



# MARE'S WAR: Homeschool Multidisciplinary Unit Ideas

## LANGUAGE ARTS/ READING & REFLECTION

- **Alex Haley, the Pulitzer Prize-winning** author of Roots: The Saga of an American Family, wrote, "In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future." Family is a big deal in Mare's War, as Mare's changing relationship with her mother, sister, son, and grandchildren are some of the central themes to the novel. Using your family members, and family documents and the internet as a resource, research your family's homefront or wartime activities during the latter half of World War II. Next, write a historical fiction scene or short story, detailing an incident based on something from your own history. Be sure to include action in your scene, as well as

Unit ideas by Tanita S. Davis  
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a realistic beginning, detailed middle, and a satisfying conclusion. Characters, in their dress, speech, and possessions should reflect the time in which they live. Design a cover for the book your scene comes from as well.

- **When Mare steps in for Peaches** to babysit General Craig's twins, she realizes that the U.S. Army does not see the African American WAC's as an equal partner in the war. Many Americans found this to be true, including the Aleutians of Alaska. First, visit the online National Parks Service article, "*Evacuation and Internment*." <http://www.nps.gov/aleu/historyculture/unangan-internment.htm> Next, imagine you are a senator or other American government official during the 1940's, and write private memorandum discussing the Aleutian Evacuation with a member of your staff. Include your opinion of the proposed action, what you believe the government's reasoning behind the action might be, potential historical consequences, and an alternative choice of action which you feel might be both fair and more successful.
- **"The Greatest Generation"** is a term coined by journalist Tom Brokaw to describe those Americans who lived through the Depression and went on to fight in WWII or to strengthen the country from the homefront. African Americans living through this time are not much written about, and pre-Civil Rights African American history has gaps. Create a timeline to display the accomplishments of African Americans in the arts, sciences and humanities from the time period from 1940-1949, **or** write a short essay outlining the specific accomplishments of at least three African American people, and explain why you chose them.

**BONUS:** Write a persuasive paper to discuss whether or not you believe that the Americans who lived through the Great Depression and WWII *are* the "greatest" generation. Remember to support your position clearly.

## FURTHER READING U.S. History/WWII Unit

- **BLUE**, BY JOYCE MOYER HOSTETTER: POLIO, JIM CROW LAWS, AND THE WAR EFFORT AT HOME. FOR AGES 9-12, BUT WORKS FOR OLDER READERS AS WELL.
- **CODE TALKERS**, BY JOSEPH BRUCHAC: AN ACCOUNT OF THE NAVAJO MEN AND BOYS WHO WORKED WITH THE U.S. MARINES IN WWII, AMERICAN PREJUDICES AGAINST NATIVE PERSONS, AND AMERICA DURING THE 40'S.
- **I AM AN AMERICAN: A TRUE STORY OF JAPANESE INTERNMENT**, BY JERRY STANLEY: A STORY WITHIN A STORY, THIS FOLLOWS THE LIFE OF ONE YOUNG ADULT, INTERSPERSED WITH AN HISTORICAL TIMELINE, AND PHOTOGRAPHS. A WELL-RESEARCHED NARRATIVE NON-FICTION BOOK.

## TIE-IN VIEWING

- **THE ALEUT STORY**, 2005. DIRECTED BY MARLA WILLIAMS; NARRATED BY CHARLIE SHEEN. A DOCUMENTARY OF THE ALEUTIAN EVACUATION OF 1942 - 1945.
- **WINTER IN WARTIME**, 2008, A DUTCH FILM, DIRECTED BY MARTIN KOOLHOVEN, THIS IS ABOUT A FOURTEEN YEAR OLD WHO BECOMES A PART OF THE RESISTANCE.
- **MRS. MINIVER**, 1942, DIRECTED BY WILLIAM WYLER. AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*, THIS FILM SHOWS LIFE OUTSIDE OF THE STATES FOR FAMILIES AND KIDS LEFT BEHIND.
- **HISTORYCHANNEL.ORG** HAS MORE. SEARCH UNDER "WOMEN IN WWII."

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### ACTIVITIES: Social Studies/Geography/History

**During the war**, Americans were committed to a single focus - one cause, one nation, and one people, working together to win. Families were linked to this sense of commitment -- "the American way" was described as the goal for which soldiers fought. But what was "the American way" in the 1940's? Looking back at posters, post cards, magazine ads, newspapers, and signs from that time period, recreate through collage, poster, or other artwork a portrait of the typical American family. You can depict either a rural or an urban family group.

**Mare and her granddaughters** traveled all across the United States during their summer vacation. Using posterboard, or a reasonably large surface, first create a map of the United States. Next, map Mare, Talitha and Octavia's journey across the country. Be sure to leave markers which creatively illustrate each stop.

**Wildlife habitat is shrinking** as humans expand their territory. Lots of times that means clashes between the two. While it's counterintuitive to do so, Mare told Octavia the truth -- the rule for safe drivers is to NOT swerve to avoid an animal, but to take one's foot off the gas and steer straight. Veering off the road risks losing control of the vehicle. The Humane Society suggests that drivers drive slowly if a single deer is spotted, as they usually move in herds. They also suggest caution at dawn and dusk, when wildlife is harder to spot, and that drivers always use caution on rural roads bordered by natural habitat. Keeping these facts in mind, first, research the road rules in your own city and township. Next, create a safety campaign based on your information. You may include road signs, posters, and/or radio and television commercials. Include a slogan to publicize driver safety.



### Social Studies/Sociology Reflection Essay

**Ain't No Ain't...** The actor, Will Smith, is quoted as saying that he is "bilingual" because he speaks African American Vernacular English with friends and family, and Standard American English in business settings. Mare was familiar with this less formal version of American English, and used the word "ain't," frequently, until she decided she wanted to speak "correct," grammatical English. Write an opinion essay answering the question: Is there a correct and incorrect way of speaking? At all times? What were the advantages of speaking Standard American English for Mare? Disadvantages?

**A Man's World?** Though women's roles in the United States changed *drastically* during the 1940's, women still also had their homes to care for, as well as their children. Mare and her cohorts were often on the receiving end of criticism aimed at them by the male officers of the U.S. Army, who clearly felt that women did not belong there. The sixteen thousand women who joined the U.S. Army as WACs during the war were only belatedly granted veterans' benefits in 1980. Write a position paper detailing why you feel that women should or should not be in the military today. While this is an opinion paper, be sure to back up your opinion thoroughly.

**A War on Two Fronts:** When Tiny is accosted in London, Mare's birthday is ruined, and her eyes are opened to the reality of Nazi racism in the European theater, and the imported racism of Americans overseas. First, find and read the National Archives online publication, *Prologue* (Spring 2008, Vol. 40, No. 1) article by John Vernon, entitled "**Jim Crow, Meet Lieutenant Robinson,**" and read that true story. Next, write an essay describing Jim Crow laws, what they are, when they started, and how they affected the lives of the men and women in the U.S. Army, including Second Lieutenant Robinson. Be sure to include details about his life after the war.