In War Time, Mary L. Dudziak discusses how people’s perception of time affects their ideas of war. Dudziak explains the affect of wartime on American politics and the American public. Since World War II, wartime has become a constant in American life. The government tells us that that wars end and begin, but in reality, we are always at war and in a heightened state of security. Americans have always accepted heightened security and fewer liberties during wartime, and still do. Dudziak argues that as multiple conflicts drag on, and there is no end in sight to the American military activity that is taking place across the world, the concept of “wartime” and “peacetime” is no longer applicable. We Americans live in a constant “wartime,” during which we accept lessened rights and liberties.

Dudziak writes that as Americans, we subscribe to the concept of “wartime” and “peacetime.” One leads in to the other, and we believe that “wartime” is only temporary. For years, this idea allowed Americans to accept a reduction of their liberties and rights in wartime, knowing that doing so would benefit national security. While preparing Americans for the United States imminent entrance into World War II, President Roosevelt said, “Whether you are in the armed services; whether you are a steel worker or a stevedore; a machinist or a housewife; a farmer or a banker; a store keeper or a manufacturer—to all of you it will sacrifice on behalf of your country and your liberties.” (46) Americans willingly sacrificed their liberties in World War II, and have done so since, in less obvious ways, under the impression that the United States is currently involved in a war, and American’s liberties will be restored after its completion.

Dudziak explains that when Americans think of wartime in the 20th century, they think of World War I, World War II, an abbreviated Cold War, and Vietnam. In truth, American military operations abroad have been ongoing, with virtually no break since World War II. The government doesn’t publicize this fact because if we were aware of it, American public would reject the government’s use of wartime politics and law. If Americans believe that the United States is at war, but the war will eventually end, then they will allow the government to reduce their liberties and rights. “Assumptions about the temporality of war are embedded in American legal and political thought.” (4) If Americans begin to recognize that we are living in a perpetual wartime, they will demand that the government change its wartime laws. Dudziak argues that the rights and liberties of Americans cannot be compromised and must be accessible at all times. The government cannot take away certain rights claiming it is a time of war and that national security requires certain actions be taken. A dark-skinned male should be able to board an airplane without being harassed, and should not have to operate day to day knowing all of him email and phone conversations are possibly being monitored. Dudziak says that since we have been living in wartime since the 1940’s, and will continue to live in wartime in the foreseeable future, we cannot have our rights stripped in the interest of national security. We need to find a way to keep our rights and liberties, while still emphasizing national security. All rights and liberties must exist during wartime, as that is the time in which we currently live, and will continue to live in for some time to come.

In War Time, Mary L. Dudziak clearly explains wartime’s affect on American politics and the American public. Her message is invaluable to all Americans. We should all take
heed to her words, and recognize that in our country it is constantly wartime. We cannot allow our government to diminish our rights and liberties for the benefit of national security. We must demand that our government make national security co-exist with our rights. War Time opens your eyes to what the government doesn’t want us to notice. This book should be read by all Americans—we all must call upon our elected officials to convey our need to retain all of our rights in this constant time of war.