Lesson Title: The Sojourner—Analyzing a Primary Source

Lesson Grade Level: 7-12

DPI Theme Area: World War II

Standards: Geography: A.8.7; History: B.8.1, B.8.4, B.12.1, B.12.2

Introduction/Background

In many respects life on the “home front” in Manitowoc County during the World War II years mirrored that in countless other American communities. Men enlisted or were drafted. Women went to work. People coped with rationing and bought war bonds. There were scrap drives and victory gardens, black-out drills and USO dances. But some of Manitowoc County’s World War II experiences were unique, at least for a fairly small county in the nation’s heartland. Most notably, the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company built 28 submarines for the U.S. Navy, side-launching them into the Manitowoc River and sending them via inland waterways to the Gulf Coast at New Orleans. Manitowoc Shipbuilding also produced LCT landing vessels which were tested in practice “invasions” on Lake Michigan beaches in the northern part of the county. Burger Boat Company built another 55 vessels for the Navy, including wooden minesweepers. Other companies in Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and other county communities manufactured war goods ranging from airplane parts to condensed milk in camouflaged cans. Employment boomed. A federal project built hundreds of housing units to accommodate some of the newcomers, and bus lines were established to transport workers to Manitowoc from other northeastern Wisconsin cities. Submarine crews stationed in Manitowoc for training as their vessels were being built brought more diversity to the community, and the Coast Guard had a strong presence. Hollywood celebrities came to tour the shipyards and promote war bond sales. German prisoners of war worked on county farms. Manitowoc even claimed credit for establishing a new “Citizenship Day” observance that for a time gained national recognition.

“The Sojourner” was a unique monthly newsletter that was published in Two Rivers, Wisconsin from April 1942 through December 1945. “The Sojourner” documents home front activity in Two Rivers, Wisconsin as well as stateside and overseas postings and experiences of Manitowoc County service personnel, particularly those from Two Rivers. More than just a hometown paper, “The Sojourner” provided a forum for local military personnel to keep in touch with “home” and with each other through letters in the newsletter, which was mailed to more than 600 Two Rivers service men and women stationed around the globe. The “entity” responsible for creating this newsletter and keeping the ever-changing mailing list up to date was a group of young women—mostly girls—from Two Rivers, Wisconsin, who called themselves the “Civic Understudies.” The Two Rivers Vocational School printing instructor served as an “advisor” for this publication, although it was not an official school publication. Initially, the Civic Understudies did their own fund-raising by holding dances, etc. to support the
publication. The local Veterans of Foreign Wars post provided additional financial support. The first two issues were not titled. The Civic Understudies held a contest for service personnel to name the newsletter.

**Lesson Objectives**
Students will be able to:
1. Analyze a primary source for information about the social history of WWII
2. Define social history
3. Describe some of the experience Wisconsin soldiers had in WWII
4. Describe home front experiences of the people left behind
5. Identify gender roles during the war
6. Make inferences about feelings and attitudes of military personnel toward other parts of the country and the world.

**Information Sources/Resources**
Go to the following web address and select The Sojourner:
[http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.HomeFront](http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.HomeFront)

Or

Go to [http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections.html](http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections.html) and select The State of Wisconsin Collection then select The Home Front: Manitowoc County in World War II and select The Sojourner. You can use any or all of the newsletters. For younger students, browse through and select the ones you would like them to use.

History Matters, [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/), provides an example of a historian analyzing letters.

**Materials**
Computer lab with at least one computer per 2 students or see below
Maps of Wisconsin, the US and the world
Atlases or wall maps
You can print out specific volumes or pages of the newsletter, rather than having students read online.
US history textbook

**Suggested Activities:**
There are a wide variety of activities that can be done with The Sojourner newsletter; it depends on what you want to teach about WWII. Reading several of the issues spread over the course of the war is a good way to get an overview of the newsletter and the varied experiences of the service men and women. One interesting aspect is how the newsletter deals with gender. Much can be learned from the young women who put the newsletter out on the one hand, but also the women who enlist in the WAVEs, WASPs, SPARs, etc. Also the male letter writers acknowledge the contribution the women in the service are making to the war effort.
1. A quote from Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the war can help put this lesson into context: “But there is 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.” Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1942 (Taken from the American Memory web site lesson about the home front at http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/homefront/index.html)

2. Either have students read several volumes of the newsletter selecting them themselves or choose specific months for them to read. Some suggestions include: the first two volumes to find out about how the newsletter began and who was responsible for it; selecting one or two from each year of the war to compare how the letters and news changed over the years.

3. You can give students these questions to guide their reading:
   a. Why was the newsletter started? Who was responsible for it? Where did you find the answers?
   b. How did The Sojourner get its name?
   c. In the Aug. 1942 volume, read the songs. What are the different gender roles in the songs? What are women doing during the war? Men?
   d. In the Nov. ’42 issue who is Agnes Dunaway? How do you know? What is her message to the “boys”? What happened Oct. 19? Why is that news?
   e. What did Wisconsin soldiers think of other parts of the country? Of the world? Give some specific examples.
   f. How do letters early in the war differ from later in the war? Are there any similarities?
   g. What can you learn about Two Rivers and Wisconsin from these letters and newsletters?
   h. What do the soldiers think about the war? Give specific examples. How do they refer to the enemies in the war? Why?
   i. What were the different jobs for which the service personnel (men and women) were being trained? See July 1944 for Faye Hallett’s experiences as a WAC. (Note: She was a former editor of The Sojourner.) Conduct research on these jobs and write up short descriptions.
   j. What evidence is there in the newsletters of censorship? Would they feel the same way during peacetime?
   k. What other questions do these newsletters raise? How would you go about answering them?

4. Students can also research the different military roles women took during the war as Women’s Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC then WAC), Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) and Semper Paratus, Always Ready (SPAR) of the Coast Guard. Below you will find some good web sites but encyclopedias and books are good starting points as well.
Glossary:

- WACs
- WAVEs
- SPARs
- battalion
- Edith Nourse Rogers
- Oveta Culp Hobby
- WASP
- barracks
- Rationing
- military ranks
- victory gardens
- regiment
- Squadron
- furlough
- censorship
- gender
- Mildred McAfee

NOTE: WASP stands for Women Airforce Service Pilots

Conclusion:
Students have analyzed The Sojourner as a primary source about the wartime and home front experiences of the people of Wisconsin. Students will identify the roles of men and women during the war and explain how those roles changed over the course of the war and from today, the attitudes of Wisconsin service men and women toward the rest of the US and the world. Students will also understand how important the newsletter as well as letters were to service men and women during the war.

Assessment:
Through class discussion and written work students will demonstrate the role of women to the war effort and the sacrifices people on the home front made to the war effort in addition to the service men and women.

Additional Information:

- http://www.60wwii.mil/presentation/common/index.cfm This site has information about women in the war that is really interesting and information on the SPARs.

- For more information about the Women’s Army Corps see http://www.army.mil/cmh-pg/brochures/wac/wac.htm. You may choose to read this and summarize it for students as it contains some sexual content that might be inappropriate for young students.

- http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm The Navy Historical Center has a web site that has information about the WAVES and great photographs of recruitment and training, quarters and meals, recreation, occupations, etc.

PBS has a timeline of the war in the Pacific during WWII that can be useful for this primary source.

- http://www.pbs.org/perilousfight/timeline/ PBS has an interactive timeline from 1933 to 1945.

You can find information about women in WWII at this site. All of the women’s service organizations are described here.