

Where  
the past  
is present

# DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## TEACHER RESOURCE LESSON PLAN

### DETROIT DURING WWII: MOBILIZATION OF INDUSTRY



Henry Ford (left) and William Knudsen, August 1938. Courtesy of the National Automotive History Collection, Detroit Public Library.

#### CREATED BY

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#### INTRODUCTION

High school students will investigate how the Detroit metropolitan industrial complex was mobilized to build war materials. Students will discover the significance of William S. Knudsen in aiding the federal government's efforts to convert major industries production into war time materials.

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Describe the wartime mobilization of industry, labor, scientists, and media
- Trace the efforts of the United States government to control the economy
- Outline how the United States mobilized Detroit for war after the attack on Pearl Harbor
- Support opinion based statements with data, vocabulary skills

#### EDUCATION STANDARDS

##### U.S. History and Geography: USHG Era 7 – The Great Depression and World War II (1920-1945)

- **7.2 World War II** - Examine the causes and course of World War II, and the effect of the war on United States society's and culture, including the consequences of the United States in world affairs.
- **7.2.3 Impact of WWII on American Life** – analyze the changes in American life brought about by U.S. participation in WWII including:
  - mobilization of economics, military, and social resources
  - role of women and minorities in the war effort
  - role of home front in supporting the war effort (e.g., rationing, work hours, taxes)

##### The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3)

- **History Dimension 2, Change, Continuity and Content - 9-12** Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
- **The Inquiry Arc of C3 Dimensions 1, 2, 3, and 4**

#### TIME REQUIRED

Two class periods (a class period being of approximately 55 minutes)

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

**Fireside Chat 16: On the “Arsenal of Democracy” (December 29, 1940) - Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

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“My friends:

“This is not a fireside chat on war. It is a talk on national security, because the nub of the whole purpose of your President is to keep you now, and your children later, and your grandchildren much later, out of a last-ditch war for the preservation of American independence and all of the things that American independence means to you and to me and to ours.

“Tonight, in the presence of a world crisis, my mind goes back eight years to a night in the midst of a domestic crisis. It was a time when the wheels of American industry were grinding to a full stop, when the whole banking system of our country had ceased to function...

“Nine days ago I announced the setting up of a more effective organization to direct our gigantic efforts to increase the production of munitions. The appropriation of vast sums of money and a well-coordinated executive direction of our defense efforts are not in themselves enough. Guns, planes, ships and many other things have to be built in the factories and the arsenals of America. They have to be produced by workers and managers and engineers with the aid of machines which in turn have to be built by hundreds of thousands of workers throughout the land.

“I want to make it clear that it is the purpose of the nation to build now with all possible speed every machine, every arsenal, every factory that we need to manufacture our defense material. We have the men -- the skill -- the wealth -- and above all, the will.

“I am confident that if and when production of consumer or luxury goods in certain industries requires the use of machines and raw materials that are essential for defense purposes, then such production must yield, and will gladly yield, to our primary and compelling purpose.”

This is the story of the forgotten heroes of World War II. They didn't wear uniforms, at least at first. They wore business suits, dungarees, flannel shirts, spectacles, Stetsons, hard hats,

lab coats, welding leathers and patterned head scarves. As a steel worker in 1943 quoted, “We produced materials to defeat the Axis powers and arm the Allied nations. We were the Detroit citizens of all colors and faiths.”

## MATERIALS USED

- Classroom chalk board or a smart board
- Newspaper paper
- Lined paper
- Pencils
- Tables
- Books, media center, or access to computers/ internet

## LESSON PREPARATION

No current American history textbook makes any mention of William Knudsen's accomplishment during WWII – Also, they make minimal mention of Henry Ford's contributions. The instructor will want to use the key articles and internet links in the resource section of this lesson plan as resources for students' content reading.

## LESSON SEQUENCE

### Day One Activity

1. The instructor reads in advance the Joel Stone article “Detroit: Arsenal of Democracy.” This article provides necessary background information for pre-WWII (1940), bio of William S. Knudsen, and the beginning of Detroit's heavy industrial complex mobilizing for war production. The teacher may also want to read the excerpts from Arthur Herman's book *Freedom's Forge*. These excerpts offer both positive and controversial materials about Knudsen and Ford.

*Note:* Instructor will want to inform students of the importance of using primary sources to analyze history. Students should be shown the difference between primary and secondary sources. Instructor can use the Library of Congress link *Using Primary Sources*, and *Why Use Primary Sources*.

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<http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>

- Optional preliminary activity – The teacher may consider reviewing textbook materials and comparing and contrasting the federal government’s control of the economies during WWI and WWII.

The students use their prior knowledge of the United States’ mobilization for the Great War. The instructor has the students create a time line of WWI mobilization – such as: War Industries Board, Bernard M. Baruch, National War Labor Board, and Herbert Hoover’s Food Administration.

*Note:* Instructor can use pages 9-16 of the article, “Detroit’s Wartime Industry” (Davis, Michael W. *Images of America: Detroit’s Wartime Industry- Arsenal of Democracy*) to review with students the importance of Detroit’s manufacturing during World War I.

Class discusses following topics:

- Impacts war had on household incomes
  - Company profits during the war (private sector receiving government contracts)
  - What were the important consumer goods at that time?
  - Domestic life styles of Detroiters during World War I.
  - How people showed patriotism
  - Changes in individual rights during war time
- The teacher has the students listen or read FDR’s “The Arsenal of Democracy” address given as a fire side chat on 29 December 1940 to the nation and the world.
  - Instructor uses the LOC Speech Analysis sheet located in LOC resources. A class discussion or reflective/formative writing follows. The instructor may want to begin discussion with such questions as:
    - What was the purpose of the speech?
    - What is FDR attempting to say to England, Germany, Japan, and Italy?
    - What has happened in the World up to this point, 29 December 1940?

- Was this speech necessary? Yes or No? Explain your answer.

*Note:* the teacher may want to have the students’ role play while listening to this speech as – a teenager, an auto worker, an auto executive, a steel worker, a mother, or a veteran from The Great War.

Finally, Students define the term – “Arsenal of Democracy”

*Note:* Instructor can use photos from Davis book, pages 13 – 17 to introduce the Detroit industrial executives and their war time committee role.

- See LOC Sound and manuscript Analysis Sheets: <http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>
- FDR’s speech found at the following sites
  - In sound recording and written form: [www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrarsenalofdemocracy.html](http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrarsenalofdemocracy.html)
  - <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3319>
  - Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum - [www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu](http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu)
- Detroit’s Wartime Industry: Davis, Michael W. *Images of America: Detroit’s Wartime Industry- Arsenal of Democracy*. first ed. Charleston, South Carolina: Acadia Publishing, 2007. 7-126.

## Day Two Activity

- Instructor presents two names to the class- Henry Ford and William S. Knudsen, The teacher uses KWL to ask students to list what they know about each individual. Class discussion follows
- Teacher has the class research Henry Ford and William S. Knudsen to gather background materials on personalities, the products that companies made, where new facilities were built and why, the cost and profits that came from these government contracts. Students will construct a vocabulary list of new terms, names, place.

*Note:* Instructor will want to use the reading materials found at the end of the lesson for

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key content materials – Joel Stone article and Arthur Herman’s *Freedom’s Forge: How America’s Business Produced Victory in WWII*

3. Class discussion or mini research findings presented (what the students learned). Class discussion and note recording follows.
4. Role playing simulation now used to apply the new content: Instructor now has students’ role play as Henry Ford, William Knudsen and automotive, steel, chemical, and rubber industry executives developing a national plan to mobilize their industries to produce more military goods.

Possible Synthesis Questions for the group activity. Students may generate their own questions.

- Can you formulate a plan to ...?
- What facts can you compile to support your plan?
- Can you think of an original way for the government to mobilize the nation’s industries?
- Can you propose an alternative plan to the mobilization of WWII?
- Can you think of an original way for the ...?

Groups present their plans. Class votes on the best plan of action.

5. Teacher presents several questions to the class such as:
  - Define the term “hero”.
  - Define the term “patriot”.
  - What is an arsenal?
  - What is democracy?
  - What is common good?

Discussion follows and terms defined.

## EVALUATION

1. Students are presented with either a group assessment or an individual assessment to the following:
  - Both Henry Ford and William Knudsen were heroes and patriots for their actions during WWII. Support and extend or challenge this

position.

2. The following evaluation questions can be used to guide the students’ critical thinking:
  - What information would you use to support your view...?
  - What would you cite to defend the actions of Henry Ford and William Knudsen?
  - Can you assess the value or importance of Henry Ford and William Knudsen to the success of the American Arsenal of Democracy?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

The teacher may use the following example black line masters in order to differentiate the lesson materials.

### Mobilizing for Defense

As the students complete their research and textbook reading complete the following chart that explains the contribution to the war effort.

1. William S. Knudsen
2. Henry Ford Sr.
3. Office Production Board
4. Office of Price Administration
5. General motors Corporation
6. Ford Motor Corporation
7. Willow Run Airport
8. Office of Scientific Research
9. Women
10. Lend Lease

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Books, article and printed materials:

*United States History Modern American* by Prentice Hall

*The American* by McDougal Littell

*The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* by McDougall Littell

Henrickson, Wilma W. *Crossroads and Turning Points*. First ed. Detroit, Mi.: Wayne State

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University Press, 1991. 401--409.

Herman, Arthur. *Freedom's Forge: How America's Business Produced Victory in WWII*. first ed. New York, NY: Random House Trade Publications, 2012. 1-400. Print.

Davis, Michael W. *Images of America: Detroit's Wartime Industry- Arsenal of Democracy*. first ed. Charleston, South Carolina: Acadia Publishing, 2007. 7-126.

## Teacher Resources and Strategies:

Marzano, Robert J., Debra J. Pickering, and Jane E. Pollack. *Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for increasing Student Achievement*. First ed. Danvers, MA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum: McREL, 2001. 1-180. Print.

Marzano, Robert J. *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. First ed. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2003. 1-216.

Gallery Walk Teaching Strategy: <http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/gallery-walk-teaching-strateg>

## Library of Congress

Home page: <http://www.loc.gov/index.html>

American Memory browse more options: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/browse/index.html>

LOC Teacher page: <http://loc.gov/teachers/>

LOC Teacher's Guides and Analysis Tool: <http://loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/guides.html>

## Detroit Historical Society:

Home Page: <http://detroithistorical.org/>

## William S Knudsen:

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/320644/William-S-Knudsen>

[http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/William\\_Signius\\_Knudsen.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/William_Signius_Knudsen.aspx)

<http://biography.yourdictionary.com/william-s->

[knudsen](#)

[http://history.gmheritagecenter.com/wiki/index.php/Knudsen,\\_William\\_S](http://history.gmheritagecenter.com/wiki/index.php/Knudsen,_William_S).

## Henry Ford:

The Henry Ford: <http://www.hfmgv.org/exhibits/hf/>

Images of henry Ford in WWII: [bing.com/images](http://bing.com/images)  
<http://auto.howstuffworks.com/1941-1948-ford-super-deluxe4.htm>

Yankee Air Museum: <http://www.yankeeairmuseum.org/>

## Speeches:

FDR Library and Museum: <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/>

Home of FDR National Park Service: <http://www.nps.gov/hofr/index.htm>

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/fdrarsenalofdemocracy.html>

University of Virginia – Miller Center: <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3319>

For more information about the **Detroit Historical Society**, or to schedule a field trip to the **Detroit Historical Museum** or **Dossin Great Lakes Museum**, visit [detroithistorical.org](http://detroithistorical.org)

## ESSAY RUBRIC

	<b>EXCEPTIONAL</b>	<b>ADMIRABLE</b>	<b>ACCEPTABLE</b>	<b>AMATEUR</b>
<b>Organization</b>	Extremely well organized; logical format that was easy to follow; flowed smoothly from one idea to another and cleverly conveyed; the organization enhanced the effectiveness of the project	Presented in a thoughtful manner; there were signs of organization and most transitions were easy to follow, but at times ideas were unclear	Somewhat organized; ideas were not presented coherently and transitions were not always smooth, which at times distracted the audience	Choppy and confusing; format was difficult to follow transitions of ideas were abrupt and seriously distracted the audience
<b>Content Accuracy</b>	Completely accurate; all facts were precise and explicit	Mostly accurate; a few inconsistencies or errors in information	Somewhat accurate; more than a few inconsistencies or errors in information	Completely inaccurate; the facts in this project were misleading to the audience
<b>Proper Citations</b>	Went above and beyond to research information; solicited material in addition to what was provided; brought in; utilized variety of resources to make project effective	Did a very good job of researching; utilized LOC materials provided to their full potential; solicited adequate resources to enhance project; at time took the initiative to find information outside of school.	Used the material provided in an acceptable manner, but did not consult any additional resources. For example, only used one source and/ or disreputable sources i.e. "Wiki"	Did not utilize resources effectively; did little or no fact gathering on the topic and failed to provide citation.
<b>Aesthetics/ Grammar</b>	Was presented with originality and quality; a professionalism that truly enhanced the project	Was strong for the most part; thoughtfully and uniquely presented	Added a few quality items to enhance the project but did not incorporate quality throughout the project.	Little energy used during this project; was bland, minimalistic, and lacked "zip"