



INTRODUCTION

During World War II, approximately 16 million Americans served in the military. Over half a million were offered the opportunity to anonymously write their opinions on combat and other topics in a series of surveys given by the Army Research Branch. These handwritten opinions sat largely untouched for decades until digitized and transcribed by The American Soldier in World War II project. This lesson plan utilizes a selection of these transcriptions to help students critically analyze primary sources to better understand the reality of post World War II life.

Students will also have the opportunity to use the **SCIM-C Method**. This method of analysis has been created to help students develop the knowledge and skills necessary to interpret historical primary sources and investigate meaningful historical questions.

GRADE LEVEL

High School/College Introductory (Age 16+)

TIME REQUIREMENT

60 minutes

MATERIALS

- Copies of **Readjustment & Postwar Life** Overview Essay
- Copies of Postwar Responses for each group of students
- Copies of **Student Worksheet** for each student

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to describe and explain the diverse views/experiences on postwar life by American soldiers by analyzing primary source documents on soldiers' experiences. They will revise their historical interpretation after reading each source, recognizing that by synthesizing information from multiple perspectives they can develop a richer, more accurate summary of the past.

KEY TERMS

Primary sources: textual or visual materials created during the historical moment you are studying, such as letters, diary entries, photographs, posters, and newspaper articles

Secondary sources: materials created well after the events they discuss by someone who did not experience them firsthand. Books, journal articles, encyclopedia entries, and

PROCEDURES

1. Begin by either having students read the overview essay, “Readjustment & Postwar Life,” to themselves or reading it together as a class. Once students have finished reading the essay, have them take a moment to write down some notes summarizing the feelings of American GIs about the postwar world based on what they read. Ask a few students to identify the following about this text:
 - a. Identify 3 important details about postwar America detailed in the essay.
 - b. Identify 2 ways in which these experiences are still relevant to life in America today.
 - c. Identify 1 question you have or 1 source you would need to better understand these experiences.

(15 minutes)
2. Review the key terms listed above.
3. Ask students whether the essay they just read is a primary or secondary source and how they can tell. Ask them what kinds of sources might be useful for learning more about what it was like to be a soldier in combat during World War II (e.g. letters, diary entries, oral histories, maps or photographs of a training camp, a training manual, etc.). **(5 minutes)**
4. Explain that students will now have the opportunity to build on their historical summaries of allies and enemies during the war by reading actual survey responses that soldiers wrote during World War II. You may choose for students to complete the activity individually or in groups. Distribute copies of the primary source responses and the Student Worksheet to each student or group.
5. Instruct students to start by analyzing just one of the letters. Have them complete Part I of the **Student Worksheet** once they finish reading. **(10 minutes)**
6. Have students read some of the additional responses, revising their historical summary each time and answering the questions on the **Student Worksheet**. Students can also think about the below questions when reading specific documents. **(20 minutes)**
7. Return to the whole class to debrief. The object is for students to realize that while each primary source is a useful tool, the best historical interpretations will synthesize information from multiple perspectives. Here are some possible discussion questions: **(10 minutes)**
 - a. How did your historical summary change after you read the first response?
 - b. Did any of your responses contradict one another? How did you handle that in writing your summary?
 - c. Was there any one response that helped you the most in developing your summary?
If so, why was it so helpful?
 - d. What details do you wish you knew more about before writing this summary?
 - e. What kinds of sources might help you find that information?

ASSESSMENT

You will be able to assess students' ability to analyze individual primary sources based on the historical summaries they write, as well as the answers they provide on the **Student Worksheet**. You will be able to assess their ability to synthesize information from multiple sources and recognize the value of that process based on their historical summaries and the answers they give in discussion. You will also be able to assess their questioning of the sources provided to them.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

[The Impact of the GI Bill](#) (Video)

[After the War](#) (Article)

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

1. Have students visit [The American Soldier in World War II](#) website and search for keywords surrounding postwar. Ask students to revise their historical summary after taking the information they find into account, and have them explain how the new source(s) helped enhance their understanding of what it was like for soldiers after World War II.

Potential Keywords: postwar, GI bill, education, discharged, college

2. Have students choose their favorite response out of the ones they read and do a “deep analysis,” extracting as much information as possible about the writer—what he liked or disliked, where he was from, his strengths and weaknesses, etc.—and build a profile of that person. The objective here is for students to practice extracting data from text, both the expressly written data and information they can infer by interpreting the details.

EDUCATION STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9 - Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9 - Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9 - Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY

HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3B

The student understands World War II and how the Allies prevailed.

HISTORICAL CONTENT ERA 8, STANDARD 3C

The student understands the impacts of World War II at home.

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 2

The student is able to appreciate historical perspectives by demonstrating the ability to

- (a) describe the past on its own terms, through the eyes and experiences of those who were there, as revealed through their literature, diaries, letters, debates, arts, artifacts, and the like;
- (b) consider the historical context in which the event unfolded—the values, outlook, options, and contingencies of that time and place; and
- (c) avoid “present-mindedness,” and not judging the past solely in terms of present-day norms and values.

HISTORICAL THINKING STANDARD 4

The student is able to support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely-reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

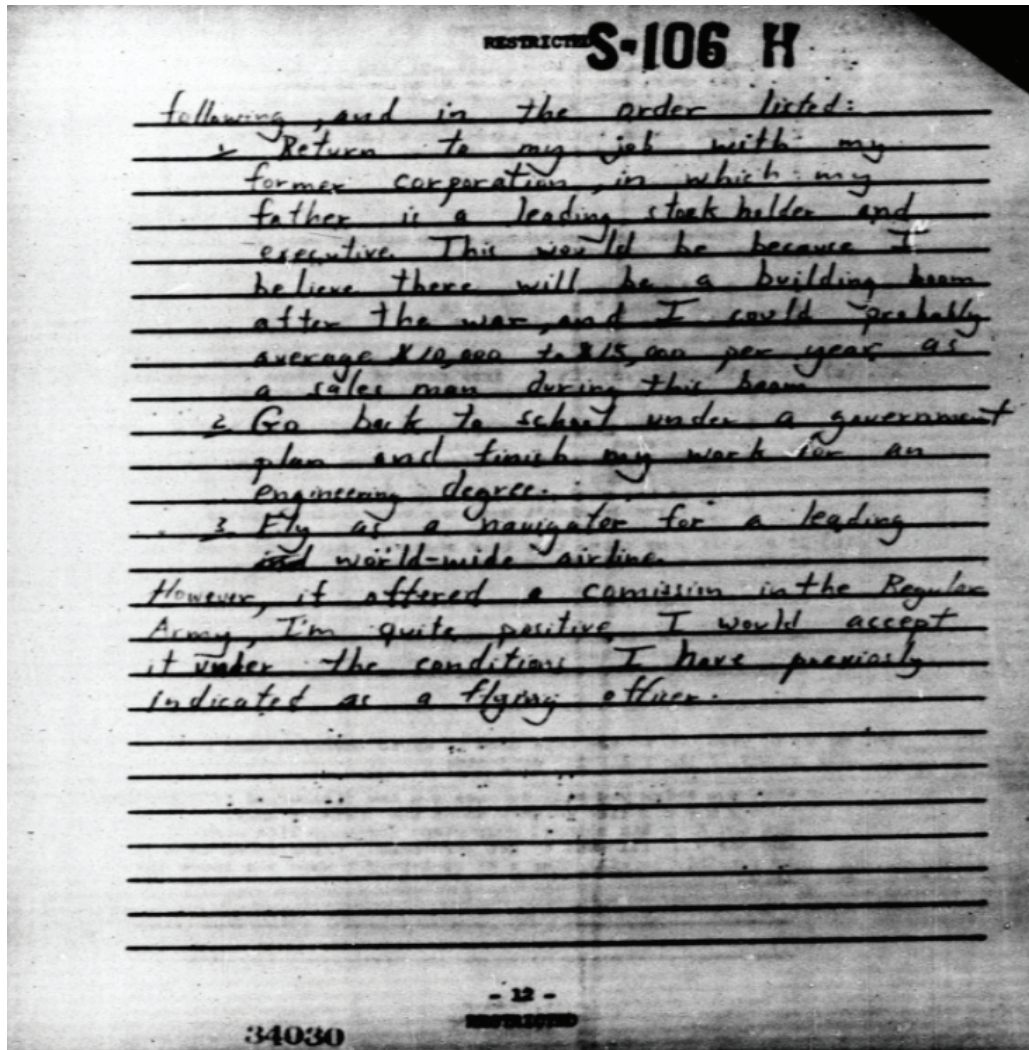
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COMBAT RESPONSES

Document A explains what one soldier hopes to do after the war.

Documents B & C relate to the G.I. Bill of Rights.

Document D reveals a soldier's plans for postwar living.



Document A, Survey 106, June 1944, 31-0709:

following, and in the order listed:

1. Return to my job with my former corporation, in which my father is a leader stock holder and executive. This would be because I believe there will be a building boom after the war, and I could probably average \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year as a sales man during this boom.
2. Go back to school under a government plan and finish my work for an engineering degree.
3. Fly as a navigator for a leading world-wide airline. However, if offered a commission in the Regular Army, I'm quite positive I would accept it under the conditions I have previously indicated as a flying officer.

(28-) RESTRICTED S-106 H

72. (a) How much has serving in the Army changed your plans for what you want to do after the war from the plans you had before you entered the Army? (Check one)

6 — It has delayed carrying out my plans but hasn't changed them much
7 ☒ It has delayed carrying out some plans and has changed others
8 — It has changed most of my plans
9 — I really didn't have any very definite plans

(b) If some of your plans have been changed, what plans have been changed as a result of your Army service and why have you changed them?

I sold my business equipment after
enlistment, and will have to buy
other equipment to return to business

73. We would like you to use this space to write anything else you have to say about your plans for after the war.

If I can get a loan under the
new Gvt. bill of rights, I expect to
buy reproduction equipment (blueprint
or BW or Ozalid, & photostat) and return
to the business I was in for 10 years, although
perhaps in a different locality. Also I may
conduct a surveying business in conjunction
with the other.

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RESTRICTED

Document B, Survey 106, June 1944, 34-0128:

I sold my business equipment after enlistment and will have to buy other equipment to return to business

If I can get a loan under the new Gvt. bill of rights, I expect to buy reproduction equipment (blueprint or BW or Ozalid, & photostat) and return to the business I was in for 10 years, although perhaps in a different locality. Also I may conduct a surveying business in conjunction with the other.

(28-) RESTRICTED S-106 H

72. (a) How much has serving in the Army changed your plans for what you want to do after the war from the plans you had before you entered the Army? (Check one)

6 ☒ It has delayed carrying out my plans but hasn't changed them much

7 ☐ It has delayed carrying out some plans and has changed others

8 ☐ It has changed most of my plans

9 ☐ I really didn't have any very definite plans

(b) If some of your plans have been changed, what plans have been changed as a result of your Army service and why have you changed them?

73. We would like you to use this space to write anything else you have to say about your plans for after the war.

THE GI BILL OF RIGHTS ARE

VERY ENCOURAGING. DON'T LET THEM

FALL THROUGH.

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RESTRICTED

Document C, Survey 106, June 1944, 35-0296:

THE GI BILL OF RIGHTS ARE VERY ENCOURAGEING. DONT LET THEM FALL THROUGH.

S-106-H

72. (a) How much has serving in the Army changed your plans for what you want to do after the war from the plans you had before you entered the Army? (Check one)

6 — It has changed everything on my plans and I don't know what I want to do.

7 — It has changed everything on my plans and I know what I want to do.

8 — It has changed some of my plans.

9 — It has changed nothing on my plans.

(b) If one of your plans has changed, what has it changed to?

73. We would like you to use this space to write anything else you have to say about your plans for after the war.

After the war I would like to buy a home in the approximate locality of my present home address. Also I expect to take advantage of any loan the government might extend to veterans.

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Document D, Survey 106, June 1944, 35-0410:

After the war I would like to buy a home, in the approximate locality of my present home address. Also I expect to take advantage of any loan the government might extend to veterans.