



BROOKLYN

CONNECTIONS

**THE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD &
WORLD WAR II
PRIMARY SOURCE PACKET**

Student Name

INTRODUCTORY READING

Jackson, Kenneth, ed. "Brooklyn Navy Yard." *The Encyclopedia of New York City*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2010. Print.

ADAPTATION

The Brooklyn Navy Yard is a shipyard on the East River at Wallabout Bay, officially known as the New York Naval Shipyard. The purchase of the land was authorized in 1800 by Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Stoddart. In early years the shipyard fitted out ships for ventures against Caribbean and **Barbary** pirates and during the war of 1812 readied more than 100 **vessels** for **raids** of British **merchant** shipping. During the Civil War more than 6000 workers built 16 vessels, converted more than 400 merchant and private ships to naval service, and fitted out the **ironclad** *Monitor*. The USS *Arizona* and six other battleships were built between 1906 and 1926, and in 1918 employment at the shipyard reached 18,000.

During WWII the Brooklyn Navy Yard was the largest naval construction facility in the United States. Among the vessels completed there were the *Missouri* (45,000 tons), on the decks of which WWII officially ended on 2 September 1954. More than 71,000 men and women worked in shifts around the clock by 1944; in addition to battleships they built aircraft carriers and **auxiliary** vessels, repaired more than 5000 ships, and converted another 250. It was the largest industrial center in the navy, as well as the largest employer in New York State.

By 1965 fewer than 7000 men and women worked at the shipyard. In 1966 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara closed the facility as part of a nationwide base closing **initiative**. In the following year New York City purchased 260 acres at the site, which was reopened as an industrial park in 1971.

1. What two bodies of water are shown on the desk atlas map?

2. Why do you think the Navy Yard was built in that particular location?

3. What different shapes do you see within the atlas page? What do you think those shapes represent?

4. List three ships created at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. (Go back to your introductory reading).

1. Look at **Document 2**. What was the purpose of the *Shipworker* newsletter?

2. What does the Rear Admiral urge employees to do? Why?

3. As of March 1945, how was the Navy's death toll reported? Why is that significant?

4. What was the purpose of the Navy Yard's *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* exhibition?

DOCUMENT 3: "6,600 More Seek Jobs at Navy Yard." *The New York Times*. 24 May 1940.

6,600 MORE SEEK JOBS AT NAVY YARD

**Total Is 20,000 Since Notice
of Speeding Building**

The rush of men seeking work at the New York Navy Yard continued unabated yesterday, reaching new heights since the flood of applications started Monday after the President announced an intensified program for national defense. More than 6,600 persons applied at the Sands Street employment office for jobs, bringing the total of job-seekers at the navy yard to more than 20,000 since Monday.

The rush was apparently due to the navy announcement that the yard was making plans for a permanent two-shift workday to speed up construction work on the two new battleships North Carolina and Iowa now building at the yard. The authorization for the change in the customary workday has already been made but navy officers said yesterday it would be two or three weeks yet before the permanent two-shift policy was adopted.

Despite the large number of applications navy men at the yard revealed that they have not enough requests for jobs from highly skilled artisans to fill the needs of any substantial program of expansion. Most of the applications are from unskilled laborers, semi-skilled workers or men only partly trained in some skilled trade, it was reported. The yard already has more applications on file for unskilled labor than it needs, officials said.

Specifically calling for expert welders, tool makers and machinists, navy yard spokesmen said they expected to hire about 2,000 additional men when needed, to fulfill the President's present program of increased naval construction and overhauling of old ships to be placed into service with the fleet.

1. Read **Document 3**. Why were so many people looking for work?

2. Why was the navy hiring?

3. How many people applied for work? How many people did the navy need to hire?

4. Why were the Brooklyn Navy Yard officials not happy with the applicants? Who were they looking to hire?

5. What do you think the difference is between a skilled job and an unskilled job? Give an example of both.

FIRST WOMEN HIRED IN NAVY YARD SHOPS

141-Year Tradition Broken as
200 Are Called—Slacks, No
Jewelry Worn at Work

Women are working as mechanics in the Navy Yard in Brooklyn for the first time in its 141-year history, headquarters of the Third Naval District revealed yesterday. Shop officials said they were much pleased with the first batch of women working there and were looking forward to employment of more.

When the United States Civil Service Commission announced that women could take an examination for prospective mechanics, 20,000 applied. Among them were young girls fresh from school or college, women whose husbands were in the armed services and some professional women. Of the applicants, 6,000 were examined and 3,000 qualified as eligibles.

Thus far the navy yard has sent out calls for 200 of these eligibles and they are coming in daily. The shopfitters' shop has asked for 100 of that number and expects to ask for more. Other shops, which have not facilities for training so large a number, are asking for smaller groups. The ordnance machine shop expects six to report soon, the foundry has requested five and the paint shop four.

A survey by the Navy of 125 of the women now employed disclosed that thirteen were college graduates, five of whom had done post-graduate work. Forty-seven had at least two years of college and only three of the entire group had failed to finish high school. Three are former school teachers, two lawyers, three musicians and one a dental technician. Only one of the 125 gave her occupation as housewife. The average age of the group is 28 years.

Women applicants for work at the navy yard have to go through the same routine as men. After having been certified as eligibles by the Civil Service Commission, they report to the yard's labor board, fill out various forms and receive instructions in the duties and obligations of employes. Then they are fingerprinted, examined physically, sworn in and assigned to training schools.

Rules for working clothes laid down by the labor board bar skirts, loose sleeves, frills, shoes with high heels or open toes, pendant earrings, necklaces, bracelets and finger rings. The mechanic learners wear coveralls or slacks equipped with flat hip pockets and no cuffs. Caps, hats or turbans are specified to prevent hair from catching in moving machinery.

The experience of shop supervisors at the Navy yard was said to agree with the findings of executives in other armament plants where women have been engaged to relieve men for combat duty. Women have been found to excel at jobs requiring a high degree of manual dexterity, speed and accuracy.

1. Read **Document 4**. In three to four sentences, summarize the article.

2. How many women applied for jobs? How many were qualified? How many were hired?

3. What were some jobs women would be doing in the Yard? Why are the rules important?

4. Why do you think the fact that women were working at the Navy Yard was so significant?

DOCUMENT 5: "First day of work for women at the Navy Yard." Brooklyn Daily Eagle. 14 Sept 1942. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library



1. Why was it necessary to hire women at the Navy Yard?

2. If you were a young woman recently hired at the Navy Yard, how might you have felt on your first day?

3. Look at the gate and the sign that says, "Open your packages—Show your badges." Why do you think there was so much security at the Navy Yard?

4. What do you think were some obstacles women might have faced while working in the yard?



Two women welders working on the flight deck of a new Essex Class aircraft carrier at the New York Navy Yard.

Document 6 – “Women Help Build Carrier for Navy.” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

WOMEN HELP BUILD CARRIER FOR NAVY

Shop Workers at Brooklyn
Yard Now Permitted Aboard
Ships—More Needed

A tradition of 143 years standing has come to an end at the New York Navy Yard in Brooklyn. Women are now working alongside men at construction work aboard Navy fighting ships. "From shop to ship" describes the progress of several score women welders, electrical and sheet metal workers, moved from shop work and other "land jobs" to help build a \$60,000,000 airplane carrier of the Essex class.

These women, looked on by Navy officials as the first of hundreds more to come, are at work on new construction. If the present acute manpower shortage continues, however, the scope of their activities may be widened.

Of 65,000 employes now at the Brooklyn yard, 4,000 are women—not counting office help. These 4,000 have been hired in the less than two years since the first woman began shop work there in August, 1942.

Women have proved their worth in this former stronghold of masculinity. Rear Admiral Monroe Kelly, commandant of the yard, declared yesterday. Many of the girls are former office workers. Most are high school graduates. A large percentage have husbands or brothers overseas, and many are mothers. Besides doing welding, electrical and sheet metal work, women are crane operators, ship-fitters, machine operators, chauffeurs and painters.

Rules for clothing call for coveralls or slacks with flat hip pockets and no cuffs, low-heeled shoes and caps or hats with hair tucked in. Such fripperies as pendant earrings, necklaces, bracelets, rings, shoes with high heels and open toes, skirts, loose sleeves and frills are taboo.

Many more women are needed for this work. Minimum age is 18 years, minimum pay about \$40 a week. Women interested in Navy Yard jobs should apply at the United States Employment Service offices at 87 Madison Avenue, Manhattan, and 165 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn; at the Navy Yard's labor board office at the Sands Street gate or at the Bayonne, N. J., annex.

1. Summarize the article in **Document 6** in three to four sentences.

2. Make five observations about the photograph in **Document 6**.

3. Infer – what do you think the women were building? Why do you think that?

4. What does the sentence, "If the present acute manpower shortage continues...the scope of their activities may be widened" mean?

5. According to the article, what type of woman typically applied to work in the Navy Yard?

NAVY DEPARTMENT

HOLD FOR RELEASE
IN MORNING NEWSPAPERS
OF FRIDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1944
RADIO RELEASE: 9 P.M., (E.W.T.) THURSDAY,
OCTOBER 26, 1944

USS ARIZONA, BATTLESHIP

The 32,600-ton battleship USS ARIZONA proved a total loss as result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, and the vessel has been stricken from the Navy List.

The USS ARIZONA was hit by a torpedo on the port side. A large bomb went down the stack. Another, probably a 16.1-inch armor piercing type, hit the forecastle, penetrated to a powder magazine, the resulting explosion in turn exploding the USS ARIZONA's main forward battery magazines.

The entire forward structure of the USS ARIZONA was completely wrecked, the two forward turrets and the conning tower dropping vertically between 18 and 20 feet.

Captain Franklin Van Valkenburgh, U.S.N., Commanding Officer of the USS ARIZONA, was killed during the Japanese attack. His widow now resides at 3023 East Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, California.

The USS ARIZONA was placed in commission October 17, 1916.

1. According to **Document 7**, what happened to the *USS Arizona* on December 7, 1941?

2. What damage was caused as a result of the attack on December 7, 1941?

3. Where is Pearl Harbor? Why do you think the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

4. When was the *USS Arizona* commissioned? What war was taking place when the ship was built?

5. The attack on Pearl Harbor was a monumental event in American history. What other events might compare? Why do you think that?

WAR COMES TO END

ABOARD THE U. S. S. MISSOURI in Tokyo Bay, Sunday, Sept. 2—Japan surrendered formally and unconditionally to the Allies today in a twenty-minute ceremony which ended just as the sun burst through low-hanging clouds as a shining symbol to a ravaged world now done with war.

[A United Press dispatch said the leading Japanese delegate signed the articles at 9:03 A. M. Sunday, Tokyo time, and that General MacArthur signed them at 9:07 A. M.]

Twelve signatures, requiring only a few minutes to inscribe on the articles of surrender, ended the bloody Pacific conflict.

On behalf of Emperor Hirohito, Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu signed for the Government and Gen. Yoshijiro Umezu for the Imperial General Staff.

MacArthur Voices Peace Hope

Gen. Douglas MacArthur then accepted in behalf of the United Nations, declaring:

"It is my earnest hope and indeed the hope of all mankind that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past."

1. According to **Document 8**, what happened onboard the *USS Missouri*?

2. According to **Document 8**, when did Japan officially surrender?

3. Why do you think the formal surrender happened on a battleship and not on land?

4. In MacArthur's speech, what good did he hope would come from the war?

DOCUMENT 9: "USS Missouri." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. 27 Oct 1948. Brooklyn Collection, Brooklyn Public Library.

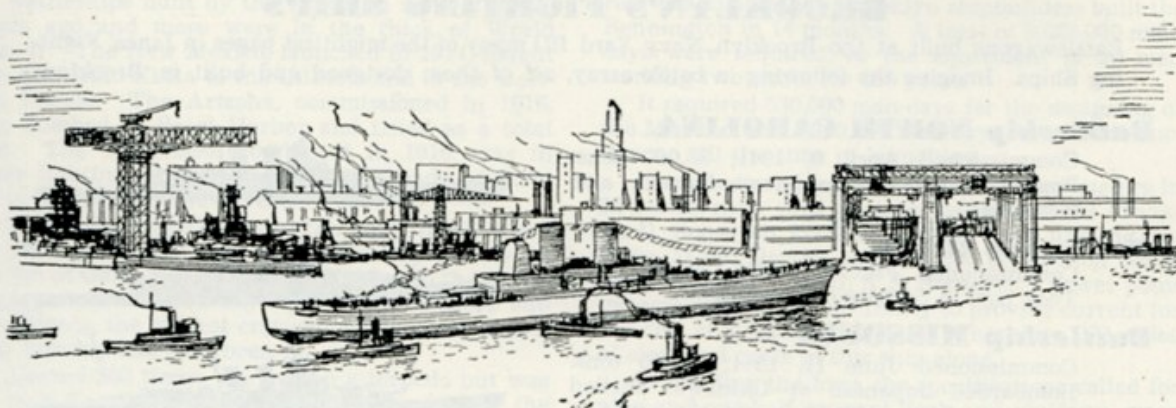


1. Look at **Document 9**. Describe the ship.

2. Where do you think this photograph was taken? Why do you think that?

3. Imagine you were standing on the shore and saw this battleship sail by. Describe how you might feel?

4. Why is the USS *Missouri* not only important to the history of Brooklyn, but for the United States as well?



BROOKLYN NAVY YARD

During World War II the Brooklyn Navy Yard grew to be the largest and greatest navy yard in the world.

Here were built aircraft carriers, battleships, cruisers, destroyers and other war vessels that conquered the navies and air forces of our enemies and made America the new mistress of the seas. Mistress, too, of the skies above.

Here were repaired, refitted and sent back into action countless ships of our own and of our Allied navies that had been bombed and torpedoed while taking part in the invasion of Normandy and the Pacific islands.

Since Pearl Harbor the Brooklyn Navy Yard has built 17 ships, including two huge battleships, five aircraft carriers, eight LSTs and two floating workshops. When submarine warfare was at its height the yard had as many as 67 ships under repair at one time. During 1944 alone the yard made repairs and alterations on 1,539 ships, as compared with 869 in the previous year and 345 in 1942.

Besides this there was a staggering amount of work supervised outside by the yard's Field Production Division. This huge task, during a three-year period, involved the conversion and alteration of 11,138 transport and patrol vessels and the assembling of 3,581 landing craft. In addition, the division made tens of thousands of service calls.

Seven Months Ahead of Time

At the peak of its activity nearly 75,000 men and women were employed by the Yard and the monthly payroll ran between \$15,000,000 and \$16,000,000.

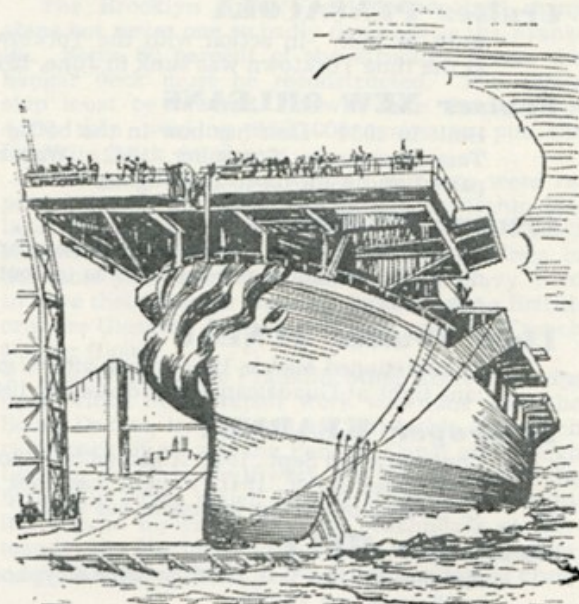
The manpower requirements for the Navy Yard's wartime production schedule rose from 2,479,830 man-days in 1942 to 6,591,203 man-days in 1944. Demands in the early part of 1945 were even greater.

Brooklyn Navy Yard was the first navy yard in the country to win the navy "E," emblematic of excellence in wartime production. Not long thereafter it became the first naval establishment to win a

renewal of the "E" award, symbol of continued excellence.

A sure indication of the speed and efficiency with which the Navy Yard was to work throughout the war came with the launching of the U. S. S. Iowa on Aug. 27, 1942. The largest and most powerful battleship ever built up to that time, weighing 45,000 tons and capable of firing farther and faster than any other ship afloat, the Iowa went down the ways seven whole months ahead of schedule. She represented two years of unceasing labor and maximum co-operation among personnel.

In May, 1945, two major aircraft carriers were launched within a week. The U. S. S. Kearsarge went down the ways six days after the dry-dock launching of the U. S. S. Franklin D. Roosevelt.



1. Read **Document 10**. What was built at the Navy Yard? Be specific.

2. How many people were employed in the Yard at its peak? How much did that cost the Yard?

3. Why did demands for more "manpower" increase in the early part of 1945?

4. What did it mean to win an "E" award?

5. **DOCUMENT 10** is a secondary source. What information did you learn that you did not learn from the primary sources in the packet?

What information did you get from the primary sources that you did not get from the secondary source?

GLOSSARY

Artisan – a skilled craftsman

Barbary pirates – North African pirates

Influx – a great mass arriving

Initiative – an introductory step

Ironclad – a ship with a hull (or body) made of iron, as opposed to wood

Merchant – a trader who sells things produced by others

Raid – to attack

Vessel – a ship