

# Life on the Home Front

## MAIN IDEA

The war required sacrifice for Americans at home and changed life in other ways.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Some wartime changes were permanent, such as black migration to Northern cities.

## TERMS & NAMES

war bonds	Sedition Act
propaganda	Oliver Wendell Holmes
Espionage Act	Great Migration

## ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

On the home front, the war opened up new jobs for women. But when the war ended, female workers were laid off. Carrie Fearing wrote to her boss, hoping to keep her job.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

We never took a soldier's place, a soldier would not do the work we did . . . such as sweeping, picking up waste and paper. . . . We . . . like our job very much and I hope you will . . . place us back at the shop.

Carrie Fearing, quoted in *Women, War, and Work*



Like Fearing, many women were proud of the part they played in getting the country ready for war. In this section, you will learn more about wartime life at home.

In May 1918, these women worked in the Union Pacific Railroad freight yard in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

## Mobilizing for War

To prepare for war, the government needed money. World War I cost the United States \$35.5 billion. Americans helped pay almost two-thirds of that amount by buying government war bonds. **War bonds** were low-interest loans by civilians to the government, meant to be repaid in a number of years. To sell the bonds, officials held Liberty Loan drives. Posters urged citizens to “Come Across or the Kaiser Will.” Hollywood actors like Charlie Chaplin toured the country selling bonds to starstruck audiences.

Schoolchildren rolled bandages and collected tin cans, paper, toothpaste tubes, and apricot pits. The pits were burned and made into charcoal for gas mask filters. Some Boy Scout troops even sold war bonds. So that more food could be sent to soldiers, people planted “victory gardens” in backyards and vacant lots. Women’s groups came together in homes and churches to knit socks and sweaters and sew hospital gowns.

### Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about the effects of World War I on the home front.

EFFECTS ON THE WORLD	EFFECTS ON THE UNITED STATES
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To persuade women to buy war bonds, this poster appealed to their love of family.

Patriotic citizens also saved food by observing wheatless Mondays and Wednesdays, when they ate no bread, and meatless Tuesdays. To save gas, they stopped their Sunday pleasure drives. The government limited civilian use of steel and other metals. Women donated their corsets with metal stays to scrap drives. Manufacturers stopped making tin toys for children and removed metal from caskets.

The war brought more government control of the economy. To produce needed war supplies, in 1917 President Wilson set up the War Industries Board. The board had great power. It managed the buying and distributing of war materials. It also set production goals and ordered construction of new factories. With the president's approval, the board also set prices. Another government agency, the National War Labor Board, settled conflicts between workers and factory owners.

To rally citizen support, Wilson created the Committee on Public Information. The committee's writers, artists, photographers, and filmmakers produced **propaganda**, opinions expressed for the purpose of influencing the actions of others. The committee sold the war through posters, pamphlets, and movies. One popular pamphlet, "How the War Came to America," came out in Polish, German, Swedish, Bohemian, and Spanish. In movie houses, audiences watched such patriotic films as *Under Four Flags* and *Pershing's Crusaders*.

## Intolerance and Suspicion

Patriotic propaganda did much to win support for the war. But its anti-German, anti-foreign focus also fueled prejudice. Suddenly people distrusted anything German. A number of towns with German names changed their names. Berlin, Maryland, became Brunswick. People called sauerkraut "liberty cabbage," and hamburger became "Salisbury steak." Owners of German shepherds took to calling their pets "police dogs."

On June 15, 1917, Congress passed the **Espionage Act**. The **Sedition Act** followed in May 1918. These laws set heavy fines and long prison terms for such antiwar activities as encouraging draft resisters. The laws made it illegal to criticize the war. U.S. courts tried more than 1,500 pacifists, socialists, and other war critics. Hundreds went to jail. Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs gave a speech arguing that the war was fought by poor workingmen for the profit of wealthy business owners. For this talk, a judge sentenced him to ten years in prison.

The government ignored complaints that the rights of Americans were being trampled. In the 1919 decision in *Schenck v. United States*, the Supreme Court upheld the Espionage Act. Schenck, convicted of

### ReadingHistory

**A. Finding Main Ideas** What were civilians asked to do for the war effort?

### ReadingHistory

**B. Recognizing Effects** How did war propaganda fuel prejudice?

distributing pamphlets against the draft, had argued that the Espionage Act violated his right to free speech. Justice **Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.**, wrote the court's opinion.

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The most stringent [strict] protection of free speech would not protect a man in falsely shouting fire in a theater and causing a panic. . . . The question in every case is whether the words used . . . are of such a nature as to create a clear and present danger that they will bring about . . . evils that Congress has a right to prevent.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *Schenck v. United States*, 1919

#### ReadingHistory

##### C. Analyzing

##### Points of View

Why did Justice Holmes believe that free speech could be limited?

Justice Holmes argued that free speech, guaranteed by the First Amendment, could be limited, especially in wartime.

## New Jobs and the Great Migration

As soldiers went off to battle, the United States faced a labor shortage. Northern factories gearing up for war were suddenly willing to hire workers they had once rejected. Throughout the South, African Americans heeded the call. Between 1910 and 1920, about 500,000 African Americans moved north to such cities as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and St. Louis. This movement became known as the **Great Migration**. African Americans left to escape the bigotry, poverty, and racial violence of the South. They hoped for a better life in the North.

### HISTORY throughART

*The Migration of the Negro*, Panel No. 1 (1940–41), by Jacob Lawrence, shows three of the most common destinations for African Americans leaving the South.

**How does Lawrence's painting reflect continuity and change in American life?**



New jobs were opening up in the American Southwest. These jobs were fueled by the growth of railroads and irrigated farming. A revolution was under way in Mexico, and the chaos led many Mexicans to flee across the border after 1910. Many immigrants settled in Texas, Arizona, Colorado, and California. Most became farm workers. During the war years, some went to Northern cities to take better-paying factory jobs.

The wartime labor shortage also meant new job choices for women. Women replaced male workers in steel mills, ammunition factories, and assembly lines. Women served as streetcar conductors and elevator operators. The war created few permanent openings for women, but their presence in these jobs gave the public a wider view of their abilities. Women's contributions during the war helped them win the vote.

**ReadingHistory**

**D. Recognizing Effects** What groups gained new jobs as a result of the war?

**Now and then**

**THE FLU EPIDEMIC**

In 1918, flu victims often came down with pneumonia and died within a week. Today, bacterial infections such as pneumonia resulting from the flu can be controlled with antibiotics.

The 1998 discovery of the frozen remains of a 1918 flu victim in an Alaskan cemetery may one day lead to a better understanding of the virus. Scientists have found a genetic link between the 1918 flu virus and swine flu, a virus first found in pigs. The Alaskan find may help scientists develop vaccines to protect against future flu outbreaks.

**The Flu Epidemic of 1918**

Another result of the war was a deadly flu epidemic that swept the globe in 1918. It killed more than 20 million people on six continents by the time it disappeared in 1919. It had no known cure. Spread around the world by soldiers, the virus took some 500,000 American lives. People tried desperately to protect themselves. Everywhere, schools and other public places shut down to limit the flu's spread.

In the army, more than a quarter of the soldiers caught the disease. In some AEF units, one-third of the troops died. Germans fell victim in even larger numbers than the Allies. World War I brought death and disease to millions. It would also have longer-term effects, as you will read in Section 4.

**Section 3 Assessment**

**1. Terms & Names**

**Explain the significance of:**

- war bonds
- propaganda
- Espionage Act
- Sedition Act
- Oliver Wendell Holmes
- Great Migration

**2. Using Graphics**

Make a chart like the one below to show reasons for wartime shifts in population.

	Shift	Reason(s)
African Americans		
Mexicans		

How similar were the two groups' reasons for moving?

**3. Main Ideas**

- What were three ways American families could contribute to the war effort?
- What was the purpose of the Espionage and Sedition Acts? What groups were most affected by them?
- What kinds of new job opportunities did the war create for women and minorities?

**4. Critical Thinking**

**Making Inferences** What were the positive and the negative consequences of American wartime propaganda?

**THINK ABOUT**

- contributions to war effort
- effect on opponents of war and on German-Americans

**ACTIVITY OPTIONS**

**SPEECH**

**MATH**

Deliver a **radio broadcast** on the importance of conserving food, or make a **calculation** of the amount of food your class wastes monthly.