

## Activity Directors for Seniors

### World War II Senior Reminiscence Activity

Certain momentous days are forever a part of our lives; they need only a picture or brief description for us to recall just where we were.

For many seniors, December 7 1941 is one of those days in America history.

The days of World War II evoke powerful memories of life during war time – a time when everyone was involved and the entire nation made sacrifices. [The WWII Quiz](#) on the following pages is meant to generate discussion of the stories of seniors; of military service, rationing, war work for women, writing letters to the “boys”, and dancing to the great swing bands of the era.



#### Directions

Make a copy of the quiz for each resident or participant

Print the answer sheet

Print posters to put up: [www.archives.gov/education/lessons/wwii-posters](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/wwii-posters)



Play a CD of one of the early 1940s Big Bands:

Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Jimmy Dorsey, Harry James, Artie Shaw

As you ask each question, follow up with a discussion of individual experience.

*What were you doing when you heard about Pearl Harbor? How did it change your life?*

*How many people did you know that served in the military? What did your family do to contribute to the war effort? What food was it hardest to do without? Where did you go dancing? What did you do for fun since you couldn't get gas? How did the war change the lives of women? How did you celebrate the end of the war?*

Use the quiz to prompt seniors to share their experience of that remarkable time.

You will find that everyone has a story!

The letters in our book, [An American Family in World War II](#), will also generate discussion and evoke memory as well as provide important background and context for those born after 1945. The Quiz is free, [click here](#) if you wish to order the book.

## World War II Generation Quiz

1. When did the United States enter World War II?
2. Who were the political leaders of the major Allied Forces?
3. Who were the political leaders of the Axis powers?
4. When was the draft first enacted? Who did it cover?
5. Name three items that were rationed other than food.
6. Name two or more big band leaders and the instrument each played.
7. What band leader was killed over the English Channel in December, 1944?
8. Who was the first Hollywood movie star to join the service?
9. What was the lowest amount savings bond sold during the war?
10. What was the substitute for butter?
11. How much was a soldier paid?
12. How much did gasoline cost?
13. What famous woman flier started the Women's Air Auxiliary which delivered planes?
14. When did the War in Europe end? When was World War II finally over?

Developed by Dr. Harry Butowsky, National Park Service and Dr. Sandra O'Connell, editors, An American Family in World War II.

**World War II Generation Quiz  
Answer Sheet**

1. When did the United States enter World War II?  
*December 7, 1941*
2. Who were the political leaders of the major Allied Forces?  
*Roosevelt – US  
Churchill – Great Britain  
Stalin - Russia*
3. Who were the political leaders of the Axis powers?  
*Hitler – Germany  
Hero Hito and Tojo – Japan  
Mussolini – Italy*
4. When was the draft first enacted? Who did it cover?  
*October 16, 1940. Draft required men between 21 and 36 to register.  
By the end of the war, nearly 16 million had served in the military. Just  
over 10 million of those were draftees.*
5. Name three items that were rationed other than food.  
*Tires, gasoline, shoes, nylons, typewriters, refrigerators, cars, bicycles*
6. Name two or more of the big band leaders and their instruments.  
*Jimmy Dorsey - saxophone, Glenn Miller - trombone,  
Benny Goodman - clarinet, Harry James – trumpet, Woody Herman –  
clarinet.*
7. What band leader was killed over the English Channel in December, 1944?  
*Captain Glenn Miller’s plane went down on the way to Paris to prepare for  
a Christmas concert.*
8. Who was the first Hollywood movie star to join the service?  
*Jimmy Stewart was a licensed pilot in the 1930s. He joined the Army Air  
Corp before Pearl Harbor, became a bomber pilot, completing 20 missions  
in the B-24 Liberator. Other stars who saw combat were Clark Gable,  
David Niven, Henry Fonda, Lee Marvin, Tyrone Power, George C. Scott,  
Charlton Heston. John Wayne, the hero in many war movies, did not serve.*
9. What was the lowest amount savings bond sold during the war?  
*\$25.00 Students bought stamps to put into a book to buy a bond.*
10. What was the substitute for butter?  
*Oleo margarine sold with a color “button” which had to be mixed into the lard.*

11. How much was a soldier paid?  
*The pay scale in 1943 went to \$ 50 a month, with 30 cents a day extra for combat pay.*
12. How much did gasoline cost? How much gasoline was allotted?  
*.20 a gallon  
Drivers were allotted 3 gallons a week unless in a special category, such as civil defense worker, doctor, trucker, or farmer.*
13. What famous woman flier started the Women's Air Auxiliary which delivered planes?  
*Jackie Cochran*
14. When did the War in Europe end?  
*May 8, 1945*
15. When was the war finally over?  
*Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945, known as V-J Day  
The Peace Treaty was signed aboard the USS Missouri on September 2, 1945*

**Where were you when you heard the news that the war had ended?**

**What did you do to celebrate?**