



“Here for the Duration: Part 2” Reading Comprehension Questions

“Here for the Duration: Part 2” gives an overview of the development of Renton’s Highlands neighborhood during World War II, when thousands of war workers moved to Renton from across the nation to work at Boeing and Pacific Car & Foundry. The result was a rapid increase in population and the need for housing.

This activity is designed for readers in 7th grade and above. Questions can be used for discussion or as writing prompts. You can find the original article from September 2019 on Renton History Museum’s Newsletters Page. You may also wish to combine this activity with the Study Guide for “Here for the Duration: Part 1.”

1. What kinds of jobs did the new residents of the Renton Highlands have when they first arrived in October 1942?

2. Boeing recruiters promised potential new hires that the new homes in the Highlands would have “all the modern conveniences,” but this was not necessarily the case. How did the features inside the permanent and temporary homes differ from expectations?

3. How were the schools in Renton affected by the sudden increase in population during the first half of the 1940s?

4. How did King County Sheriff Harlan S. Callahan and Renton Police Chief Vince Stewart perceive the new residents of the Renton Highlands?

5. How did the residents of the Renton Highlands react to the rumors about crime in their area?



6. After Highlands residents confronted the controversy, what kinds of work did Police Chief Vince Stewart do to contribute to creating a healthier community?

7. What was the role of the Highlands Community Council?

8. In May 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. Japan surrendered to the Allies in August of the same year. How did the end of the war affect the workforce in Renton and the surrounding areas?

9. "Annexation" is a formal act in which a city incorporates neighboring communities into its jurisdiction. How did the annexation of the Renton Highlands into the City of Renton affect the City?

Essay Question: Describe life in the Renton Highlands during its first few months as a community for war workers in 1942. What challenges did the newcomers face? What brought them together as a community?

Creative Essay Question: Imagine that you are a teenager who moved to the Renton Highlands with your parents in 1942. Write a letter to a friend who lives in another state to tell them about your new home. Your friend might want to know more about the house you live in, your school schedule, and what it is like being new to the neighborhood.



Answer Guide for Parents & Teachers

1. What kinds of jobs did the new residents of the Renton Highlands have when they first arrived in October 1942?

The Renton Housing Authority required that new renters in the Highlands prove they were employed in the defense industry. The three biggest employers in the area were the Boeing Co., Pacific Car & Foundry, and Kenworth Motor Co. The homes in the Highlands were advertised as being within walking distance of all of these workplaces. Some residents, such as Lyle Grace, worked multiple jobs—Lyle was employed at Lake Washington Shipyards and Todd Dry Docks in Seattle.

2. Boeing recruiters promised potential new hires that the new homes in the Highlands would have “all the modern conveniences,” but this was not necessarily the case. How did the features inside the permanent and temporary homes differ from expectations?

The 500 permanent homes had coal heaters, plastered walls, and electric ranges, hot water heaters, and refrigerators. The 1500 temporary houses had plywood interiors, coal ranges and space heaters, and refrigerators that required ice for cooling. Newcomers were surprised to find homes heated by wood stoves and ranges fueled by coal, and some were upset when they found out they had to cut kindling to light fires. For some families, however, the Highlands homes were still an upgrade—for the Espetveits of North Dakota, for example, it was the first time they had had electricity in their home.

3. How were the schools in Renton affected by the sudden increase in population during the first half of the 1940s?

Between 1941 and 1945, Renton’s school-age population doubled, and schools were overwhelmed by the number of new students. Students had to attend classes in two to three shorter shifts per day, reducing the amount of time young people spent in school and leaving them with more free time on their hands.

4. How did King County Sheriff Harlan S. Callahan and Renton Police Chief Vince Stewart perceive the new residents of the Renton Highlands?

Sheriff Harlan S. Callahan and Chief Vince Stewart thought that war work was “luring hundreds of criminals” to King County and Renton, a view which was published in the *Seattle Times*. They claimed that federal work programs as part of Pres. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal were shipping unaccompanied minors from the Midwest to “housing projects.” Callahan spread rumors about “wolf pack” gangs and wild parties involving teenagers from the Highlands, and launched an investigation into juvenile delinquency there. These assumptions stemmed from biases against people from the Midwest based on Depression-era stereotypes.

5. How did the residents of the Renton Highlands react to the rumors about crime in their area?

Residents of the Renton Highlands community refuted the claims that workers from the Midwest were the cause of crime. Fred W. Hunt, a Highlands resident, and Dan McGovern, the editor of the *Renton*



Chronicle, wrote pieces for the *Chronicle* citing the patriotism and hard work contributed by Highlands residents. With the help of the city, Highlands residents began a campaign to set the record straight. Parents in the Highlands criticized Callahan's handling of the situation, and teens' testimony provided no evidence of the "wolf gang" mentality. King County Deputy Prosecutor John J. Quine concluded that stigmatizing teens in the Highlands was unfair, calling them "good boys and girls."

5. After Highlands residents confronted the controversy, what kinds of work did Police Chief Vince Stewart do to contribute to creating a healthier community?

According to Clarence S. Williams, a sheriff's deputy detailed to the Renton Police Department during the war, Chief Stewart worked with residents of the Highlands in more of a social work capacity. This included providing counseling, talking with residents, and trying to help with issues that would likely be handled by other specialists today.

6. What was the role of the Highlands Community Council?

The Highlands Community Council was a neighborhood organization which organized dances, picnics, movies, and community events for youth and families. They recruited existing clubs like the Boys and Girls Clubs and the Girl Scouts to provide services to the community.

7. In May 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. Japan surrendered to the Allies in August of the same year. How did the end of the war affect the workforce in Renton and the surrounding areas?

At the beginning of September 1945, work on war planes was suddenly unnecessary and thousands of Boeing employees were suddenly laid off as the amount of war work decreased. Subcontracts with Pacific Car & Foundry and Kenworth Motor Truck Co. were cancelled. However, three out of four war workers still planned to remain in the Renton and Seattle areas.

8. How did the annexation of the Renton Highlands into the City of Renton affect the City?

Renton's population had grown three and a half times in the four years of war, from 4,488 in 1941 to 16,039 in 1945. Most of the growth occurred in the Highlands area. When the Highlands' 420 acres were annexed in 1946, its 2,420 units of housing and 7,500 residents meant that Renton had changed from a fourth-class city to a second-class city.

Essay Question: Describe life in the Renton Highlands just after it was built as a community for war workers. What challenges did the newcomers face? What brought them together as a community?

Sample Answer: Workers moved into houses as quickly as they finished going up, and a sizable community formed there where there previously was none. The first few months of life in the Renton Highlands were a challenge. The neighborhood had muddy streets, no sidewalks, no phones, no grassy yards, and no landscaping. Despite wartime shortages and the adverse conditions that had resulted from the neighborhood being built so quickly, the residents did their best to make comfortable homes for themselves and their families.

New residents also had to deal with prejudice from local law enforcement officers and residents who lived in Renton before the war. New Boeing workers were called 'Okies' by their peers, a derogatory term that had been used for poor Midwesterners who sought work out West during the Depression. Due to the overwhelming number of incoming children and teens, students had to attend school in



shifts, and repurposed Army barracks were used as additional classrooms. The school-aged population of the Highlands became the subject of controversy when King County Sheriff Harlan S. Callahan and Renton Police Chief Vince Stewart were quoted in articles in the *Seattle Times* that contained accusations of juvenile delinquency, gangs, and parties. As a result, residents of the Renton Highlands came together to defend their reputation, and sought new ways to build community. Neighborhood groups provided structured activities for young people, such as dances, picnics, and movies, and brought in organizations like the Girl Scouts and Boys & Girls Club.

Creative Essay Question: Imagine that you are a teenager who moved to the Renton Highlands with your parents in 1942. Write a letter to a friend who lives in another state to tell them about your new home. Your friend might want to know more about the house you live in, your school schedule, and what it is like being new to the neighborhood.

In this creative essay, students have an opportunity to imagine what life was like for young people in another time period, supporting their creative writing with facts from the article. Topics may include the quality of housing and amenities (pages 1, 5 and 6), school during wartime (page 7), and the misunderstandings between the existing residents and the new ones, especially fears adults held about the new teenagers in town (page 7). You may also encourage students to look at photos of school, youth and teens provided in the article to help them flesh out their stories.

Supplemental Resources (all available at no cost)

American Communities during World War II

[Uniting Communities for War - The National WWII Museum](https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/uniting-communities-war) - this article mentions some of the overall challenges of life on the American home front, and ways in which communities tried to stay united, with a focus on volunteers of all ages who participated in activities such as scrap and grease collection, plane spotting, entertaining and providing aid to soldiers, and community boards that administered government programs such as rationing and the draft.

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/uniting-communities-war>

[Social Changes During the War - University of Houston Digital History](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3493) - This is part of a larger series of World War II articles provided online by the University of Houston. It discusses changes to everyday life for Americans, with sections focusing on women, African Americans, and Mexican Americans. All three groups faced unique challenges—for example, this article mentions the Zoot Suit Riots in Los Angeles and the Detroit Race Riots, both of which occurred in 1943 due to racial prejudices and mounting tensions among war workers in urban industrial centers.

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3493

[Native Americans in the Military - World War II \(1939-45\)](#) - This article was published by Wisconsin's Forest County Potawatomi Nation in a 2015 issue of their bimonthly periodical, the Potawatomi Traveling Times. It gives an overview of Native communities and individuals across the country who supported the war effort. These efforts included participating in organizations on the home front as well as serving as soldiers and code talkers in the military. Overall, Native Americans made the largest per capita contribution to the war of all participating groups in the U.S.



https://www.fcpotawatomi.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/web_feb_15_2015.pdf

Critical Thinking Questions: How did cities across the United States change during the early 1940s? How did individuals, families, and communities adapt to these changes? How did existing prejudices create challenges for minority groups who joined the war industry? What contributions did women, Black Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans make, and how do you think their efforts impacted future movements for each group's civil rights?

Prejudices against Incoming Workers & Public Housing Residents

[Smithsonian American Art Museum: The Great Okie Migration](https://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The-Great-Okie-Migration.pdf) - The term "Okie," as mentioned in the article, refers to agricultural workers from the Midwest who traveled West in search of work after losing their livelihoods during the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. This article gives some background about the challenges these migrant workers faced during the 1930's, the stigma that surrounded them, and how wartime affected them.

<https://americanexperience.si.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/The-Great-Okie-Migration.pdf>

[The Myth of Failure: A Complex History of American Public Housing, by Shawn Watson](https://ushistoryscene.com/article/public-housing-myth-of-failure/) - This U.S. History Scene article by Shawn Watson gives a decade-by-decade overview of public housing in the U.S. since its inception in the 1930s, including common arguments in opposition to it. It also tackles misconceptions about public housing that have persisted throughout its history.

<https://ushistoryscene.com/article/public-housing-myth-of-failure/>

[Mixed-Income Development Study- University of Chicago](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/voices.uchicago.edu/dist/0/1173/files/2018/06/Chaskin_Study_8_web-2e49e0c.pdf) - This 2018 report from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration talks about the stigma public housing residents in mixed-income communities face today, including quotes from residents.

[https://cpb-us-](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/voices.uchicago.edu/dist/0/1173/files/2018/06/Chaskin_Study_8_web-2e49e0c.pdf)

[w2.wpmucdn.com/voices.uchicago.edu/dist/0/1173/files/2018/06/Chaskin_Study_8_web-2e49e0c.pdf](https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/voices.uchicago.edu/dist/0/1173/files/2018/06/Chaskin_Study_8_web-2e49e0c.pdf)

Critical Thinking Questions: How do you think Depression-era stereotypes about migrant workers from the American Midwest impacted the Renton Highlands Community? How has public housing in the United States changed and evolved since the Great Depression and World War II? What challenges do public housing residents face today? Based on what you read here and in the article, how do you think existing opinions about the New Deal and public housing affected residents who moved to the new Renton Highlands community during the war?

Concerns about Juvenile Delinquency during World War II

["Teen Trouble" Pamphlet, 1943](https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww2/Documents/life-juvenile3.pdf) – This pamphlet, a primary source aimed at parents of teenage children during the war, attempted to explain the effect of wartime on the teenage psyche, and argues that parental neglect due to war work can lead to delinquent behavior. It also presents a range of social activities as solutions for involving teens constructively in the war effort and in their communities.

<https://sos.oregon.gov/archives/exhibits/ww2/Documents/life-juvenile3.pdf>

["As The Twig is Bent"](#) - This 11-minute propaganda film was sponsored in 1944 by Aetna Life Insurance. Aimed at parents, it argues that changes to family structure during wartime can lead to delinquency in



children and teens. The film warns of the dangers of “playing hooky,” cinemas, jukeboxes, dance floors, and early marriages. It also offers advice on what parents can do to prevent delinquency.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHV84_Fslxw

[History.com - After WWII, Fears of Liberated Teen Girls Led to 'Grooming' Films](#) – Although mainly focused on the postwar era, this article explains how, during the early 1940’s, a moral panic arose over the trend of young women’s bobby socks. Concerns over teenagers in the 1940’s led to a wave of “mental hygiene” films that were intended to teach teenagers how to dress, groom themselves, and behave in social situations. One such film, which focuses on the lofty beauty standards to which teenage girls were held, is incorporated into the article. Finally, the article describes how Title IX, passed in 1972, was a major factor in curbing gender-based discrimination on high school and college campuses.

<https://www.history.com/news/beauty-standards-women-1940s-bobby-socks>

Critical Thinking Questions: Can you spot some examples of biases in these primary sources? Who wrote them, and who was the intended audience? Why did adults fear that teenagers would turn to crime during the war? Compare and contrast social expectations for teenagers in the 1940s and today.

Children and Teenagers during World War II – Oral Histories

[Eileen Hughes Oral History](#) - Provided via Brown University Library’s online collection, this article contains excerpts from an oral history interview with Eileen Hughes of Rhode Island. Eileen was in junior high school when the United States became involved World War II. Although she was too young to join the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, Eileen became an active volunteer with her local Civilian Defense group and the USO.

https://cds.library.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/TeenageVolunteer.html

[Flora Alicia Shank Oral History: Voces Oral History Project](#) – Flora Alicia Shank was a teenager in El Paso, TX when the war broke out. This passage contains excerpts from Flora’s oral history, which covers USO dances and the cinema as forms of recreation, and changes to aspects of everyday life she experienced, including switching to public transportation and rationing groceries. It is made available through the University of Texas’s *Voces* oral history project, which aims to collect the stories of Latinx Americans.

<https://voces.lib.utexas.edu/collections/stories/flora-alicia-shank>

[Rogers Smith Oral History – National Home Front Project](#) – Roger Smith was a young teenager during the war. In his oral history, he talks about how the war affected his community: young men left to fight, and retirees and children filled their positions in his school and the local fire department. German prisoners of war were used as farm laborers. Smith also talks about how experiencing World War II from the home front influenced his decision to fight in the Korean War when he came of age.

<https://nationalhomefrontproject.org/smith-rogers/>

[Ralph Deaton Oral History – National Home Front Project](#) – Ralph Deaton talks about his experiences as a young boy in Church Hill, Maryland during the war. Excerpts provided on the website include community recreation at his father’s tavern, Ralph’s fear of German POWs, and ways in which he experienced discrimination and segregation as a young Black person in the 1940s.

<https://nationalhomefrontproject.org/deaton-ralph/>



Critical Thinking Questions: Compare and contrast the experiences of two or more of the interviewees. Which parts of the home front experience do you think differed based on individual circumstances, and which experiences do you think were common among young people in the United States? How did children and teens interact with their communities during the war? Based on both the oral histories and the primary sources listed in the “Concerns about Juvenile Delinquency during World War II” section, do you think adults’ perceptions of children and teens during the 1940s were correct? Why or why not?