

Summary: The Home Front

Building an Army

The United States' armed forces grew weaker in the 1920s and 1930s. The U.S. military was not ready for a war when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. The United States needed to mobilize for war. The military needed soldiers. The soldiers needed guns, uniforms, airplanes, and tanks. More than 15 million Americans joined the armed forces, including 100,000 women. Some were drafted.

The government spent billions of dollars on supplies. It paid businesses to make the supplies. Factories hired millions of new workers. Many of them were African Americans and women. Some factories stopped making consumer goods to make military supplies. U.S. factories made more war supplies than the other nations. American scientists made better helicopters and airplanes. Scientists also developed radar. Radar was used to find airplanes and ships that were far away.

At Home in Wartime

Many Americans helped support the war. Groups gathered supplies for soldiers. Children collected metal and old tires. Factories used them to make supplies. The military also needed lots of food for the soldiers. Meat, sugar, and gasoline were rationed. Many families planted gardens to grow their own food. American culture changed. Many people knew someone fighting in the war. Newsreels told about the war. People wrote books, plays, movies, and songs about the war.

Many people were afraid Japanese Americans would help Japan during the war. The government forced over 100,000 Japanese Americans to move to internment camps. Most of these people were American citizens. Some Italian Americans and German Americans were sent to internment camps. Thousands of Japanese Americans fought for the United States.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

- mobilize** *verb*, to get ready to fight
- newsreel** *noun*, a short film about current events
- internment camp** *noun*, a place where prisoners are held during wartime

After You Read

REVIEW Why did the United States have to produce so many military supplies? What were the United States' armed forces like in the 1920s and 1930s? What was the U.S. military like when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941? Underline the two sentences that tell you the answer.

REVIEW What did Americans at home do to help the war effort? Highlight three ways that Americans helped the war effort.