



THE NATIONAL  
WWII MUSEUM  
NEW ORLEANS

***Those Were the Days, My Friend***  
Comparing Prices and Percentages from WWII

A Lesson from  
the Education Department

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[www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education)

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## **Those Were the Days, My Friend**

### Comparing Prices and Percentages from WWII

*Those were the days, my friend.* A loaf of bread cost 9 cents, a new car \$920. This sounds great, but what was a dollar really worth? This cross-curricular activity, in which students calculate and discuss price changes over time, combines history, economics, and math. They will find some interesting surprises here.

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will compare prices between 1942 and today by using a percentage formula and then determine the relevant buying power of the dollar over time.

**GRADE LEVEL:** 7-12

**STANDARDS:** History Thinking Standard 3—the student engages in historical analysis and interpretation.

Content Era 8 (1929-1945), Standard 3C—the student explains how the United States mobilized its economic and military resources during World War II.

Common Core Math Standards, Standard 7RP.3—the student will use proportional relationships to solve multistep ratio and percent problems.

**TIME REQUIREMENT:** One to two class periods.

#### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Pass out the student worksheet and show students the newspaper advertisements from 1942. Have a collection of grocery store advertisements (and access to the internet) available so that students can fill in the *Cost today* section. If there is not enough time in class for them to research the answers, you can also have the figures ready for students to fill in.
2. Using the included formula, calculate the percentage of increase of each item and fill in the blanks.
3. Discuss why students think some items have risen in price percentage more than others.
4. Ask students to guess what the average annual salary was in 1942 and what it is today. Write the answers on the board: 1942--\$1,880 and 2011—\$49,000 (est. based on 2010 census).
5. Comparing the price chart numbers, did the dollar go farther in 1942 or does it go farther today? Example: \$1,880 a year could buy you 20,888 loaves of bread in 1942 (at 9¢ a loaf), but \$49,000 only buys you 16,387 loaves of bread in 2011 (at \$2.99 a loaf). Have students make a list of which items were more affordable then and which items are more affordable now. (*Here's a clue: first calculate the percentage of increase in the annual salaries between 1942 and 2011.*) Is it different for different types of goods (food, entertainment, durable goods, etc.)? Why?

**ASSESSMENT:** Components for assessment include the completed worksheet and the class discussion.

**ENRICHMENT:** Have students research the costs of these items in different years (1920, 1960, and 1990) and compare them to today's prices. Students can also research price changes in other countries.

**Those Were the Days My Friend**  
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Student Worksheet

**Directions:** fill in the approximate/average prices for these items today. Calculate the percentage of change from then to now and fill in the blanks.

**Formula:** 
$$\frac{(\text{cost today} - \text{cost in 1942})}{\text{cost in 1942}} = X (100)$$

<b>Example:</b>			
<u>ITEM</u>	<u>Cost in 1942</u>	<u>Cost today</u>	<u>Percentage of change</u>
Loaf of bread	9¢	\$2.99	+3,222% (+ or -)

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>Cost in 1942</u>	<u>Cost today</u>	<u>Percentage of change</u>
Snap beans (1lb.)	5¢	_____	_____%
Coffee (1lb.)	22¢	_____	_____%
Milk (1qt.)	13¢	_____	_____%
Candy bar	5¢	_____	_____%
Soda	5¢	_____	_____%
Movie ticket	10¢	_____	_____%
Newspaper	10¢	_____	_____%
Haircut	50¢	_____	_____%
Postage stamp	3¢	_____	_____%
Cat food (1 can)	6¢	_____	_____%
Ground beef (1 lb.)	25¢	_____	_____%
Avocado	8¢	_____	_____%
Camera	\$3	_____	_____%
Men's suit	\$16.95	_____	_____%
New car	\$920	_____	_____%
House	\$4,000	_____	_____%

**HICKOK BELTS** just like dad's, but with twice as much class. Westerns, live-glass solids and combinations. Sizes 24 to 34.  
**1.00 and 1.50**

**SHARKSKIN SHIRT**  
 He'll grow rapturous over this Hollywood styled Marlboro (tops in sports wear) tailored sharkskin sports shirt. Inner-outer. Sizes 10 to 20.  
**2.50**

**PALM BEACH SUIT**  
 It's almost a tradition to wear white Palm Beach at graduation. (Tans, blues and fancies are also acceptable.) We have regulars, longs and  
**16.95**

The Times-Picayune, Saturday, May 23, 1942  
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New Orleans' Largest  
Retail Grocers

# H. G. HILL STORE

## IN THE THOUSANDS WHO ARE SAVING MORE MONEY ON

It has always been the policy of your H. G. Hill Stores to offer you the lowest prices consistent with fine quality and good management—H. G. will continue to offer you money-saving food values! Our buyers will continue to search the markets of the world to secure food values for you will be priced, not how high, but how low we can offer them to you. It is important to save money now! It is Patriotic to save! Come in and yourself that you DO save at Hill Stores. Take advantage of the money-saving bargains your Hill Store offers you.



*Finest Quality* FRUITS & VEGETABLES

UNITED STATES NO. 1 RED SOLID-MEATED

# TOMATOES

NEW CROP YOUNG TENDER LOUISIANA

## WHITE SQUASH

2 LBS. 5c

FRESH TENDER YOUNG LOUISIANA

## SNAP BEANS

POUND 5c

FRESH DUG—NO. 1 QUALITY—LOUISIANA RED

## NEW POTATOES

5 LBS. 15c

**VELVA**  
Delicious  
**SALAD DRESSING**  
part 35c  
A  
yonnaise 4-oz. jar 10c

JUICY BRIGHT  
**Lemon**  
LARGE FANCY  
**Avoca**  
FRESH CRISP  
**Parsle**  
NO. 1 QUALITY  
**Potato**  
YOUNG TENDER  
**Beets**  
LARGE SIZE JU  
**Orang**  
FANCY FIRM Y  
**Onion**  
LARGE TENDER  
**Cucur**

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