

# Summary: California and World War II

## Wartime California

In the late 1930s, war started in Europe. Soon Great Britain, France, and Russia were fighting against Germany, Japan, and Italy. On December 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing more than 2,000 people. The United States entered the war against Japan, Germany, and Italy.

Although there was no evidence, people worried that Japanese Americans would help Japan. In February 1942, President Roosevelt ordered Japanese Americans into internment camps. Some of the camps were in California. More than 110,000 Japanese Americans left their businesses, homes, and farms to live in drafty crowded buildings in a camp surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. Some Japanese American men, however, fought in a special army unit and earned more than 18,000 medals.

## War Industries

During World War II, California's large agricultural industry grew to meet wartime needs for food. The state also became a training center for the Army, Navy, and Marines. Soldiers trained in deserts, mountains, and beaches, and learned to fly in the clear skies of California. By the war's end, there were over 140 military bases. The state was also a leading manufacturing center. New factories made goods for the defense industry such as weapons, steel, and airplane parts. Shipyards built over 1,500 ships. More planes were built in California than any other state. Before the war, factories hired mostly white men. In need of workers during wartime, they hired women, African Americans, and Mexican Americans.

## Pitching In

During World War II, civilians, including children, saved everything that could be recycled and used for the war effort. They said, "Use it, wear it out, make it do." As the military used more food, civilians were encouraged to raise their own. By 1943, a third of all vegetables Americans ate were raised in "victory gardens." Certain goods such as butter, sugar, and gas were rationed. But the efforts paid off. The war ended in victory in 1945 for the United States and its side.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**internment camp** *noun*, a place where a person is held captive

**manufacturing** *noun*, using machines to make goods

**defense industry** *noun*, an industry that makes equipment for the military

**civilian** *noun*, a person who is not in the armed forces



### After You Read

**REVIEW** Why were Japanese Americans sent to internment camps?

Circle the sentence that tells why the government put Japanese Americans in camps.

**REVIEW** What new industries started or grew in California during the war? Underline sentences that describe what California farming and industry did during the war.

**REVIEW** What did civilians do to help the United States during World War II? Highlight the sentences that tell how civilians pitched into the war effort.