

# How the War Changed America

*World War II forced a Depression-battered nation to mobilize for a titanic struggle. This had a major long-term impact on American society.*

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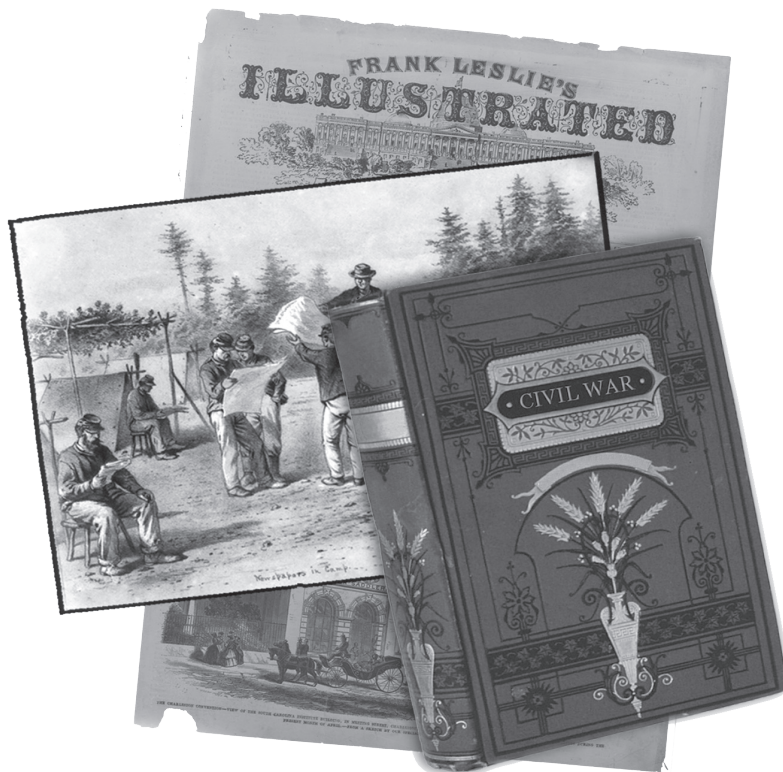
# Teacher Introduction

## ★ Using Primary Sources

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it’s because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,  
conflicting  
perspectives are  
among the truths  
of history.  
No single  
objective or  
universal account  
could ever put an  
end to this endless  
creative dialogue  
within and  
between the past  
and the present.”*

From the 2005 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

## ★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

### **Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes:**

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **TWO Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way. (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **CD-ROM.** The ImageXaminer lets students view the primary sources as a class, in small groups, or individually. A folder containing all of the student handouts in pdf format, including a graphic organizer for use with the ImageXaminer's grid tool, allows for printing directly from the CD.
- **One DBQ.** On page 22, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

**All pages in this booklet may be photocopied for classroom use.**

### **1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.**

Give them copies of pages 7–9. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

### **2. Have students do the worksheets.**

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources with the ImageXaminer. You may also ask them to use its magnifying tools to more clearly focus their analysis.

### 3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Use the overheads to focus this discussion on each source in turn. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

### 4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 22 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

**The DBQ for this booklet (see page 22):**

*“The war against German and Japanese militarism changed America in many ways, largely for the good.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?*

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

## ★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

### **Excellent Essay**

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

### **Good Essay**

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### **Fair Essay**

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

### **Poor Essay**

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

# Suggestions to the Student

## ★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This Debating the Documents lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

## ★ *How to Use This Booklet*

### **1. Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this Debating the Documents lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



### **2. Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals; others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter), but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These things give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

### **3. Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

### **4. As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

### **5. Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge. The DBQ is on page 22.



## • *How the War Changed America* •

In 1939, after a decade, the Great Depression still held the nation in its grip. President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs had changed many things. Yet eight million people were still out of work. As Europe plunged into war, however, Americans shifted their attention from problems at home to the terrible dangers abroad. The German Nazi conquest of much of Europe in 1940 left only Great Britain standing fully against a terrifying foe. Japan was on the march in Asia. On December 7, 1941, its attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States fully into the war.

World War II left entire societies in ruins in many parts of Europe and Asia. Death, destruction, and social and cultural upheaval were everywhere. Moral codes seemed to have collapsed. Spiritual grief and horror left people bewildered and in despair. Six million Jews and millions of others perished in the Holocaust. Forty million others died in the war.

American soldiers experienced or witnessed a good deal of this horror. At home, however, most Americans knew the war in a different way. They lived through the battles only from news reports, newsreels, and the letters and stories of GIs overseas. Fears and anxieties were high, but many Americans were able to maintain a somewhat normal way of life.

Still, the war changed life in many ways. A different America emerged from World War II.

For one thing, the U.S. became the great "arsenal of democracy" for the Allies. To harness its industrial system, government control over the economy grew enormously. The War Production Board (WPB) regulated economic life in a far greater way than all the New Deal programs ever had. It controlled raw materials and fuel, and it tightly directed businesses producing for the war. The federal Office of Price Administration (OPA) kept prices and rents low and rationed certain goods.

Millions of men went off to war. Workers were

suddenly hard to find; jobs were plentiful. Unemployment rates plummeted to unheard of lows. Millions of women took jobs in factories. After the war, the economy, for the most part, stayed strong. The war may well have helped to save the New Deal reforms and make them a permanent part of American life.

In the war, Americans seemed to pull together. Their sacrifices helped unite them. In order to shift production to wartime needs, Americans at home had to give up many consumer goods. The government gave them ration cards to limit their purchases of tires, gasoline, sugar, and other items. They were urged to save scrap metal, rubber, paper, and more. Campaigns to buy war bonds helped finance the war while also encouraging patriotic feelings about it.

The war did not create perfect harmony. Depression-era tensions (between rich and poor, labor and business) only partly faded away. They always lay just beneath the surface. Fears of sabotage or subversion by enemy agents were high. Racial and ethnic bigotry made itself felt. This was especially so with respect to Japanese American citizens living on the West Coast. African Americans fought bravely during the war, but they had to do so in segregated, all-black units.

At the same time, blacks were proud of their service, and this pride would flower during the civil rights movement shortly after the war. Women gained satisfaction and pride from their war production work. Many returned to the home after the war, but many others did not. For millions of women and African Americans, the war was a time of awakening.

What about others? In general, how did the war change life in America? The sources for this lesson should help you think about, debate, and decide this question.



## World War II Timeline

1939

Adolf Hitler's Germany takes over Czechoslovakia. Hitler and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin decide to dismember Poland. Hitler then invades Poland, triggering World War II. Albert Einstein tells President Roosevelt it is possible to build an atomic bomb. Roosevelt signs the 1939 Neutrality Act, allowing other nations to buy arms if they pay for them in full.

1940

Germany takes over much of Western Europe. Winston Churchill becomes British Prime Minister. Roosevelt signs a law requiring men to register for a military draft. He trades 50 destroyers to Britain in exchange for leases on British bases. Defense production is stepped up. In November, Roosevelt defeats Republican Wendell Wilkie to win an unprecedented third term as president.

1941

The Lend-Lease Act is signed. It provides arms to friendly countries at war. The Office of Price Administration is set up. German submarine attacks off the Atlantic Coast increase. Roosevelt declares a state of unlimited national emergency. He sets up a commission to prevent racial discrimination in defense work. In June, Hitler turns on Stalin and invades the Soviet Union. On December 7, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. The next day, the U.S. declares war on Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy declare war on the U.S.

1942

In January, Japan forces U.S. troops out of the Philippines as it proceeds to conquer many parts of Asia. The War Production Board takes over from the earlier Office of Production Management. On February 10, the last new civilian car is made. In March and April, 112,000 Japanese aliens and Japanese-American citizens on the West Coast are relocated in camps in the interior. The Battle of Midway in June gives the U.S. an early turning point victory. Gasoline rationing begins. In November, U.S. and British forces land in North Africa. At the end of the year, a food rationing program is announced.

1943

In February, the first point-rationing books are distributed. In April, Roosevelt freezes prices, salaries, and wages. In May, a strike by coal miners ends when the government seizes the coal mines. A Detroit race riot breaks out in June. In August, the Allies conquer Sicily, and the U.S. Army soon lands in Italy. Fighting in the Pacific rages.

1944

U.S. forces shell Japanese soil in February for the first time. On June 4, the Allies liberate Rome. On June 6 ("D-Day"), Allies land at Normandy, France. In September, France is fully liberated. In October, U.S. forces return to the Philippines and begin to reconquer it. In November, Roosevelt defeats Republican Thomas E. Dewey for a fourth term. The bombing of the Japanese homeland begins. In December, the Battle of the Bulge disaster delays the final triumph over Germany.

1945

On April 12, Franklin Roosevelt dies, and Harry Truman becomes president. On May 2, Berlin falls to Soviet troops. On May 8, Germany surrenders. On August 6 and 9, the U.S. drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan announces its surrender on August 14. The war is over.

## Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USE6-D-006436.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC2-1107.

### Information on Documents 1 & 2

**Document 1** A United States Office of War Information photo, dated October 1942. Nobody played hookey the day teacher Doris Jordan at Jamison Elementary School explained how every pupil can help win the war. These Roanoke, Virginia, youngsters, along with some 30 million other young Americans, were mobilized into the nation's newest home-front fighters, the junior army, to collect scrap metal and other things needed to supply the war effort.

**Document 2** This is a Works Projects Administration War Services Project poster, published in Pennsylvania between 1941 and 1943. The poster urges Pennsylvanians to take up various kinds of civil defense work. It shows a family prepared to do its part. The poster says in part: "SERVICE ON THE HOME FRONT. There's a job for every Pennsylvanian in these civilian defense efforts."

## Visual Primary Source Documents 3 & 4



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-107498.



Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZC4-5600.

### Information on Documents 3 & 4

**Document 3** This 1942 Army Air Forces photo shows the first African American pilots in the history of the U.S. Army Air Corps. In 1942, these men graduated from a training class at Tuskegee Army Airfield in Alabama. The pilots who did this are known as the “Tuskegee Airmen.” Third from the left is Benjamin O. Davis, the first commander of an all-black air unit. Davis led dozens of dangerous missions during World War II. Blacks fought in

segregated units in the war. Then in 1948, President Harry Truman ended segregation in the armed forces. Davis drafted the plan to carry out this order for the Air Force. He retired as a Lieutenant General in 1970.

**Document 4** This United States Office of War Information poster was published in 1943. It is based on an Alfred T. Palmer photograph of a woman working in an airplane factory.



## Study the Documents: Visual Sources 1 & 2

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

### **1 Main Idea — Doc. 1**

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This teacher in a class in 1942 is asking the children to do something. What is she asking them to do? Why do you think she has listed the items you see on the blackboard?

### **2 Main Idea — Doc. 2**

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This poster lists five forms of help Pennsylvanians can give to the war effort: Citizens Defense Corps, Citizens Service Corps, American Unity, Salvage Program, Victory Gardens. What do you know or guess about the purpose of each of these?

### **3 Visual Features**

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Notice how the family is portrayed on the poster in Document 2. How might this portrayal add to the appeal of the poster? What, if anything, does this image suggest to you about the mood of the nation in 1942?

# Study the Documents: Visual Sources 3 & 4

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

## **1 Main Idea — Doc. 3**

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Read the information provided about this photo. Based on this, write a one-sentence caption for the photo as if you were an editor planning to use the photo in a newspaper story.

## **2 Main Idea — Doc. 4**

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Briefly explain why the government believed that “the more women at work, the sooner we win.”

## **3 Visual Features**

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Notice the image of the woman at work in Document 4. What might make this image especially appealing to women thinking about getting jobs in war production plants? Make a list of the visual features that help make the poster effective—and that are evidence of attitudes of women during the war years.

## **4 What Else Can You Infer?**

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That is, what is suggested or implied in the documents? For example, do they suggest in any way that overall attitudes about blacks and women were changing during World War II? Would blacks have viewed the photo of the Tuskegee Airmen with pride, frustration, or some other set of emotions?

## Comparing the Documents

### ★ *The Visual Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the “Comparison Essay” worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand how America changed during World War II?**



*Documents 1 & 2* ☐



*Documents 3 & 4* ☐

## Comparison Essay

*I chose Documents \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did not choose Documents \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the documents in the following way:*

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KEEP THIS IN MIND: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.



## Written Primary Source Document 1

### Information on Document 1

This is part of a letter home from Pfc. Richard Cowan in Belgium, December 5, 1944, on his 22nd birthday. A few days later Cowan was killed in the Battle of the Bulge, after courageous actions for which he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Reprinted by permission of Robert Cowan, reproduced in *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from America's Wars*, edited by Andrew Carroll (Scribner, 2001), p. 265.

#### • Document 1 •

*[That's] really the main reason I tried so long to get into the army. To join so much in the action that there would be no moral tie to the ten commandments, as it were—to base my actions on a rawer creed....*

*But I think the beauty of it is that when the going shades off into the rough, then the old creed comes shining through. And it's easy to see that nothing's changed. Quite the contrary—that the old law was built from out of the same indecency; that*

*it is quite the logical development from this realistic off-color life of ours. In fact, I think it's proof that to know one extreme, its antithesis must first be realized.*

*And it means that everybody shares the same universals—hope, love, humor, faith. Being 22 is to have a chance to hit everything, no holds barred. And it's damned comforting to have made the loop of most of the attitudes towards things, and come out near where you started.*

# Written Primary Source Documents 2 & 3

## Information on Documents 2 & 3

**Document 2** A passage from “A Call for Sacrifice,” a speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt, April 28, 1942. Roosevelt listed a seven-point program of sacrifice including higher taxes, ceilings on prices, rents, and wages, sales of war bonds, and rationing.

**Document 3** This table compares Gross National Product (GNP) to total spending by the federal government. GNP measures the dollar value of all goods and services produced by a nation in a year.

### • Document 2 •

*Some people are already taking the position that every one of the seven points is correct except the one point which steps on their own individual toes. A few seem very willing to approve self-denial—on the part of their neighbors. The only effective course of action is a*

*simultaneous attack on all of the factors which increase the cost of living, in one comprehensive, all-embracing program covering prices and profits and wages and taxes and debts. The blunt fact is that every single person in the United States is going to be affected by this program.*

### • Document 3 •

(figures in billions of 1982 dollars)

<u>Year</u>	<u>GNP</u>	<u>Total Federal Purchases</u>	<u>Total Federal Purchases as % GNP</u>
1929	\$709.6	\$18.3	2.58%
1939	\$716.6	\$53.8	7.51%
1940	\$772.9	\$63.6	8.23%
1941	\$909.4	\$153.0	16.82%
1942	\$1,080.3	\$407.1	37.68%
1943	\$1,276.2	\$638.1	50.00%
1944	\$1,380.6	\$722.5	52.33%
1945	\$1,354.8	\$634.0	46.80%

# Study the Document: Written Source 1

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

## **1 Main Idea or Topic**

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In your own words, explain what Pfc. Cowan felt when he began the war and what fighting in the war taught him.

## **2 Interpreting Meanings**

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Pfc. Cowan says he first went to war in order “to base my actions on a rawer creed.” What does he mean?

Cowan then goes back to the “old creed,” because he sees that “the old law was built from out of the same indecency.” What does he mean by this?

He sums up by saying that “to know one extreme, its antithesis must first be realized.” What do you think he means? Do you agree or disagree with him? Why?

## **3 What Else Can You Infer?**

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From this one letter, can you infer anything at all about what other soldiers learned from their wartime experience? Why or why not?

# Study the Documents: Written Sources 2 & 3

Instructions: Take notes on these questions. Use your notes to discuss the documents and answer the DBQ.

## **1 Main Idea — Doc. 2**

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In a sentence or two, explain Roosevelt's view of what the government's role in society and the economy should be during the war.

## **2 What Else Can You Infer?**

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What, if anything, can you infer from this passage about the public's attitudes about wartime sacrifice and Roosevelt's view of the government's wartime role?

## **3 Main Idea — Doc. 3**

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What does this table show about the role of the government in American life during World War II?

## **4 Interpreting Meanings**

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Using this table, compare the period 1929–1939 with the period 1940–1945. What does this suggest about the impact of the war on America as compared with the impact of Roosevelt's New Deal programs of the 1930s? Could the numbers be misleading in any way? Why or why not?

## Comparing the Documents

### ★ *The Written Sources*

Answer the question by checking one box below. Then complete the statements on the “Comparison Essay” worksheet. Use all your notes to help you take part in an all-class debate about these documents—and to answer the final DBQ for the lesson.

**Which of these primary source documents would be most useful to a historian trying to understand how America changed during World War II?**

*Part of a letter  
home from Pfc. Richard  
Cowan in Belgium,  
December 5, 1944, on  
his 22nd birthday*

*Document 1* ☐

*A passage from  
“A Call for Sacrifice,” a  
speech by Franklin D.  
Roosevelt, and a table  
comparing Gross National  
Product (GNP) to total  
spending by the federal  
government*

*Documents 2 & 3* ☐

# Comparison Essay

*I chose Document(s) \_\_\_\_\_ because:*

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*I did not choose Document(s) \_\_\_\_\_.*

*However, a historian still might use the document(s) in the following way:*

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KEEP THIS IN MIND: Some sources are very biased. A biased source is one that shows you only one side of an issue. That is, it takes a clear stand or expresses a very strong opinion about something. A biased source may be one-sided, but it can still help you to understand its time period. For example, a biased editorial cartoon may show how people felt about an issue at the time. The usefulness of a source depends most of all on what questions you ask about that time in the past.

# Document-Based Question

Your task is to answer a document-based question (DBQ) on the way World War II changed America. In a DBQ, you use your analysis of primary source documents and your knowledge of history to write a brief essay answering the question. Using all four documents, answer this question.

## *Document-Based Question*

**“The war against German and Japanese militarism changed America in many ways, largely for the good.”  
Do you agree or disagree? Why?**

Below is a checklist of key suggestions for writing a DBQ essay. Next to each item, jot down a few notes to guide you in writing the DBQ. Use extra sheets to write a four- or five-paragraph essay.

- *Introductory Paragraph*

Does the paragraph clarify the DBQ itself? Does it present a clear thesis, or overall answer, to that DBQ?

- *The Internal Paragraphs — 1*

Are these paragraphs organized around main points with details supporting those main ideas? Do all these main ideas support the thesis in the introductory paragraph?

- *The Internal Paragraphs — 2*

Are all of your main ideas and key points linked in a logical way? That is, does each idea follow clearly from those that went before? Does it add something new and helpful in clarifying your thesis?

- *Use of Primary Source Documents*

Are they simply mentioned in a “laundry list” fashion? Or are they used thoughtfully to support main ideas and the thesis?

- *Concluding Paragraph*

Does it restate the DBQ and thesis in a way that sums up the main ideas without repeating old information or going into new details?