

## Student Lesson



### **"Black-Box Theater: The Home front"**

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Submitted by Karl Schmidt

**"One front and one battle where everyone in the United States - every man, woman, and child - is in action. That front is right here at home, in our daily lives."**

**-U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt,  
in address to the nation,  
April, 1942**

**Lesson Title:** Black-box Theater: The Home front

**Grade Level:** 7 – 12

**EALRS:**

◆ Social Studies: History

- 1.2 analyze the historical development of events, people and patterns of Life
- 2.1 investigate and research historical information
- 2.2 analyze historical information
- 2.3 synthesize information and reflect on findings
- 3.1 explain the origin and impact of an idea on society
- 3.2 analyze how historical conditions shape the emergence of ideas and how ideas change overtime
- 3.3 understand how ideas and technological developments influence people, resources, and culture

◆ Art

- 1.3 use and develop arts skills and techniques to solve problems and express ideas
- 3.2 reflect and respond critically to the use of the arts in all forms of communication
- 4.1 use arts skills and knowledge in other subject areas
- 4.4 recognize the influence of the arts in shaping and reflecting cultures and history

**OVERVIEW:**

Many families living in America during WWII had different life experiences. These experiences were based on many factors such as their skin color, nationality, where they lived, what type of work they did, etc. Some home front families were greatly affected by WWII, while others were not. Most families were affected by national policies: gas rationing, food rationing and the military draft. Students can learn more about the WWII home front through interviews and research.

**PURPOSE:**

This lesson provides the opportunity for students to work in groups, do historical research, and use the performing arts as an avenue for sharing knowledge and concepts about the WWII home front. This activity would be an excellent Veterans Day activity.

**MATERIALS:**

1. The WWII Video "When We Were Kids...We Went To War"
2. VCR – TV
3. Access to the world wide web or the library for research
4. Cardboard boxes, black poster paint, or black butcher paper
5. Writing supplies

**ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES:**

1. Groups of students will create, write and perform a short play depicting a family from the WWII home front era, using historically correct scenarios for their play.
2. Have students watch the "Relations Left Behind", "Rationing", and the "Rosie The Riveter" segments of "When We Were Kids...We Went To War."\*
3. Have students read and focus on the transcripts provided with the lesson and available on [www.wwiihistoryclass.com](http://www.wwiihistoryclass.com)
4. Choose three groups of students to play the part of an American family during WWII. Students can decide which member of the family they will play. (father, mother, teenager, grandma, etc.)
5. Each group will be a family of a different nationality or background. Japanese Americans, German American, Italian American, African American, White American/w father overseas, White American/farmer, and White American/businessman are but just a few of the family situations that could be selected.
6. Students will create a set from the cardboard boxes. Painting or covering them in black provides an inexpensive set that fades into the background during the dialogue and does not distract from the words or ideas the actors are presenting. They also allow the actors and the audience to use their imaginations. The boxes could represent the dining room table, the radio in the living room, or the desk at your worksite.
7. Each group of actors will research the type of home front family they have chosen and create a dialog that depicts historically correct events or situations that apply to their group.
8. The format that is used during the presentation will be the choice of the actors. Each group could present their entire dialogue one after the other, or they could rotate around from group to group depicting the same situations for each of the different families.

**EVALUATION:**

1. The teacher can use a rubric for assessment.  
(A sample rubric for Black Box Theater presentations is included with the lesson plan.)

\* Full text of interviews available at [www.wwiihistoryclass.com](http://www.wwiihistoryclass.com)

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### "Black Box Theater: The Home Front"

#### RUBRIC: BLACK BOX THEATER – THE HOME FRONT

CATEGORY	10 points	7 points	4 points	1 point
<b>Historical Accuracy</b>	All home front historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Almost all home front historical information appeared to be accurate and in chronological order.	Most of the home front historical information was accurate and in chronological order.	Very little of the home front historical information was accurate and/or in chronological order.
<b>Role</b>	Home Front view, arguments, and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Home Front view, arguments, and solutions proposed were often in character.	Home Front view, arguments, and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Home Front view, arguments, and solutions proposed were rarely in character.
<b>Required Elements</b>	Students included more home front info. than expected.	Students included all home front info. expected.	Students included most home front info. expected.	Students included less home front info. than was expected.
<b>Props Costume</b>	Students used Black Box props (could include costume) show considerable work/creativity and make the presentation better.	Students used black box props in such a way to make the presentation better.	Students black box props did not add much to the presentation.	The students used no black box props OR the props used detracted from the presentation.