

World War II Introduction Lesson

Orientation on World War II Veterans – Lesson Plan

How old were the veteran's you are about to interview when they entered the service? Probably between 18 and 21—they could have been your older brothers, and some of you could have enlisted to fight--with your parent's permission. Much has changed since then, and I will use the next 20 minutes to orient you to the veterans then and now. I'll try to reveal the life of a teen ager as these veterans saw it, and then what you can expect of them seventy years later. I hope this will help you get started with the oral history process.

America in 1940

- What was America like when these veterans were 10-25 years old? Changes and similarities:
 - Population
 - **132,000,000** Americans in 1940 – in 2011 over 310,000,000 – **more than doubled**
 - PA **2nd** largest (9.9 mil), # 1 NY (13.4), IL (7.9) OH (6.9), CA (6.9) – 2010 #6 12.3 mil
 - Urban, USA only **58%** live in cities, PA 66% -- 2010 82% live in cities
 - life expectancy **63** years, half of population died before collecting SocSec – 2010 78 years
 - IMR, all deaths under age 1, **45**/1000 -- 2010 **6**/1000 - much **better medical** care now
 - **Penicillin and blood plasma** both introduced – very important in treating war wounded
 - Economics – America coming out of **depression**, in 2011 America trying to avoid a depression
 - GDP \$**101** billion --in 2007 \$14,074 billion, **140** times larger (not accounting for inflation)
 - industry converted to war arms and America becomes arsenal for democracy
 - **28%** of men in agriculture or mining, **32%** industry, 40% services – 2010 **1%, 22%, 77%**
 - **few women** worked outside the home, but the war effort would change that too
 - unemployment at **14.6%** end of depression
 - High school graduates in 1945: **32%**, college: **5%** -- 2010 **80%, 27%**
 - teachers earned \$**1,374**, spent \$**85**/student – 2010, 49K per teacher, 11K/student yearly
 - new car \$800, gas **18c/gl**, new house **\$6550**, milk **34c/gl**, bread 8c
 - PA **Turnpike** opens as America's first super highway – **stimulus project**
 - Entertainment: no internet, smart phones, iPods, or music videos, right???
 - popular song: http://www.last.fm/music/The+Andrews+Sisters/_/Boogie+Woogie+Bugle+Boy
 - Walt Disney's *Pinocchio* top movie at cinema in 1940, with others a shared experience
 - 1940 **Olympics** are cancelled due to the war, were to be held in Tokyo and Helsinki
 - **McDonalds** and **Dairy Queen** both get their start
 - Newspaper and radio are how most people get their news and entertainment reading about
 - Politics:
 - Alaska and Hawaii are not states – although both will be **attacked by the Japanese**
 - World War II already started for the rest of the world by 1940
 - Japanese conquest and atrocities in China since 1937
 - Germany invades Poland, Denmark, and Norway, and France falls. Britain stands alone

- US **Selective Service** starts, many of you young men would be eligible to be drafted
- FDR will be the only president elected to a third term, in office 8 years already

That was then, this is now. What happened to those World War II veterans?

- only **10% of WWII veterans saw combat**, still served in USA through training, maintenance
- This generation saw so much destruction spent their **lives building—GI Bill** sends to college
 - generation builds the **interstates**, man on moon, reverses Jim Crow, wins Cold War, polio
- To help you get a better perspective of this period from the view of the veteran, posted on web site are lists of movies to watch, books to read, or music to listen to
 - I hope I put into perspective your project and how your interviewees saw and see the world

Sources:

Events: <http://whathappenedinmybirthyear.com/>
<http://www.answers.com/topic/1940>

Population data: http://www.1930census.com/1940_the_year_in_history.php
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940_United_States_Census
<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/statcomp/documents/1941-02.pdf>
eO: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0005148.html#axzz0zRq23xAh>
IMR: <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5714a6.htm>

Econ:

GDP: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0104575.html#axzz0zRdQDEMI>
Ed: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Educational_attainment_in_the_United_States
Costs: <http://www.tvhistory.tv/1940%20QF.htm>

Juke box: <http://www.6thcorpsmusic.us/>