

# history theatre

35th ANNIVERSARY SEASON

## Play Guide



## *Christmas of Swing*

Written by Bob Beverage and Ron Peluso

In collaboration with David Lohman and Jan Puffer

**November 24 – December 23, 2012**



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## Table of Contents

### Historical Context

• About The Andrews Sisters.....	3
• The Andrews Sisters Top Ten Hits .....	7
• About the USO Camp Tours.....	8
• Women and the War Effort, an essay by Eleanor Roosevelt .....	10
Activity : Letter Writing.....	12
Activity : Create Your Own USO Tour.....	22
Bibliography .....	24

Play Guide to accompany ***Christmas of Swing*** published by History Theatre ©2012

# About The Andrews Sisters

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The Andrew Sisters were a close harmony singing group consisting of sisters LaVerne, Maxene, and Patricia Andrews. They boasted an exuberant, close-harmony style well-suited to cheery novelty songs, and their intricate vocal arrangements and rhythmic ability mirrored the sound of the swing bands that constituted their chief competition in their heyday. For the most part, The Andrews Sisters did not focus on romantic material, but rather sang upbeat songs, often borrowed from other cultures. Although they were well-established by the time the U.S. entered World War II, their optimistic tone made them perfect boosters of the war effort. In later years they remained closely identified with the war years, remembered as wearing military uniforms and singing their signature song: *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy*.



The three sisters were born in Minnesota to a Greek immigrant father, Peter Andreos (changed to Andrews upon arriving in the US) and Olga Sollie, a Norwegian-American mother. Their parents ran a restaurant in Minneapolis. The girls turned to singing as children, entertaining on local radio and in amateur revues, with Patty taking the lead, Maxene singing high harmony, and LaVerne low. Patty, the youngest, was only seven when the group was formed, and just twelve years old when they won first prize at a talent contest at the local Orpheum Theatre in Minneapolis, where LaVerne played piano accompaniment for the silent film showings in exchange for free dancing lessons for herself and her sisters. They were particularly inspired by the Boswell Sisters who had scored a number of hits in the early '30s.

In November 1933, they joined a vaudeville troupe for six months, traveling around the Midwest. Afterwards, their parents closed the restaurant to devote themselves to their daughters' career, and the family spent the years 1934 – 1937 touring with bands. In 1937, they went to New York as part of Leon Belasco's band and while there, made their first recordings (albeit under Belasco's name) for Brunswick Records. After six years of living on the road, the girls had their first major success with *Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen*, an English version of a song from the Yiddish theater, which sold 350,000 copies. The song made its first appearance on "Your Hit Parade" on January 8, 1938 and held the Billboards No.1 slot for five weeks.

The hit established the trio in the music world and they began to get extensive radio and personal-appearance work. They returned to the hit parade in April 1939 with their recording of the song *Hold Tight, Hold Tight*. In the 1940s the sisters found themselves in high demand, and became the most profitable stage attraction in the entire nation, earning \$20,000 a week. In 1940, signed to Universal Pictures, they made the first of a series of low-budget "B" movies, *Argentine Nights*.

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With the U.S. entry into World War II, the Andrews Sisters began appearing frequently at military bases, and later traveled overseas to entertain the troops. They volunteered their free time to entertain enlisted and wounded men by singing, dancing and signing autographs. In June of 1945 they participated in an eight-week USO tour and performed for thousands of servicemen. They had been hoping to do such a tour since the war started in order to give back to the soldiers who were fighting. While touring, they often treated three random servicemen to dinner when they were dining out. They also recorded a series of Victory Discs for distribution exclusively to Allied fighting forces, again volunteering their time to do studio sessions for the Music Branch, Special Service Division of the Army Services. They were dubbed the "Sweethearts of the Armed Forces Radio Service" for their many appearances on shows like "Command Performance," "Mail Call," and "G.I. Journal." Perhaps only Bob Hope and his troupe did more to entertain the troops.



Although their recording activity was slowed by the musicians' union strike that began in 1942, they had another Top Ten hit that year with *Strip Polka*. When Decca settled with the union in 1943, The Andrews Sisters embarked on a series of hits, many of them with Bing Crosby.

The Andrews Sisters premiered their own weekly network radio show, "Eight-to-the-Bar Ranch," at the end of 1944, and the hits continued with the calypso song *Rum and Coca Cola*, which went to number one in February 1945, becoming the biggest hit of that year.

All this success did not come without its share of hardship. In the early 1950s The Andrew Sisters started to face troubled times. First, Vic Schoen, the trio's band leader and composer, left the group. This was a huge blow because he and his orchestra had accompanied the sisters in over 90% of their recordings. Aside from his constant presence he was also very skilled in arranging music for the trio.

After Vic left, they began to focus on nightclub performing where Patty became more of a focus of the group. She also started to launch a concurrent solo recording career. The trio's last Top Ten hit was *Sparrow in the Tree Top*, another pairing with Bing Crosby, in 1951.

They continued to record for Decca through the end of 1953, at which point Patty left the group for a solo career, with her husband as her agent. Maxene and LaVerne learned of Patty's decision from newspaper gossip columns rather than their own sister; which caused a bitter two-year separation. It became even worse when Patty decided to sue LaVerne for a larger share of their parents' estate. Maxene and LaVerne continued to perform as The Andrews Sisters, going on tour in 1954.

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In June 1956, the three reconciled. They recorded for Capitol Records from 1956 through 1959; releasing a dozen singles. They then signed with Dot Records without commercial impact. They began to experiment with a new sound described as a light rock-and-roll, which did not gain popularity with the public who preferred to hear The Andrews Sisters singing old hits. At this time the girls were up against a new wave of talent such as Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry and the sisters did not match their previous success.

In the fall of 1966, LaVerne retired from performing due to illness and was replaced by Joyce de Young. LaVerne died of cancer the following spring. The Andrews Sisters made their final appearance as a trio in July 1968, after which Maxene took a job at Lake Tahoe Paradise College of Fine Arts, where she taught acting, drama and speech along with working with troubled teens. Patty returned to her solo career in 1971 and appeared in a musical revue called *Victory Canteen* in Los Angeles. The revue was then expanded into a musical play and Maxene was brought in for what became the Broadway show *Over Here!*, a musical about the WWII home front. *Over Here!* opened on Broadway on March 6, 1974. Its cast album charted, as did another Andrews Sisters compilation *In the Mood* on Paramount. Meanwhile, Bette Midler revived *Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy* for a Top Ten hit in 1973, bringing two Andrews Sisters compilation albums onto the charts.

Maxene and Patty had a falling out when Patty's husband brought a lawsuit against the producers of *Over Here!* leading to the show's premature closing on January 4, 1975, and the cancellation of a national tour. The two sisters remained estranged from then on, although they made occasional joint appearances. Maxene, who until her death said she was not aware of Patty's motives for the separation, often appealed to Patty for a personal reconciliation, to no avail.

Maxene suffered a serious heart attack in 1982 while performing in Illinois and underwent quadruple bypass surgery, which she successfully recovered from. She went on to do a successful cabaret show for 15 years called *Maxene: An Andrews Sister*. Patty re-emerged in the late 1970s as a regular panelist on *The Gong Show*. The two did reunite on October 1, 1987 when they received a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame.



Shortly after her off-Broadway debut in the musical *Swingtime Canteen*, Maxene suffered another heart attack while on vacation and died at Cape Cod Hospital on October 21, 1995.

Patty is the last surviving member of The Andrews Sisters. She lives in Northridge, California. She is now a widow, since her husband/manager of 55 years passed away in 2010. She rarely speaks personally of her sisters. When asked about their legendary feuding, she jokes about it and quickly moves onto the next topic.

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Throughout their long career, the sisters sold well over 90 million records. They recorded 47 songs with crooner Bing Crosby, 23 which charted on the Hit Parade; thus making them one for the most successful pairings of acts in recording history. The Andrews Sisters became the best-selling female group in the history of popular music. They recorded a little over 700 songs, had 113 charted billboard hits; 46 which reached the top 10 status. They earned nine gold records and were the first all-female group to see an album go platinum. They performed in 17 Hollywood featured films, countless appearances on radio shows between 1935 and 1960 – including their own. They did guest appearances on every major television show of the 1950s and '60s and had record-breaking theater and cabaret runs all across America and Europe.

The Andrews Sisters are still recognized for their engaging harmony and witty sense of humor. They are lovingly remembered by their fans and still remain one of the best-selling female vocal groups of all time.

### **LaVerne Sophie Andrews**

Birth Date: July 6, 1911  
Birth Place: Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Married: Lou Rogers  
Death Date: May 8, 1967 in Hollywood, California  
Buried: Forest Lawn Cemetery  
Hair: Red  
Eyes: Brown

### **Maxene Angelyn Andrews**

Birth Date: January 3, 1916  
Birth Place: Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Married: Lou Levy (divorced in 1951)  
Death Date: October 21, 1995 in Cape Cod, MA  
Buried: Forest Lawn Cemetery  
Hair: Brown  
Eyes: Brown

### **Patricia Marie Andrews**

Birth Date: February 16, 1918  
Birth Place: Mound, Minnesota  
Married: Marty Melcher (divorced 1950)  
Wally Weschler (deceased 2010)  
Hair: Blonde  
Eyes: Brown



# The Andrews Sisters

## Top Ten Hits

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1937

Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen

1938

Hold Tight, Hold Tight

Says My Heart

Tu-Li Tulip Time

Lullaby to a Jutterbug

1939

Beer Barrel Polka

Well All Right!

Yodelin' Jive

1940

Say Si Si

Ferryboat Serenade

Beat Me Daddy, Eight to the Bar

I'll Be With You In Apple Blossom Time

The Woodpecker Song

Scrub Me Mama With a Boogie Beat

1941

Aurora

1942

Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy

The Shrine of St. Cecilia

Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree

Strip Polka

Three Little Sisters

1943

Pistol Packin' Mama (with Bing Crosby)

Victory Polka (with Bing Crosby)

Jingle Bells

Santa Claus is Coming to Town (with Bing Crosby)

Shoo Shoo Baby

1944

Is You Is or Is You Ain't (with Bing Crosby)

There'll Be a Hot Time in the Town of Berlin

Don't Fence Me In

Rum and Coca-Cola

Accentuate the Positive

Straighten Up and Fly Right

1945

Along the Navajo Trail

1946

South America, Take It Away (with Bing Crosby)

Rumors are Flying

Money is the Root of All Evil

1947

Near You

Civilization (with Danny Kay)

Toolie Oolie Doolie

Christmas Island

The Lady from 29 Psalms

1948

Underneath the Arches

You Call Everyone Darling

1949

I Can Dream, Can't I

1950

Quicksilver (with Bing Crosby)

I Wanna Be Loved

# About The USO Camp Tours

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In 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt conceived the USO for the purpose of reaching out directly from the American people to those in military uniforms. Nongovernmental, but civilian and voluntary in make-up, the organization would serve as a link from the ordinary citizen to the men and women serving far from home. It was to show that America cares, remembers, and supports the service and sacrifice of those who defend her. It would deliver morale enhancing programs and services around the world.

In May 1941, the USO sent out seven traveling show buses, bringing entertainment to service men in Army camps east of the Rockies. Meanwhile, a Hollywood committee financed by agents and producers, and with the cooperation of the Screen Actors Guild, put on several large shows at military camps in California. Later that year, the Citizens Committee for the Army and Navy, the USO and show business industry met. The result was USO Camp Shows, Inc., officially launched Oct. 30, 1941

During the peak of action in 1945, USO Camp Shows were presenting 700 shows a day, with more than 300,000 performances overseas and in the United States, to an audience totaling more than 173 million. From 1941 to 1947, more than 7,000 performers put on 428,521 shows of all kinds. The entertainers included stars of screen, stage, radio and the concert stage, as well as vaudevillians and other entertainers who wanted to show their support for the troops.

Units were sent overseas to some 42 countries included Variety Units, Concert Units, Play Units, Musical Comedy Units, Sketching Artists Units, Name-Band Units, Sports Units, and All Girl Units. Camp Shows entertained as many as 15,000 soldiers seated on the ground, as few as 20 in jeeps based at a lonely outpost, and at the bedsides of wounded soldiers recuperating in military hospitals.

In 1942, Bob Hope; on his first overseas tour, went to Europe with Frances Langford, Tony Romano and Jack Pepper. In the spring of 1943, 199 overseas units brought a touch of home to troops. Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy toured Newfoundland. Jack Benny and Larry Adler entertained in the Middle East, and Joe E. Lewis and Ray Bolger went to the Pacific. Judith Anderson took Shakespeare to Hawaii and later toured the Pacific.

Continued >>

In the spring of 1944, Camp Show performers toured the tent cities on the fields and beaches bordering the English Channel. On July 28th, eight Camp Show units with 43 men and women landed on Utah Beach, just 48 days after the D-Day invasion. Plywood was laid atop a 30-ton ammunition carrier, and a public address system was set up for a show. The next day, entertainers went as close to the front as they could get. Units also were bringing up the curtain in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Before the war was over, Martha Raye had entertained soldiers in every theatre of war where Americans were stationed.

A concert unit that included Frederick Jagel, Robert Weede, Polyna Stoska, Isaac Stern and Alex Zakin landed in amphibious ducks, and 10,000 GIs saw their performances in New Guinea. Jascha Heifetz performed in a bombed-out German theater, and Ann Moray walked the wards of a hospital in Anzio singing to recovering troops. A subdivision of the concert unit included ballet.

The sports world also turned out in support of the troops. Wrestler Nick Munday was in France and Belgium, and Ruth Arons played table tennis with GIs in Normandy. Frank Frisch, Carl Hubbell, Lefty Gomez and others from the baseball world visited troops. Boxers Jack Sharkey and Mickey Walker toured the European Theatre. Shortly after VJ-Day, Leo Durocher went with Danny Kaye to Japan.

The Sketch Artists program, which visited hospitals stateside and overseas, involved some 170 leading illustrators and portrait painters, drawing 30,000 portraits of wounded service men.



Following V-E Day, the Army asked for 100 Camp Show units in the European Theatre. Eleven musicals, 20 plays, 10 concert units and 59 variety units were rushed over, supplementing 26 hospitals units. Stars included Sonja Henie, Amos & Andy, John Kieran, Jack Benny, Ingrid Bergman, The Andrew Sisters, Bob Hope, Allan Jones, Betty Hutton and many, many others. Another demand was made after V-J Day, and 86 additional units were dispatched to the Pacific.

The entertainers often faced the same dangers as the troops they were sent to entertain. While historical records differ on the actual figures, a number of Camp Show performers were killed, seriously wounded, or injured during their service as "Soldiers in Greasepaint." Glenn Miller, a major and head of the Army Air Corps Band, was killed in a plane crash en route to France. Musical theatre star Tamara Dreisen was killed in a plane crash near Lisbon in 1943. Singer Jane Froman was severely injured in the same crash.

Touring Camp Shows were discontinued in 1947 but were revived in 1951 with the approach of the Korean War. In 1957, USO Camp Shows, Inc. was dissolved. The USO assumed all responsibility for managing the entertainment needs of service members around the world – a tradition that continues today.

# American Women in the War

An essay by Eleanor Roosevelt

January 1944

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Our women are serving actively in many ways in this war, and they are doing a grand job on both the fighting front and the home front. Some 12,000 of our Army and Navy nurses are now overseas, taking care of our sick and wounded fighting men. I have seen some of these nurses in Great Britain, in many of the islands of the Pacific, in New Zealand and Australia, and I have the greatest respect and admiration for them. They take everything in the spirit of soldiers, keeping their troubles to themselves. They suffer from homesickness, they experience the hardships of severe climates and the actual perils of war, yet they remain ever cheerful. Their smiles are wonderful medicine for the men they care for.

I recall vividly some of the nurses' barracks I visited on my recent Pacific trip. Roofs constructed of native matting or of woven palms made good nesting places for rats and insects. In many places the climate was so damp that I doubt if the women ever put on a garment which was entirely dry. Some of the nurses lived for months at a time up near the combat zone, where it was impossible ever to get a hot bath. Add to all this the hazards of air raids and you have a stern test of hardihood. Yet I never heard a single nurse complain.

At home, many women have become nurses in civilian hospitals. With so many of our regular nurses at the far corners of the earth, these women have a heavy load to carry: they are just as much a part of the war effort as though they were actually at the front. Their spirit is illustrated by an 18-year-old student nurse whom I met on a train not long ago. She looked so young that I wondered if she realized what hard work she was embarking on. She assured me she knew quite well it would be very difficult; but she was determined to have a profession and be a useful member of her community.

Then there are the many women in our military services. Commanding officers feel that, in many cases, they have performed their duties more efficiently than the men whom they have freed for active service.

So far the WACS have been the only ones allowed overseas. This seems to me ridiculous. The restriction on the activities of our other women's military services is not due to any feeling of Congress or the military authorities that women cannot do the job. It is due, rather, to a false chivalry, which insists that women be protected from war hazards and hardships, even against their own wishes. Some women accept this point of view, but I believe most of us would rather share more fully in the experiences of our men.

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I think this idea of sheltering women is a shortsighted policy, since one of the great postwar difficulties will be the readjustment of men and women who have been long separated. That readjustment will be easier if both have experienced a similar discipline and acquired a similar attitude toward life.

Besides those in uniform, over 2,300,000 of our women have gone into war industries; 1,900,000 of them are doing regular factory work. Many of these workers feel they are not being allowed to produce as much as they could. I think their dissatisfaction would be remedied if we had labor-management committees in all war industries throughout the country, so that their ideas and grievances could obtain a hearing.

Some of the married women workers are not doing their best because we haven't taken into consideration their personal problems. Their homes must still go on. Their children must be cared for. Day nurseries are now being established, but they are not always properly organized. Sometimes they are not located conveniently for the mothers—I was told of one nursery which was five blocks from a bus stop, which meant that a woman had to walk 20 blocks every day. To a tired woman carrying a child, those blocks seem very long.

Working mothers also have difficult shopping problems. There are two workable solutions. One is an organized shopping service in every block, so that a woman may leave her entire order for the day with one person, and pick the packages up in the evening near her home. The other is to have certain shops in every neighborhood reserve a supply of staple foods from sale until the women return from work.

The task of buying food and cooking it for the family would be made far lighter if we adopted the British restaurant idea. In England the municipality and the Ministry of Food cooperate to set up restaurants which provide one good three-course meal a day at a reasonable price and without ration points.

These matters require detailed community organization. But while we have carefully organized our civilian defense services—many of which we may never need these—things which we *do* need have too often been completely neglected.

The many thousands of women who are not doing any unusual work, but are simply running their houses quietly and efficiently, are contributing more to the war effort than they themselves realize. The woman who meets war difficulties with a smile, who does her best with rationing and other curtailments, who writes her man overseas the kind of letters he must have to carry him through successfully, is making a great contribution to this difficult period. If, in addition to this work at home, a woman is giving her services to any of the volunteer organizations, our hats must be off to her.

Undoubtedly there are some women who are leading the same sort of life today that they have always led; but I think they must be having a difficult time finding companionship. For the vast majority of women in this country, life has changed. Their thoughts and their hearts are concerned with what is happening in North Africa, Italy, the Southwest Pacific and countless other places in the world. They are only content as they feel they are contributing something toward the speedier ending of the war and a better chance for their particular men in the world of the future.

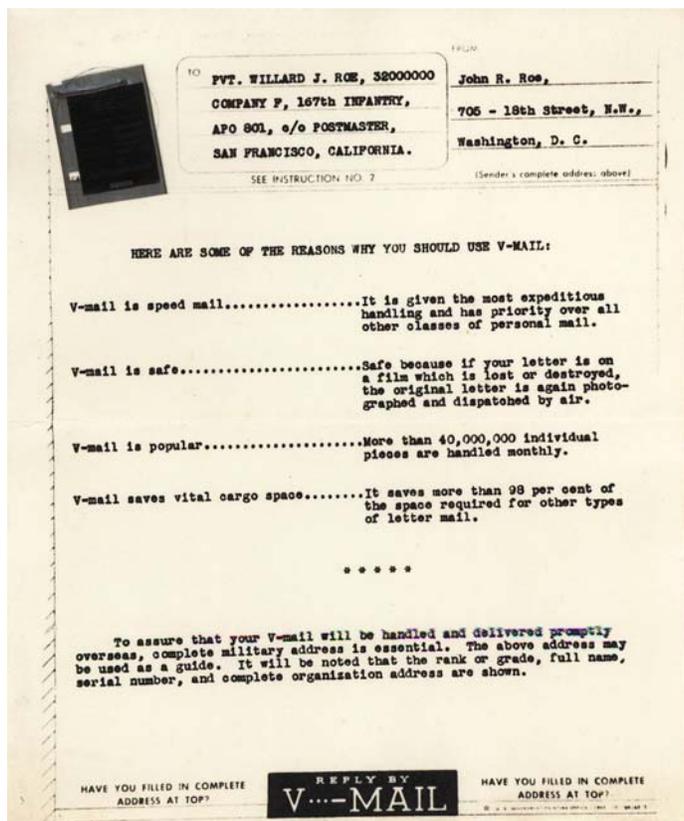
Originally published in the Reader's Digest in 1944 to express how woman are playing a crucial part in the war efforts, serving both overseas and within the United States.

# Letter Writing in World War II

For members of the armed forces the importance of mail during World War II was second only to food. The emotional power of letters was heightened by the fear of loss and the need for communication during times of separation. Messages from a husband, father, or brother who were killed in battle might provide the only surviving connection between him and his family. The imminence of danger and the uncertainty of war placed an added emphasis on letter writing. Emotions and feelings that were normally only expressed on special occasions were written regularly to ensure devotion and support.

Military personnel felt the most connected to home through reading about it in letters. Civilians were encouraged to write their service men and women about even the most basic activities. Daily routines, family news, and local gossip kept the armed forces linked to their communities.

Wartime romances adjusted to long distances and sweethearts and spouses separated by oceans used mail to stay in touch. Couples were married on furlough and babies were born while their fathers were away at the battlefield. Letters kept America's troops informed about home life and detailed accounts allowed them to be in the war and have that critical link back to their families. Others wrote to kindle new relationships and fight off the loneliness and boredom of wartime separation.



Mail played a significant role in maintaining morale on the battlefield and at home, and officials supported that role by working to ensure mail communications during wartime. V-Mail service could ensure this communication with added security and speed. The Office of War Information and the Advertising Council worked with commercial businesses and the community to spread the word about this new service and its benefits.

V-mail, short for Victory Mail, is a hybrid mail process used during World War II as the primary and secure method to correspond with soldiers stationed abroad. To reduce the logistics of transferring an original letter across the military postal system, a V-mail letter would be censored, copied to film, an printed back to paper upon arrival at its destination.

Continued >>

V-mail correspondence was on small letter sheets, 17.8cm by 23.2cm (7 by 9 1/8 in.), that would go through mail censors before being photographed and transported as thumbnail-sized image in negative microfilm. Upon arrival to their destination, the negatives would be blown up to 60% their original size 10.7cm by 13.2cm (4 1/4 in. by 5 3/16 in.) and printed.

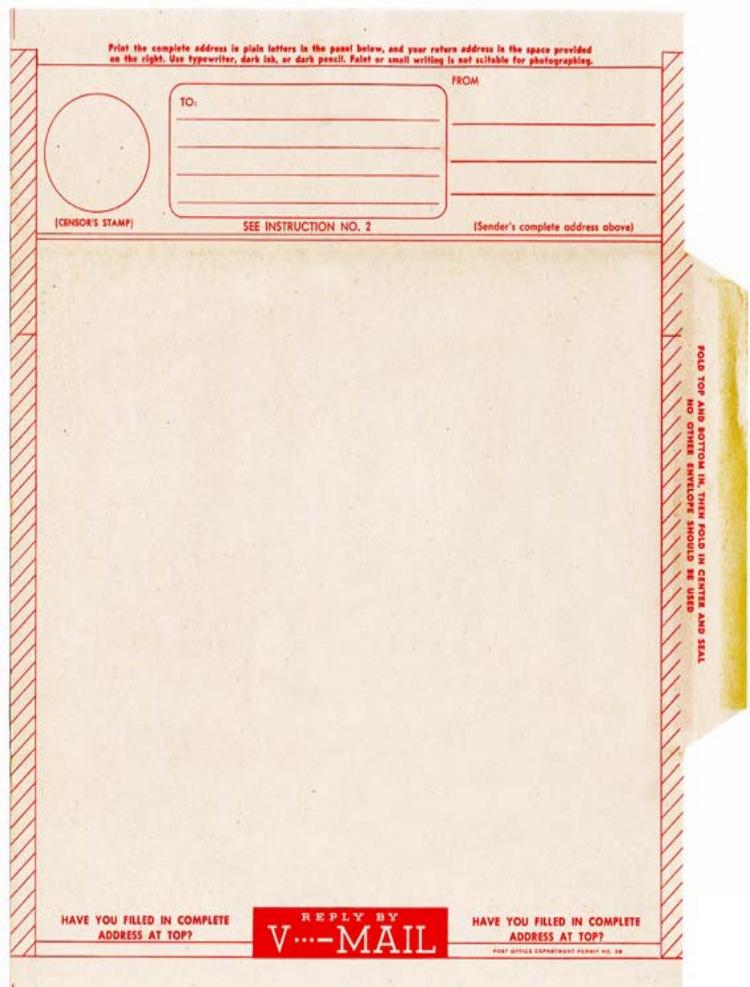
According to the National Postal Museum, "V-mail ensured that thousands of tons of shipping space could be reserved for war materials. A single mail sack could replace the 37 mail bags required to carry 150,000 one-page letters. The weight of that same amount of mail was reduced dramatically from 2,575 pounds to a mere 45. This saved considerable weight and bulk during a time in which both were hard to manage in a combat zone.

Military censors crossed out, and sometimes snipped out, sections of letters, including references to a soldier's location or plans. In addition to postal censorship, V-mail also deterred espionage communications by foiling the use of invisible ink, microdots, and micro printing, none of which would be reproduced in a photocopy.

V-Mail was promoted as patriotic with advertisements emphasizing contributions to the war effort, such as saving cargo space and providing messages to lift spirits. To allay the fears and misconceptions of would-be V-Mail writers, news reports explained how the letters were processed and sped to military personnel.

## Better Letters

The Red Cross advocated frequent letter writing and published recommendations on style and content. Civilians were advised to give positive sentiments and observations about the war and to avoid negativity and despair. It was inevitable that some long-distance relationships would end and "Dear John" and "Dear Jane" letters were dreaded at every mail call.



In her article “Sabotage Women of America,” Red Cross correspondent Rosemary Ames cautioned women to be selective when they composed their messages, writing that:

“Men in war have neither the time nor the emotional energy to be interested in boring details about housekeeping, rationing problems and family troubles. Unfortunately, many women’s minds run that way. They had better change routes for those letters are often not even read to the end. Men have told me as much. Soldiers are occupied with the fundamentals of existence. Yours, as well as theirs, only most of you are too far away from the terribleness of war and what a Nazi-dominated world could mean, to realize it. Yes, I know. It is very hard to suddenly become a psychologist and an author overnight merely because your man went away. However, it is worth your while to try. For just as the right kind of letters will tighten your romances – or your bonds of affection with son, brother, or husband – so will the wrong kind loosen them” (“Sabotage Women of America” by Rosemary Ames; File E-NC-148-57/181; OWI Intelligence Digests, Office of War Information, Record Group 208; National Archives at College Park, Maryland; 4-5).

In their article “War Anxieties of Soldiers and Their Wives,” Edward and Louise McDonagh analyzed the influence of social forces on men and women involved in the war. After gathering first-hand information from soldiers and their families, they concluded that the emotional effects of the war could outweigh physical dangers if they were left unacknowledged. Such worries were categorized into intermittent, battle, and family-related pressures. They examined all sides of these emotional traumas and explained that: “Much is being written about the G.I. and his family. This is as it should be, for G.I.s, their wives and children, comprise approximately one-fifth of the nation’s population and what this group is doing and thinking may affect America’s future for many years to come. Hence, it is well for civilians to try to understand what goes on in the minds of those most closely affected by this war” (McDonagh 195).

This husband and wife writing team provided advice on how soldiers and their families could avoid psychological and emotional difficulties during and after the war. They recommended that people be aware of war-related difficulties and write frequently to servicemen and their families to keep spirits high. Their counsel also advised husbands to remain faithful to their wives and wives to refrain from worrying their husbands over unnecessary complaints – cautioning that “gossip may travel via V-Mail to the four corners of the earth” and raise anxieties (McDonagh 197).

They directed their final recommendations to civilians, and asked them to help war-torn families:

“Civilians can aid by trying to understand the plight of families torn apart by war, by helping to build toward goals of world peace, and by acknowledging the gratitude due all soldiers and their wives for the sacrifices of service on the war and home front” (McDonagh 200).

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# ACTIVITY: World War II Letters

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## Abstract

Many students view the lives of soldiers at war as one battle after another. As a way to see the more human side of soldiers at war and their loved ones at home, students will view letters written at that time and even learn about the special way of making letters smaller so they would take up less space on transport. By the end of the lesson, students will create their own wartime letter that reflects some of the main ideas and topics from the lessons.

## Essential Questions

- What was the purpose of mail during World War II?
- How was mail used to encourage soldiers and people on the home front during World War II?
- What was V-Mail and what purpose did it serve during World War II?

## Assessment

- Students will use the National Archives and Records Administrations Written Document Analysis Worksheet (SEE PAGE 18) to analyze letters that soldiers wrote or received.
- Students will use a Venn diagram (SEE PAGE 19) to compare and contrast regular postal mail and V-Mail that was used during World War II.
- Students will use the information they learned about the purpose and content of letters to:
  - Imagine they are a WWII soldier or a family member waiting on the home front and write a letter to someone overseas.
  - Write a letter to a soldier currently serving overseas.

## Procedure

### Part 1

Begin by brainstorming with the class ways that humans communicate. Make a list of these ideas on the board. Go back through and ask students to tell you which ones they use most often.

Secondly, ask students to raise their hand if they have ever received something in the mail. Make another list on the board of things that are received in the mailbox (birthday cards, bills, letters, magazines, etc.). As a class, go through the list and discuss for a few minutes how they feel when they receive mail, especially items off the list.

With students in groups of 2-4, have them come up with at least 3 reasons soldiers would have wanted to receive mail from family and friends during WWII or family/friends would have wanted to receive mail from a soldier they knew. After about 5 minutes, have the class share the reasons letters were probably sent during WWII (updates on life, letting people know they were ok, gossip, flirting, asking for something, etc).

Continued >>

Have your students look at letters and victory mail written by soldiers.

[Merkki.com](http://Merkki.com) has examples of letters written from POW's.

[postalmuseum.si.edu/victorymail](http://postalmuseum.si.edu/victorymail) has examples of v-mail.

Have your students look at both of these websites or have them research websites of their own. Use the Written Document Analysis Worksheet (SEE PAGE 18). In groups of 2-4, students should analyze the WWII era letters. (*Students should have already been instructed on how to use the Document Analysis Worksheet.*)

After the groups of students have had time to fill out the Written Document Analysis Worksheet (SEE PAGE 18) for each of the four items, go through each item and list topics and features the class noticed about the letters. It may be good to have a discussion about if there are any differences or similarities between the local and the national document examples.

## **Part 2**

Review the purpose of the letters sent from soldiers to family/friends. Discuss how the letters could be encouraging. Did anyone find anything that was not positive in the letters? What had been *left out* of the letters (information about location, descriptions of violence/death, information on future plans) and why.

Discuss as a class how the letters were transported to and from soldiers, how many letters might need to be transported regularly, and problems there might be with transporting so many letters. Brainstorm possible solutions to getting so many letters from one place to another without taking up too much space.

Read World War II letters as a class. Pass out to groups a copy of the Victory Mail informational letter (SEE PAGE 20). Using this information and information already discussed in class about regular postal mail, groups should create a Venn diagram (SEE PAGE 19) that compares and contrasts regular mail and V-Mail as it was used during WWII. Topics for students to consider might be: ways it helped the military, ways it helped people on the home front, how it was sent, how it was received, and why the government was encouraging people on the home front to send so much mail. As a class, discuss the Venn diagram (SEE PAGE 19). Have the class discuss the pros and cons of both types of mail and which they would have preferred.

## **Part 3**

WWII Letters Final Assessment: Now that students have viewed letters from WWII and have discussed the different ways letters were sent, they are going to create their own letter. First, have them write a full-length letter. Then, using V-mail Rules (SEE PAGE 20), have them rewrite the letter in the the V-mail Form (SEE PAGE 21).

When students are finished with their letters have them share in small groups during class and/or compare them with the real WWII letters that were analyzed at the start of the lesson.

Continued >>

## **Part 4**

Send a soldier (or two) your support by thanking them for their service. Feel free to include a few details about your background if you are comfortable doing so. Try to stay away from politics and keep it simple, the more positive the better!

A few guidelines:

1. Do not put letters in individual envelopes. Please bundle in stacks of 50.
2. Do not use glitter, confetti or anything that is not attached to the card.
3. Only include positive messages.
4. Be creative! Draw pictures, talk about you and let them know their services does not go unnoticed.
5. Include your address or email address if you wish. Most military will write back to you!

Letters can be sent to:

Million Thanks  
17853 Santiago Blvd. #107-355  
Villa Park, CA 92861

# Written Document Analysis Worksheet

Type of Document (check one)

<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Map	<input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement
<input type="checkbox"/> Letter	<input type="checkbox"/> Telegram	<input type="checkbox"/> Congressional record
<input type="checkbox"/> Patent	<input type="checkbox"/> Press release	<input type="checkbox"/> Census report
<input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum	<input type="checkbox"/> Report	<input type="checkbox"/> Other

UNIQUE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):

<input type="checkbox"/> Interesting letterhead	<input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten
<input type="checkbox"/> Typed	<input type="checkbox"/> Seals
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT \_\_\_\_\_

AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:

POSITION (TITLE):

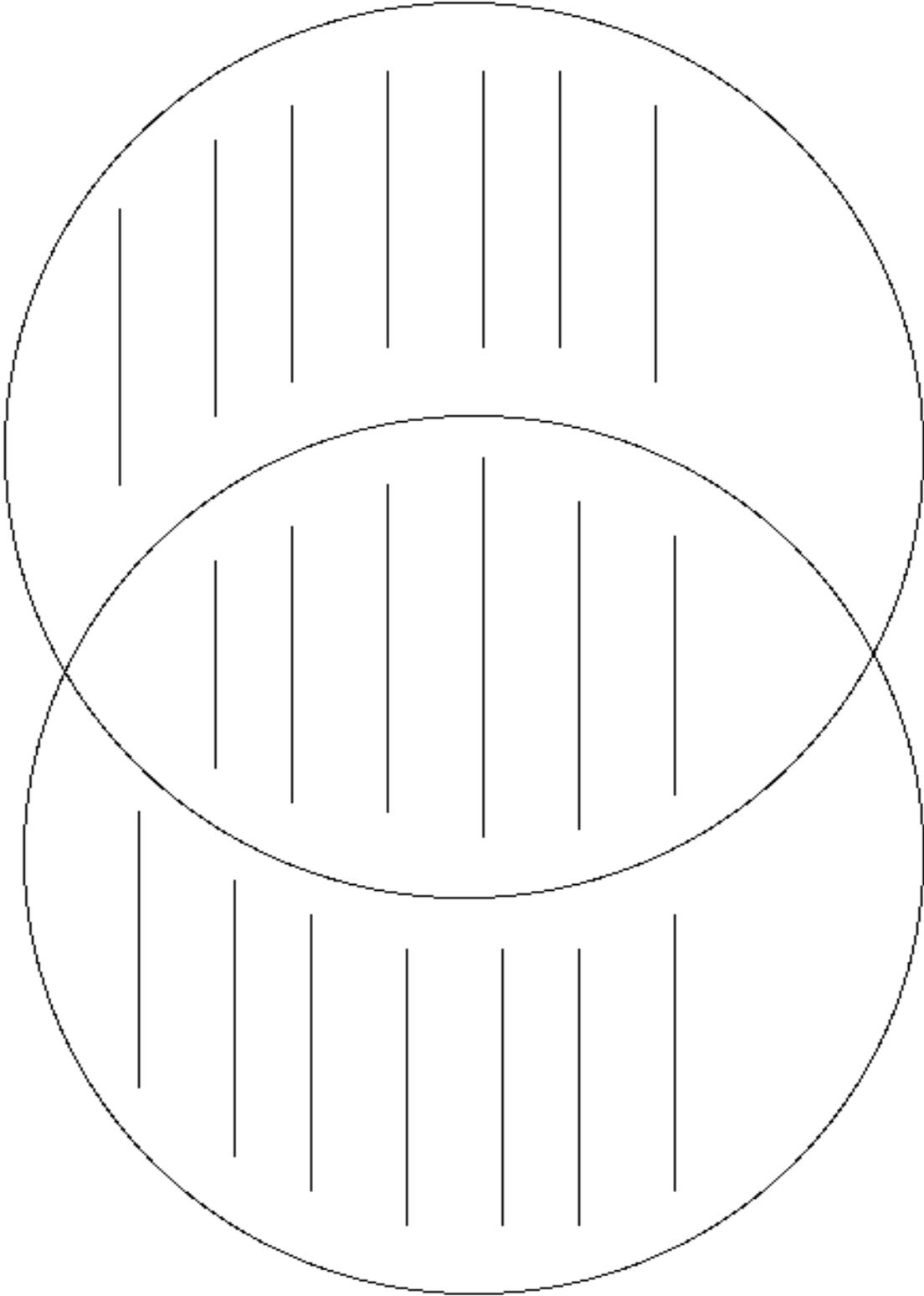
FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?

DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)

- A. List three things the author said that you think are important:
  
- B. Why do you think this document was written?
  
- C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.
  
- D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:
- E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:

# VENN DIAGRAM

Write details that tell how the subjects are different in the outer circles. Write details that tell how the subjects are alike where the circles overlap.



# Victor Mail Informational Letter



TO  
PVT. WILLARD J. ROE, 32000000  
COMPANY F, 167th INFANTRY,  
APO 801, c/o POSTMASTER,  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

FROM  
John R. Roe,  
705 - 18th Street, N.W.,  
Washington, D. C.

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

(Sender's complete address: above)

## HERE ARE SOME OF THE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD USE V-MAIL:

V-mail is speed mail.....It is given the most expeditious handling and has priority over all other classes of personal mail.

V-mail is safe.....Safe because if your letter is on a film which is lost or destroyed, the original letter is again photographed and dispatched by air.

V-mail is popular.....More than 40,000,000 individual pieces are handled monthly.

V-mail saves vital cargo space.....It saves more than 98 per cent of the space required for other types of letter mail.

\* \* \* \* \*

To assure that your V-mail will be handled and delivered promptly overseas, complete military address is essential. The above address may be used as a guide. It will be noted that the rank or grade, full name, serial number, and complete organization address are shown.

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY  
**V...-MAIL**

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1943 O 30,625

# Victor Mail Form

Print the complete address in plain letters in the panel below, and your return address in the space provided on the right. Use typewriter, dark ink, or dark pencil. Faint or small writing is not suitable for photographing.

FROM

TO:

(CENSOR'S STAMP)

SEE INSTRUCTION NO. 2

(Sender's complete address above)

FOLD TOP AND BOTTOM IN, THEN FOLD IN CENTER AND SEAL  
NO OTHER ENVELOPE SHOULD BE USED

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

REPLY BY  
**V...-MAIL**

HAVE YOU FILLED IN COMPLETE ADDRESS AT TOP?

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT PERMIT NO. 38

# ACTIVITY: Creating Your Own USO Tour

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## Abstract

Supporting America's troops was the first mission of the USO. In 1941, as it became clear that the nation was heading into World War II, several organizations mobilized to support the growing U.S. military: the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board.



Over time, the USO has evolved, developing new programs and services to meet the ever-changing needs of the troops and their families, while holding fast to its original mission. Today, the USO continues to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families, and will continue to be give back to those that serve our country.

## Essential Questions

- What was the purpose of the USO tours during WWII?
- How were the USO tours used to encourage the troops?
- What did a typical USO tour look like?

## Procedure

### Part 1

Discuss with your students what the USO tour looked like. Have your students read **About the USO Camp Tours** article (SEE PAGE 8). Then, have your students research the different USO tours that went out during the war. Come back as a class to discuss the different types of tours that were sent out to the troops.

Break the students up into groups. Have them create their own current day USO tour for military personnel serving in the military. Remember to consider the wide range of cultures, ages, geographical backgrounds and preferences that represent the military when choosing their acts. Consider also the concept of a variety of acts – musical, acting, etc. when assembling the final show. Have them take in to consideration the items listed on the Peer Review sheet.

Create a poster for your USO show. Have the groups present their poster to the whole class along with an explanation of their show.

Continued >>

# Assessment

Have each group fill out a Peer Review Sheet for each presenting group.

## Peer Review Sheet

Group's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Questions	Rate 1 – 5
Has the group narrowed focused on the purpose?	
Does the poster arranged in an interesting way?	
Does the writer provide the reader with a natural flow and sequence to the event?	
Can the audience understand the purpose of the event?	
Does the poster make you want to go to the event?	
Do you believe military personnel would enjoy this show?	
Can you tell when and where the event will take place?	
Did the presentation clearly outline the event? Did it leave you not understanding something?	
Your own question:	

### Response to presentation:

What is your favorite part of the presentation?

What is the weakest part of the presentation?

Questions/Comments:

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**lala.com:** Has many Andrew Sisters songs that you can download. Launched 2005.

**mnhs.org/library/tips/history\_topics/131women\_homefront.htm:** Women & The Home Front During World War II. Articles compiled in 2009.

**nme.com:** News, biography, videos of Andrew Sisters. Launched 1996.

**singers.com:** Good discography of the Andrew Sisters. Launched 2006.