



**Lesson:** Learning The Lingo

**Grade Level:** 9 – 12

**Approximate Duration:** One Class Period

**Common Core Standards:**

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.4](#). Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4](#). Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4](#). Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

**Objectives:** Students – as a class, in groups or as individuals – will examine signatures, inscriptions, captions and slang terms from various primary source yearbooks to determine the meaning of words and phrases used by students during WWII.

**Introduction:**

- Begin by printing out and distributing the **SLANG TERMS OF WWII** glossary of terms beginning on page 3. Have students read through the list.
- Ask students if they have heard of any of these terms before or if any students recognize them.
- Ask students what might be the modern day equivalents to some of these WWII slang terms.
- Introduce the See You Next Year website as well as the idea of a high school yearbook as a primary source. Ask students what information they think might be collected from high school yearbooks from WWII. Ask students if they think slang terms and phrases might be used in the yearbooks.

**Lesson Procedure:**

- Depending on computer access and student ratio, as a class, in groups or as individuals, have students examine several high school yearbooks, noting the use of slang terms and phrases in student signatures and inscriptions as well as in yearbook captions and titling.
- If lesson is performed individually or in groups, have each individual or group present their findings to the class while also navigating through the website.

**Assessment:**

- Components for assessment include the answering of questions relating to slang terms and phrases and participation in class presentations and discussions.

**Enrichment/Further Discussion:**

- For enrichment or further discussion, have students compose their own contemporary slang term glossary that might be used in yearbooks today.
- Discuss yearbooks of today and what information is found in them as opposed to the yearbooks from WWII.
- Discuss what future scholars or researchers might learn from your own school's current yearbooks.
- Discuss what key terms or phrases future scholars or researchers would need to know in order to understand your own school's yearbook.

## Slang Terms of WWII

Just as today, young people 70 years ago had a language all of their own, with slang terms and expressions used to set themselves apart from the older generation as well as a means to identify like-minded peers. 1940s slang and slang terms are seen frequently in high school yearbooks from WWII, in captions as well as in student signatures and, in some ways, the war and military terminology influenced the development of new sayings and terms of phrase. Since most of these phrases and terms are no longer used, without a proper background, many seem to make no sense. However, before you 'snap your cap' there 'Ace,' 'get a load' of this list of slang lingo below.

### A

- Above My Pay Grade – Don't ask me
- Ace – Expert or pro
- Amscra – Pig Latin for 'scram' meaning to leave or flee; 'let's amscra'
- Armored Heifer – Canned Milk

### B

- Baby/Baby Doll – Affectionate term for a member of either sex
- Bad Business – Trouble
- Bandit – An enemy fighter plane or an unwelcome intruder
- Bathtub – A sidecar for a motorcycle
- Black-And-White – A police car
- Blow A Cork – To become furious or upset
- Bop – To dance, specifically to Big Band or Jazz music
- Broad – Impolite term for a woman
- Brush Off – To snub or rebuff
- Buy/Bought The Farm – To die or be dead; 'he just bought the farm.'

### C

- Canary – Female singer
- Cheaters – eye glasses or sun glasses
- Cheesy – Cheap or disposable
- Cock-eyed – Crazy
- Cooking With Gas – To do something right; 'Now you're cooking with gas!'
- Crummy – bad, poor quality

### D

- Dame – Impolite term for an attractive girl or woman
- Dead Hooper – A poor or uncoordinated dancer
- Deck Out – To dress up for a social occasion

- Dogs – Feet
- Dope – Information; ‘the straight dope’
- Dreamboat – An extremely attractive person
- Ducky Shincracker – An extremely good dancer
- Dynamite – Something excellent or outstanding

## E

- Edgy – Anxious or nervous

## F

- Fat-Head – Put-down for a foolish or childish person
- Flap Your Lips – To talk carelessly
- Flip Your Wig – To lose control of one’s self, to have an outburst
- Fresh – Presumptuous or lascivious
- Fuddy Duddy – A conservative or someone perceived to be old-fashioned

## G

- Gamming – Showing off
- Gas – A great time or something hilarious; ‘the dance was a gas!’ or ‘that movie was a gas!’
- Gay – Light-hearted and fancy-free
- Geezer – Impolite term for an old person or someone who is perceived to be old
- Get A Load Of – To look at or to draw attention to; ‘Get A Load Of This’
- GI – Government Issue, unofficial term for an American service member
- Gobbledygook – Long-winded, nonsensical speak; gibberish
- Goldbricking/Goldbricker – Goofing off or not working hard; someone who goofs off or does not work hard
- Gone – Someone knowledgeable about current trends and style
- Gone With The Wind – To run off or flee
- Goods/The Goods – the right material or a person who has them; ‘He’s got the goods’ or ‘that guy’s the goods’
- Gravy – Easy money
- Grill – To hound or interrogate

## H

- Hairy – Old-fashioned, out of style
- Hen Fruit – Eggs
- Hep Cat/Kitten – A person familiar with current trends and styles; someone who is ‘Gone’
- Hi-De-Ho – Hello; a reference to the Cab Calloway song

- Hi sugar, are you rationed? – Slang play on words dealing with war-time rationing asking if a person is going steady
- Hipster – A person familiar with the counter-culture of the 1940s; someone who is ‘Gone’
- Hit The Silk – To bail out with a parachute, also to leave a party or scene

#### I

- I’m Going Fishin’ – Looking for a date
- In A Twist – To make a big deal out of something; ‘it’s nothing to get in a twist over’
- In Cahoots With – Working with or conspiring with someone
- In The Groove – Something or someone that performs well; very good

#### J

- Jitterbug – A popular dance craze
- Jive – To make sense out of something, to understand; ‘that jives with me’
- Joe – Coffee

#### K

- Kick/Kicks – Something done for fun or enjoyment
- Killer Diller – Something of extreme quality; the best

#### L

- Lettuce – Money, a play on the color of U.S. currency
- Licorice Stick – Clarinet
- Line – A false statement or lie
- Lulu – Something excellent, but also can be something unexpected or large; ‘that first step is a lulu!’

#### M

- Meatball – Put-down for a stupid or foolish person
- Moolah – Money
- Motorized Freckles – Ants or insects
- Mud – Coffee
- Mug – Face

#### N

- Natch – Naturally, of course
- No Dice! – A rejection; to deny someone
- No Fooling – The honest truth or telling the truth

## O

- Old Lady – Mother or girlfriend/wife
- On The Nose – The exact solution or correct response; ‘right on the nose’
- Out Of This World – Superb; wonderful

## P

- Paw – Hand or to lay hands on someone
- Peanuts – Money of a small or insignificant sum
- Peepers – Eyes
- Pistol – A dynamic or energetic person
- Popsicle – Motorcycle

## Q

- Quarterback – To lead

## R

- Rag – To make fun or tease someone
- Rhubarb – An argument or squabble
- Rock – A precious stone such as a diamond
- Rugcutter – One who loves to dance

## S

- Sappy – Gullible (a sap) or overly sentimental
- Scram – To leave or flee, also to tell someone to leave or flee; ‘Get Lost’
- Sing – To inform or snitch on; ‘sing like a canary’
- Snap Your Cap – To become angry
- Solid – A strong rhythmic beat in music
- Spiffy/Spivvy – Dressed up
- Sticks – An isolated place in the country or any far-off area or neighborhood; ‘out in the sticks’
- Stompers – Shoes
- Swell – very good, nice, all-around OK

## T

- Take A Powder – To leave
- Threads – Clothing
- Tin Pan Alley - Center of the music industry in 1940s New York City, located between 48<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Streets

## U

- Unreal – special, notable

#### V

- Vamp – a female seductress or screen actress

#### W

- Wacky – Crazy or insane
- Wad – Money
- What's Buzzin', Cousin? - How's it going?
- What's Cookin'? - What's going on?
- What's Eatin' You? - What's bothering or annoying you?

#### Y

- Yuck – Put-down for a foolish or stupid person

#### Z

- Zoot Suit – Deliberately flashy style of dress featuring high-waisted, wide-legged, tight-cuffed, trousers and a long coat with wide lapels and wide shoulders. Associated with both big band music and juvenile delinquency.