

★ HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS ★

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The Four Freedoms

On January 6, 1941, President Roosevelt requested support for the Lend-Lease program. In what became known as the Four Freedoms speech, Roosevelt defined the freedoms that came to represent why Americans were fighting. Do you think that Roosevelt selected the most significant freedoms? Explain your answer.

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want, which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.

That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation. That kind of world is the very antithesis [opposite] of the so-called new order of tyranny which the dictators seek to create with the crash of a bomb.



Civil-defense units helped prepare Americans in case of attack by Axis forces.

The war also affected popular radio serials. Radio stations abandoned spy and sabotage programs for the duration of the war. Some even banned certain sound effects, such as wailing sirens, to avoid alarming listeners.

✓ **READING CHECK: Summarizing** How did the U.S. government use the media to keep wartime morale high?

Life During Wartime

Americans cut back their consumption of both luxuries and necessities to help the war effort. Millions of people grew vegetables and other produce in their backyards. These so-called victory gardens helped make more food available to U.S. and Allied soldiers. Martha Wood recalled that she and her neighbors



“[formed] a neighborhood Victory Garden, plowed up the backyards of three houses, and planted beans, corn, tomatoes, okra, squash, and all the things we could use. When the crop came in, . . . [we] used a pressure cooker and canned all day. I was canning until midnight and later, night after night, and I frequently said, ‘I wish I had Hitler in that pressure cooker.’”

—Martha Wood, quoted in *Americans Remember the Home Front*, by Roy Hoopes

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, U.S. authorities imposed restrictions in case of attack on the mainland. West Coast cities began practicing nighttime blackouts. Authorities feared that brightly lit U.S. cities would make easy targets for Japanese bombers. Civil-defense units searched for signs of enemy aircraft. Across the nation, practice air-raid drills sent Americans scrambling for cover.

People worked longer hours and made many sacrifices, but daily life in the United States did not change radically during the war. On Broadway stages, musicals such as Irving Berlin’s *This Is the Army* (1942) and Leonard Bernstein and Jerome Robbins’s *On the Town* (1944) provided laughs and avoided the painful side of wartime. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein’s production *Oklahoma!* (1943) was the biggest hit during the war.

Wartime music did not have the same innocence of World War I hits such as “Over There.” Instead, big hits like “Remember Pearl Harbor” and “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!” captured the harsh reality of war. Irving Berlin’s song

“God Bless America” became a sort of unofficial national anthem. Big-band swing music remained popular, and sentimental songs such as “White Christmas” expressed Americans’ longing for a return to peace.

In part as a result of widespread interest in the war, nonfiction became more popular than fiction. The best-selling books of 1941 were William Shirer’s *Berlin Diary*, a frightening look inside Nazi Germany, and Joseph Davies’s *Mission to Moscow*, a positive portrayal of the Soviet Union. Wartime also brought a change to the publishing industry. Paperback books first appeared in 1939, and wartime rationing helped them quickly surpass hardcover as the format of choice. The lower cost, light weight, and smaller size of paperbacks made them very popular. The military boosted the growth of the paperback format with the Armed Services Editions, which provided paperback books free of charge to U.S. troops. Some 60 million books of all types were distributed during the war.

✓ **READING CHECK: Drawing Inferences** How did popular entertainment in the 1940s convey universal themes?

AMERICAN ARTS

Norman Rockwell

Norman Rockwell was born in New York City in 1894. For six decades, until his death in 1978, Rockwell showed the positive side of American life in his illustrations. He once said, “As I grew up . . . I unconsciously decided that, even if it wasn’t an ideal world, it should be so, and so I painted the ideal aspects of it.” He is best known for the covers he drew for the *Saturday Evening Post*. In 47 years Rockwell drew 322 covers for the *Post*, more than any other artist.

Rockwell lived in Vermont during World War II and often used his neighbors as models for his illustrations. Despite painting just one combat scene during the war, he managed to capture the mood of a nation at war. He did so by reminding people of the reasons behind the war without downplaying the difficulty of the struggle. Rockwell said that he tried to create an image that “makes the reader want to sigh and smile at the same time.”

Rockwell’s cover for the September 4, 1943, *Saturday Evening Post* celebrated the Labor Day holiday. *Liberty Girl* honored women’s contributions to the war effort with its representations of the many different kinds of work that women were performing.

Norman Rockwell’s *Liberty Girl*



Understanding the Arts

1. How many different occupations are represented in this image?
2. How does this image reflect the experiences of American women on the home front?