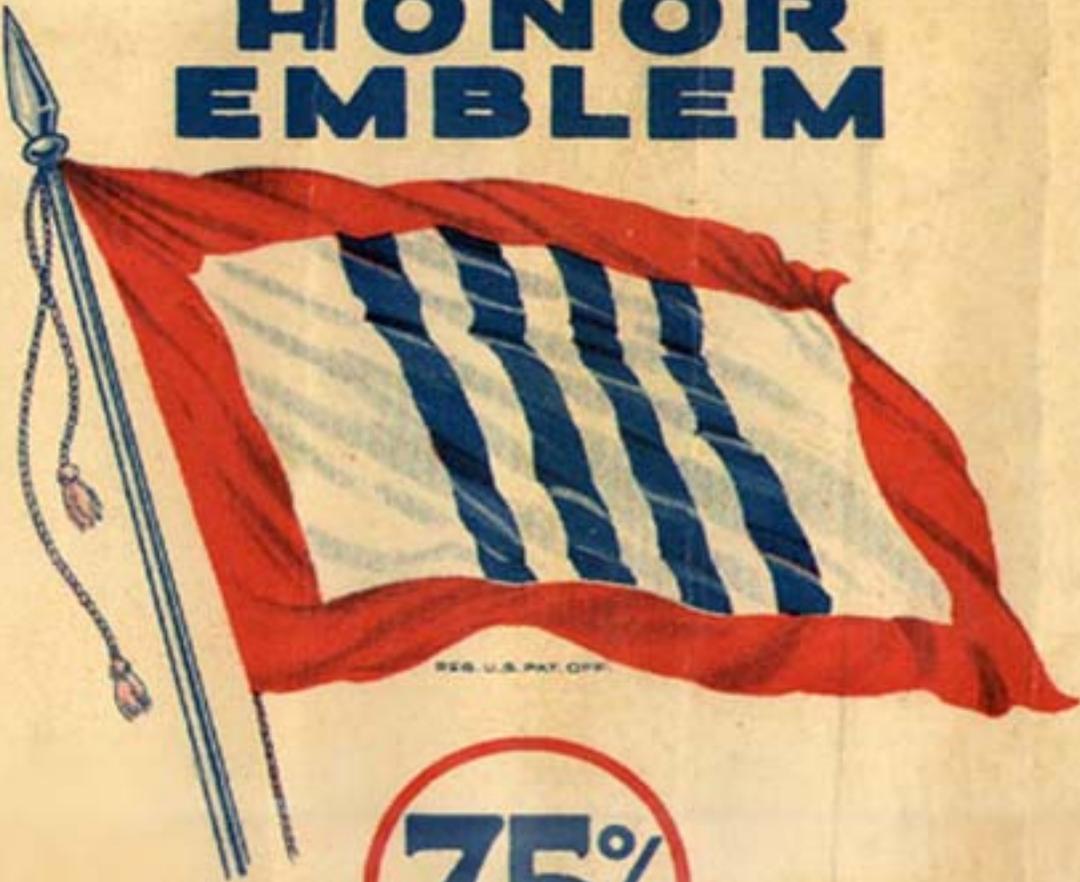
DRY MATERIALS THOROUGHLY AND DELIVER TO POINTS DESIGNATED BY
THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
DO YOUR BIT - SAVE THE PIT

GAS DEFENSE DIVISION - CHEMICAL WARFARE SERVICE USA.
NOV 11 1918
Collected by Capt. Wall

Document 7



**HONOR
EMBLEM**



REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

75%

**OF THIS FIRM'S EMPLOYEES HAVE
BOUGHT BONDS OF THE**

4th LIBERTY LOAN

13 88

THE COMMERCIAL ARTS & DESIGN CO., NEW YORK, N.Y.

MUST MAIL CHRISTMAS BOXES BY NOVEMBER 20

Only One Package Can go to Each Soldier Overseas for Coming Holiday Season

Persons who desire to send Christmas packages to soldiers overseas should acquaint themselves with the rules made by the war department. Only one package may be sent to each soldier and the soldier must give the name of the person from whom he desires the package. Package labels are being issued to the soldiers now, one to each soldier and each package must carry this label. Every package must be mailed by November 20 and must be accepted by the Red Cross chapter nearest the home of the person who desires to mail it.

Rules for Christmas packages announced by the war department follow:

One parcel will be accepted by the war department through the Red Cross for each soldier overseas.

Each soldier will be provided with one Christmas parcel label. This label will be forwarded by him to the person in the United States from whom he wishes to receive his Christmas package. Packages that do not bear this label will not be accepted by the Red Cross for delivery to the postoffice authorities. Labels that are lost will not be duplicated.

Christmas parcels must be placed in cardboard boxes 3x4x9 inches in size. These boxes will be provided to holders of

labels by the American Red Cross. They may be obtained at Red Cross chapters or branches after November 1.

No Message Can be Sent

With each box will be given complete instructions regarding the articles which may be sent and a list of articles which are barred by the postal authorities. Study these instructions and avoid mistakes. No message or written material of any kind will be allowed to go in the boxes. When the boxes are packed, but unwrapped, they must not weigh more than two pounds and fifteen ounces. If the parcel is overweight some article must be removed.

Do not put perishable food, soft candy, liquids or anything in glass containers in the package if you wish it to reach its destination with the other contents unspoiled.

Do not mail the box yourself. When packed, the box should be taken to the nearest collection station designated by the Red Cross unsealed and unwrapped, ready for inspection. Red Cross representatives are authorized to remove objectionable articles from parcels. Shippers will then affix sufficient postage on their parcels to carry them to Hoboken, N. J. Parcel post zone rates will be charged. The parcels are to remain in custody of the Red Cross until delivered to the postal authorities.

No Christmas parcel will be accepted after November 20. Keep this in mind.

