

# A Look at Rationing During World War II

## Overview:

Students will take a look at the real-life challenges to family life during World War II. They will learn about the requirements and limitations of rationing. Using this information, students will create a budget for a family of four with an annual income of \$2000. Their budget will include meals, clothing, shelter and entertainment. In addition, students will think about ways to extend the budget.

**GRADE**

9-12

**THEME**

Four Freedoms

**LENGTH**

The activity may take 2 to 3-45 minute periods.

**DISCIPLINE**Social Studies; Language  
Arts: Reading; Mathematics**VOCABULARY**Rationing; Victory garden;  
Budget; Ration books;  
Ration coupons

## Enduring Understandings/ Essential Questions:

1. Families on the homefront faced major challenges during World War II.
2. The economy was stronger during World War II due to an increase of jobs available.
3. Rationing helped to provide essential supplies for the military overseas as well as ensuring all on the homefront would get their fair share of goods.
  - What were the challenges faced by families on the home front during World War II?
  - What was the effect of the war on the U.S. economy?
  - What was rationing?
  - Why was rationing important?

## Objectives:

- Students will read and apply information about rationing during World War II.
- Students will create a budget for a family of four with an income of \$2,000.
- Students will brainstorm ways to extend the family budget by engaging in activities supporting the war efforts.

## Background:

World War II began in 1939. The United States was not involved in the beginning of the war, however, President Franklin Roosevelt believed that the United States would eventually need to play a role. In January 1941, he made his speech to Congress. In his speech, President Roosevelt named the Four Freedoms which he stated are the rights of everyone in the world. One of the freedoms, "Freedom from Want" grew in importance as the war raged on. The United States government asked all citizens to conserve goods. In order to ensure that food and other commodities were fairly distributed to all people, a system of rationing was developed. Families were given coupons which made certain amounts of specific foods available to each family. In addition to rationing foods, some goods, especially gasoline, clothing, shoes, tires and fuel oils, were scarce commodities and families required coupons to get these items. Despite the challenges faced by families on the home front, they were aware that their efforts at home affected the men fighting overseas who were ultimately making the greatest of sacrifices.

# Materials:

## Multimedia Resources:



Norman Rockwell (1894 - 1978)

From *From Want*, 1943

Oil on canvas

Story Illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 6, 1943

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## Classroom Supplies

- Print copies of the following article explaining rationing during World War II
- Copies of Rationing and Food price list (handout) for each student
- Images of ration coupons and ration book
- Student budget worksheet

## Activities:

- Students should have had the opportunity to view and discuss the illustration, *Freedom from Want* by Norman Rockwell. In addition, they should have had the opportunity to listen to or read the 1941 Freedom Speech by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.
- Provide students with a copy of the informational text explaining rationing during World War II. Allow them time to close read the text, marking important information, as well as questions they have.
- Meet with students to discuss the text explaining rationing. They may have questions and misunderstanding that will need to be clarified before they create a family budget.
- Provide students with a Food Price list and Ration list as well as a Student budget worksheet.  
After students have had the opportunity to create a budget, meet with students to review and discuss the budgets they created. What ideas did students come up with to extend the budget?
- Thinking about today's economy, what are their thoughts about life during World War II.
- **Extend the learning:** Have students update the information you gave them to reflect a budget for today, including the kinds of trips and entertainments typically enjoyed by today's families.

## Assessment:

- Are students able to identify the challenges that families faced during World War II?
- Are the budgets created by students realistic?
- Are students able to come up with some ideas to extend the budget?

## Standards:

This curriculum meets the standards listed below. Look for more details on these standards please visit: [ELA](#) and [Math Standards](#), [Social Studies Standards](#), [Visual Arts Standards](#).



Norman  
Rockwell

## – Applied Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.2

Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

D2.Eco.13.9-12.

Explain why advancements in technology and investments in capital goods and human capital increase economic growth and standards of living.