JCPML TREASURE BOX LESSON PLAN – Section 4: Finding out about rationing and austerity

These activities will help students to understand austerity and rationing and the importance of radio in promoting these ideas. The teacher-directed tasks in Parts 1 – 3 could be adapted as student-directed activities for teams of about 6 students. You will need:

- CDs or online sources of popular music from the 1940s
- A computer and speakers to play John Curtin’s Austerity speech (JCPML00408/10) at: http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=86138

Part 1: The Austerity Army

1. Students complete the oral and written questions on the Digital Treasure Box Section 4 activity Be a Shock Trooper in the Austerity Army! in groups or with the teacher.

Part 2: The Radio in World War II

2. Students read the Advertisement for Radios. Ask students: what do you notice about the sizes and prices of radios?
3. Read the article A Brief History of Radio in Australia from the 1920s to the 1950s. Discuss with students:
   a. What do you think were the advantages of a big radio compared to a small one?
   b. What evidence can you find that most Australians listened to the radio?
   c. Explain why all radio station call signs in WA begin with the number 6, e.g. 6WF.
4. Some radio stations such as 2GB in New South Wales advertised their popular programs in the Australian Women’s Weekly. Look at the information in Radio Shows & Film Reviews to answer the following questions.
   a. What night of the week could you hear a musical revue on 2GB?
   b. On Sunday night at 7.45pm, what show could you expect to hear?
   c. What was exciting for listeners about 2GB’s new “Star Barometer”?
   d. Which program was designed to give young people a voice on radio?
5. Ask students why radio was so important during World War II. Discuss in terms of: information, education, entertainment.

Part 3: Austerity Speech by John Curtin, 3/10/1942

6. Explain to students that John Curtin used radio to deliver important messages to Australians during World War II. One of these was about austerity. Play Curtin’s austerity speech and ask students what they think the Prime Minister is trying to say.
7. If necessary, have students look up these terms used in Curtin’s speech: imperative, relentless and ruthless enemy, total war, war machine, sorrowing homes, voluntarily abandon distractions and luxuries, bond (war bond), Austerity Loan.
8. Write the following questions on the board or screen. Ask students to listen to the speech again, this time reading along with a copy of the Austerity Speech Transcript. Have them answer the questions orally or in written format.
   a. Who is the enemy?
   b. Why is Japan to be feared?
   c. What does it mean to ‘turn all resources to the purposes of war’?
   d. Why does Curtin want everyone to buy at least one war bond in the Austerity Loan? (N.B. Australia’s population at the time was 7 million.)
9. Students complete the Digital Treasure Box Section 4 Cartoon Activity in groups or with the teacher.

10. Extension work – radio program team activity: Ask students to imagine that their radio station must explain austerity to people in their state. They should use Be a Shock Trooper in the Austerity Army! as the basis for their program. Students may wish to include some commercial breaks (see the Wartime Advertisements from Part 4 below and the resource for Creating an Advertising Jingle) and some wartime music (use CDs or purchase music online). Students could perform their radio program for the class.
Part 4: Wages & Budgeting / Rationing & Coupons During World War II

You will need:

11. Students read Rationing & Coupons During World War II as an introduction to the topic. Choosing key words from this document, they create an explosion diagram around the word RATIONING with a brief explanation of each key word.

12. Students complete the first page of Money Matters as an introduction to imperial (pre-decimal) currency. The second page may be used as an extension challenge.

13. Students imagine that they are adults living in Australia during World War II. Assume that every student is single, employed and aged around 21. Each requires an occupation and a wage (see the General Wages Information sheet; some discussion is likely to arise about discrepancies between male and female wages). Each student is to design a simple budget, with the aim of having between 10 and 20 shillings left over (write this amount on the front of his/her Ration Book and consult the Teacher’s Guide to Ration Coupons) that can be used to purchase imaginary goods or small prizes supplied by the teacher. Some activities students should consider when designing their budget include:

- Board/lodging: 20/- per week
- Lunches: 2/- per day
- Tram/train travel: 2/- return per day
- Cinema: 1/6
- Dancing: 1/6
- Milkshake: 4d
- Cigarettes: 10 for 11d (explain that the health consequences of smoking were not understood in this era)
- Taxation: approximately one third of income

Some money should also be set aside for clothing and savings (see the Wartime Advertisements for resources).

E.g.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget for a male railway worker, income 118/9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Taxation: 40/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Board/lodging: 20/- per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lunches: 10/- per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Train travel: 10/- return per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clothes: 8/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Entertainment: 20/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Savings: 10/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TOTAL: 118/9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Consider the effects of strikes during the period of rationing. Imagine that tanker drivers, who deliver petrol to all metropolitan service stations, are unhappy with their pay and working conditions. They have decided to go out on strike at midnight tonight. The strike is announced on commercial radio during the 4 o’clock news bulletin. Discuss:

- The immediate response of many motorists
- The problems arising from this response
- If it appears that the strike will last for an extended period, what are some possible government options to deal with the scarcity of petrol? (This should lead to a discussion about rationing.)
- Alternate situations: a bread strike; a milk strike; a Coca-Cola strike.

15. Students complete the Rations Cooking activity sheet to understand the effects of rationing upon food choice and availability.

16. Reading Wartime Advertisements in detail, students go “window shopping” with the following shopping lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ladies</th>
<th>Gentlemen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of gloves</td>
<td>1 pair of covered shoes or work boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 dress</td>
<td>1 sports shirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pair of shoes</td>
<td>1 pair of socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pairs of stockings (also called hose/hosiery)</td>
<td>1 Akubra hat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students should work out:

a. The price of each item and the total price of the shopping list
b. The number of coupons required for each item
c. How long it would take to save up for all of the items on their list, using their budget
d. Which item on their shopping list would be most likely to need replacement before the war is over, and why.