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# NCTE and the English Curriculum during World War II

"We need to make...changes, and individually we will perform special wartime duties; but the initial message from outstanding college teachers is that we must do the job for which we are trained: help others to realize the power that emanates from great literature to live humanely in the midst of conflict."

From College Journal, "English in Wartime" (1942)

World War II had an immediate, tangible effect on the U.S. educational system. With both teachers and students being among millions of Americans drafted, there was a diminished college population. But the war was also a driving force for many intangible changes. In particular, educators needed to change their curriculum to better reflect the needs and challenges in this new environment.

For NCTE, this meant thinking about the discipline of English and its role in supporting the war effort. According to J.N. Hook in *A Long Way Together: A Personal View of NCTE's First Sixty-Seven Years*, "the Council reacted immediately to the state of war by creating a Planning Commission" (1979, p. 133). It tackled the basic, yet weighty questions posed by the war: "Can the teaching of English in American...schools remain unchanged by our entrance into World War II? And should it? If not, how should it be changed?" (p. 133).

The Planning Commission determined that while the basics of English should remain the same, certain aspects of the subject had more significance during wartime. After all, English was a valuable discipline to the war effort's communication needs. Marion Sheridan, NCTE Executive Board member, pointed out that English played a vital role in democracy:

"A democracy depends upon the use of words, upon the ability to understand and to discuss questions of freedom, liberty, labor; upon the ability to trace the course of thought and to detect specious argument.... Literature is a storehouse of the experiences of mankind.... Its peace and serenity may give balance and a sense of normalcy, and fortitude, when total war dominates the situation." (qtd. in Hook, p. 135)

To help English teachers fulfill the discipline's role during this dire time, NCTE published a series of pamphlets to guide them in thinking about how the war affected their curriculum. In addition, the journals College English and the English Journal regularly featured articles and letters about the special challenges teachers faced. To learn more about NCTE's role in World War II, take a look at the featured records below.

**Contents:** (To enlarge and clarify an image, click on it and it will open in a new window)

Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, November 1942 The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime Teaching English in Wartime: A Brief Guide to Classroom Practice The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter Victory Corps Reading List The English Journal College English Junior High School English What Communication Means Today

# Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting, November 1942

In November 1942, NCTE held its annual board meeting, its first since the United States declared war on the Axis powers. The minutes record a series of resolutions affirming the Council's devotion to supporting the war effort. The resolutions consisted of seven main points, the first of which emphasized the grave threat the country was facing and what was at stake: "Let us make clear to our students that this is a war of the people against intolerable tyranny and inhumanity; that its purpose is to establish a world of peace, order, and freedom, the bases of which are our concern both now and in the future."

Item: Minutes of Board of Directors Meeting (1942) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/70/001



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## The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime

The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime was the result of the Planning Commission's work on determining if the English curriculum should be changed because of the war. They determined that while the basics should remain the same, "especial caution is needed to conserve those aesthetic and recreational values in English which are necessary to continuing culture, to personal growth and satisfaction, and to the maintenance of sanity and perspective during wartime." The Council also stressed the importance of maintaining all tenets of democracy, including "international good will," to avoid the danger of intolerance and hatred.

Item: Copy of The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime(1942) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/73/803

### THE ROLE OF THE ENGLISH TEACHER IN WARTIME

[At an emergency meeting held during the Christman knilday, the Planning Commission of the National Council of Teachers of English, along with more than twenty other Council leaders, studied the role of the Council and of the teacher of English in the present scar emergency. Problems of promoting Council gravith and of improving the effectiveness of Council activities at this time were considered by separate committees. Of greatest institution were ever, is the report of the subcommittee on the role of the teacher of English in warine, which is here presented in fall. It is of interest to note that the report, which was approved by the Coucil's Executive Committee, was the product of ground group thinking and was unanimously adopted by the conference.]

> Whole or part of this report may be reproduced in any manner without special permission.

Although the statement of "Basic Aims of Instruction in English" recently produced by the National Conneil of Teachers of English is obviously as important for times of wara as for times of pace, it seems wise, in view of the present emergency, to select for particular emphasis at the moment certain aspects of the program which have special significance for the current scene.

As teachers of English, we recognize that we have a specific contribution to make toward winning the war and insuring the victory of democratic ideals.

I. Through reading and discussion we can help young people to sense what it is that America is fighting for by developing an understanding of democratic ideals and by stimulating devotion to them.

a) These ideals include a respect for the dignity and worth of the individual and a broad sensitivity to human beings and to their needs and aspirations.

b) They are concerned with the basic principles of the Bill of Rights, such as freedom of person and of religion, freedom of speech and of the press, the right of assembly and of petition, equality before the law, the privilege of trial by jury, and the right to vote. c) As teachers of literature, we are conscious of the fast that America's fight for democratic principles is but one part of mankind's long struggle for freedom. For that reason we wish to utilize materials which present that struggle as revealed at Thermopylee, in Magna Carta, the French Revolution, in Russia, in South America, and in other lands and times, as well as in our own naito and in our own enaito space har presentation we hope to achieve that perspective without which the individual finds himself overwhelmed emotionally and intellectually in the current disaster.

d) We conceive it as part of our obligation to stress international good will as a major tenet of democracy, stimulating a knowledge of, and a respect for, the cultures of all nations that will share with America in the establishment of the peace. By so doing, we shall hope to avoid the dangers of the present crisis, such as a glorification of war per se, hatred of the common people of other nations, distrust of minority groups in the United States who are descended from peoples of enemy countries, and an attitude of blind patriotism which leads to selfahmes, self-sufficiency, and separatism after the war is over. Substitution of positive attitudes of mutual understanding can be accomplished through the right choice of materials for reading and through wise guidance in topics for discussion.

e) As tachers of English, we can develop those skills essential to participation in democratic life (1) through classroom practice in group thinking and decision, (2) through teaching the techniques of public and panel discussion, and (3) through emphasis upon the need for precision and honesty in the use of language in reading and reporting and in the expression of ideas in speech and writing.

f) In this connection we recognize the unique importance of the newspaper, the magazine, the radio, and the motion picture and will assist boys and girls in the discriminating use of them.

II. In the teaching of English we are in a position to promote national unity (1) through the democratic integration of diverse cultural groups, (2) through recognition of the unique contribution of each to our national culture, and (3) through emphasis upon the contribution which America has made to each of them.

a) Since language is an important element in unifying a people, we recommend that all elementary and secondary schools use English as the language of basic instruction. At the same time, we recognize the desirability of continuing instruction in foreign languages and retaining skill in the use of them.

b) We seek to unify the entire Western Hemisphere by promoting greater understanding and appreciation of the culture and ideals of Central and South America and closer cultural association with Canada.

c) In the development of democratic unity we aim to recognize the rights and contributions of minorities in this country as well as those of majorities, especially of the Negro, the Semitic peoples, and those logal aliens who may be under suspicion at the moment because of descent from energy mations.

d) At the same time, we seek to promote through the study of literature a sense of unity among the various sections of our country and among the various social and economic groups represented in our national life.

e) A considerable propertion of the literature to be tangit in the achools shall be chosen with its suitability for these purposes in mind. Some of it has been haught for many years. Some of it will need reorienting in terms of the present scene. Other materials must be sought out and brought into the schools. Two types of presentation of the democratic ideal are available. One is patriotic literature as such, which yorchins the principles of democracy and arouses emotional response to them. The other, even more important, is illustrative of lite under democratic could fits or of literature literature and the optical model of the scene materials will give positive evidence of the incorporation of such ideals into the lives of individuals and of homes and communities. Others will reveal violations of the same principles. So far as possible, the positive presentation is prefemble.

f) In classes in both literature and expression it is important that we help young people to understand the function of criticism in wartime and the seeming contradiction between the necessity for taking orders in an emergency and the assumption of critical attitudes basic to training for the peace.

III. The teaching of English in wartime will concern itself also with the needs of the individual for social and personal adjustment.

a) It will develop those linguistic skills essential to the carryingout of democratic principles in daily living. It will promote that power of language requisite to securing, weighing, and exchanging

ideas together with a clear recognition of the emotional connotation and exact detonation of words, which is powerful in establishing attitudes.

b) In the expressional phases of English, discussion of personal and social problems contingent upon the present war will be encouraged, and problems of metalt hygican kept constantly in mind. Among these is the personal adjustment of individual boys and girls to the tension in family life due to anxiety about the war. Attitudes of fortitude can be engendered through realing and discussion, and emotional preparation for the shocks of war may be promoted.

 $\epsilon$ ) A major purpose of such reading and discussion will be to develop a long view of the problems confronting the present in an effort to preserve sanity and perspective and to provide the relief which comes from seeing the present conflict in relation to past events.

d) Creative expression will also be fostered as an outlet for the emotions and as a means of reflection upon and synthesis of the experiences which young people are facing.

IV. As teachers of English, we recognize that continuing emphasis upon all the aims presented in the report of the Basic Aims Committee of the National Council is important in wartime and that, so far as possible, all the normal experiences in language and in reading outlined in it should be maintained, for young people are being educated at the moment for the peace as well as for the war. Especial caution is needed to conserve those aesthetic and recreational values in English which are necessary to continuing culture, to personal growth and satisfaction, and to the maintenance of sanity and perspective during wartime.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The report of the Basic Aims Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English may be found in the *English Journal* for January, 1942. It is also available in separate pamphlet form for ten cents from the Council Office at 211 West Sixty-eighth Street, Chicago, Illinois.

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A crucial document for guiding teachers during World War II, NCTE encouraged the wide dissemination of the ideas expressed in this four-page pamphlet, *The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime*, by allowing anyone to reproduce it in its entirety.

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# Teaching English in Wartime: A Brief Guide to Classroom Practice

To further guide teachers, NCTE published *Teaching English in Wartime: A Brief Guide to Classroom Practice*. Authored by Neal Cross, member of the Planning Commission, this pamphlet addressed the question of how teachers can adapt their curriculum to the war. The Council again emphasized the importance of international relations and understanding foreign cultures. One of the most prominent concerns, however, was how to instill a devotion to democracy in students.

Item: Copy of *Teaching English in Wartime: A Brief Guide to Classroom Practice* (1942) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/809

# Teaching English in Wartime C S

A Brief Guide to Classroom Practice

### NEAL CROSS

With the Assistance of RACHEL SALISBURY, LOU LABRANT, and HELENE HARTLEY



PAMPHLET PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH · NO.

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оваятыка консына смонама, ронсына повосоданті по. 10, Сангіе С. Ргіс Укласнико Інтистиков и Консомало Консон, Бансіна Каторат ога Догизов от тих Nav Yong Krancira Vigenzi илот пи Санажента как Осто ог Рапса Еписатики в Niky Yong Kranci, Расвызи Мокозовани No. 11, Dore V. Šinith Распискаю Senicot. Мотяк, Бясцан Мокозовани No. 11, Деног D. Child and Hardy R. Finch

PUPILS ARE PROPLE (REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES), ENGLISH MONOGRAPH NO. 13, Nellic Appy, Committee Chairman RADIO AND ENGLISH TEACHING, ENGLISH MONOGRAPH NO. 14, Max Herzberg

PAMPHLET PUBLICATIONS

1. PITFALLS FOR READERS OF FICTION, Hazel Sample

2. WE BUILD TORFUTER: A READER'S GUIDE TO NEORO LIFE AND LITERATURE, Charlemae Rollins

3. BASIC AIMS FOR ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, DOTA V. Smith, Committee Chairman 4. TEACHING ENGLISH IN WARTIME: A BRIEF GUIDE TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE, Neal Cross, Committee Chairman

\*Out of print.

#### TEACHING ENGLISH IN WARTIME

Teachers of English in this time of war must re-examine their aims and materials in order to do better the things which they have been trying to do all the time. The skills of reading, speaking, writing, and hearing are more important now than they have ever been. The education of our children for life in a democracy and the understanding of the culture of foreign nations are important parts of our program now if we are to win the peace as well as the war. English teachers need to be keenly aware of these aims, especially in these times.

I. How Can WE HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO REALIZE WHAT IT IS THAT AMERICA IS FIGHTING FOR?

This question must dominate the whole of English instruction. Many of the literary selections ordinarily taught can be pointed to develop an understanding of democratic ideals and to stimulate devotion to those ideals.

We need to examine our anthologies and other teaching materials for reading selections which may be applied to this purpose. For ex-ample, Robert Frost's "Mending Wall" can be used to illustrate the principles which underlie any peace program, for it stresses the necessity for human understanding. Its characters are common people. In discussing the poem, we might ask such questions as: What is it that doesn't love a wall? Why does Frost speak of gaps where "Two men can walk abreast"? Why does he use the symbol of the "old stone savage arm'd" in describing his neighbor? What is the significance of the lines, "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know What I was walling in or walling out"

This kind of emphasis upon human relations and the principles of democracy can be emphasized in presenting many of the selections

\*The reader is referred also to the Council's new publication, Speuk, Look, Listen!, which discusses the use of visual aids in the emergency, and the new pamphlet on dis-cussion techniques prepared by the Council's Committee on Language Communication.

14. BROWN, STERLING A. (ed.), The Negro Caravan. A thousand pages of the best imaginative literature written by

American Negroes reflect the pathos of an oppressed people and the courage of men who have led a slow march toward freedom. 15. LORD BYRON, Childe Harold, Canto III.

A recital in verse of the successive efforts of the Greeks, from ancient to modern times, to gain and guard their liberty and to build a great civilization.

16. Dos Passos, JOHN, the biographical sketches in U.S.A.

Interspersed in the narrative of Dos Passos' trilogy are vivid and thoroughly readable prose poems about such great democratic and intellectual leaders as the elder La Follette and Thorstein Veblen.

17. SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM, Julius Caesar. This familiar play has been taught as the story of the assassination of the original Roman Fascist leader by an idealist and friend of the people.

18. SHOLOKHOV, MIKHAIL, And Quiet Flows the Don. A great trilogy on the efforts of the Russian people to achieve freedom after World War I. The story is told with poise and vigor, giving an intimate picture of the peasants.

Further explorations should be made among the biographies of such popular heroes as Bolivar, Garibaldi, and Toussaint L'Ouverture, and the work of such poets as Whittier, Whitman, Sandburg, and Rukeyser

d) UNDERSTANDING OF PROPLES OF OTHER NATIONALITIES EITHER IN THIS COUNTRY OR ABROAD

The attainment of this goal is of sufficient importance to merit an entirely new course or an exceedingly important unit in present literature courses. A world-literature course especially prepared to meet the needs of a particular community is that submitted by Miss McKibben of Amsterdam, Ohio.

Amsterdam is a coal or "feeder" town to the steel city of Steubenville, Ohio. The workers in the mine come from nine European countries. Eight of every ten pupils in the school are of foreign-born parents or of foreign birth themselves. The course is one in twelfth-[6]

grade general reading. Its three aims are to build a real appreciation of the joy of reading, to create pride in the country from which these children or their parents come and a better understanding of the ideals and customs of the country to which they have come, and to serve as a discussion ground for the difficulties which arise from the amalgamation process

The plan of the course is to use the first semester for an extensive study of the literature, music, and art of thirteen European countries. During the second semester the amalgamation and assimilation of immigrants in this country are studied. During the first six weeks of the first semester England, Ireland, Scotland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands are considered. The second six weeks are devoted to France, Spain, and Italy. The third cover the countries of Middle Europe, Russia, and Germany. Monday of each week is devoted to an introduction to a country

politically and historically, with reference to outstanding men in literature, music, and art. The playing of musical recordings and looking at pictures of the country under consideration occupy Tues-day and Wednesday. Miss McKibben notes that books from which the teacher reads to the class are made easily accessible to the students, and as a rule are immediately borrowed and read extensively. Friday is given over to class reports on reading and to a general summary of the week's work. While it is planned that each country will be considered for a week, it is possible to extend the time if the study proves sufficiently interesting.4

The second semester is concerned with the study of the amalgamation and assimilation of immigrants in this country. During the first six weeks such books as The Americanization of Edward Bok (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), Mary Antin's The Promised Land (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1012), Heydrick's Americans All (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1920), and others are read. During the same six weeks this class will also study the influence of foreign countries upon our art, music, and literature, using such selections as Washington Irving's sketch of the Alhambra and Willa Cather's French colonial novels as reading materials. The second six weeks are devoted to the study of sectional United

See also Harold A. Anderson et al., Instruction in English in the University High School ("Publications of the Laboratory Schools," No. 9 [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1941]), pp. 97-108.

The cover and pages from *The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter*. The introduction discusses the importance of teaching democracy in the classrooms, while pages six and seven address the importance of learning about the international community.

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# The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter

To stress the importance of English during World War II, NCTE published numerous pamphlets informing teachers and students on how the war affects English education. The pamphlet, *The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter: A Reading List for Young People*, focused on what readings would help junior high students understand the problems and issues brought up by Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech and by the Atlantic Charter. NCTE hoped that through these recommended books, students would understand the significance of the war and the challenges that await after the war.

Item: Copy of *The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter* (1943) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/824



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### FOREWORD

GENERALLY speaking, books, magazines, newspapers, news-reels, and radio are keeping the adult population well in-formed as to the course of events. In a lesser degree they are provoking thought about the significance of events and the need for sane, unselfish, understanding action after the war in order that human relationships may be established on the basis of mutual trust and con-fidence, and another devastating war avoided.

It is recognized that the next twenty-five years will be crucial ones for this planet. In that period the young people of today will be in positions of responsibility for the conduct of national and international affairs. They should begin now to view these affairs in the light of the great purposes of the democratic nations.

This list of books, suggested by President Roosevelt's statement of the Four Freedoms and by the Atlantic Charter-the only official pronouncements regarding the United Nations' war and post-war aims-is an effort to explain to the younger members of the family of man the great problems with which the older members are now preoccupied. Even more than to provide factual information, the list is intended to induce thought. It is suggestive rather than inclusive. It is to be hoped that everyone who uses it will think of other titles that can be included, of other things that can be done to clarify the state of world affairs and to induce intelligent action in handling them. After all, it's all in the family!

Because of the overlapping content of the twelve articles in the two documents, it has been necessary to make many arbitrary decisions about the placing of books under the various headings. Some could be used equally well in two or three places. Occasional notes will indicate the reasoning by which the decisions were reached. It will be noticed that the books included represent a fairly wide range in reading difficulty, but in general all will be suitable for junior high school students of varying reading ability. Naturally, there are included many books that have been published since the war began; their subject matter makes them valuable. However, fundamental truth knows no time, and many older publications have been re-evaluated in the light of the present times and have been found good. Only those that are now in print

did not formally subscribe to the principles of the Atlantic Charter did not tormally subscribe to the principles of the Minite Chatter until the United Nations' Declaration of January, 1,942, the Chatter served an immediate and definite purpose. It was a statement of a positive pograe of the Minister of Advance Strategies and where in the world. It was an affirmation of a common purpose more enduring than military victory—a purpose extending to the pace be youd such victory. It was a powerful weapon in the H was a togening many ways as important as the samed conflici titter, It was a beginning of the global strategy which was soon to prove so increasingly effective for the cause of the United Nations.

### \* \* \* THE MEN WHO MADE IT

HAWTHORNE, HILDEGARDE. Long Adventure: The Story of Winston Churchill. Plates. 346p. Appleton, 1942. \$25.0. England's Prime Minister is shown as a warmhearted, enterprising, courageous human being as well as a great stateman. MOSES, BELLE. Franklin Delano Roosevelt: The Minute Man of '33. 201p. Appleton, 1933. \$1.75. The story of Franklin Delano Roosevelt until he became president in 1933.

### \* \* \*

GENERAL Books that give a broad background of the history and books that give a broad background of the instally and culture of the peoples of the world are a basis for understanding the present. When the present is recog-nized as the basis for the future, the immediate postwar world is seen to be tremendously important.

BEATY, JOHN O. Swords in the Dawn. Illus. by Henry C. Pitz. 212p. Long-

KATY, JOIN O. Showins in the Database must be reached by C. Lin, J. Showing and S. J. S. 2000. Start, J. S. 2000. Start Beiling, called a start of the start of the start of the start of the plantering First. Hengist and his bother, Horsa, led the successful band of Danes and Justs who assive the call. As a reward Vortigen gave Hengist the Island of Thanet off the southeast cost. Here he ruled as king of the North Sea projects of Briting and here he called his race.

DILTS, MARION MAY. Pageant of Japanese History. Illusive two appendixes and with drawings by Poyojiro Orishi. 380p. Longmans, 1938. \$3.00. An excellent codenation of Japanese history with emphasis on the culture, customs, and beliefs of the people.

Forrar, GENNERVE, George Washington's World. Illus, by the subto. 3489. FORTA, GENNERVE, 1941. \$2.75. The subtor, 1941. \$2.75. The subtor, 1941. \$2.75. The subtor of the subtor of the subtor of the people who were living when he did, hotin in America, and all over the world, of whit they did whose they were didden, how lare on the subtor of the living which used what part each one of them physical in that greatest of all adventure stories, the History of the World "(r. with). 12

HARYMAN, GERTRUDE. Machines and the Men Who Made the World of Industry, Ilux 278p, Macmillan 1993, 42-50. In the landschool the author system, I and I and the two considered transformation that has taken false in the world during the last two consider-humble beginning in earlier days. The World Automatic are been humble beginning in earlier days. Thus, 302p, Day, 1944, 8196. A discussion of American democrasy and in significance. The last dayset discuss fully the right guaranteed to every American clustering. Build of Bales and Constra-tion of the Table Last of Machines. The Machines and Constra-tion of the Table Last of Machines. The Table 270, Machines World Per Line Last of Machines. The Machines and Strate.

-, World We Live In: And How It Came To Be. Illus. 375p. Mac-

millan, 1931. \$2.50. A readable outline history of the world, with emphasis on discovery and invention and development of proponities and cultural arts.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas to the second second

Longmans, 1941. \$3.00. History of South America from the ancient civilizations through the colonization period to the present day, with side lights on the culture, arts, and trends of the South

Vol 3. Describes important investions in agriculture, tanks, tiamportanos, aumanas, and domestic attributives. The structure of the structure of the structure of the structure of the structure point out that man has solved the problems of production but not of distribution. It, as Pasteur said, the nations will unite, not to destroy, but to build, then we can very specify free the world from hunger and want. Good for reference use.

receipting free the world from hunger and want. Good for reference use. Storage, Euzawith: Pageaut of Chinese History, Illus, by Bernard Watchins, 3666, Longmann, 1994, 83,00. The best history of China for boys and gifts. It shows a fine feeling for the family life, customs, and religion of the Chinese people. STETASSEOS, Device Markowski, Starker, 1994, 25,30. Son. Illus, with plotographs. 15/fp. Scribert, 1994, 25,30. In the best history and indicates the people away and the Chine and an indicates the part Alakan may pike juwed affains in the tenture, formation with the form survey made by Pan-American Airway and the Chine Stark Starker, Starker and Starker and Starker and Alakan Markan.

States Anny. WHITS, ANNI TERRY. Lost Worlds: Adventures in Archaeology. Illustra-tions and maps. 310p. Random, 1941. \$2,50. Who says history is dea? These accounts of archeological discovery of civilization in Greece, Egypt, Asyria, Babylonis, and South America have all the excitement of a finite state mapset story. It in its often that ancient history is lowedfar since the state of the s

The cover and pages from The Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. The foreword stressed that this generation of students must be trained for their future leadership roles in the world. Pages 12 and 13 illustrate what books were thought necessary for them to prepare for these roles.

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# Victory Corps Reading List

Another pamphlet the Council published was the *Victory Corps Reading List*, which provided book recommendations for members of the High-School Victory Corps. The reading list was divided into categories related to different aspects of the war, including America's allies and enemies, food production, and community service. The U.S. Commissioner of Education, J.W. Studebaker, praised NCTE for its "initiative and imagination in sponsoring" the list.

Item: Copy of Victory Corps Reading List (1943) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/824



The cover and pages from *Victory Corps Reading List*. The foreword and acknowledgement explained the partnership between NCTE and the Victory Corps. Pages 14 and 15 illustrate how suggested readings were annotated and the different types of subjects.

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# The English Journal

Throughout the war, *The English Journal* published articles on how the change from peacetime to wartime affected English education. The article entitled "The Council Meets in Wartime" in the February 1943 issue discussed the annual NCTE meeting where along with usual business, the Council also had to make critical decisions regarding English's place in the war. Not only did the Council pass measures recommended by the Resolutions Committee to help with the war effort, but the *English Journal* published letters from teachers illustrating how the war affected students and their learning needs.

### **Item:** Copy of English Journal(1943)

To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/801

|                            | of THE ENGLISH JOURNAL   | COUNCIL NEWS AND COMMENT TO   |
|----------------------------|--|---|
|                            |  |   |
|                            | a statement than to write a question. A improve themselves, that life will go on and sneaker may expand the statement or he the good and the beautiful must therefore          | Alice V. Brower, A. B. Davis High School, As English teachers we are, moreover, esp   |
|                            | speaker may expand the statement or he the good and the beautiful must therefore<br>may revise and answer it. not be forgotten.  | Mount Vernon, New York.<br>cially equipped to play a vital part in a well-o<br>ordinated program of communication, which  |
|                            | HELEN RAND My pencil was kept busy that hour. Four   | The Board of Directors considered the the basic art of everyday expression and read   |
|                            | EVANSION TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL other times that day, with four other sec-   | reports of twenty-three committees (others ing.   |
| THE ENGLISH                | EVANION FORMATION STATUS<br>EVANITOR, ILLINOIS<br>Naturally many of the same suggestions   | reported only to the Executive Committee). English has been performing and must control time to perform an indispensable service in it  |
|                            | were made by the different sections. Later I   | the English needs of high school students terpreting the aims, purposes, and progress   |
|                            | condensed these into a single list. At the   | when principals are so much disposed to re-<br>all civilian war work, and in building morale (  |
|                            | THE YOUNG PEOPLE FACE THEIR<br>PROBLEMS  | duce English time in order to expand techni- important as military drill) through reading an  |
|                            | now has a copy of the hot and the orthogen   | cal training (see recent English Journal arti-<br>cles by Max J. Herzberg and Lennox Grey). I. Let us make clear to our students that th  |
|                            | It was the beginning of the school year and I are using it as a guide in much of our<br>1942. The draft age might be lowered to work. There is nothing on it that English      | cles by Max J. Herzberg and Lennox Grey).<br>All felt that we must not be concerned about is a war of the people against intolerable tyra                                       |
| [ournal                    | aighteen Before me sat a senior English teachers have not been doing, but I find sig-  | our own vested interests but work solely for ny and inhumanity; that its purpose is to estal  |
|                            | class, among whose members were boys who nificance in applying it because it comes   | the welfare of our students and of society. lish a world of peace, order, and freedom, the discussion and a with the adaption of bases of which are our concern both now and it |
|                            | would become eighteen before the year from the students themselves. I respect it   | The discussion ended with the adoption of<br>the following motion offered by Lennox the future.   |
|                            | would be over. Men were being rejected by because it reflects their own opinion of their<br>the Army because of physical unfitness, lack needs in time of trouble.             | 2. Let us re-examine and adjust our cours   |
|                            | of mental alertness, lack of information, and Now let the list speak for itself:   | Grey:<br>That the Board of Directors recommend to the<br>submit to the proper war agencies instruction  |
|                            | actual illiteracy; and the schools were being  | Planning Commission and the Executive Com-<br>materials which will facilitate the work of suc   |
|                            | biamed for it all. Courses in mathematics,   | mittee. projects as the Victory Corps, Pre-induction<br>I. That the major undertaking of the Na- Programs, and the like.  |
|                            | science, and shop were being reconstructed Pleasantville, New York<br>to meet the needs of the time. However, I Phases of learning suggested for emphasis                      | tional Council the coming year be the mobiliza-<br>3. Let us devise procedures to assist govern   |
|                            | was not teaching these subjects; I was during the war by students in the senior  | tion of English teachers in a program which will mental agencies in important activities such a   |
|                            | teaching English. What could be done in the English classes in Pleasantville High School,  | stress maintaining and improving communica-<br>tion as a wartime service. the sale of war bonds and stamps, promotion<br>salvage collections, and the preparation of ma         |
|                            | English course to help young people meet September, 1942:<br>the requirements of the branches of the serv-   | 2. That to this end the Planning Commis-<br>terials of instruction to explain the need for  |
|                            |  | sion work out ways of co-ordinating the activi-<br>ties of various National Council committees.   |
|                            | ice, of the war industries, of the "home tion, pronunciation (with some emphasis on proper names in the news), poise   | ties of various National Council committees.<br>3. That the Committee on the Place of Eng-<br>and listening skills and clear and concise expre-                                 |
|                            | I looked at the class. These seniors would a Practice in conversation: discussion of cur-  | lish in American Education be authorized to sion.   |
|                            | have these conditions to meet. What were<br>their own ideas? Saying no more to them  | treat with organizations outside the National<br>Council (e.g., Office of Education, Office of War<br>stimulate reading on topics directly connected                            |
|                            | their own ideas? Saying no more to them<br>than I have said here except a platitudinous from men in the service; expressing opin-<br>ions; impromptu speaking; answering ques- | Information, O.C.D., Commission on Co-opera- with the war effort and progress, and with the   |
|                            | addition about the superiority of many tions quickly, concisely, and clearly; giving   | tive Curriculum Planning, etc.) to co-ordinate<br>our work with theirs in such ways as are com-<br>standing.  |
| THE PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE  | heads over one, I gave the students just three instructions<br>minutes to think and then armed with a nad 3. Increased ability in speaking convincingly,                       | patible with the policies of the National Coun-<br>6. Let us give young people perspective of   |
| OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH | minutes to think and then, armed with a pad<br>and a pencil, took down the suggestions they interestingly, and (where advisable) cau-  | cil, and as have the approval of the Executive the ideals for which we are fighting as expresse   |
|                            | and a petitic to a L had had some ideas tiously  | Committee of the National Council. in the literature on our own nation and of the other nations of the world.   |
| IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS       | of my own; but I was glad I had not di-<br>4. Practice in writing interesting, entertaining  | 7. Let us stimulate young people to thin  |
|                            | vulged them, for all these and many more clearly, and concisely in writing   | REPORT OF THE RESOLUTIONS COM-<br>MITTEE OF THE NATIONAL COUN-<br>through the dynamic ideas and ideals for which  |
|                            | 5. Improvement in penmansnip, spenng,  | CIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH we fight and to accept these ideals as the object of their personal sacrifice and devotion.  |
|                            | able to give commands, that men must be  | As English teachers we are mobilized for war,   |
|                            | trained to listen to them and to carry out 6. Opportunity to write words for war songs   | to preserve the values and ideals created and DORA V. SMITH GEORGE G. GATES<br>perpetuated by free men. It is our patriotic Chairman MAX J. HERZBERG                            |
|                            | orders, that reports must be made quickly<br>and clearly, that everybody is writing let-   | function—one to which we gladly devote our-<br>BERT E. BOOTHE HELEN RAND MILLE:   |
|                            | ters and ought to know how to write them 8. Greater ability to read instructions intelli-  | selves-to do all we can to help win the war. ANGELA M. BROENING MARK NEVILLE  |
|                            | well, that people in the service and out will gently, to grasp and retain details, to recog-   | Approved and adopted by the Board of Direc- See The Role of the English Teacher in War  |
|                            | have emergencies to meet, that young peo- nize propaganda, to be broadminded in  | tors of the National Council of Teachers of English<br>meeting in Chicago on November 27, 1942. National Council of Teachers of English.  |
| FEBRUARY 1943              | ple must now quickly grasp opportunities to reading, to judge and choose books   | months in omorpo on tracemon 2/, 1942. Annothe Complete of Andrews of Angreen   |
|                            |  |   |
|                            |  |   |
|                            |  |   |
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# **College English**

*College English* was especially focused on the war. At the college level, students and their teachers were eligible to be drafted. In the February 1942 issue, the article "English in Wartime: A Symposium by College Teachers" discussed the specific challenges and changes the war would bring to the English curriculum and what must stay the same. In an article in the January 1944 edition, W. Wilbur Hatfield examined the learning needs

of soldiers, drawing upon the results from an NCTE survey sent to the directors of English staff in the Army and Navy.

Item: Copy of *College English* (1944) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/802



Two pages from W. Wilbur Hatfield's article, "English for Men in Uniform," which appeared in the January 1944 edition of *College English*. Hatfield investigated the educational needs of soldiers.

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# Junior High School English

College and high school students were not the only ones whose needs the Council addressed during this time. *Junior High School English*, prepared by the Committee on Junior High English in Time of War, focused on younger students and their role in the war. They created a "six-point program" for teachers, the first point declaring "Remember we have been fighting the greatest war in history, that Junior boys and girls have special needs in connection with it, and that they have a special stake in its consequences." The Council was not solely focused on the war, however, acknowledging that educating students about life during peace was just as important for this generation so accustomed to war.

Item: Copy of Junior High School English (1944)

### To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/73/803



The front cover, back cover and introduction of *Junior High School English*. The book cover listed the "six-point program." The introduction emphasized the needs for instruction in both peace and war.

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# What Communication Means Today

"This will be known as the war of letters," said Donald Porter Geddes, quoted in *What Communication Means Today* by Lennox Grey. This book served to educate readers on the importance of communication during World War II. The author shared numerous anecdotes of soldiers writing back home and of communication errors that caused defeats in the battlefield. In addition, Grey quoted a soldier, stating that "Almost all of these fighting men are literate to the point of being literary.... We want books over here – 90 percent of us. We need books." The author pointed out that communication also facilitates propaganda. As with how the Council acknowledged that the English curriculum must change to adapt to war, this book defined the changing nature of communication during World War II.

Item: Copy of What Communication Means Today (1944) To learn about related material, see the following record series: 15/71/824



#### Part I FIRST DEFINITIONS

MODERN INSTANCE—1. Early in June, 1943, a captain of marines wrote a letter from an island in the South Pacific. Nine days later it was delivered to his wife in the heart of America. In that nine-day wonder which is now an everyday occurrence, and still more in the far-reaching contents of his letter, we find embodied the theme of this pamphlet and of the series on *Commu*nication, which it introduces

This is what he wrote:

This is what he wrote: Just had a big day of relaxation (his previous letters had told of repeated bombings by the Japanese, resulting in the death of two of his closest movies are themselves something to see. Just a movie cover out op our-doors in the tropic night, with troops sitting all around, on benches or the ground. In the lit screen the sophistication of Hollywood, and outside is the warm night wind, the waving palm trees dark against the moon, and the dilatant nurmur of the title on the rest, so slow and faint as to be only

the distant murmur of the tide on the reef, so slow and faint as to be only an undercurrent to the stillness. It came to me today, rather whimsically on going over my kit, that I have almost worn out my second pair of shoes in the military service. That makes me feel a veteran, in a very mild way, and also a little apole-gic toward you for-well, taking so long to vin the war, I supposed . . Murringry things are so huge, and move so slowly--like great ghaders, first worn, rather three horizing as the so win is overwhelh. If their cards that war, rather than being in a stew to win it overnight. If Italy cracks that

war, rather than being in a stew to win it overnight. If Italy cracks that will certainly change the picture . . . . As I wrote N— today, there is a curious contrast between extensive and intensive thinking. Itaving so little to go on, one merely huge it more book for the last two months. *Jonekoe* hugers a be the selection. I live with Friar Tuck, Jocksky, the Black Knight, and the sturdy Cedric or the fandidu Wamba. And the sever discuss military matters, do keep reading up on the geography of the south and southwest Pacific; there are so many beek for the last to talk to you about some day. *Learn* at last the island berg, the Marhalls, clear to the northeast and Hawaii. It is a whole new world to America but one in which we cannot ease future responsibility. world to America but one in which we cannot escape future responsibility. The world can never again be allowed to drift. The airplane has changed [1]

After you've read everything else, you start reading the laundry labels

... After you've read everything every you have reasong on other popel's clothes. The soldier of today isn't going to war without knowing what it's all about or going to tolerate any sort of literary isolation from his country. The overseas sales of magazines like Reader's Digest and Time and Like are, I think you will agree, phenomenal. ... Almost all of these fighting men are literate to the point of being liter-tions to some or consider them by 'old Army standards...

Amost all of these ingriting more are instante to use points and are any when one stops to consider them by 'old Arwy' standards. We want books over here—90 per cent of us. We need the the mail horsetily say that many a favorite magazine is "weated one" in the mail with almost equal anxiety as many "letters from home"—which I can hardly deep first place.

Such letters-showing among other things that fighting men read the literary reviews and respond to them-tell the story more effectively than any peroration that we might write. Morale, lives, our very survival as a people depend on communication at many levels—the exchange of ina propie depited committee committee of the propied of the propied

LETTERS-THE LITERATURE OF THIS WAR? Letters are close-up communication. They are very close to communication at its roots, the spoken word and the sign-as close as the writer can make them. If they also have the selectivity and compression of litertime to write it in. Here is that communication from person to person which is the basis of communication between communities, regions, nations, hemispheres. In such modern Odysseys as these letters provide we see that concern for belongingness, for the sharing and comparing of experience, for communication, for human communion, that has been among the most insistent of human values from the time when Homer portrayed the homecoming of Ulysses down to the latest self-conscious modernization of the same story in Saroyan's Human Comedy.

There is more than a passing hint that these men are redefining literature as communication, and that the most notable literature of this war may be its letters. As we think back historically, it may appear more than accident that the first English novel, so called, was written in the form of letters. Donald Porter Geddes, editor of Pocket Books, predicts that this will be known as the war of letters. His evidence is that his best seller among soldiers is the dictionary-used as a speller! [6]

In short, war has brought home to us again the elementary, elemental In sort, wat has broom nome to us again the extendary, elementar meanings of communication- as the prime lass of all human community. For the past generation we have taken communication largely for granted, quite unlike our pioneer forhears. We have rewarded a few exceptional performances with palms and medals, Puliter prizes and Nobel prizes, movie "Oscars," academic degrees, sizeable fortunes. But we have forgotten, except in an academic way, that thin-skinned man as species has been able to survive on this tough-skinned planet, in conflict with creatures and forces physically far more powerful than he, largely because of his powers of communication. So with nations of men. Events of the past five years have brought us back to this elemental meaning, and have also driven home the fact that new instruments and arts of communication have for the first time given the possibility of world com-munity: where all parts of the world are within instant reach of one man's voice, for good or bad, and where writing, print and picture can be transmitted or transported to any part of the world within a few hours, or at most a few days. The dictators were swift to see this. They went far toward making a New World Order of slaves. We woke up just in

THE PRIMARY MEANING OF COMMUNICATION

It would seem to be part of every teacher's task to see that we keep awake

#### LONG VIEW

France fell, we now say, because of failure of communication. We mean in part that her vast armies were divided and made helpless in the battle of France by the calculated disruption of physical "communications." We mean even more profoundly that her people had been divided long before by the breakdown of human communication, com-mon understanding, sympathy and faith by the factional ambitions of her leaders and the shrewd work of Nazi propagandists. We know that American defeats early in this war likewise sprang from

failures in communication, including failure to understand the "communication-mindedness" of our enemies, if their skill in exploiting certain aspects of communication can be called that. In spite of warnings we suffered our Pearl Harbor because we lacked genuine communication both of instruments and men. Hopefully we accepted the Japanese tokens of continuing communication in the persons of Nomura and Kurusu when other acts of the Japanese should have told us that genuine two-way communication did not exist. We learned that the Trojan [7]

The cover and pages of What Communication Means Today. The introduction began with a letter from a soldier fighting overseas. Pages six and seven explained the many ways communication had affected the war thus far.

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