

WOMEN IN WWII

fighting on the home front and overseas

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October 29, 1929, was a dark day in history. "Black Tuesday" is the day that the stock market crashed, officially setting off the Great Depression. Unemployment skyrocketed--a quarter of the workforce was without jobs by 1933 and many people became homeless. President Herbert Hoover attempted to handle the crisis but he was unable to improve the situation. In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president and he promised a "New Deal" for the American people. Congress created The Works Progress Administration (WPA) which offered work relief for thousands of people.



The end to the Great Depression came about in 1941 with America's entry into World War II. America sided with Britain, France and the Soviet Union against Germany, Italy, and Japan. The loss of lives in this war was staggering. The European part of the war ended with Germany's surrender in May 1945. Japan surrendered in September 1945, after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Study the photo then read the information below. Answer the questions with the open minded-thinking of today's women on the home front in the middle-east.



The history of women in the military is one that extends over 4000 years into the past,



for example,

Joan of Arc (1431), throughout a vast number of cultures and nations women have played many roles in the military, from ancient warrior women, to the women currently serving in conflicts like the Iraq War.

Despite various roles in the armies of past societies, the role of women in the military, particularly in combat, is controversial and it is only recently that women have begun to be given a more prominent role in contemporary armed forces. As increasing numbers of countries begin to expand the role of women in their militaries, the debate continues.

The role of women in combat has become a particularly contentious issue in contemporary militaries throughout the world. With the current exclusion of women from many combat roles seen by some as a form of sexual discrimination, an ongoing debate continues to rage. Many on each side of the issue cite the alleged physical and mental differences of the two sexes, the effect of the presence of the opposite sex on the battlefield, and the traditional view of males as soldiers as arguments both for and against women being employed as soldiers under combat situations. The idea of having women in combat has been thrown around by several civilizations since early civilization. Some societies have chosen to not allow women to fight for their countries, while others have used women to fight in their wars as frequently as men, such as 800,000 women who served in the Soviet military during World War 2, of which nearly 70% saw front line action. Women have been serving in the military in numerous support roles in several countries for many years. In modern wars, however, there may be no front line, and women, in such roles as military police providing convoy escort, or staffing checkpoints, have gotten into firefights as part of a mixed unit, Raven 42. SGT Leigh Ann Hester, among other decorated soldiers in the Raven 42 unit, received the Silver Star, the third highest US combat decoration. While nurses under fire had received this award previously, Hester was the first woman to receive it for direct participation in combat.

Although women are recruited to serve in the military in most countries, only a few countries permit women to fill active combat roles. Countries that allow this include New Zealand, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Israel and Switzerland. Other nations allow female soldiers to serve in certain Combat Arms positions, such as



At this time of war many supplies were needed and there was a low supply of goods. Women took the initiative to recycle and salvage in order to come up with needed supplies. They gathered recycled goods, handed out information on the best methods to use that one may get the most out of recycled goods and organized many other events to decrease the amount of waste. Volunteer organizations led by women also, prepared packages for the military overseas or for prisoners of war in Axis countries.

With World War II came the dire need for employees in the workplace, without women to step in the economy would have collapsed. By autumn 1944 the number of women working full-time in Canada's paid labor force was twice what it had been in 1939, and that figure of between 1,000,000 and 1,200,000 did not include part-time workers or women working on farms." Women had to take on this intensive labor and while they did this they still had to find time to make jams, clothes and other such acts of volunteering to aid the men overseas.

How did women during WWII contribute to the cause at home and abroad?

The major powers devoted 50–60% of their total GDP to war production at the peak in 1943. The Allies produced about three times as much in munitions as the Axis powers.

Munitions Production in World War II
(Expenditures in billions of dollars, US 1944 munitions prices)

Country/Alliance	Year						
	1935-9 ave	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	Total 1939–44
<u>U.S.A.</u>	0.3	1.5	4.5	20.0	38.0	42.0	106.3
<u>Britain</u>	0.5	3.5	6.5	9.0	11.0	11.0	41.5
<u>U.S.S.R.</u>	1.6	5.0	8.5	11.5	14.0	16.0	56.6
<u>Allies Total</u>	2.4	10.0	20.0	41.5	64.5	70.5	204.4
<u>Germany</u>	2.4	6.0	6.0	8.5	13.5	17.0	53.4
<u>Japan</u>	0.4	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5	6.0	16.9
<u>Axis Total</u>	2.8	7.0	8.0	11.5	18.0	23.0	70.3

Use the graph to help you about think and answer the questions.

State your opinion about the munitions productions during WWII.

Which country had the highest munitions production and did the US women contribute-how and why?

Source: Goldsmith data in Harrison (1988) p. 172

Directions read the information. Then answer the questions.



With this expanded horizon of opportunity and confidence and with the extended skill base that many women could now give to paid and voluntary employment, women's roles in World War II were even more extensive than in the First World War. By 1945, more than 2.2 million women were working in the war industries in the U.S., building ships, aircraft, vehicles, and weaponry. Women also worked in factories, munitions plants and farms, and also drove trucks, provided logistic support for soldiers and entered professional areas of work that were previously the preserve of men. In the Allied countries thousands of women enlisted as nurses serving on the front lines. Thousands of others joined defensive militias at home and there was a great increase in the number of women serving in the military itself, particularly in the Red Army.

This necessity to use the skills and the time of women was heightened by the nature of the war itself. While World War I was mainly fought in France and was a war arguably without clear aggressor or villain, World War II was truly a global conflict where countries were invaded or under the threat of invasion from leaders in Germany (Adolf Hitler) and Japan that had ambitions of world domination. In these circumstances the absolute urgency of mobilizing the entire population made the expansion of the role of women inevitable. The hard skilled labor of women was symbolized in the United States by the figure of Rosie the Riveter. Many women served in the resistances of France, Italy, and Poland, and in the British SOE which aided these.

What and who did this poster signify? Why was this poster important?



Barbara Erickson Given Her WASP Wings
Courtesy National Archives



"Nurses of a field hospital who arrived in France via England and Egypt after three years service." Parker, August 12, 1944. 112-SGA-44-10842.

TRAINING FOR VICTORY: A HOUSEWIFE LEARNS WELDING AT A VOCATIONAL SCHOOL.

FOR 26 YEARS SHE MADE MATCH CASES... NOW IT'S WAR PRODUCTION.

WOMEN IN WAR INDUSTRY

AS MEN MOVE TO THE FRONT LINES WOMEN MUST FILL THE GAP IN THE PRODUCTION LINES. 1,500,000 ARE WORKING IN WAR INDUSTRIES NOW. 4,000,000 MORE WILL BE NEEDED IN 1943 TO SMASH THE AXIS.

THESE HANDS THAT ROCKED A CRADLE NOW OPERATE A PRESS IN AN AIRCRAFT PLANT WITH SUPERIOR SKILL AND SPEED.

TWO SPECIAL WARBOB WIDOWS BEYOND THE HEART OF THEIR HUSBANDS. THEY'RE A MENDING TEAM ON RADIO SUPPORT ASSEMBLIES FOR BOMBERS.





EFFICIENCY PLUS! FEMALE TAPPING MACHINE OPERATORS DO AND MAKE OPERATIONS ON THE 7 1/2 HOUR EVENING SHIFT THAN MEN ON THE 8 HOUR DAY SHIFT.

BEAUTY LINE—ASSEMBLY LINE! THEY'RE MAKING ELECTRICAL BOX ASSEMBLIES IN CONTINUOUS PRODUCTION.

WOMEN MUST KEEP 'EM ROLLING

COMPILED AND EDITED BY SUPERSTOCK WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC ASSISTANCE, OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION PHOTO DISPLAY BOARD, 10 EAST 40TH STREET, N. Y. C.

General Writing Rubric

	Beginning	Developing	Accomplished	Exemplary	Score
Introduction/ Conclusion 	The writer does not encourage interest in the topic. A conclusion is not evident.	The writer encourages some interest in the topic. A conclusion is attempted.	The writer heightens interest in the topic, and has a concluding statement.	The topic is creatively introduced to heighten interest, and a conclusion is clear.	
Organization 	The writer uses little organization and writing is not fluid.	The writer uses some organization and is somewhat fluid in their writing.	The writing is organized and fluid.	The writing is well organized with fluid transitions.	
Content 	The writer provides little or no detail to support the topic.	The writer provides some details to support the topic.	The writer provides sufficient details to support the topic.	The writer provides interesting details that clearly support the topic.	
Structural Quality 	The writer makes numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization. Little use of paragraphs.	The writer makes several errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization. Some use of paragraphs.	The writer makes few errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization, and uses paragraph form.	The writer makes no grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and/or capitalization errors. Paragraphs are well constructed.	
Student Name: _____				Total =	

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