

Using Primary Sources in the Classroom: World War II 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 Needs of a Soldier

Background information for teachers:

World War II was a "modern" conflict in its dependence on technological advances of the 20th century. Unlike World War I which saw whole armies bogged down in static trench warfare, World War II put a premium on mobility with ships, jeeps, tanks, and airplanes moving troops from point to point. Each soldier had to carry not only weaponry for battle, but also nearly everything he needed to live on in the field.

Content Standards:

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies (2010)

- 4th Grade:
 - 13. Describe the economic and social impact of World War II on Alabamians, including entry of women into the workforce, increase in job opportunities, rationing, utilization of Alabama’s military installations, military recruitment, the draft, and a rise in racial consciousness.
 - Recognizing Alabama participants in World War II, including the Tuskegee Airmen and women in the military
 - Justifying the strategic placement of military bases in Alabama, including Redstone Arsenal, Fort Rucker, Fort McClellan, and Craig Air Force Base
- 6th Grade:
 - 6. Identify causes and consequences of World War II and reasons for the United States’ entry into the war.
 - Locating on a map Allied countries and Axis Powers
 - Locating on a map key engagements of World War II, including Pearl Harbor; the battles of Normandy, Stalingrad, and Midway; and the Battle of the Bulge
 - Identifying key figures of World War II, including Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sir Winston Churchill, Harry S. Truman, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Michinomiya Hirohito, and Hideki Tōjō
 - Describing the development of and the decision to use the atomic bomb
 - Describing human costs associated with World War II Examples:the Holocaust, civilian and military casualties
 - Explaining the importance of the surrender of the Axis Powers ending World War II
 - 7. Identify changes on the American home front during World War II.
 - Example: rationing

- Recognizing the retooling of factories from consumer to military production
- Identifying new roles of women and African Americans in the workforce
- Describing increased demand on the Birmingham steel industry and Port of Mobile facilities
- Describing the experience of African Americans and Japanese Americans in the United States during World War II, including the Tuskegee Airmen and occupants of internment camps
- 10th Grade:
 - 10. Describe the impact of World War II on the lives of American citizens, including wartime economic measures, population shifts, growth in the middle class, growth of industrialization, advancements in science and technology, increased wealth in the African-American community, racial and ethnic tensions, Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G. I. Bill of Rights), and desegregation of the military.
 - Describing Alabama's participation in World War II, including the role of the Tuskegee Airmen, the Aliceville Prisoner of War (POW) camp, growth of the Port of Mobile, production of Birmingham steel, and the establishment of military bases

National Standards for History

- Era 8 The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)
 - Standard 3: The causes and course of World War II, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs:

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. Identify some of the materials needed for a soldier's survival in the field.
2. Discuss the differences between essential and nonessential materials.
3. Prioritize articles according to survival needs.

Suggested Activities:

1. Each student is a supply officer. Ask them to make a list of the items that a soldier will need to survive in the field of battle.
2. Compile a master list as a class from their individual work.
3. Discuss the cost and the transportation of the items. Will the soldier have to carry this equipment? What special needs does the climate demand?
4. Make an overhead projection sheet or a copy for each student of the document describing officer's field equipment.
5. Remind the students that "dismounted" means that the articles are carried by the soldier, "mounted" means that a vehicle is available.
6. Discuss the weight of the items and the necessity of the items. Allow the students to eliminate equipment they consider to be unnecessary.
7. Divide the list and ask the students to research the approximate cost of some of the items in the present. (Flashlight, compass, blanket, field glasses, raincoat, clothing articles.) This should help the students to understand some of the material costs of war.
8. Ask the students why they think that this list was marked "confidential." What could an enemy force discover about our soldiers, if the equipment lists were not confidential?

Primary Sources:

- [Document 1](#): "Officer's and Warrant Officer's Field Equipment." [ADAH Public Information Subject File - Alabamians at War](#), SG 17126, Folder 19, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.
- [Document 2](#): "Officer's and Warrant Officer's Clothing and Equipment." [ADAH Public Information Subject File - Alabamians at War](#), SG 17126, Folder 19, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

Document 1

Officer's and Warrant Officer's field equipment (other than clothing worn on person)

ARTICLE	DISMOUNTED	MOUNTED ON VEHICLE
Bags, canvas, field	Attached to suspenders, carried on back, or on right side slung by strap passing over left shoulder.	Attached to suspenders, carried on back, or slung by strap passing over left shoulder, or stowed in vehicle.
Basin, canvas, folding	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Belt, pistol or revolver	Worn 2	Worn 2
Blanket, roll	-----	In/on vehicle (when bedding roll is not authorized).
Blanket, wool	In bedding roll	In bedding roll or in blanket roll.
Book, blank, memorandum	In shirt pocket	In shirt pocket.
Boots or shoes	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Breeches (or trousers)	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Bucket, canvas, folding	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Canteen, cup and cover	On belt, right rear	On belt, right rear.
Cap, field	Worn, or in bag, canvas, field	Worn, or in bag, canvas, field.
Case, dispatch	On right side, slung by a strap passing over left shoulder.	On right side, slung by a strap passing over left shoulder.
Compass, lensatic or prismatic.	Right front of belt	Right front of belt.
Compass, watch	In pocket	In pocket.
Flashlight	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Glasses, field	On right rear slung by strap passing over left shoulder.	On right rear slung by strap passing over left shoulder.
Gloves, any type	Worn; in bag, canvas, field; or in bedding roll.	Worn; in bag, canvas, field; or in bedding roll.
Goggles	Worn, on helmet, or in right shirt pocket.	Worn, on helmet, or in right shirt pocket.
Handkerchief	In bag, canvas, field, and in bedding roll.	In bag, canvas, field, and in bedding roll.
Hat, service	Attached to bag, canvas, field.	Attached to bag, canvas, field.
Helmet, steel	Attached to bag, canvas, field.	Attached to bag, canvas, field.
Holster, pistol	On belt, opposite right hip	On belt, opposite right hip.
Housewife	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Kit, mess, complete	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Laces, extra, any type	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Leggins	In bedding roll	In bedding roll.
Locker, trunk	On cargo vehicle	On cargo vehicle.
Mask, gas, service	Under left arm, slung by strap passing over right shoulder.	Under left arm, slung by strap passing over right shoulder.
Message book	In shirt pocket	In shirt pocket.
Ointment, protective	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Overcoat, long, or short	On bag, canvas, field	On bag, canvas, field.
Pocket, magazine, web, double.	Left front of belt	Left front of belt.
Pouch, first-aid, with packet	On belt, left rear	On belt, left rear.
Raincoat	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Rations	In bag, canvas, field	In bag, canvas, field.
Roll, bedding	On cargo vehicle (or on pack animal).	On cargo vehicle.
Shoe, dubbing	In bag, canvas, field	

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

OFFICERS AND W. O. CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

For Issue

Bag, canvas, field O. D. M-1936	1 ea.	✓
Belt, pistol M-1936	1 ea.	✓
Blanket, wool O. D. M-1934	2 ea.	✓
Can, meat, M-1932	1 ea.	✓
Canteen, (aluminum, stainless steel or plastic)	1 ea.	✓
Cover, canteen dismounted	1 ea.	✓
Cup M-1910	1 ea.	✓
Fork	1 ea.	✓
Knife	1 ea.	✓
Identification tag 40"	1 ea.	✓
Pin, tent, shelter, wood	10 ea.	✓
Pocket magazine double web	1 ea.	(1 ea.)
Pocket magazine carbine	1 ea.	(1 ea.)
Pole, tent, shelter	2 ea.	✓
Pouch, first aid	1 ea.	✓
Pocket, first aid	1 ea.	✓
Roll, bedding, waterproofed	1 ea.	✓
Spoon	1 ea.	✓
Strap, carrying O. D. bag canvas field	1 ea.	✓
Suspenders, belt	1 ea.	✓
Tag, identification	2 ea.	✓
Tent, shelter half	2 ea.	✓
Leggins, canvas	2 ea.	✓
Helmet, steel complete M-1	1 ea.	✓
Cover, Mattress	1 ea.	✓
Message book, M-105-A	1 ea.	✓
Mask, gas, (diaph or service)	1 ea.	✓

The following list is to be purchased:

Belt, O's or W. O.	1 ea.	✓
Belt, web, waist	1 ea.	✓
Book, memo, pocket and pencil	1 ea.	✓
*Brush, clothes	1 ea.	✓
*Brush, hair	1 ea.	✓
*Brush, shaving	1 ea.	✓
*Brush, shoe	1 ea.	✓
Brush, tooth	1 ea.	✓
Cap, Garrison, O's, wool O. D.	1 ea.	✓
Cap, Service, O's	1 ea.	✓
Coat, wool, service	1 ea.	✓
Comb	1 ea.	✓
x Drawers, wool	3 pr.	✓
x Gloves, wool, O. D.	1 pr.	✓
Handkerchief, cotton, white	6 pr.	✓
Insigna Cap. Off.	1 ea.	✓
Insigna W. O.	1 ea.	✓
Insigna Collar O's	2 pr.	✓
Insigna Collar O's V. S.	2 pr.	✓
Insigna Collar, W. O's.	2 pr.	✓
Insigna, grade	2 ea.	✓
Jacket, field	1 ea.	✓
*Knife, pocket	1 ea.	✓
x Laces, shoes, extra	1 ea.	✓
*Locker, trunk	1 ea.	✓
x *Mattress	1 ea.	✓
*Mirror, trench	1 ea.	✓
Necktie, cotton, mohair O. D.	1 ea.	✓
x *Overcoat, short or long	1 ea.	✓
*Pajamas	2 pr.	✓
*Pen, fountain	1 ea.	✓
x *Pillow, feather or cotton	1 ea.	✓