

Lesson 5: Volunteers from Arkansas

OVERVIEW

This lesson explores the military service and support for World War II both from Arkansans and from Japanese Americans who volunteered for military service from the concentration camps at Rohwer and Jerome.

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to describe the military service of Arkansans and Japanese Americans from Rohwer and Jerome during World War II.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What were the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II?
- What was it like to live in Arkansas during World War II?

ARKANSAS HISTORY FRAMEWORKS

TCC 1.2, 1.4

MATERIALS

- Arkansas history textbooks
- Documentary video *Time of Fear*, television, and VCR
- Photograph of Bernice Pearl Lockhart reproduced onto an overhead transparency

BACKGROUND

About 200,000 Arkansans, more than ten percent of the state's population, volunteered or were drafted by the Selective Service during World War II. The number might have been even higher, but many recruits had health problems severe enough that they failed their physical examinations. Others were rejected because they could not read or write at a sufficient level. Some Arkansans served in the military overseas, while others worked in administrative positions in Arkansas. Arkansas troops served in both the European and Pacific theaters. Women could serve in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (changed to the Women's Army Corp, or WAC in 1943). Women in the WAC and other branches of the military filled non-combatant occupations such as administration, motor mechanics, mail sorting, photography, radio and telephone operators, clerks, and nurses. African Americans also volunteered in large numbers. They served in segregated units commanded by white officers. During World War II, Camp Robinson in North Little Rock expanded to 48,188 acres and was used for basic training for army infantry unit and to house German Prisoners of War.

Japanese Americans served in the segregated units designated for *Nisei* (Japanese American) soldiers. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was legendary for their bravery and success. Some Japanese Americans who were skilled in the Japanese language also served in the MIS – Military Intelligence Service. During the last year of the war, the 442nd rescued the “Lost Battalion” in France, and it was later described by General Mark Clark as one of the most highly decorated units of the war.

OPENING

Show students the photograph of Bernice Pearl Lockhart (reproduced following this lesson – copy on to an overhead transparency). Ask students the following questions:

When do you think this photograph was taken? What clues in the photograph make you think this?

In what kind of job do you think Ms. Lockhart works? Why?

List three adjectives to describe Ms. Lockhart.

Explain to students that Bernice Pearl Lockhart served in the WAC, or Women’s Army Corps, during World War II. She worked at the Veterans Hospital in Tuskegee, Alabama. Ask students to brainstorm ways in which Arkansans supported the war effort.

ACTIVITIES

1. Write the following questions on the board or overhead projector:

How did Arkansans support the U.S. military during World War II?

What kinds of combat and non-combat positions did Arkansans hold?

How did women and African Americans participate in the military?

Have students locate information in their Arkansas history textbooks about military service by Arkansans during World War II. Then, discuss the three questions as a class. Show the second photograph of President Roosevelt touring Camp Robinson on the overhead projector. Discuss the questions as a class.

2. View the documentary video *Time of Fear* from 36:05 until 47:10. Ask students to take notes during the video clip about how Japanese Americans in Arkansas showed their loyalty to the United States during World War II. This 11-minute clip covers the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the loyalty questionnaire, and Japanese Americans fighting for the United States in Europe.

After the video clip, discuss with students how they would have filled out questions #27 and #28 on the loyalty questionnaire, which asked:

Do you forswear allegiance to the emperor of Japan?; and

Are you willing to serve in the United States military?

3. Compare and contrast the military service of Arkansans and Japanese Americans. Where did they serve during World War II? What kinds of hardships did they face? How might military service have changed their lives?

CLOSING

Connect the issue of military service during World War II with serving in the U.S. armed forces today. For what reasons do individuals join the military today? How are these similar to and different from reasons individuals joined the military during World War II?

EXTENSIONS

Have students read the passage entitled “Jehovah’s Witnesses in World War II Arkansas.” Discuss reasons why individuals might object to participation in a war. Talk about the questions at the end of the reading, and ask students whether they would volunteer to fight for the United States. Why? Why not?

Contact your local VFW post and invite a World War II veteran from Arkansas to speak to your class about his experiences. Have students prepare questions in advance of the visit. For an extended research project, have students get involved in the Veteran’s History Project. The Library of Congress has kits available for students and teachers to learn how to conduct oral histories with veterans in their communities. See the website <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/kit.html> for more information. Students can also search the database of oral histories to find stories from veterans in their area.

REFERENCES

Guy Vanderpool. “All Together Now: The Arkansas Home Front During World War II.” Brochure published by Texarkana Museums System, 1995.



Bernice Pearl Lockhart of Hot Springs. Photo courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.

Questions to Think About

1. When do you think this photograph was taken? What clues in the photograph make you think this?
2. In what kind of job do you think Ms. Lockhart works? Why?
3. List three adjectives to describe Ms. Lockhart.