

# World War II Comes to Boca Raton

**CONTENT / THEME:** Florida History / World War II

**GRADE:** Fourth

**TIME:** 1 class period

## **TEXTBOOK CONNECTION:**

Houghton Mifflin Social Studies: Florida Studies: (2005) Grade 4, Chapter 9, Core Lesson 2, pages 270-275.

Harcourt Brace Social Studies: Florida Edition (2002) Grade 4, Unit 4, Chapter 8, pages 314-318

After reading about *World War II*, ask the students, “How did World War II affect Boca Raton?” Explore the answer with the following lesson.

## **BENCHMARK CONNECTIONS:**

- SS.A.1.2.1 understands how individuals, ideas, decisions, and events can influence history.
- SS.A.1.2.2 uses a variety of methods and resources to understand history (such as interpreting diaries, letters, newspapers; and reading maps and graphs) and knows the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- SS.A.6.2.2 understands the influence of geography on the history of Florida.

## **FCAT SKILLS PRACTICED:**

- cause/effect
- narrative essay

## **OBJECTIVES:** The students will...

- analyze letter excerpts written during World War II.
- demonstrate the effects of the Boca Raton Army Air Field and World War II on Boca Raton and its citizens.

## **MATERIALS:**

- Reading passage: *World War II Comes to Boca Raton* (Lexile Measure: 720L)
- Handout of World War II letter excerpts and a World War II account
- Whiteboard and dry erase pen (blackboard and chalk)

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION & TEACHER PREPARATION:

- Read the following topic from A Teacher's Guide to Boca Raton's History:
  - Boca Raton Army Air Field (*Turning Points*, 3)
- Read pages 48-49 from A Stroll Through Early Boca Raton from A - Z.
- Read the photo captions on pages 55-59 and 64 from Images of America: Boca Raton.
- Review the reading passage: *World War II Comes to Boca Raton* and make copies for students if desired.
- Make copies of the letter excerpts and account from World War II for students and/or make an overhead transparency if desired.
- Incorporate the following vocabulary words into the weekly vocabulary list:
  - **cause** - an event that makes another event happen
  - **citizen** - an official member of a country or city
  - **effect** - what happens as a result of a cause
  - **primary resource** - is a first hand account of an event. It was written by a person who was there.
  - **secondary resource** - is written by someone who was not present at the event.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

- Introduce the lesson by asking, "How do you think World War II affected Boca Raton?"
- Read the passage *World War II Comes to Boca Raton*. (Note: The Army Air Corps/Forces is the present day United States Air Force.)
- Ask the following questions:
  1. In what ways did Boca Raton's geography help convince the government to build an Army air field? (*flat terrain, close proximity to ocean, high land to discourage flooding,*)
  2. What kind of school was found only at the Boca Raton Army Air Field for all Air Corps soldiers? (*radar*)
- Ask students what happened (effects) in Boca Raton due to the decision of building the Boca Raton Army Air Field (cause). List the answers on the whiteboard:
  - over 100 residents had to sell their property
  - hundreds of buildings were built over 6000 acres in Boca Raton
  - the Boca Raton Club was closed and used by the Army
  - citizens opened boarding houses
  - citizens watched for German subs at the beach watchtower
  - the population increased
- Present the excerpts from letters dated May 10th and May 14th, 1942. They were written by Thomas Rickards, Jr. who was waiting for his orders from the army at the time:

*They say at least twelve tankers have been torpedoed between Ft. Pierce and Miami during last week . . .*

*The war continues to come closer. The ship sinkings off our coast - in sight of land - are enough to make you sick at your stomach . . .*

*So as I said, the war is coming closer and closer all the time now. We are on an almost complete blackout every night now. No cars are allowed to move faster than twenty miles per hour and then only with dim parking lights. No street lights, show windows, flood lights, night baseball, or anything. It's an eerie sight. And bombers are overhead all the time.*

- Ask the following questions about the previous excerpts:
  1. How do we know of some events that happened in Boca Raton and the surrounding area during World War II ? (*from letters written by people living at the time*)
  2. Are these letters a primary source or a secondary source? (*primary*)
  3. What other primary sources give information about what happened in Boca Raton during World War II ? (*oral histories, photographs, maps, etc.*)
  4. What did Tom mean when he wrote, “the war is coming closer and closer all the time now” ? (*he was referring to the German submarines torpedoing and sinking ally ships just off-shore*)
  5. What is a blackout? (*lights from any source are not allowed to be seen at night*)
  6. How do you think Tom felt at this time? (*scared, upset, almost physically ill*)
- Present the following account taken from an interview with Boca Raton citizen, Max Hutkin:

*Townpeople weren't fully prepared for the change in their lives which the influx of troops would make. ...Hungry army personnel soon discovered the Hutkins store. Max and his wife, Nettie, got up each morning at 3a.m. to make thousands of sandwiches, which would be sold each day by 2:00, for 15 cents each.*

- Ask students for two more effects of the Boca Raton Army Air Field to add to the prior list on the whiteboard. (*the blackout rules, good for town's businesses*)

## **REVIEW & APPLICATION OF LESSON:**

- Students will imagine living in Boca Raton during World War II. Ask the students to write a letter telling a friend the effects the war and the Boca Raton Army Air Field had on them, as a citizen of Boca Raton.
- Book the education program *History on the Move* conducted by the Boca Raton Historical Society & Museum by contacting the Education Department at (561) 395-6766 x107 or [education@bocahistory.org](mailto:education@bocahistory.org). This history adventure takes students to several Boca Raton historic landmarks, including remaining BRAAF buildings and the actual airstrip.

## **ASSESSMENT:**

- Evaluate the students' response to factors that convinced the U.S. Government to build an air field in Boca Raton.
- Evaluate students' ability to compile a list of the effects on Boca Raton and its citizens.
- Evaluate student letters (narrative essay).

## **VISUAL ARTS EXTENSION:** *(See Visual Arts Extensions section for materials and directions.)*

- **Modern Art -How a Book, Event or Person Can Affect You**  
Students will brainstorm how a book/story, event or person has influenced their thinking or actions and will create an abstract work of art based on an emotion or feeling of this book/story, event or person in an artwork. Students will use line, color, shape, texture and form to create their work of art.