The Home Front

By Sharon Fabian

World War I took place in Europe. When young men from the United States volunteered or were drafted to fight in the war, they crossed the Atlantic Ocean. There, in Europe, they took part in the battles. People said that they were at "the front."

Here at home in the United States, there wasn't much that people could do at first but hope and pray that their loved ones would come home safely. Then, when the chance came along to do something that might help the soldiers overseas, people were glad to participate. It made them feel like they were doing something to help their sons and husbands who were on the front lines.

Soon, the United States was asking its citizens at home to help in many ways. At home, on the farm, and in the factory, people were making changes in their lives to support the war. Some of the changes were legislated by the government, but others were made voluntarily. Propaganda posters convinced people that volunteering was the right thing to do. One poster said "Women! Help America's sons win the war." Another one called on people at home to show "The Spirit of America" by volunteering in the war effort. These efforts to support the war from here in the United States became known as the home front.

One large part of the war effort at home involved food. The government needed huge amounts of food to feed the millions of troops in the military. It asked citizens at home to give up eating certain foods on certain days so that there would be more food to send overseas. Since many of the male farmers were already in the army, farm women took on much of this work.

Citizens at home were also encouraged to support the war by providing money. One way they did this was by buying war bonds. When people bought war bonds, it was like putting money into a savings account except that the money went to the government instead of into a bank. The government could then spend the money on war expenses. Millions of Americans bought these liberty bonds. Another way that people supported the war with their money was by paying higher income taxes.

Factory workers supported the war by producing rifles, bullets, artillery shells, and other materials. They also built ships for the rapidly growing U.S. Navy. As on the farms, many of these jobs were filled by women. The War Industries Board made sure that factories kept producing war materials. A popular slogan said that people should be supporting the war one way or another. They should either "work or fight."

By providing all of this food, money, and materials, citizens at home supported the war. They provided the army with the things that it needed to keep fighting.

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Questions

1. World War I took place mainly in ______.
   A. South America
   B. Asia
   C. the United States
   D. Europe

2. The "home front" for America was in ______.
   A. Asia
   B. South America
   C. Europe
   D. the United States
Propaganda posters encouraged people to buy liberty bonds, to grow victory gardens, and to take other measures to support the war. Do you think these posters changed many people's minds about the war? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Propaganda posters encouraged people to _____.
   A. go on strike
   B. support the war
   C. save money in the bank
   D. oppose the war

4. In victory gardens, people grew food to _____.
   A. eat at home
   B. send to the soldiers
   C. can in the factories
   D. feed the farm animals

5. During the war, many women took jobs in _____.
   A. factories
   B. victory gardens
   C. combat
   D. none of the above

6. "Wheatless" Mondays were Mondays when _____.
   A. citizens at home ate no wheat
   B. bread factories closed down
   C. soldiers ate no wheat
   D. farmers planted no wheat

7. During the war, factories produced _____.
   A. guns
   B. bullets
   C. ships
   D. all of the above

8. Home front activities included _____.
   A. planting gardens
   B. trench warfare
   C. naval battles
   D. all of the above
Suppose that you lived during the time of World War I, and your family was growing a victory garden, observing "meatless" and "wheatless" days, and eating all of your leftovers so as not to waste any food. Write a letter to a soldier overseas telling him about your efforts.