

INTRODUCTION

Because of their sacrifice in fighting in World War II, a wide array of entertainment and recreation opportunities were offered to American GIs. United Service Organization shows, sports, games, and radio all became important parts of the American soldier's life. These men were offered the opportunity to anonymously write their opinions on entertainment and other topics in a collection of surveys given by the 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 recreation and entertainment during World War II.

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 **Recreation & Welfare** and **Entertainment** Overview Essays
- Copies of Recreation & Entertainment 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 entertainment in the US military during WWII 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 documentaries are good examples.



PROCEDURES

1. Begin by either having students read the overview essays, “Entertainment” and “Recreation & Welfare,” to themselves or reading it together as a class. You may also have half the class read the first essay while the other half reads the second essay. Once students have finished reading the essays, have them take a moment to write down some notes summarizing the experience of soldiers with entertainment and recreation based on what they read. Ask a few students to identify the following about this text:
 - a. Identify 3 important details about the soldier’s experiences with entertainment 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 entertainment and recreation 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

[USO Show](#) (Video)

[Armed Forces Radio Broadcast Clip](#) (Video)

[“Donut Dollies” and the American Red Cross](#) (Article)

EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT

1. Have students visit [The American Soldier in World War II](#) website and search for keywords surrounding entertainment and recreation. 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 during World War II.

Potential Keywords: entertainment, recreation, Red Cross, radio, USO, baseball, dance

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.

Image Source: [NARA](#)

COMBAT RESPONSES

Document A includes comments about USO shows.

Document B includes comments about music.

Document C includes comments about sports.

Document D includes complaints about the lack of free time soldiers have.

Document E includes comments about dances.

RESTRICTED

(15 - 17)

76. a. Have you ever heard any BBC news broadcasts? (Check one)

1 ☒ Yes
2 ☐ No
3 ☐ Not sure

b. Do you have any preference for either the American or BBC news broadcasts? (Check one)

☐ Have never heard BBC broadcasts

1 ☐ I have no preference
2 ☐ I prefer the BBC news broadcast
3 ☒ I prefer the American news broadcast

c. What is the reason for your answer? (Write answer here: _____)

Who in the hell do the British think they are?
They talk like they know what's what.

d. If you have a preference for either the American or British news broadcasts, how strongly do you feel about your preference? (Check one)

1 ☐ I don't feel strongly about it at all
2 ☐ I don't feel so strongly about it
3 ☒ I feel fairly strongly about it
4 ☐ I feel very strongly about it

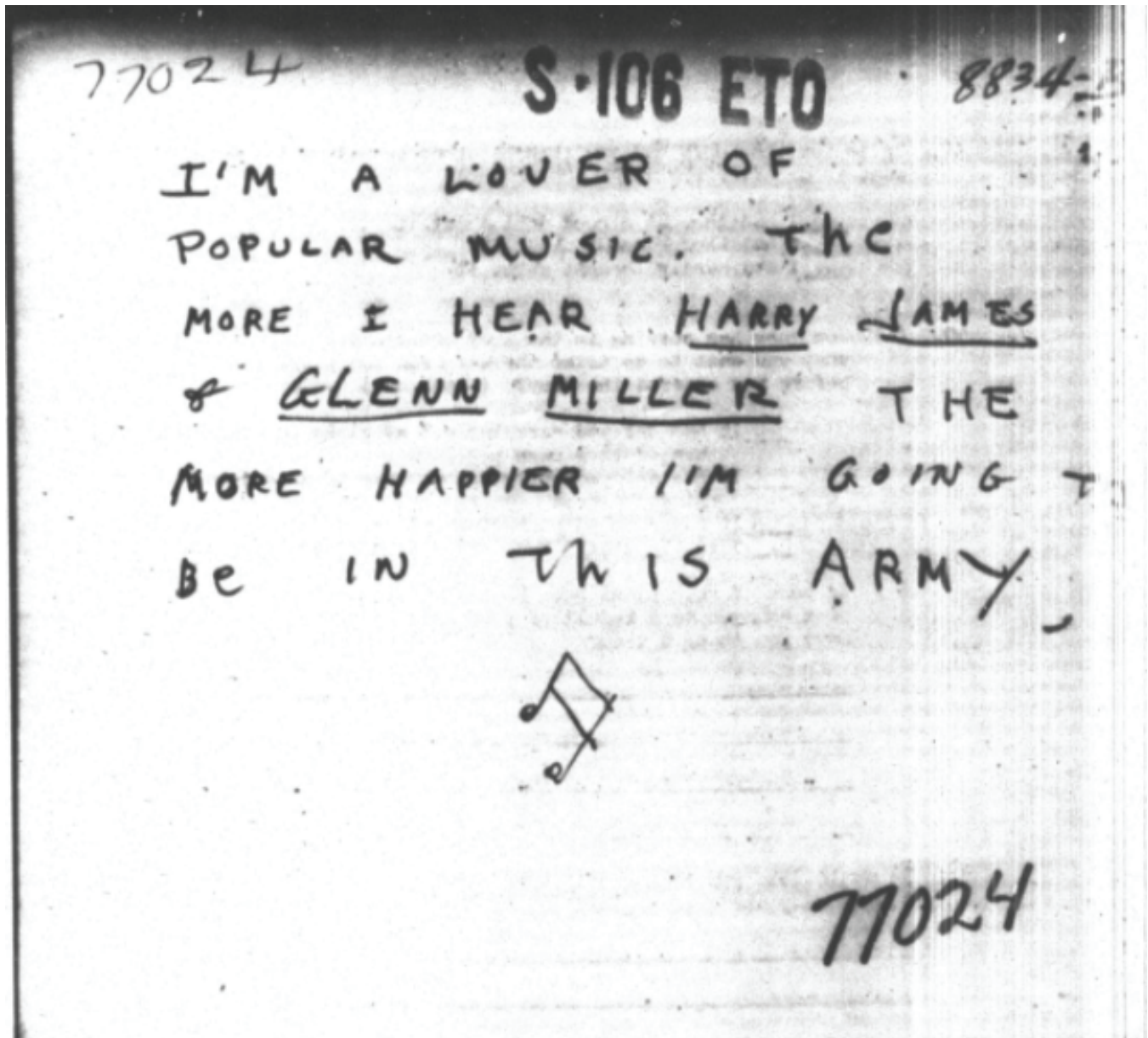
77. If you have any other things to say about radio in the ETO -- suggestions, gripes or criticisms -- please write them below: _____

Let's have a few more movies and USO
shows. Bob Hope is over here now so
how about seeing him. Also since we aren't
doing anything let's do some sight seeing.
I would like to see some other countries.
If the Air Corps can fly from place to place
and see things we should be able to too.

RESTRICTED

Document A (Survey 218, July 1945, 42-1813):

Let's have a few more movies and USO shows. Bob Hope is over here now so how about seeing him. Also since we aren't doing anything let's do some sight seeing. I would like to see some other countries. If the Air Corps can fly from place to place and see things we should be able to too.



Document B (Survey 106, June 1944, 32-0582):

I'm a lover of popular music. The more I hear Harry James & Glenn Miller the happier I'm going to be in this army.

95. Do you feel that you have been given your fair share of furloughs and passes since you have been in this camp?

☐ 1 Yes, I have had my fair share of both furloughs and passes
☒ 2 I have had my fair share of furloughs, but not of passes
☐ 3 I have had my fair share of passes; but not of furloughs
☐ 4 No, I have not had my fair share of either furloughs or passes

96. Up to now, has the war made things better or worse for your family and friends back home (such things as jobs, pay, and living conditions)? (Check one)

☐ 1 Things are a lot better
☐ 2 Things are a little better, but not much
☐ 3 I don't see any difference
☒ 4 Things are a little worse
☐ 5 Things are a lot worse
☐ 6 Don't know

97. If you have any further remarks you would like to make on any subject, please write them below as fully as you like.

I think we should have more time for sports. In civilian life, I was a Golf Professional, and naturally, I want to continue playing the game. None of us have time for sports because we work from daybreak until dark. I feel that it is necessary in a young man's life, or otherwise, it is very hard on his morale. I know because I see it every day.

CONTINUE WRITING ON THE NEXT PAGE

Document C (Survey 95, January-February 1944, 17-1506):

I think we should have more time for sports. In civilian life, I was a Golf Professional, and naturally, I want to continue playing the game. None of us have time for sports because we work from daybreak until dark. I feel that it is necessary in a young man's life, or otherwise, it is very hard on his morale. I know because I see it every day.

97. How do you think we will get along with England after the war?

4 ☒ We will get along very well (Check one)
 7 ☐ We will disagree about some things but manage to get along
 8 ☐ We will have some serious arguments but we won't fight each other
 9 ☐ We will very likely fight each other sooner or later
 11 ☐ Undecided

98. If you have any further remarks to make on any subject, please write them below as fully as you like.

There is only one thing about the Army that I do not like and that is that we do not get enough free time. We do not have enough time to write letters or any thing. Our Sundays are all full and we work every day until it is dark. Many of us would like to have competitive sports and participate in intra-platoon & intra company athletics.

How about more competitive sports and less "gig" detail. We are fighting for such things as American baseball and football. Let's enjoy it while we learn to fight for it.

Document D (Survey 63, July-September 1943, 15-0404):

There is only one thing about the army that I do not like and that is that we do not get enough free time. We do not have enough time to write letters or any thing. Our Sundays are all full and we work every day until it is dark. Many of us would like to have competitive sports and participate in intra-platoon & intra company athletics.

How about more competitive sports and less "gig" detail. We are fighting for such things as American baseball and football. Let's enjoy it while we learn to fight for it.

118. If you have any remarks to add to this survey, please write them here just as fully as you like:

Fayetteville, N.C. is too small a town for the number of men stationed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Service clubs are too small and not enough of them. At a dance only 300 to 500 men can be accommodated. This results in some men getting to dances about once in 2 months. If men are going to be stationed in large numbers, arrangements should be made so they can obtain transportation to some large recreational center or to several small ones so all will have a chance at a good time. Recreation while off duty is a necessity.

NOTICE: Go back over all of the pages to make sure you did not skip any of them.

I am married and this does not affect me but I hear the men talking about this subject. It is the main topic of conversation.

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- 27 -

Document E (Planning Survey I, December 1941, 01-1031):

Fayetteville, N.C. is too small a town for the number of men stationed at Ft. Bragg, N.C. Service clubs are too small and not enough of them. At a dance only 300 to 500 men can be accommodated. This results in some men getting to dance about once in 2 months. If men are going to be stationed in large numbers, arrangements should be made so they can obtain transportation to some large recreational center or to several small ones so all will have a chance at a good time. Recreation while off duty is a necessity.

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