



World War II: Home Front

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Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about the home front during World War II. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available for each unit in a typical American history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

INTRODUCTION

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- *A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of American History*

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- *Based on primary or secondary sources*

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone.

- *Brief tasks promoting historical literacy*

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- *Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments*

A BASIC and an ADVANCED version of each assessment are provided. The BASIC Assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The ADVANCED Assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the BASIC version.

- *Easy to use both as learning and assessment tools*

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess student historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- *Evaluating student responses*

Brief but specific suggestions are provided defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

World War II: Home Front Assessment 1

Basic Level

Teacher Instructions

Based on Common Core Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8

★ Key Ideas and Details

1. **(6–8)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using this Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their American History coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

World War II: Home Front: Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to this Assessment

THIS SECTION IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW ON SAMPLE PAGES.

Student Handout

World War II: Home Front: Assessment 1

Directions: This exercise asks you to read a primary source document and a secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

April 19

On April 19 at 0552 the Coast Guard at Sandwich, Massachusetts, reported an object on the surface some 15 to 20 miles north of Sandwich. The Coast Guard evaluation was a submarine since three signalmen and an Army officer had seen subs and felt certain that the object sighted was a submarine. A check revealed that no friendly subs were operating in the area. However, the K-10 was diverted to the scene to investigate and make a search. Two planes from the Naval Air Station Squantum were also sent to assist. The results of all searches were negative and the incident was evaluated as very doubtful. It was thought likely that the object seen was one of the 83-footers [wood-hulled patrol boats] on her regular patrol as it could resemble a sub at a distance of 15 miles.

April 22–23

An observer from the Ipswich, Massachusetts, Coast Guard Station reported to the District Intelligence Officer at 2000 that he had sighted a tanker about 12 miles northeast of Ipswich. He also saw a sub surfacing at 1925 and again at 1945. He saw it for about five minutes before a plane appeared at which time the sub submerged. Gunfire was noticed and after the submerging of the sub, the observer heard sounds similar to depth charges and the gun firing continued.

Strangely enough there was no report of either a tanker or a plane in the area. Portsmouth reported only one sub out operating in areas A and B and not firing. The area was investigated by a blimp and the Submarine Chaser SC-686, but all results were negative.

Source Information: These are two brief entries in an official Navy war diary titled “Secret War Diary, Northern Group: Task Group, 02.1 of the Eastern Sea Frontier Force.” The excerpts are both from the diary’s “Chapter II, Activity and Suspicious Events, April 1944.” This war diary is available from The National Archives of Boston—America on the Home Front: Selected World War II Records of Federal Agencies in New England. It can be accessed at <http://www.archives.gov/boston/exhibits/homefront/2.0-war-diary.pdf>.

Document 2: A Secondary Source

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, was a profound shock for Americans. The United States declared war against Japan the next day. A few days after that, Hitler declared war on the United States. The nation now faced powerful enemies in both Asia and Europe. Americans had long felt protected from such conflicts by the vast oceans separating them from those distant parts of the globe. World War II changed that very suddenly. In the Atlantic and along the East Coast, German submarines began attacking U.S. merchant shipping, and for a while did so with devastating impunity. Some ships were sunk within sight of land. Many Americans feared a land invasion could follow.

At first, the coastline was largely unguarded. The Coast Guard took on the task of protecting shipping and preventing enemy spies and saboteurs from coming ashore. In June 1942, Coast Guard authorities observed the landing in Long Island, NY, of four German agents carrying explosives. However, they were not prepared to stop them. They had to rely on the FBI to track down and arrest the saboteurs. Both military and civilian groups patrolled the coasts and northern shipping lanes and investigated submarine sightings. However, America's thousands of miles of coastline meant that the task would remain uncertain and challenging throughout the war. Without the advanced electronic equipment available now, and without rapid enough helicopter response capabilities, the task for Navy, Coast Guard, Civil Defense and many ordinary citizens would not be an easy one. It would keep them all in a high state of anxiety throughout the war.

Source Information: This document is a secondary source account of military threats and perceived threats to the U.S. coastline during World War II. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. As a secondary source, this document is not evidence from the war years. It is a later account by someone writing about that time. This particular historical account was written in 2013 specifically for use as part of this activity.

Assessment Questions

1. What details in Document 1 suggest it was not easy detecting and dealing with enemy activity off the New England coast during World War II?
2. What details in Document 2 help to explain why so much energy was spent on investigating incidents such as the two described in Document 1?

Document 3: A Visual Primary Source



Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-116353.

Source Information: Looking down one of the two final assembly lines for B-24E (Liberator) bombers at Ford's big Willow Run plant in Michigan. Guns and wing tips have not yet been added to the planes in the foreground. The Liberator could operate at high altitudes and over great ranges on precision bombing missions. The Ford Motor Company originally constructed the Willow Run plant to produce components for this bomber in the summer of 1941. This United States Office of War Information photo is dated as somewhere between July 1942 and February 1943.

Assessment Questions

1. How do all three of these documents help in explaining the huge impact the government had on the U.S. economy during World War II?

2. Does the visual source (Document 3) add anything to your understanding of this impact that you cannot learn from the other two documents? Explain your answer.