

The Great War



Harvey Dunn, *Prisoners and Wounded*, 1918 This 1918 painting of German and American wounded and exhausted soldiers after the Meuse-Argonne offensive captures some of the horror and pathos of war. How does this image contrast with the war memorials? Where are the heroes? (Harvey Dunn, *Prisoners and Wounded*, 1918. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution)

American Stories

A Young Man Enlists in the Great Adventure

On April 7, 1917, the day after the United States officially declared war on Germany, Edmund P. Arpin, Jr., a young man of 22 from Grand Rapids, Wisconsin, decided to enlist in the army. The war seemed to provide a solution for his aimless drifting. It was not patriotism that led him to join the army but his craving for adventure and excite-

ment. A month later, he was at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, along with hundreds of other eager young men, preparing to become an army officer. He felt a certain pride and sense of purpose, and especially a feeling of comradeship with the other men, but the war was a long way off.

Arpin finally arrived with his unit in Liverpool on December 23, 1917, aboard the *evithan*, a German luxury liner that the United States had interned when war was declared and then pressed into service as a troop transport. In England, he discovered that American troops were not greeted as saviors. Hostility against the Americans simmered partly because of the previous unit's drunken brawls. Despite the efforts of the U.S. government to protect its soldiers from the sins of Europe, drinking seems to have been a reoccupation of the soldiers in Arpin's outfit. Arpin also learned something about trench wine and women, but he spent most of the endless waiting time learning to play contract bridge.

Arpin saw some of the horror of war when he went to the front with a French regiment as an observer; but his own unit did not engage in combat until October 1918, when the war was almost over. He took part in the bloody Meuse-Argonne offensive, which helped end the war. But he discovered that war was not the heroic struggle of carefully planned campaigns that newspapers and books described. War was filled with misfired weapons, mix-ups, and erroneous attacks. Wounded in the leg in an assault on an unnamed hill and awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his bravery, Arpin later learned that the order to attack had been recalled, but word had not reached him in time.

When the armistice came, Arpin was recovering in a field hospital. He was disappointed that the war had ended so soon, but he was well enough to go to Paris to take part in the victory celebration and to explore some of the famous Paris restaurants and nightclubs. In many ways, the highlight of his war experiences was not a battle or his medal but his adventure after the war was over. With a friend, he went absent without leave and set out to explore Germany. They avoided the military police, traveled on a train illegally, and had many narrow escapes, but they made it back to the hospital without being arrested.

Edmund Arpin was in the army for two years. He was one of 4,791,172 Americans who served in the army, navy, and marines. He was one of the 2 million who went overseas and one of the 230,074 who were wounded. Some of his friends were among the 18,909 who were killed. When he was mustered out of the army in March 1919, he felt lost and confused. Being a civilian was not nearly as exciting as being in the army and visiting new and exotic places.

In time, Arpin settled down. He became a successful businessman, married, and raised a family. A member of the American Legion, he periodically went to conventions and reminisced with men from his division about their escapades in France. Although the war changed their lives in many ways, most would never again feel the same sense of common purpose and adventure. "I don't suppose any of us felt, before or since, so necessary to God and man," one veteran recalled.

For Edmund P. Arpin, Jr., the Great War was the most important event of his lifetime. Just as war changed his life, so, too, did it alter the lives of most Americans. Trends begun during the progressive era accelerated. The power and influence of the federal government increased. Not only did the war promote woman suffrage, prohibition, and public housing, but it also helped create an administrative bureaucracy that blurred the lines between public and private, between government and business—a trend that would continue into the twenty-first century.

In this chapter, we examine the complicated circumstances that led the United States into the war and share the wartime experiences of American men and women overseas and at home. We will study not only military actions but

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also the impact of the war on domestic policies and on the lives of ordinary Americans, including the migration of African Americans into northern cities. The war cut off immigration from Europe and led to a policy of immigrant restriction in the next decade. The war left a legacy of prejudice and hate and raised the basic question, could the tenets of American democracy, such as freedom of speech, survive participation in a major war? The chapter concludes with a look at the idealistic efforts to promote peace at the end of the war and the disillusion that followed. Woodrow

Wilson's foreign policy, which sought to make the world safe for democracy, marked a watershed in the relationship of the United States to the world. The Great War was global war in every sense, and it thrust the United States into the role of leadership on the world scene as an interventionist savior of democratic values, but many Americans were reluctant to accept that role. But whether they liked it or not, the world was a different place in 1919 than it had been in 1914 and that would have a profound influence on American lives.

THE EARLY WAR YEARS

Few Americans expected the Great War that erupted in Europe in the summer of 1914 to affect their lives or alter their comfortable world. When a Serbian student terrorist assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary in Sarajevo, the capital of the province of Bosnia, a place most Americans had never heard of, the act precipitated a series of events leading to the most destructive war the world had ever known.

The Causes of War

The Great War, as everyone called it at the time, seemed to begin accidentally, but its root causes reached back many years and involved intense rivalry over trade, empire, and military strength. The Great War, which would cost at least 10 million lives and have a profound influence on every aspect of culture and society, did not seem inevitable in 1914. There had been wars throughout the nineteenth century, including the Boer War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the American Civil War, but these wars, though bloody, were mostly local. There had not been a major global conflict since the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. In fact, there were many signs of international cooperation, with agreements on telegraphs in 1865, postage in 1875, and copyright in 1880. Most nations in the world had even agreed on international time zones by the 1890s. An international conference at The Hague in the Netherlands in 1899 had set up a World Court to settle disputes before they led to war. Peace advocates and politicians alike promoted disarmament conferences and predicted that better technology and improved communication would lead to permanent peace. "It looks as though we are going to be the age of treaties rather than the age of wars, the century of reason rather than the century of

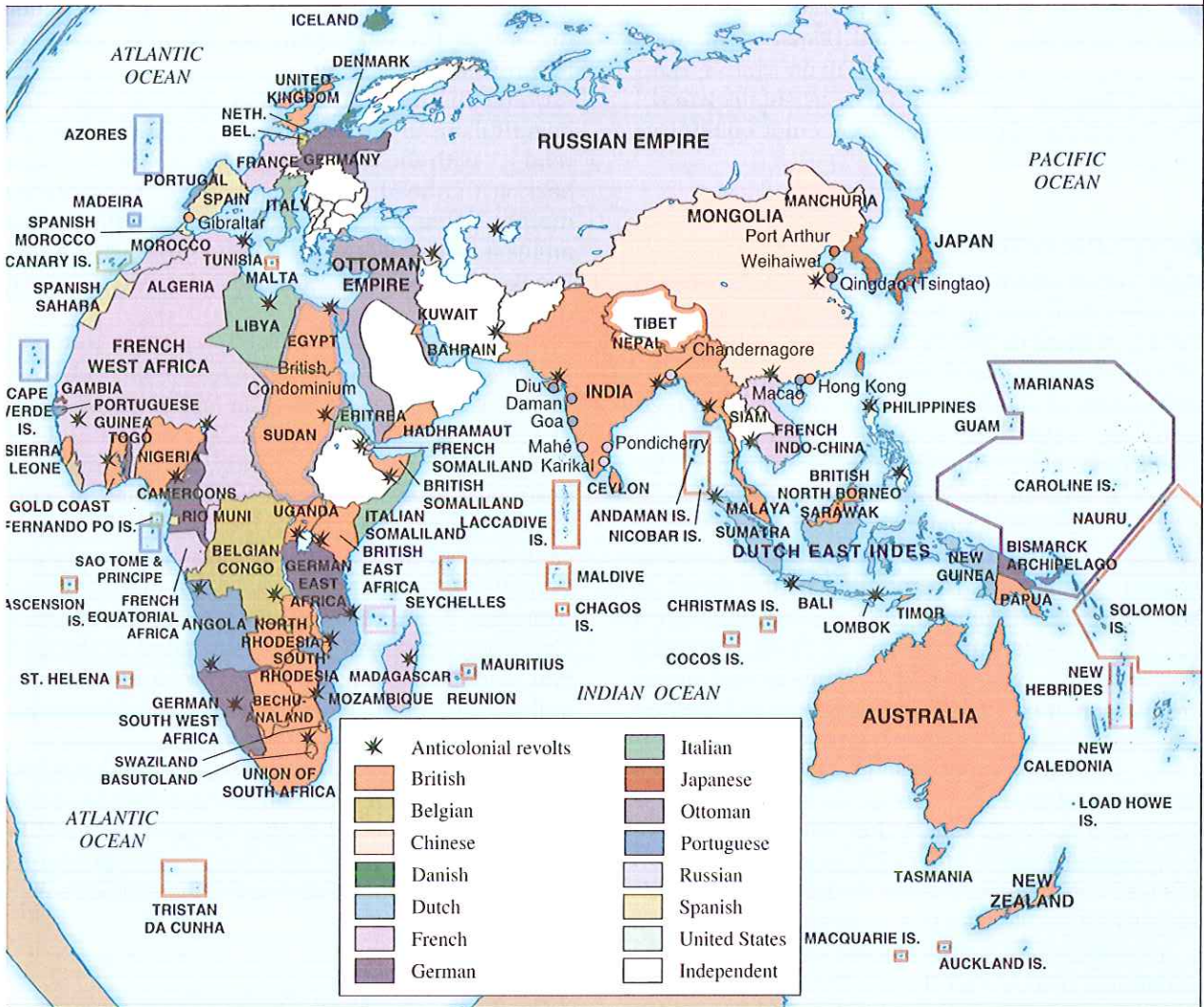
force," a leader of the American peace movement announced.

However, the same forces of improved technology and communication that seemed to be bringing nations closer together also helped create a rising tide of nationalism—a pride in being French or English or German. There was also a growing European rivalry over trade, colonies, and spheres of influence in Africa and Asia. Theodore Roosevelt had tried to arbitrate differences between Germany, France, and Great Britain over trade at a conference in Morocco in 1905 and 1906, but the tension and disagreements remained. At the same time, Austria and Russia clashed over territory and influence in the Balkans, where there was a rising sense of Slavic nationalism. Modern Germany, which was created from a number of small states in 1871, emerged as a powerful industrial giant. About 1900, Germany began to build a navy large enough to compete with the British fleet, the most powerful in the world. Great Britain, in turn, built even more battleships. As European nations armed, they drew up a complex series of treaties. Austria-Hungary and Germany (the Central Powers) became military allies, and Britain, France, and Russia (the Allied Powers) agreed to assist one another in case of attack. Despite peace conferences and international agreements, many promoted by the United States, the European balance of power rested precariously on layers of treaties that barely obscured years of jealousy and distrust.

The incident in Sarajevo destroyed that balance. The leaders of Austria-Hungary were determined to punish Serbia for the assassination. Russia mobilized to aid Serbia. Germany, supporting Austria-Hungary, declared war on Russia and France. Britain hesitated, but when Germany invaded Belgium to attack France, Britain declared war on Germany. Within a few months, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Bulgaria joined the Central Powers.

European Empires in 1914

In 1914, European countries had colonies or “spheres of influence” in all parts of the world. Although the United States got into the imperialism game late, it also had an empire and an interest in global trade. European imperialism and competition over trade was very much a factor in the origins of World War I. The war would alter the economic and political map of the world. **Reflecting on the Past** Which European nations were most powerful in Asia and Africa in 1914? How has this map changed today?



taly joined the Allies after being secretly promised additional territory after the war. Japan declared war on Germany not because of an interest in the European struggle but in order to acquire German rights in China's Shantung province and a number of Pacific Islands. Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and initially the United States, remained neutral. In August 1914, as Europe rushed toward war, British foreign secretary Sir Edward Grey remarked: "The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime." His prediction proved to be deadly accurate.

When news of the German invasion of Belgium and reports of the first bloody battles began to reach the United States in late summer, most Americans believed that madness had replaced reason. Europeans "have reverted to the condition of savage tribes roaming the forests and falling upon each other in a fury of blood and carnage," the *New York Times* announced. The American sense that the nation would never succumb to the barbarism of war, combined with the knowledge that the Atlantic Ocean separated Europe from the United States, contributed to a great sense of relief after the first shock of the war began to wear off. Woodrow Wilson's official proclamation of

neutrality on August 4, 1914, reinforced the belief that the United States had no major stake in the outcome of the war. The president was preoccupied with his own personal tragedy. His wife, Ellen Axson Wilson, died of Bright's disease the day after his proclamation. Two weeks later, still engulfed by his own grief, he urged all Americans to "be neutral in fact as well as in name, . . . impartial in thought as well as in action." The United States, he argued, must preserve itself "fit and free" to do what "is honest and disinterested . . . for the peace of the world." But remaining uninvolved, at least emotionally, was going to be difficult.

American Reactions

Many social reformers despaired when they heard the news from Europe. Even during its first months, the war seemed to deflect energy away from reform. "We are three thousand miles away from the smoke and flames of combat, and have not a single regiment or battleship involved," remarked John Haynes Holmes, a liberal New York minister. "Yet



IMAGE
Leaders of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

who in the United States is thinking of recreation centers, improved housing or the minimum wage?" Settlement worker Lillian Wald responded to the threat of war by helping lead 1,500 women in a "woman's peace" parade down New York's Fifth Avenue. Jane Addams of Hull House helped organize the American Woman's Peace party. Drawing on traditional conceptions of female character, she argued that women had a special responsibility to work for peace and to speak out against the blasphemy of war because women and children suffered most in any war, especially in a modern war in which civilians as well as soldiers became targets.

Although many people worked to promote an international plan to end the war through mediation, others could hardly wait to take part in the great adventure. Hundreds of young American men, most of them students or recent college graduates, volunteered to join ambulance units in order to take part in the war effort without actually fighting. Among these men were Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and E. E. Cummings, who later turned their wartime adventures into literary masterpieces. Others volunteered for service with the French Foreign Legion or joined the Lafayette Escadrille, a unit of pilots made up of well-to-do American volunteers attached to the French army. Many of these young men were inspired by an older generation who pictured war as a romantic and manly adventure. One college president talked of the chastening and purifying effect of

armed conflict, and Theodore Roosevelt projected an image of war that was something like a football game in which red-blooded American men could test their idealism and manhood.

Alan Seeger, a 1910 graduate of Harvard, was one of those who believed in the romantic and noble purpose of the war. He had been living in Paris since 1912, and when the war broke out, he quickly joined the French Foreign Legion. For the next two years, he wrote sentimental poetry, articles, and letters describing his adventures. "You have no idea how beautiful it is to see the troops undulating along the road . . . with the captains and lieutenants on horse back at the head of the companies," he wrote his mother. When Seeger was killed in 1916, he became an instant hero. Some called him "America's Rupert Brooke," after the gallant British poet who died early in the war.

Many Americans visualized war as a romantic struggle for honor and glory because the only conflict they remembered was the "splendid little war" of 1898. For them, war meant Theodore Roosevelt leading the charge in Cuba and Commodore Dewey destroying the Spanish fleet in Manila harbor without the loss of an American life. Many older Americans recalled the Civil War, but the horrors of those years had faded, leaving only the memory of heroic triumphs. As Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Supreme Court justice who had been wounded in the Civil War, remarked, "War, when you are at it, is horrible and dull. It is only when time has passed that you see that its message was divine."

The reports from the battlefields, even during the first months of the war, should have indicated that the message was anything but divine. This would be a modern war in which men died by the thousands, cut down by an improved and efficient technology of killing.

The New Military Technology

Military planners had not anticipated the stalemate that quickly developed. The German Schlieffen plan called for a rapid strike through Belgium to attack Paris and the French army from the rear. However, the French stopped the German advance at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914, and the fighting soon bogged down in a costly and bloody routine. Soldiers on both sides dug miles of trenches and strung out barbed wire to protect them. Thousands died in battles that gained only a few yards or nothing at all. At the Battle of the Somme in the summer of 1916, the German casualties were 600,000 men killed or wounded. The British lost 419,000 and the French 194,000, and the battle did not change the

course of the war. Rapid-firing rifles, improved explosives, incendiary shells, and tracer bullets all added to the destruction. Most devastating of all, however, was the improved artillery, sometimes mounted on trucks and directed by spotters using wireless radios, that could fire over the horizon and hit targets many miles behind the lines. The technology of defense, especially the machine gun, neutralized the frontal assault, the most popular military tactic since the American Civil War. As one writer explained: “Three men and a machine gun can stop a battalion of heroes.” But the generals on both sides continued to order their men to charge to their almost certain deaths.

The war was both a traditional and a revolutionary struggle. It was the last war in which cavalry was used and the first to employ a new generation of military technologies. By 1918, airplanes, initially used only for observation, were creating terror below with their bombs. Tanks made their first appearance in 1916, but it was not until the last days of the war that this new offensive weapon began to neutralize the machine gun. Trucks hauled men and equipment, but hundreds of thousands of horses were also used on the battlefields; for some soldiers, the sight of great numbers of dead horses on the battlefields was more depressing than the presence

of dead men. Wireless radio and the telephone were indispensable, but carrier pigeons sometimes provided the only link between the front line and the command post in the rear. In the spring of 1915, the Germans introduced a terrible new weapon—poison gas. Chlorine gas blinded its victims, caused acid burns on the skin, and consumed the lungs. Gas masks provided some protection but were never entirely effective. Poison gas attacks, used by both sides after 1915, were one of the most terrifying aspects of trench warfare.

For most Americans, the western front, which stretched from Belgium through France, was the most important battleground of the war. But along the eastern front, Russian troops engaged German and Austrian armies in bitter fighting. After Italy joined the conflict in 1915, a third front developed along the northern Italian and Austrian border, while submarines and battleships carried the fight around the world.

The Great War was truly a global struggle. Soldiers from the British Empire, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and India fought on the western front alongside French-speaking black Africans. The British and the French battled in Africa to capture Germany’s African colonies, and the struggle continued until 1918, especially in East Africa. The British, who initially thought they were only going to support the French on the western front, found themselves in the Middle East, in Mesopotamia (Iraq), and fighting Turks in the Dardanelles between the Aegean and the Black Sea. In one of the great disasters of the war, the British attacked Gallipoli, first with battleships and then with hundreds of thousands of men. After losing one-third of their fleet and more than a quarter of a million men, many of them Australians and New Zealanders, the British withdrew. Reports of carnage, on and off the battlefield, poured in. After they entered the war, the Turks systematically massacred an estimated 800,000 Armenians in one of the worst acts of genocide in the world’s history. Yet the United States and the European countries stood by and did nothing.

Some Americans could hardly wait to join the fighting. Theodore Roosevelt and his friend Leonard



A War Victim The Great War, despite the new technology of trucks, tanks, and airplanes, was also a war that used hundreds of thousands of horses to drag and carry men and equipment. Many horses were killed and many more got stuck in the mud. This photo shows a British unit with one horse stuck so badly that it was probably shot rather than rescued. In World War I soldiers like these spent more time waiting than they did fighting and every break meant time for a smoke. What else can you learn about the military experience during World War I by studying this photo? (*The Art Archive/Imperial War Museum*)

The Great War in Europe and the Middle East

The Great War had an impact not only on Europe but also on North Africa and the Middle East. Even the countries that remained neutral felt the influence of global war. **Reflecting on the Past** For most Americans, the war was in France on the western front. Where else were major battles fought?



Wood, the army chief of staff, led a movement to prepare American men for war. In 1913, Wood established a camp for college men at Plattsburgh, New York, to give them some experience with military life, order, discipline, and command. By 1915, thousands had crowded into the camp; even the mayor of New York enrolled. The young men learned to shoot rifles and to endure long marches and field exercises. But most of all, they associated with one another. Gathered around the campfire at night, they heard Wood and other veterans tell of winning glory and honor on

the battlefield. In their minds at least, they were already leading a bayonet charge against the enemy, and the enemy was Germany.

Difficulties of Neutrality

Not all Americans were so eager to enter the fray, but many sympathized with one side or the other. Some Americans favored the Central Powers. About 8 million Austrian Americans and German Americans lived in the United States. Some supported

their homeland. They viewed Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany as a progressive parliamentary democracy. The anti-British sentiment of some Irish Americans led them to take sides not so much for Germany as against England. A few Swedish Americans distrusted Russia so vehemently that they had difficulty supporting the Allies. A number of American scholars, physicians, and intellectuals fondly remembered studying in Germany. To them, Germany meant great universities and cathedrals, music, and culture. It also represented social planning, health insurance, unemployment compensation, and many programs for which the progressives had been fighting.

Despite Wilson's efforts to promote neutrality, for most Americans, the ties of language and culture tipped the balance toward the Allies. After all, did not the English-speaking people of the world have special bonds and special responsibilities to promote civilization and ensure justice in the world? American connections with the French were not so close, but they were even more sentimental. The French, everyone remembered, had supported the American Revolution, and the French people had given the Statue of Liberty, the very symbol of American opportunity and democracy, to the United States.

Other reasons made real neutrality nearly impossible. The fact that export and import trade with the Allies was much more important than with the Central Powers favored the Allies. Wilson's advisers, especially Robert Lansing and Edward House, openly supported the French and the British. Most newspaper owners and editors had close ethnic, cultural, and sometimes economic ties to the British and the French. The newspapers were quick to picture the Germans as barbaric Huns and to accept and embellish the atrocity stories that came from the front, some of them planted by British propaganda experts. Gradually for Wilson, and probably for most Americans, the perception that England and France were fighting to preserve civilization from the forces of Prussian evil replaced the idea that all Europeans were barbaric and decadent. But the American people were not yet willing to go to war to save civilization. Let France and England do that.

Woodrow Wilson also sympathized with the Allies for practical and idealistic reasons. He wanted to keep the United States out of the war, but he did not object to using force to promote diplomatic ends. He believed that by keeping the United States out of the war, he might control the peace. The war, he hoped, would show the futility of imperialism and would usher in a world of free trade in products and ideas. Remaining neutral while maintaining trade with the belligerents became increasingly difficult. Remaining neutral while speaking out about

the peace eventually became impossible. The need to trade and the desire to control the peace finally led the United States into the Great War.

World Trade and Neutrality Rights

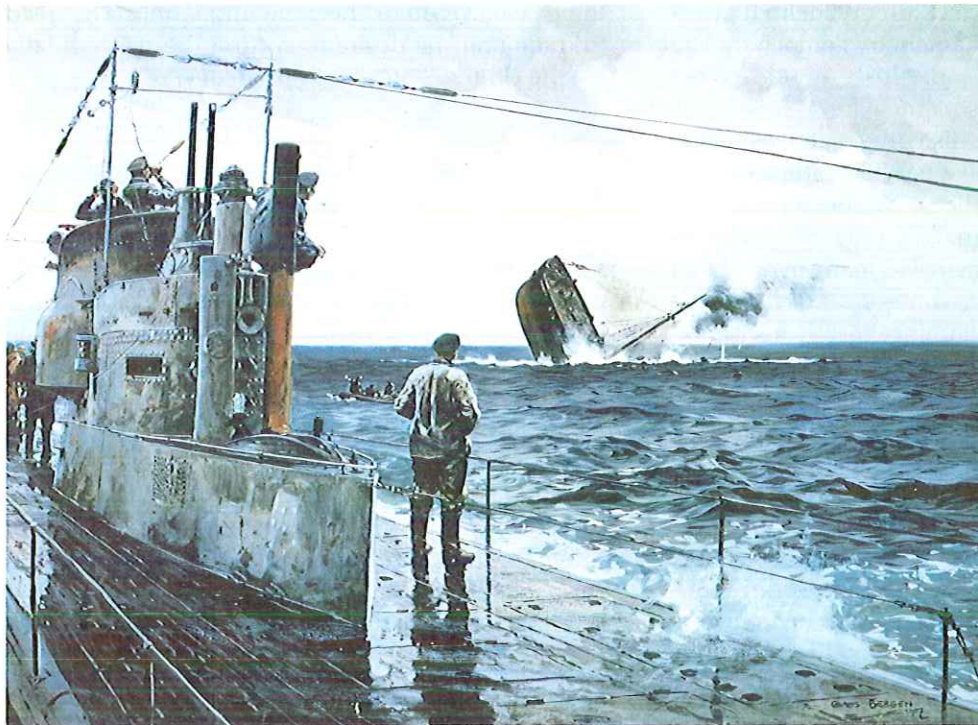
The United States was part of an international economic community in 1914 and the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914 caused an immediate economic panic. On July 31, 1914, the Wilson administration closed the stock exchange to prevent the unloading of European securities and panic selling. It also adopted a policy discouraging loans by American banks to belligerent nations. Most difficult was the matter of neutral trade. Wilson insisted on the rights of Americans to trade with both the Allies and the Central Powers, but Great Britain instituted an illegal naval blockade, mined the North Sea, and began seizing American ships, even those carrying food and raw materials to Italy, the Netherlands, and other neutral nations. The first crisis that Wilson faced was whether to accept the illicit British blockade. To do so would be to surrender one of the rights he supported most ardently, the right of free trade.

Wilson eventually backed down and accepted British control of the sea. His conviction that the destinies of the United States and Great Britain were intertwined outweighed his idealistic belief in free trade and caused him to react more harshly to German violations of international law than he did to British violators. Consequently, American trade with the Central Powers declined between 1914 and 1916 from \$169 million to just over \$1 million, whereas trade with the Allies increased during the same period from \$825 million to more than \$3 billion. At the same time, the U.S. government eased restrictions on private loans to belligerents. In March 1915, the House of Morgan loaned the French government \$50 million, and in the fall of 1915, the French and British obtained an unsecured loan of \$500 million from American banks. With dollars as well as sentiments, the United States gradually ceased to be neutral.

Germany retaliated against British control of the seas with submarine warfare, using its new weapon, the U-boat (*Unterseeboot*). International law required a belligerent warship to warn a passenger or merchant ship before attacking, but a U-boat rising to the surface to issue a warning would have meant being blown out of the water by an armed merchant ship. On February 4, 1915, Germany announced a submarine blockade of the British Isles. Until Britain gave up its campaign to starve the German population, the Germans would



Adolf K.G.E. von Spiegel, U-Boat 202 (1919)



Unterseeboot A German U-boat sinking a fishing ship somewhere in the Atlantic. The German submarine revolutionized the war at sea, and the sinking of the British ocean liner *Lusitania* and various American ships led directly to the United States entering the war. At first the submarines had the advantage, but by 1918, anti-submarine technology had been developed to enable the United States and Great Britain to win the battle of the Atlantic. Germany lost 178 submarines with 5,400 men. How did the submarine change the nature of the war at sea? (Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY)

sink even neutral ships. Wilson warned Germany that it would be held to “strict accountability” for illegal destruction of American ships or lives.

In March 1915, a German U-boat sank a British liner en route to Africa, killing 103 people, including one American. How should the United States respond? Wilson’s advisers could not agree. Robert Lansing, a legal counsel at the State Department, urged the president to issue a strong protest, charging a breach of international law. William Jennings Bryan, the secretary of state, argued that an American traveling on a British ship was guilty of “contributory negligence” and urged Wilson to prohibit Americans from traveling on belligerent ships in the war zone. Wilson never did settle the dispute, for on May 7, 1915, a greater crisis erupted. A German U-boat torpedoed the British luxury liner *Lusitania* off the Irish coast. The liner, which was not armed but was carrying war supplies, sank in 18 minutes. Nearly 1,200 people, including many women and children, drowned. Among the dead were 128 Americans. Suddenly Americans confronted the horror of total war fought with modern weapons, a war that killed civilians, including women and children, just as easily as it killed soldiers.

The tragedy horrified most Americans. Despite earlier warnings by the Germans in American newspapers that it was dangerous to travel in war zones, the same newspapers denounced the act as “mass murder.” Some called for a declaration of war. Wilson

and most Americans had no idea of going to war in the spring of 1915, but the president refused to take Bryan’s advice and prevent further loss of American lives by simply prohibiting all Americans from traveling on belligerent ships. Instead, he sent a series of protest notes demanding reparation for the loss of American lives and a pledge from Germany that it would cease attacking ocean liners without warning.

Bryan resigned as secretary of state over the tone of the notes and charged that the United States was not being truly neutral. Some denounced Bryan as a traitor, but others charged that if the United States really wanted to stay out of the war, Bryan’s position was more logical, consistent, and humane than Wilson’s. The president replaced Bryan with Robert Lansing, who was much more eager than Bryan to oppose Germany, even at the risk of war.

The tense situation eased late in 1915. After a German U-boat sank the British steamer *Arabic*, which claimed two American lives, the German ambassador promised that Germany would not attack ocean liners without warning (the *Arabic* pledge). But the *Lusitania* crisis caused an outpouring of books and articles urging the nation to prepare for war. The National Security League, the most effective of the preparedness groups, called for a bigger army and navy, a system of universal military training, and “patriotic education and



Sinking of the *Lusitania*—New York Tribune

national sentiment and service among the people of the United States.”

Organizing on the other side was a group of progressive reformers who formed the American Union Against Militarism. They feared that those urging preparedness were deliberately setting out to destroy liberal social reform at home and to promote imperialism abroad.

Wilson sympathized with the preparedness groups to the extent of asking Congress on November 4, 1915, for an enlarged and reorganized army. The bill met with great opposition, especially from southern and western congressmen, but the Army Reorganization Bill that Wilson signed in June 1916 increased the regular army to just over 200,000 and integrated the National Guard into the defense structure. Few Americans, however, expected those young men to go to war. Even before American soldiers arrived in France, however, Wilson used the army and the marines in Mexico and Central America.

Intervening in Mexico and Central America

Wilson envisioned a world purged of imperialism, a world of free trade, but a world where American ideas and products would find their way. Combining the zeal of a Christian missionary with the conviction of a college professor, he spoke of “releasing the intelligence of America for the service of mankind.” Although Wilson denounced the “big stick” and “dollar diplomacy” of the Roosevelt and Taft years, Wilson’s administration used force more systematically than did his predecessors. The rhetoric was different, yet just as much as Roosevelt, Wilson tried to maintain stability in the countries to the south in order to promote American economic and strategic interests.

At first, Wilson’s foreign policy seemed to reverse some of the most callous aspects of dollar diplomacy in Central America. Secretary of State Bryan signed a treaty with Colombia in 1913 in which the United States agreed to pay \$5 million for the loss of Panama and virtually apologized for the Roosevelt administration’s treatment of Colombia. The Senate, not so willing to admit that the United States had been wrong, refused to ratify the treaty.

The change in spirit proved illusory. After a disastrous civil war in the Dominican Republic, the United States offered in 1915 to take over the country’s finances and police force. When the Dominican leaders rejected a treaty making their country virtually a protectorate of the United States, Wilson ordered in the marines. They took control of the government in May 1916. Although Americans built

roads, schools, and hospitals, people resented their presence. The United States intervened in Haiti with similar results. In Nicaragua, the Wilson administration kept the marines sent by Taft in 1912 to prop up a pro-American regime and acquired the right, through treaty, to intervene at any time to preserve order and protect American property. Except for a brief period in the mid-1920s, the marines remained until 1933.

Wilson’s policy of intervention ran into the greatest difficulty in Mexico, a country that had been ruled by dictator Porfirio Díaz, who had long welcomed American investors. By 1910, more than 40,000 American citizens lived in Mexico, and more than \$1 billion of American money was invested there. In 1911, however, Francisco Madero, a reformer who wanted to destroy the privileges of the upper classes, overthrew Díaz. Two years later, Madero was deposed and murdered by order of Victoriano Huerta, the head of the army.

Wilson refused to recognize the Huerta government. Everyone admitted that Huerta was a ruthless dictator, but diplomatic recognition, the exchange of ambassadors, and the regulation of trade and communication had never meant approval. In the world of business and diplomacy, it merely meant that a particular government was in power. But Wilson set out to remove what he called a “government of butchers.”

At first, Wilson applied diplomatic pressure. Then, using a minor incident as an excuse, he asked Congress for power to involve American troops if necessary. Few Mexicans liked Huerta, but they liked the idea of North American interference even less, and they rallied around the dictator. The United States landed troops at Veracruz, Mexico. Wilson’s action outraged many Europeans and Latin Americans as well as Americans.

Wilson’s military intervention drove Huerta out of office, but a civil war between forces led by Venustiano Carranza and those led by General Francisco “Pancho” Villa ensued. The United States sent arms to Carranza, who was considered less radical than Villa, and Carranza’s soldiers defeated Villa’s. When an angry Villa led what was left of his army in a raid on Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916, Wilson sent an expedition commanded by Brigadier General John Pershing to track down Villa and his men. The strange and comic scene developed of an American army charging 300 miles into Mexico unable to catch the retreating villain. The Mexicans feared that Pershing’s army was planning to occupy northern Mexico. Carranza shot off a bitter note to Wilson, accusing him of threatening war, but Wilson refused to withdraw the troops. Tensions rose. An



Pancho Villa This photograph shows Pancho Villa on horseback leading the rebel Mexican army that clashed with the American army in Mexico in 1916. President Wilson sent American forces more than 300 miles into Mexico to arrest Villa, who allegedly had murdered a number of Americans, but they were not able to catch him. What impact do you think the American invasion of Mexico had on America's relation with Mexico and Latin America? (Brown Brothers)

American patrol attacked a Mexican garrison, with loss of life on both sides. In January 1917, just as war seemed inevitable, Wilson agreed to recall the troops and to recognize the Carranza government. Had it not been for the growing crisis in Europe, it is likely that war with Mexico would have resulted.

THE UNITED STATES ENTERS THE WAR

A significant minority of Americans opposed joining the European war in 1917, and that decision would remain controversial when it was re-examined in the 1930s. But once involved, the government and the American people made the war into a patriotic crusade that influenced all aspects of American life.

The Election of 1916

American political campaigns do not stop even in times of international crisis. As 1915 turned to 1916, Wilson had to think of re-election as well as of preparedness, submarine warfare, and the Mexican campaign. At first glance, the president's chances of re-election seemed poor. He had won in 1912 only because Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive party had split the Republican vote. If supporters of the Progressives in 1912 returned to the Republican fold, Wilson's chances were slim indeed. Because the Progressive party had done very badly in the 1914 congressional elections, Roosevelt seemed ready to seek the Republican nomination.

Wilson was aware that he had to win over voters who had favored Roosevelt in 1912. In January 1916, he appointed Louis D. Brandeis to the Supreme

Court. The first Jew ever to sit on the Court, Brandeis was confirmed over the strong opposition of many legal organizations. His appointment pleased the social justice progressives because he had always championed reform causes. They made it clear to Wilson that the real test for them was whether he supported the anti-child labor and workers' compensation bills pending in Congress.

In August, Wilson put heavy pressure on Congress and obtained passage of the Worker's Compensation Bill, which gave some protection to federal employees, and the Keatings–Owen Child Labor Bill, which prohibited the shipment in interstate commerce of goods produced by children under age 14 and in some cases under 16. This bill, later declared unconstitutional, was a far-reaching proposal that for the first time used federal control over interstate commerce to dictate the conditions under which businesspeople could manufacture products.

To attract farm support, Wilson pushed for passage of the Federal Farm Loan Act, which created 12 Federal Farm Loan banks to extend long-term credit to farmers. Urged on by organized labor as well as by many progressives, he supported the Adamson Act, which established an eight-hour workday for all interstate railway workers. Within a few months, Wilson reversed the New Freedom doctrines he had earlier supported and brought the force of the federal government into play on the side of reform. The flurry of legislation early in 1916 provided one triumph for the progressive movement. The strategy seemed to work, for progressives of all kinds enthusiastically endorsed the president.

The election of 1916, however, turned as much on foreign affairs as on domestic policy. The Republicans ignored Theodore Roosevelt and nominated

Instead the staid and respectable Charles Evans Hughes, a former governor of New York and future Supreme Court justice. Their platform called for “straight and honest neutrality” and “adequate preparedness.” In a bitter campaign, Hughes attacked Wilson for not promoting American rights in Mexico more vigorously and for giving in to the unreasonable demands of labor. Wilson, on his part, implied that electing Hughes would guarantee war with both Mexico and Germany and that his opponents were somehow not “100 percent Americans.” As the campaign progressed, the peace issue became more and more important, and the cry “He kept us out of war” echoed through every Democratic rally. It was a slogan that would soon seem strangely ironic.

The election was extremely close. In fact, Wilson went to bed on election night thinking he had lost the presidency. The election was not finally decided until the Democrats carried California (by fewer than 4,000 votes). Wilson won by carrying the West as well as the South.

Deciding for War

Wilson’s victory in 1916 seemed to be a mandate for staying out of the European war. Those who supported Wilson as a peace candidate applauded in January 1917 when he went before the Senate to clarify the American position on a negotiated settlement of the war. The German government had earlier indicated that it might be willing to go to the conference table. Wilson outlined a plan for a negotiated settlement before either side had achieved victory. It would be a peace among equals, “a peace without victory,” a peace without indemnities and annexations. The agreement Wilson outlined contained his idealistic vision of the postwar world as an open marketplace, and it could have worked only if Germany and the Allies were willing to settle for a draw. But neither side was interested in such a conclusion after years of bitter and costly conflict.

The German government refused to accept a peace without victory, probably because early in 1917, the German leaders thought they could win. On January 31, 1917, the Germans announced that they would sink on sight any ship, belligerent or neutral, sailing toward England or France. A few days later, in retaliation, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Germany. But Wilson—and probably most Americans—still hoped to avert war without shutting off American trade. As goods began to pile

up in warehouses and American ships stayed idly in port, however, pressure mounted to arm American merchant ships. An intercepted telegram from the German foreign secretary, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German minister in Mexico increased anti-German feeling. If war broke out, the German minister was to offer Mexico the territory it had lost in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona in 1848. In return, Mexico would join Germany in a war against the United States. When the Zimmermann note was released to the press on March 1, 1917, many Americans demanded war against Germany. Wilson still hesitated.

As the country waited on the brink of war, news of revolution in Russia reached Washington. That event would prove as important as the war itself. The March 1917 revolution in Russia was a spontaneous uprising of workers, housewives, and soldiers against the government of Czar Nicholas II and its conduct of the war. The army had suffered staggering losses at the front. The civilian population was in desperate condition. Food was scarce, and the railroads and industry had nearly collapsed. At first, Wilson and other Americans were enthusiastic about the new republic led by Alexander Kerensky. The overthrow of the feudal aristocracy seemed in the spirit of the American Revolution. Kerensky promised to continue the struggle against Germany. But on November 6, 1917, the revolution took a more extreme turn. Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, known as Lenin, returned from exile in Switzerland and led the radical Bolsheviks to victory over the Kerensky regime. He immediately signed an armistice with Germany that released thousands of German troops, who had been fighting the Russians, to join the battle against the Allies on the western front.

Lenin, a brilliant lawyer and revolutionary tactician, was a follower of Karl Marx (1818–1883). Marx was a German intellectual and radical philosopher who had described the alienation of the working class under capitalism and predicted a growing split between the proletariat (the unpropertied workers) and the capitalists. Lenin extended Marx’s ideas and argued that capitalist nations eventually would be forced to go to war over raw materials and markets. Believing that capitalism and imperialism went hand in hand, Lenin argued that the only way to end imperialism was to end capitalism. Communism, Lenin predicted, would eventually dominate the globe, and the new Soviet Union, not the United States, would be the model for the rest of the world to follow. The Russian Revolution threatened Wilson’s vision of the world and his plan to bring the United States into the war “to make the world safe for democracy.”



Charles E. Hughes 1916 Presidential Campaign Speech



The Zimmermann Telegram (1917)

More disturbing than the revolution in Russia, however, was the situation in the North Atlantic, where German U-boats sank five American ships between March 12 and March 21, 1917. Wilson no longer hesitated. On April 2, he urged Congress to declare war. His words conveyed a sense of mission about the country's entry into the war, but Wilson's voice was low and somber. "It is a fearful thing," he concluded, "to lead this great, peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars." The war resolution swept the Senate 82 to 6 and the House of Representatives 373 to 50.

Once war was declared, most Americans forgot their doubts. Young men rushed to enlist; women volunteered to become nurses or to serve in other ways. Towns were united by patriotism.

A Patriotic Crusade

Not all Americans applauded the declaration of war. Some pacifists and socialists and a few others opposed America's entry into the war. "To whom does war bring prosperity?" Senator George Norris of Nebraska asked on the Senate floor. "Not to the soldier, . . . not to the broken hearted widow, . . . not to the mother who weeps at the death of her brave boy. . . . I feel that we are about to put the dollar sign on the American flag."

For most Americans in the spring of 1917, the war seemed remote. A few days after war was declared, a Senate committee listened to a member of the War Department staff list the vast quantities of materials needed to supply an American army in France. One of the senators, jolted awake, exclaimed, "Good Lord! You're not going to send soldiers over there, are you?"

To convince senators and citizens alike that the war was real and that American participation was just, Wilson appointed a Committee on Public Information, headed by George Creel, a muckraking journalist from Denver. The Creel Committee launched a gigantic propaganda campaign to persuade the American public that the United States had gone to war to promote the cause of freedom and democracy and to prevent the barbarous hordes from overrunning Europe and eventually the Western Hemisphere.

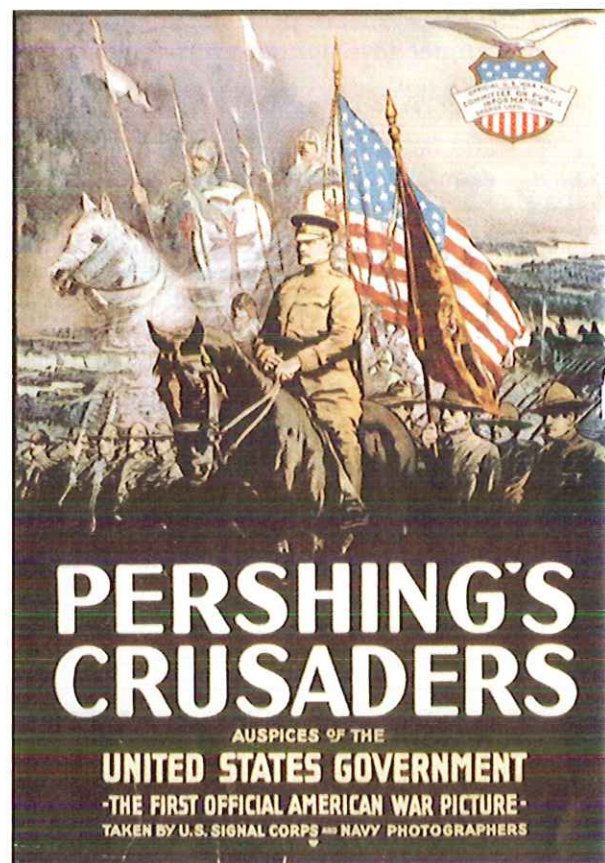
The patriotic crusade soon became stridently anti-German and anti-immigrant. Most school districts banned the teaching of German. Sauerkraut was renamed "liberty cabbage," and German measles became "liberty measles." Many families Americanized their German surnames. Several



President Wilson's War Message (1917)



"Boy Scouts Support the War Effort" (1917)



Pershing's Crusaders This official 1917 U.S. government publication compares American soldiers to medieval knights. It makes explicit the American belief that by entering World War I they were joining not only a war but also a crusade to make the world safe for democracy. They were not just supporting the Allied cause, but they had a special mission to rescue the old world and to spread the American way of life. How do you suppose Europeans reacted to this American sense of mission and superiority? (*Library of Congress, LC-USZC4-1539*)

cities banned music by German composers from symphony concerts. South Dakota prohibited the use of German on the telephone, and in Iowa, a state official announced, "If their language is disloyal, they should be imprisoned. If their acts are disloyal, they should be shot." Occasionally, the patriotic fever led to violence. The most notorious incident occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois, which had a large German population. A mob seized Robert Prager, a young German American, in April 1918, stripped off his clothes, dressed him in an American flag, marched him through the streets, and lynched him. The eventual trial led to the acquittal of the ringleaders on the grounds that the lynching was a "patriotic murder."

The Wilson administration did not condone domestic violence and murder, but heated patriotism led to irrational hatreds and fears. Suspect were not



Immigrants and the Great War

only German Americans but also radicals, pacifists, and anyone who raised doubts about the American war efforts or the government's policies. The Los Angeles police ignored complaints that Mexicans were being harassed, because after learning of the Zimmermann telegram they believed that all Mexicans were pro-German. In Wisconsin, Senator Robert La Follette, who had voted against the war resolution, was burned in effigy and censured by the faculty of the University of Wisconsin. At a number of universities, professors were dismissed, sometimes for as little as questioning the morality or the necessity of America's participation in the war.

On June 15, 1917, Congress, at Wilson's behest, passed the Espionage Act, which provided imprisonment of up to 20 years or a fine of up to \$10,000, or both, for people who aided the enemy or who "willfully cause . . . insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny or refusal of duty in the military . . . forces of the United States." The act also authorized the postmaster general to prohibit from the mails any matter he thought advocated treason

or forcible resistance to U.S. laws. The act was used to stamp out dissent, even to discipline anyone who questioned the administration's policies. Using the act, Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson banned the magazines *American Socialist* and *The Masses* from the mails.

Congress later added the Trading with the Enemy Act and a Sedition Act. The latter prohibited disloyal, profane, scurrilous, and abusive remarks about the form of government, flag, or uniform of the United States. It even prohibited citizens from opposing the purchase of war bonds. For delivering a speech denouncing capitalism and the war, Socialist party leader Eugene Debs was convicted of violating the Sedition Act and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

In 1919, the Supreme Court upheld the conviction, even though Debs had not explicitly urged violation of the draft laws. Not all Americans agreed with the decision, for while still in prison, Debs polled close to 1 million votes in the presidential election of 1920. Ultimately, the government prosecuted 2,168 people under the Espionage and Sedition Acts and convicted about half of them. But these figures do not include the thousands who were informally persecuted and deprived of their liberties and their right of free speech.

One woman was sentenced to prison for writing, "I am for the people and the government is for the



DOCUMENT
Newton D. Baker, Treatment of German Americans (1918)



DOCUMENT
Espionage Act (1917)



AUDIO
The Speech That Sent Debs to Jail"

profiteers." Ricardo Flores Magon, a leading Mexican American labor organizer and radical in the Southwest, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for criticizing Wilson's Mexican policy and violating the Neutrality Acts. In Cincinnati, a pacifist minister, Herbert S. Bigelow, was dragged from the stage where he was about to give a speech, taken to a wooded area by a mob, bound and gagged, and whipped. In Bisbee, Arizona, where wartime demand for copper had increased the population to 20,000, the miners went on strike in June 1917 to protest low wages and unsafe conditions in the mines. The owners blamed the strike on the IWW, which they claimed was controlled by the Germans. The IWW had little to do with the strike, but the local sheriff led a posse of men into the miners' homes, where they rounded up 1,200 "undesirables" and shipped them in boxcars into Mexico. The mine owners then quickly hired strikebreakers so the production of copper to support the war effort could continue.



DOCUMENT
Abrams v. United States (1919)



Army Medical Examiner: "At last a perfect soldier!"

"At Last a Perfect Soldier" This antiwar, antimilitary cartoon appeared in the American radical magazine *The Masses* in July 1916. *The Masses* was an irreverent journal that for a few years published important articles and illustrations by leading artists. It was shut down as subversive during the war by the U.S. government. How does this image contrast to the usual depiction of the soldier as hero? Do you agree with this image of the soldier today? (*The Masses*, 8, July 1916, [back cover]/The Tamiment Institute Library, New York University)

The Civil Liberties Bureau, an outgrowth of the American Union Against Militarism, protested the blatant abridgment of freedom of speech during the war, but the protests fell on deaf ears at the Justice Department and in the White House. Rights and freedoms have been reduced or suspended during all wars, but the massive disregard for basic rights was greater during World War I than during the Civil War. This was ironic because Wilson had often written and spoken of the need to preserve freedom of speech and civil liberties. During the war, however, he tolerated the vigilante tactics of his own Justice Department, offering no more than feeble protest. Wilson was so convinced his cause was just that he ignored the rights of those who opposed him.

Raising an Army

Debate over a volunteer army versus the draft had been going on for several years before the United States entered the war. People who favored some form of universal military service argued that college graduates, farmers, and young men from the slums of eastern cities could learn from one another as they trained together. Opponents of a draft pointed out that people making such claims were most often the college graduates, who assumed they would command the boys from the slums. The draft was not democratic, they argued, but the tool of an imperialist power bent on ending dissent. “Back of the cry that America must have compulsory service or perish,” one opponent charged, “is a clearly thought out and heavily backed project to mold the United States into an efficient, orderly nation, economically and politically controlled by those who know what is good for the people.” Memories of massive draft riots during the Civil War also led some to fear a draft.

Wilson and his secretary of war, Newton Baker, both initially opposed the draft. In the end, both concluded that it was the most efficient way to organize military personnel. Ironically, it was Theodore Roosevelt who tipped Wilson in favor of the draft. Even though his health was failing and he was blind in one eye, the old Rough Rider was determined to recruit a volunteer division and lead it personally against the Germans. The thought of his old enemy Theodore Roosevelt blustering about Europe so frightened Wilson that he supported the Selective Service Act in part, at least, to prevent such volunteer outfits as Roosevelt planned. Congress argued over the bill, the House insisting that the minimum age for draftees should be 21, not 18. On June 5, 1917, some 9.5 million men between



IMAGE
Recruiting
Poster for the
Marines

ages 21 and 31 registered, with little protest. In August 1918, Congress extended the act to men between ages 18 and 45. In all, more than 24 million men registered and more than 2.8 million were inducted, making up more than 75 percent of soldiers who served in the war.

The draft worked well, but it was not quite the perfect system that Wilson claimed. Draft protests erupted in a few places, the largest in Oklahoma, where a group of tenant farmers planned a march on Washington to take over the government and end the “rich man’s war.” But the Green Corn Rebellion, as it came to be called, died before it got started. A local posse arrested about 900 rebels and took them off to jail.

Some men escaped the draft. Some were deferred because of war-related jobs, and others resisted by claiming exemption for reasons of conscience. The Selective Service Act did exempt men who belonged to religious groups that forbade members from engaging in war, but religious motivation was often difficult to define, and nonreligious conscientious objection was even more complicated. Thousands of conscientious objectors were inducted. Some served in noncombat positions; others went to prison.

THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Family albums in millions of American homes contain photographs of those who were drafted or volunteered: young men in uniform, some of them stiff and formal, some of them candid shots of soldiers on leave in Paris or Washington or Chicago. These photographs testify to the importance of the war to a generation of Americans. For years afterward, the men and women who lived through the war sang “Tipperary,” “There’s a Long, Long Trail,” and “Pack Up Your Troubles” and remembered rather sentimentally what the war had meant to them. For some, the war was a tragic event, as they saw the horrors of the battlefield firsthand. For others, it was a liberating experience and the most exciting period of their lives.

The American Soldier

The typical soldier, according to the U.S. Medical Department, stood 5 feet 7½ inches tall, weighed 141½ pounds, and was 22 years old. He took a physical exam, an intelligence test, and a psychological test, and he probably watched a movie called *Fit to Fight*, which warned him about the dangers of venereal disease. The majority of American soldiers had not attended high school. The median level of education



Soldiers Taking
an IQ Test
During WWI

for native whites was 6.9 years, 4.7 years for immigrants, and just 2.6 years for southern blacks. As many as 31 percent of the recruits were declared illiterate, but the intelligence tests were so primitive that they probably tested social class more than anything else. More than half the recent immigrants from eastern Europe ranked in the “inferior” category. Fully 29 percent of the recruits were rejected as physically unfit for service, a finding that shocked health experts.

Most World War I soldiers were ill-educated and unsophisticated young men from farms, small towns, and urban neighborhoods. They came from all social classes and ethnic groups, yet most were transformed into soldiers. The military experience changed the lives and often the attitudes of many young men and some women. Women contributed to the war effort as telephone operators and clerk typists in the navy and the marines. Some went overseas as army and navy nurses. Others volunteered for a tour of duty with the



“Feminine
Patriotism”

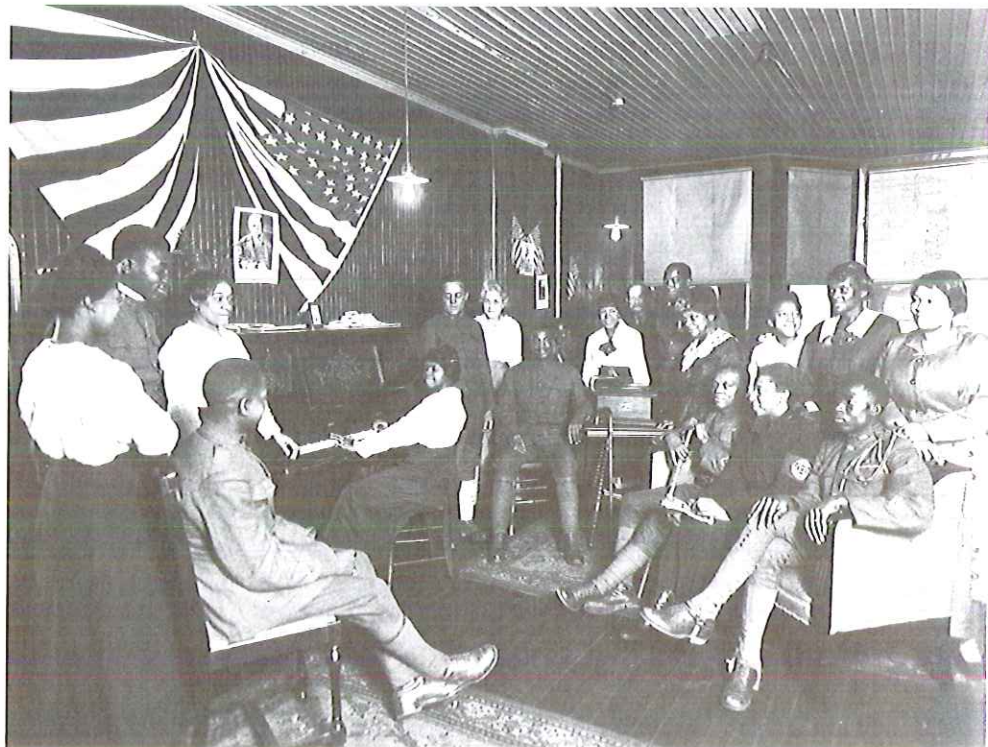
Red Cross, the Salvation Army, or the YMCA. Yet the military experience in World War I was predominantly male. Even going to training camp was a new and often frightening experience. A leave in Paris or London, or even in New York or New Orleans, was an adventure to remember for a lifetime. Even those

who never got overseas or who never saw a battle experienced subtle changes. Many soldiers saw their first movie in the army or had their first contact with trucks and cars. Military service changed the shaving habits of a generation because the new safety razor was standard issue. The war also led to the growing popularity of the cigarette rather than the pipe or cigar because a pack of cigarettes fit comfortably into a shirt pocket and a cigarette could be smoked during a short break. The war experience also caused many men to abandon the pocket watch for the more convenient wristwatch, which had been considered effeminate before the war.

The Black Soldier

Blacks had served in all American wars, and many fought valiantly in the Civil War and the Spanish-American War. Yet black soldiers had most often performed menial work and belonged to segregated units. Most black leaders supported American participation in the war. An exception was Boston journalist William Monroe Trotter, who argued that German atrocities were no worse than the lynching of black men in America. Instead of making the world safe for democracy, he suggested, the government should make “the South safe for Negroes.” But W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of *The Crisis*, urged blacks to close ranks and support the war. He predicted that

Entertaining Black Servicemen Assigned to segregated units, black soldiers were also excluded from white recreation facilities. Here black women from Newark, New Jersey, aided by white social workers, entertain black servicemen. How do you think black men felt about fighting for freedom in a segregated army? (National Archives)



RECOVERING THE PAST

Government Propaganda

All governments produce propaganda. Especially in time of war, governments try to convince their citizens that the cause is important and worthwhile even if it means sacrifice. Before the United States entered the World War I, both Great Britain and Germany presented their side of the conflict through stories planted in newspapers, photographs, and other devices. Some historians argue that the British propaganda depicting the Germans as barbaric Huns who killed little boys and Catholic nuns played a large role in convincing Americans of the righteousness of the Allied cause.

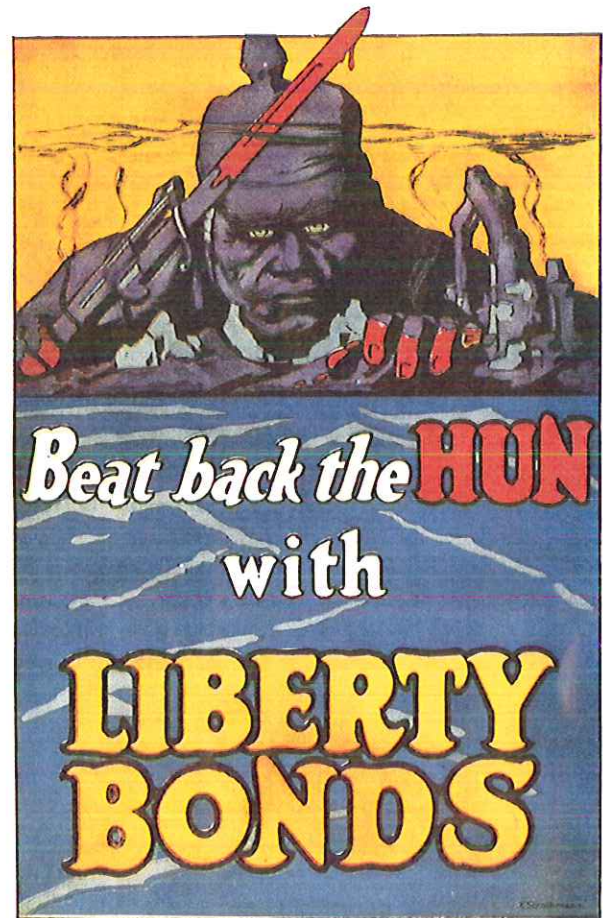
When the United States entered the war, a special committee under the direction of George Creel did its best to persuade Americans that the war was a crusade against evil. The committee organized a national network of "four-minute men," local citizens with the proper political views who could be used to whip up a crowd into a patriotic frenzy. These local rallies, enlivened by bands and parades, urged people of all ages to support the war effort and buy war bonds. The Creel Committee also produced literature for the schools, much of it prepared by college professors who volunteered their services. One pamphlet, titled *Why America Fights Germany*, described in lurid detail a possible German invasion of the United States. The committee also used the new technology of motion pictures, which proved to be the most effective propaganda device of all.



Visual of the Enemy, ca. 1917-1918

There is a narrow line between education and propaganda. As early as 1910, Thomas Edison made films instructing the public about the dangers of tuberculosis, and others produced movies that demonstrated how to avoid everything from typhoid to tooth decay. However, during the war, the government quickly realized the power of the new medium and adopted it to train soldiers, instill patriotism, and help the troops avoid the temptations of alcohol and sex.

After the United States entered World War I, the Commission of Training Camp Activities made a film called *Fit to Fight* that was shown to almost all male servicemen. It was an hour-long drama following the careers of five young recruits. Four of them, by associating with the wrong people and through lack of willpower, caught venereal disease. The film interspersed a simplistic plot with grotesque shots of men with various kinds of venereal disease. The film also glorified athletics,



Liberty Bond propaganda. (The Granger Collection, New York)

especially football and boxing, as a substitute for sex. It emphasized the importance of patriotism and purity for America's fighting force. In one scene, Bill Hale, the only soldier in the film to remain pure, breaks up a peace rally and beats up the speaker: "It serves you right," the pacifist's sister remarks, "I'm glad Billy punched you."

Fit to Fight was so successful that the government commissioned another film, *The End of the Road*, to be shown to women who lived near military bases. The film is the story of Vera and Mary. Although still reflecting progressive attitudes, the film's message is somewhat different from that of *Fit to Fight*. Vera's strict mother tells her daughter that sex is dirty, leaving Vera to pick up "distorted and obscene" information about sex on the street. She falls victim to the first man who comes



Scene from *Fit to Fight*. (War Department, Commission on Training Camps)

along and contracts a venereal disease. Mary, in contrast, has an enlightened mother who explains where babies come from. When Mary grows up, she rejects marriage and becomes a professional woman, a nurse. In the end, she falls in love with a doctor and gets married. *The End of the Road* has a number of subplots and many frightening shots of syphilitic sores. Several illustrations show the dangers of indiscriminate sex. Among other things, the film preached the importance of science and sex education and the need for self-control.



Anti-VD poster issued by the U.S. Commission on Training Camp Activities. (Army Educational Commission)

REFLECTING ON THE PAST What do the anti-VD films tell us about the attitudes, ideas, and prejudices of the World War I period? What images do they project about men, women, and gender roles? Would you find the same kind of moralism, patriotism, and fear of VD today? How have attitudes toward sex changed? Were you shown sex education films in school? Were they like these? Who sponsored them? What can historians learn from such films? Does the government produce propaganda today?

the war experience would cause the “walls of prejudice” to crumble gradually before the “onslaught of common sense.” But the walls did not crumble, and the black soldier never received equal or fair treatment during the war.

The Selective Service Act made no mention of race, and African Americans in most cases registered without protest. Many whites, especially in the South, feared having too many blacks trained in the use of arms. In some areas, draft boards exempted single white men but drafted black fathers. The most notorious situation existed in Atlanta, where one draft board inducted 97 percent of the African Americans registered but exempted 85 percent of the whites.

Still, most southern whites found it difficult to imagine a black man in the uniform of the U.S. Army.

White attitudes toward African Americans sometimes led to conflict. In August 1917, violence erupted in Houston, Texas, involving soldiers from the regular army’s all-black Twenty-Fourth Infantry Division. Harassed by the Jim Crow laws, which had been tightened for their benefit, a group of soldiers went on a rampage, killing 17 white civilians. More than 100 soldiers were court-martialed; 13 were condemned to death. Those convicted were hanged three days later before any appeals could be filed.

This violence, coming only a month after the race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, brought on in part by the migration of southern blacks to the area, caused great concern about the handling of African American soldiers. Secretary of War Baker made it clear that the army had no intention of upsetting the status quo. The basic government policy was complete segregation and careful distribution of black units throughout the country.

African Americans were prohibited from joining the marines and restricted to menial jobs in the navy. A great many black nurses volunteered to go to France, but only six actually went—and they were assigned to black units. In 1918, official policy and American prejudice would not allow black women to care for white men. While some African Americans were trained as junior officers in the army, they were assigned to the all-black Ninety-Second Division, where the high-ranking officers were white. But few black officers or enlisted men would see

action. A staff report decided that “the mass of colored drafted men cannot be used for combatant troops.” Most of the black soldiers, including about 80 percent of those sent to France, worked as stevedores and common laborers under the supervision

of white, noncommissioned officers. “Everyone who has handled colored labor knows that the gang bosses must be white if any work is to be done,” remarked Lieutenant Colonel U. S. Grant, the grandson of the Civil War general. Other black soldiers acted as servants, drivers, and porters for the white officers. It was a demeaning and ironic policy for a government that advertised itself as standing for justice, honor, and democracy.

Over There

The conflict that Wilson called the war “to make the world safe for democracy” had become a contest of stalemate and slaughter. To this ghastly war, Americans made important contributions. In fact, without their help, the Allies might have lost. But the American contribution was most significant only in the war’s final months. When the United States entered the conflict in the spring of 1917, the fighting had dragged on for nearly three years. After a few rapid advances and retreats, the war in western Europe had settled down to a tactical and bloody stalemate. The human costs of trench warfare were horrifying. In one battle in 1916, a total of 60,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded in a single day, yet the battle lines did not move an inch. By the spring of 1917, the British and French armies were down to their last reserves. Italy’s army had nearly collapsed. In the East, the Russians were engaged in a bitter internal struggle, and in November, the Bolshevik Revolution would cause them to sue for a separate peace, freeing the German divisions on the eastern front to join in one final assault in the West. The Allies desperately needed fresh American troops, but those troops had to be trained, equipped, and transported to the front. That took time.

A few token American regiments arrived in France in the summer of 1917 under the command of General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing, a tall, serious, Missouri-born graduate of West Point. He had fought in the Spanish-American War and led the expedition to track down Pancho Villa in Mexico in 1916. When the first troops marched in a parade in Paris on July 4, 1917, the emotional French crowd shouted, “*Vive les Américains*” and showered them with flowers, hugs, and kisses. But the American commanders worried that many of their soldiers were so inexperienced they did not even know how to march, let alone fight. The first Americans saw action near Verdun in October 1917. By March 1918, more than 300,000 American soldiers had reached France, and by November 1918, more than 2 million.



IMAGE
African
American
Recruiting
Poster



AUDIO
Over There



DOCUMENT
Statement to
French
Authorities
Concerning
Black American
Troops (1918)



African
American
Soldiers Under
French
Command

One reason that the U.S. forces were slow to see actual combat was Pershing's insistence that they be kept separate from the French and British divisions. An exception was made for four regiments of black soldiers who were assigned to the French army. Despite the American warning to the French not to "spoil the Negroes" by allowing them to mix with the French civilian population, these soldiers fought so well that the French later awarded three of the regiments the Croix de Guerre, their highest unit citation.

In the spring of 1918, with Russia out of the war and the British blockade becoming more and more effective, the Germans launched an all-out, desperate offensive to win the war before full American military and industrial power became a factor in the contest. By late May, the Germans had pushed to within 50 miles of Paris. American troops were thrown into the line and helped stem the German advance at Château-Thierry, Belleau Wood, and Cantigny, place names that proud survivors would later endow with almost sacred significance. Americans also took part in the Allied offensive led by General Ferdinand Foch of France in the summer of 1918.

In September, more than half a million American troops fought near St. Mihiel; this was the first battle

in which large numbers of Americans were pressed into action. One enlisted man remembered that he "saw a sight which I shall never forget. It was zero hour and in one instant the entire front as far as the eye could reach in either direction was a sheet of flame, while the heavy artillery made the earth quake." The Americans suffered more than 7,000 casualties, but they captured more than 16,000 German soldiers. The victory, even if it came against exhausted and retreating German troops, seemed to vindicate Pershing's insistence on a separate American army. British and French commanders were critical of what they considered the disorganized, inexperienced, and ill-equipped American forces.

In the fall of 1918, the combined British, French, and American armies drove the Germans back. Faced with low morale among the German soldiers, the mutiny of the German fleet, and the surrender of Austria, Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated on November 8, and the armistice was signed on November 11. More than 1 million American soldiers took part in the final Allied offensive near the Meuse River and the Argonne forest. It was in this battle that Edmund Arpin was wounded. Many of the men were inexperienced, and some, who had been rushed through training as

"90-day wonders," had never handled a rifle before arriving in France. There were many disastrous mistakes and bungled situations. The most famous blunder was the "lost battalion." An American unit advanced beyond its support and was cut off and surrounded. The battalion suffered 70 percent casualties before being rescued.

The performance of the all-black Ninety-Second Division was also controversial. The Ninety-Second had been deliberately dispersed around the United States and had never trained as a unit. Its higher officers were white, and they repeatedly asked to be transferred. Many of its men were only partly trained and poorly equipped, and they were continually being called away from their military duties to work as stevedores and common laborers. At the last



Eugene
Kennedy, A
"Doughboy"
Describes the
Fighting Front
(1918)



Deadly Weapons of the Great War New technology made the Great War more horrible in some ways than past wars. British soldiers wearing primitive gas masks operate a Vickers machine gun. The machine gun effectively neutralized the tactic of massive infantry charges, while poison gas attacks increased the number of soldiers with "shell shock" or mental illness. How has war changed since 1918? Is mental illness still a factor among soldiers in time of war? (Imperial War Museum, London)

AMERICAN VOICES

Private John Figarovsky, American Soldiers Get a Warm Welcome in France

The United States entered the war late, but when American soldiers finally arrived in France they were greeted with enthusiasm by French soldiers and civilians who were tired of the terrible war. The American soldiers thought of the war as a great adventure.

When we landed, one of the first things we did was to parade through the town of St. Nazaire. The French people were just delirious with joy, because in the Americans they saw hope for the future. As we marched through town, the sidewalks and even the gutters on both sides were full of people and we felt so proud and important that such a fuss was being made over us. The mayor even proclaimed a holiday.

Most of us were young fellows, and we must have made a good impression because the French girls would jump in the ranks and throw flowers at us and scream and even kiss some of the soldiers. But we kept on, you know, with army discipline, we tried not to notice too much of that. It was such a wonderful reception, we never imagined anything like that would happen, that we'd be welcomed so

warmly. They must have admired us a lot, and of course we were looking forward to the great adventure ahead of us. We were looking forward to the fight—we didn't know how serious it was because we'd never been to war before. But we didn't stay in St. Nazaire for long, we were marched about three miles out of town where they had some cantonments.

When we trained with the French troops they were very cooperative. Most of them were short, and it seemed they'd had their clothes on for a year—they hardly ever changed their clothes. But they were very nonchalant about everything. I guess they were tired after four years of warfare. And they were surprised to see that we were so eager to get into the fight.

- How long do you suppose the Americans' eagerness to get into the fight lasted?
- Have the French always seen Americans as the hope of the future?

minute during the Meuse-Argonne offensive, the Ninety-Second was assigned to a particularly difficult position on the line. They had no maps and no wire-cutting equipment. Battalion commanders lost contact with their men, and on several occasions, the men broke and ran in the face of enemy fire. The division was withdrawn in disgrace, and for years politicians and military leaders used this incident to point out that black soldiers would never make good fighting men, ignoring the difficulties under which the Ninety-Second fought and the valor shown by black troops assigned to the French army.

The war produced a few American heroes. Joseph Orlahombie, a Choctaw, overran several German machine gun nests and captured more than 100 German soldiers. Sergeant Alvin York, a former conscientious objector from Tennessee, single-handedly killed or captured 160 Germans using only his rifle and pistol. The press made him a celebrity, but his heroics were not typical. Artillery, machine guns, and, near the end, tanks, trucks, and airplanes won the war. "To be shelled when you are in the open is one of the most terrible of human experiences," one

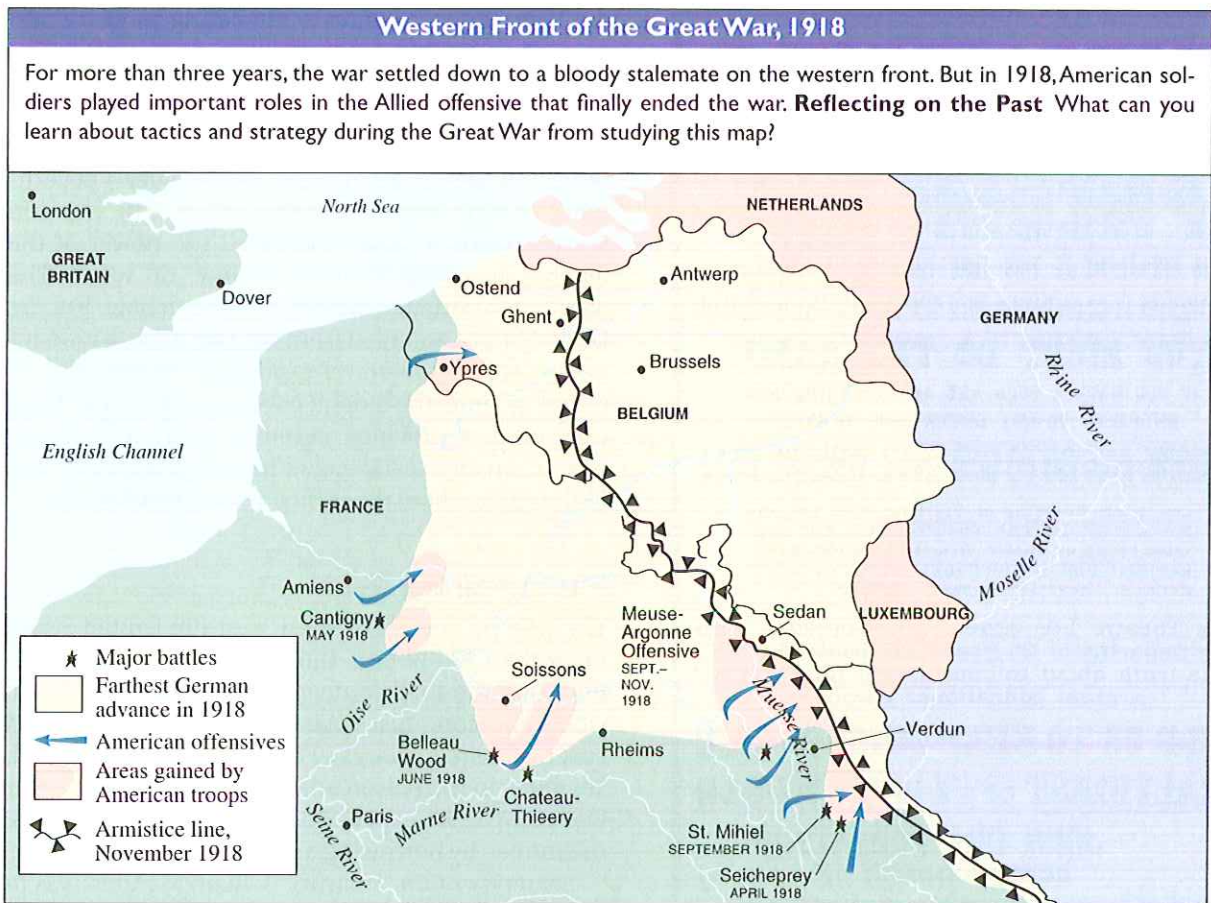
American soldier wrote. "You hear this rushing, tearing sound as the thing comes toward you, and then the huge explosion as it strikes, and infinitely worse, you see its hideous work as men stagger, fall, struggle, or lie quiet and unrecognizable."

With few exceptions, the Americans fought hard and well. Although the French and British criticized American inexperience and disarray, they admired their exuberance, their "pep," and their ability to move large numbers of men and equipment efficiently. Sometimes it seemed that Americans simply overwhelmed the enemy with their numbers. They suffered more than 120,000 casualties in the Meuse-Argonne campaign alone. One officer estimated that he lost 10 soldiers for every German his men killed in the final offensive.

The United States entered the war late but still lost more than 48,000 service personnel and had many more wounded. Disease claimed 15 of every 1,000 soldiers each year (compared with 65 per 1,000 in the Civil War). But American losses were tiny compared to those suffered by the European



French Couple
Welcomes Two
U.S. Soldiers



armies. The British lost 900,000 men, the French 1.4 million, and the Russians 1.7 million. Nor was the financial burden as costly for the United States as for its Allies. American units fired French artillery pieces; American soldiers were usually transported in British ships and wore helmets and other equipment modeled after the British. The United States

purchased clothing and blankets, even horses, in Europe. American fliers, including heroes such as Eddie Rickenbacker, flew French and British planes. The United States contributed huge amounts of men and supplies in the last months of the war, and that finally tipped the balance. But it had entered late and sacrificed little compared with France and England. That would influence the peace settlement.



World War I Losses

The total cost of the war was estimated at more than \$330 billion. The cost in human life was even more horrible. The number of known dead was placed at about 10 million men and the wounded at about 20 million, distributed among chief combatants as follows (round numbers). **Reflecting on the Past** Which countries bore the brunt of dead and wounded? How did this influence the peace settlement?

	Dead	Wounded	Prisoner
Great Britain	947,000	2,122,000	192,000
France	1,385,000	3,044,000	446,000
Russia	1,700,000	4,950,000	500,000
Italy	460,000	947,000	530,000
United States	115,000	206,000	4,500
Germany	1,808,000	4,247,000	618,000
Austria-Hungary	1,200,000	3,620,000	200,000
Turkey	325,000	400,000	—

A Global Pandemic

The end of the Great War brought relief and joy to many, but in the fall of 1918 an influenza pandemic swept around the world, killing an estimated 50 million people, with 675,000 deaths in the United States in a little more than a year. The Spanish Flu, as it was called (although there is no evidence that it originated in Spain), seems to have started at about the same time in Europe, Asia, America, and even in remote Eskimo villages. Only a small percentage of those who caught the disease died from it, but unlike most epidemics, it hit hardest among young adults. More than 43,000 American servicemen died from

INFLUENZA
 FREQUENTLY COMPLICATED WITH
PNEUMONIA
 IS PREVALENT AT THIS TIME THROUGHOUT AMERICA.
 THIS THEATRE IS COOPERATING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.
YOU MUST DO THE SAME
 IF YOU HAVE A COLD AND ARE COUGHING AND
 SNEEZING. DO NOT ENTER THIS THEATRE
GO HOME AND GO TO BED UNTIL YOU ARE WELL

Coughing, Sneezing or Spitting Will Not Be Permitted In The Theatre. In case you must cough or sneeze, do so in your own handkerchief, and if the coughing or sneezing persists leave the theatre at once.

This Theatre has agreed to co-operate with the Department Of Health in disseminating the truth about Influenza, and thus serve a great educational purpose.

HELP US TO KEEP CHICAGO THE HEALTHIEST CITY IN THE WORLD

JOHN DILL ROBERTSON
 COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH

A Warning about the Influenza Pandemic This poster was distributed in 1918 to movie theaters in Chicago by the Commissioner of Health. The language of the poster reveals the fear and near panic that many Americans felt in the face of the deadly flu epidemic. Do posters like this do any good? (*National Library of Medicine*)

the flu (almost as many as died on the battlefield). Early in the epidemic, rumors blamed German germ warfare for the disease, but the German army was infected as well. No antibiotics or shots could prevent or cure the disease, and the surgical masks required in some cities did no good. Even President Wilson came near death from the disease in the spring of 1919. The flu of 1918–1919 killed more people in a short time than any event in human history, perhaps 20 million worldwide. The speed with which the disease spread around the world was another reminder of how the modern world was interconnected and isolation was impossible. The virus that caused the outbreak has never been identified.

DOMESTIC IMPACT OF THE WAR

For at least 30 years before the United States entered the Great War, a debate raged over the proper role of

the federal government in regulating industry and protecting people who could not protect themselves. Controversy also centered on the question of how much power the federal government should have to tax and control individuals and corporations and the proper relation of the federal government to state and local governments. The war and the problems it raised increased the power of the federal government in a variety of ways. The wartime experience did not end the debate, but the United States emerged from the war a more modern nation, with more power residing in Washington. At the same time, the federal government with its huge expenditures provided immense economic advantage to businesses engaged in war production and to the cities where those businesses were located.

Financing the War

The war, by one calculation, cost the United States more than \$33 billion. Interest and veterans' benefits bring the total to nearly \$112 billion. Early on, when an economist suggested that the war might cost the United States \$10 billion, everyone laughed. Yet many in the Wilson administration knew the war was going to be expensive, and they set out to raise the money by borrowing and by increasing taxes.

Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo was in charge of financing the war. Studying the policies that treasury secretary Salmon Chase had followed during the Civil War, he decided that Chase had made a mistake in not appealing to the emotions of the people. A war must be a "kind of crusade," he remarked. He also learned from the British, French, and German propaganda campaigns. McAdoo's campaign to sell liberty bonds to ordinary American citizens at a very low interest rate appealed to American loyalty. "Lick a Stamp and Lick the Kaiser," one poster urged. Celebrities such as film stars Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks promoted the bonds, and McAdoo employed the Boy Scouts to sell them. "Every Scout to Save a Soldier" was the slogan. He even implied that people who did not buy bonds were traitors. "A man who can't lend his government \$1.25 per week at the rate of 4% interest is not entitled to be an American citizen," he announced. A banner flew over the main street in Gary, Indiana, that made the point of the campaign clear: "ARE YOU WORTHY TO BE FOUGHT AND DIED FOR? BUY LIBERTY BONDS."

The public responded enthusiastically, but they discovered after the war that their bonds had dropped to about 80 percent of face value. Because the interest on the bonds was tax exempt, well-to-do



"Buy War Bonds" Poster

citizens profited more from buying the bonds than did ordinary men, women, and children. But the wealthy were not as pleased with McAdoo's other plan to finance the war: raising taxes. The War Revenue Act of 1917 boosted the tax rate sharply, levied a tax on excess profits, and increased estate taxes. The next year, another bill raised the tax on the largest incomes to 77 percent. The wealthy protested, but a number of progressives were just as unhappy with the bill, for they wanted to confiscate all income over \$100,000 a year. Despite taxes and liberty bonds, however, World War I, like the Civil War, was financed in large part by inflation. Food prices, for example, nearly doubled between 1917 and 1919.



Mrs. Hearst Reviews a Liberty Loan Parade

Increasing Federal Power

The major wars of the twentieth century made huge demands on the nations that fought them and helped transform their governments. The United States was no exception. At first, Wilson tried to work through a variety of state agencies to mobilize the nation's resources. The need for more centralized control and authority soon led Wilson to create a series of federal agencies to deal with the war emergency. The first crisis was food. Poor grain crops for two years and an increasing demand for American food in Europe caused shortages. Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover, a young engineer who had won great prestige as head of the Commission for Relief of Belgium, to direct the Food Administration. Hoover instituted a series of "wheatless" and "meatless" days and urged housewives to cooperate. Women emerged during the war as the most important group of consumers. The government urged them to save, just as later it would urge them to buy.

The Wilson administration used the authority of the federal government to organize resources for the war effort. The National Research Council and the National Advisory Committee on Aeronautics helped mobilize scientists in industry and the universities to produce strategic materials formerly imported from Germany, especially optical glass and chemicals to combat poison-gas warfare.

American companies also tried to reproduce German color lithography, which had dominated the market for postcards, posters, and magazine illustrations before the war. Perhaps most valuable were the efforts of scientists in industry to improve radio, airplanes, and instruments to predict the weather and detect submarines. The war stimulated research and development and made the



"Join a Sheep Club" Poster, 1917-1919

United States less dependent on European science and technology.

The War Industries Board, led by Bernard Baruch, a shrewd Wall Street broker, used the power of the government to control scarce materials and, on occasion, to set prices and priorities. Cooperation among government, business, and university scientists to promote research and develop new products was one legacy of the war. The government itself went into the shipbuilding business. The largest shipyard, at Hog Island near Philadelphia, employed as many as 35,000 workers but did not launch its first ship until the late summer of 1918. San Francisco and Seattle also became major shipbuilding centers, while San Diego owed its rapid growth to the presence of a major naval base.

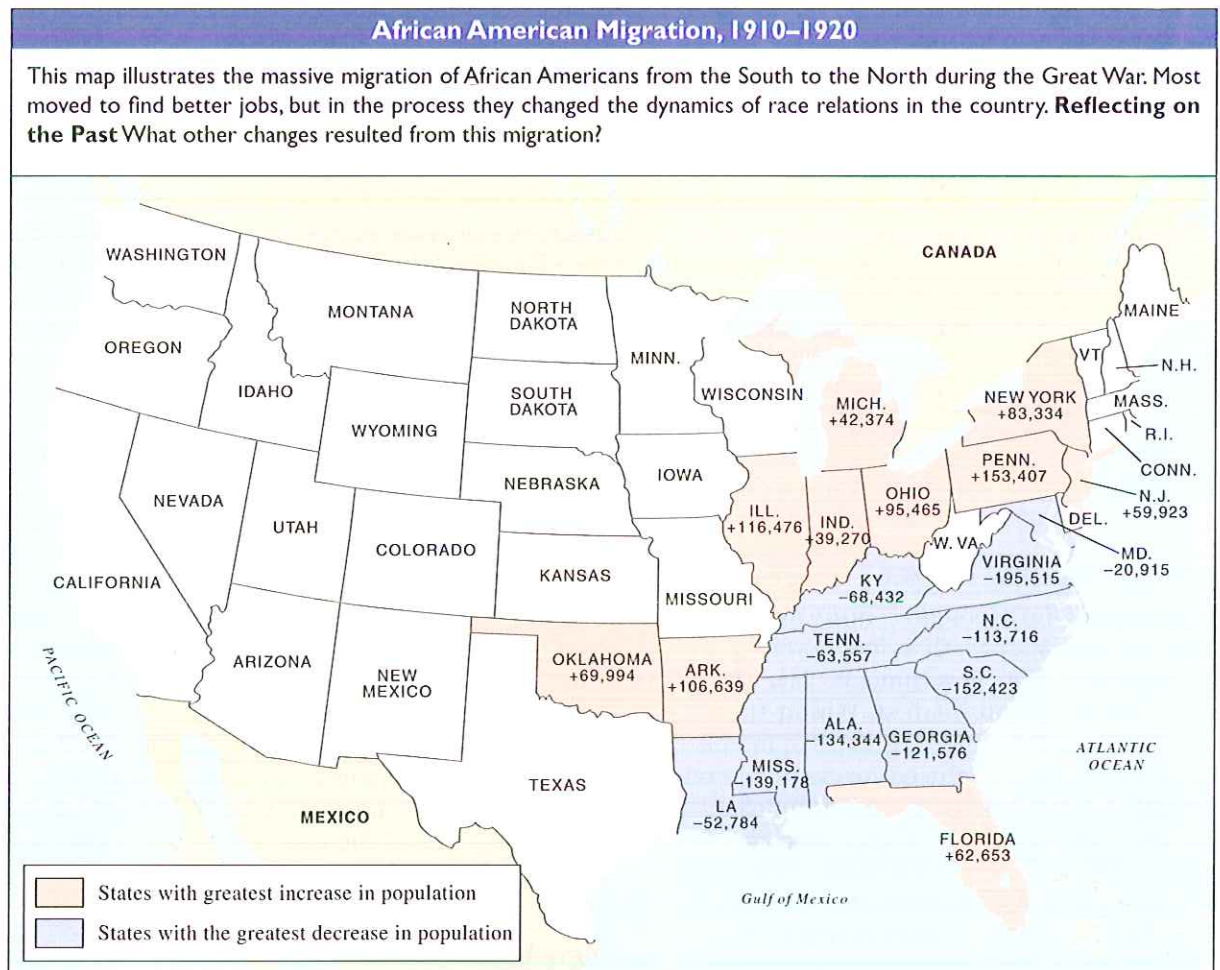
The government also got into the business of running the railroads. When a severe winter and a lack of coordination brought the rail system near collapse in December 1917, Wilson put all the nation's railroads under the control of the United Railway Administration. The government spent more than \$500 million to improve the rails and equipment, and in 1918, the railroads did run more efficiently than they had under private control. Some businessmen complained of "war socialism" and of increased rules and regulations. Like it or not, the war increased the influence of the federal government.

War Workers

The Wilson administration sought to protect and extend the rights of organized labor during the war, while mobilizing the workers necessary to keep the factories running. The National War Labor Board insisted on adequate wages and reduced hours, and it tried to prevent exploitation of women and children working under government contracts. On one occasion, when a munitions plant refused to accept the War Labor Board's decision, the government simply took over the factory. When workers threatened to strike for better wages or hours or for greater control over the workplace, the board often ruled that they either work or be drafted into the army.

The Wilson administration favored the conservative labor movement of Samuel Gompers and the AFL, and the Justice Department put the radical Industrial Workers of the World "out of business." Beginning in September 1917, federal agents conducted massive raids on IWW offices and arrested most of its leaders.

Samuel Gompers took advantage of the crisis to strengthen the AFL's position to speak for labor. He supported the administration policies by making it



clear that he opposed the IWW as well as socialists and communists. Convincing Wilson that it was important to protect the rights of organized labor during wartime, he announced that “no other policy is compatible with the spirit and methods of democracy.” As the AFL won a voice in home-front policy, its membership increased from 2.7 million in 1916 to more than 4 million in 1917. Organized labor’s wartime gains, however, would prove only temporary.

The war opened up industrial employment opportunities for black men. With 4 million men in the armed forces and the flow of immigrants interrupted by the war, American manufacturers for the first time hired African Americans in large numbers. In Chicago before the war, only 3,000 black men held factory jobs; in 1920, more than 15,000 did.



African American Population, 1910 and 1950

Northern labor agents and the railroads actively recruited southern blacks, but the news of jobs in northern cities spread by word of mouth as well. By 1920, more than 300,000 blacks had joined the “great

migration” north. This massive movement of people, which continued into the 1920s, had a permanent impact on the South as well as on the northern cities. Like African Americans, thousands of Mexicans headed north into the United States, as immigration officials relaxed the regulations because of the need for labor in the farms and factories of the Southwest.

The war also created new employment opportunities for women. Posters and patriotic speeches urged women to do their duty for the war effort. One poster showed a woman at her typewriter, the shadow of a soldier in the background, with the message: “STENOGRAPHERS, WASHINGTON NEEDS YOU.” Women responded to these appeals out of patriotism, as well as out of a need to increase their earnings and to make up for inflation, which diminished real wages. Women went into every kind of industry. They labored in brickyards and in heavy industry, became conductors on the railroad,



African American Women Workers



Letters from the Great Migration

AMERICAN VOICES

An African American Woman Decides to Move North

Many African Americans wrote to the *Chicago Defender*, an African American newspaper, during the war seeking information about transportation to the North.

Mobile, Ala., April 25, 1917

Sir: I was reading in that paper about the Colored race and while reading it I seen in it where cars [the railroad] would be here for the 15 of May which is one month from to day. Will you be so kind as to let me know where they are coming to and I will be glad to know because I am a poor woman and have a husband and five children living and three dead one single and two twin girls six months old today and my husband only get \$1.50 a day and the mother of 8 children 25 years old and I want to get out of this dog hold because I don't know what I am raising they up for in this place

and I want to get to Chicago where I know they will be raised and my husband crazy to get there because he know he can get more to raise his children and will you please let me know where the cars is going to stop to so that he can come where he can take care of me and my children. He get there a while and then he send for me. . . .

- Why were African Americans so eager to move to the North during the war?
- Did they find the promised land in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia?

Source: "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916–1918," Collected under the direction of Emmett J. Scott, *Journal of Negro History* (July and October 1919). Copyright The Association for the Study of Negro History and Life.



Icewomen Women proved during the war that they could do "men's work." These two young women deliver ice, a backbreaking task, but one that was necessary in the days before electric refrigerators. Despite women like these, the war did not change the American ideal that women's proper place was in the home. Has that ideal changed since 1918? (*National Archives*)

and turned out shells in munitions plants. They even organized the Woman's Land Army to mobilize female labor for the farms. They demonstrated that women could do any kind of job, whatever the physical or intellectual demands. Black women left domestic service for jobs in textile mills, even in the stockyards. However, racial discrimination, even in the North, prevented them from moving too far up the occupational ladder.

Even though women demonstrated that they could take over jobs once thought suitable only for men, their progress during the war proved temporary. Only about 5 percent of the women employed during the war were new to the workforce, and almost all of them were unmarried. For most, it meant a shift of occupations or a move up to a better-paying position. Moreover, the war accelerated trends already underway. It increased the need for telephone operators, sales personnel, secretaries, and other white-collar workers, and in these occupations, women soon became a majority. Telephone operator, for example, became an almost exclusively female job. By 1917, women represented 99 percent of all operators as the telephone network spanned the nation.

In the end, the war did provide limited opportunities for some women, but it did not change the dominant perception that a woman's place was in the home. After the war was over, the men returned, and the gains made by women almost disappeared. There were 8 million women in the workforce in 1910 but only 8.5 million in 1920.

The Climax of Progressivism

Many progressives, especially the social justice progressives, opposed U.S. entry into the war until a few months before the nation declared war. But after April 1917, many began to see the “social possibilities of war.” They deplored the death and destruction, the abridgment of freedom of speech, and the patriotic spirit that accompanied the war. But they praised the social planning the conflict stimulated. They approved of the Wilson administration’s support for collective bargaining, the eight-hour workday, and protection for women and children in industry. They applauded Secretary of War Baker when he announced, “We cannot afford, when we are losing boys in France, to lose children in the United States at the same time.” They welcomed the experiments with government-owned housing projects, woman suffrage, and Prohibition. Many endorsed the government takeover of the railroads and control of business during the war.

One of the best examples of the progressives’ influence on wartime activities was the Commission on Training Camp Activities, set up early in the war to solve the problem of mobilizing, entertaining, and protecting American servicemen at home and abroad. This experiment was a uniquely American effort; no other country tried anything like it. The chairman of the commission was Raymond Fosdick, a former settlement worker. He appointed a number of experts from the Playground Association, the YMCA, and social work agencies. They set out to organize community singing and baseball, establish post exchanges and theaters, and even provide university extension lectures to educate the servicemen. The overriding assumption was that the military experience would help produce better citizens, people who would be ready to vote for social reform once they returned to civilian life.

The Commission on Training Camp Activities also incorporated the progressive crusades against alcohol and prostitution. The Military Draft Act prohibited the sale of liquor to men in uniform and gave the president power to establish zones around military bases where prostitution and alcohol would be prohibited. Some military commanders protested, and at least one city official argued that prostitutes were “God-provided means for the prevention of the violation of innocent girls, by men who are exercising their ‘God-given passions.’” Yet the commission, with the full cooperation of the Wilson administration, set out to wipe out sin, or at least to put it out of the reach of servicemen. “Fit to fight” became the motto. “Men must live straight if they would shoot straight,” one official announced.

It was a typical progressive effort combining moral indignation with the use of the latest scientific prophylaxis. The commissioners prided themselves on having eliminated all the red-light districts near the training camps by 1918. When the boys go to France, the secretary of war remarked, “I want them to have invisible armour to take with them. I want them to have armour made up of a set of social habits replacing those of their homes and communities.”

France tested the “invisible armour.” The government, despite hundreds of letters of protest from American mothers, decided that it could not prevent the soldiers from drinking wine in France, but it could forbid them to buy or accept as gifts anything but light wine and beer. If Arpin’s outfit is typical, the soldiers often ignored the rules.

Sex was even more difficult to regulate in France than liquor. Both the British and the French armies had tried to solve the problem of venereal disease by licensing and inspecting prostitutes. Georges Clemenceau, the French premier, found the American attitude toward prostitution difficult to comprehend. On one occasion, he accused the Americans of spreading disease throughout the French civilian population and graciously offered to provide the Americans with licensed prostitutes. General Pershing considered the letter containing the offer “too hot to handle.” So he gave it to Fosdick, who showed it to Baker, who remarked, “For God’s sake, Raymond, don’t show this to the President or he’ll stop the war.” The Americans never accepted Clemenceau’s offer, and he continued to be baffled by the American progressive mentality.

Suffrage for Women

In the fall of 1918, while American soldiers were mobilizing for the final offensive in France and hundreds of thousands of women were working in factories and serving as Red Cross and Salvation Army volunteers near the army bases, Woodrow Wilson spoke before the Senate to ask its support for the vote for women. He argued that woman suffrage was “vital to the winning of the war.” Although Wilson had earlier opposed the vote for women and his positive statement at this late date was not necessary, his voice was a welcome addition to a rising chorus of support for an amendment to the Constitution that would permit the female half of the population to vote.

Many still opposed woman suffrage. Some argued that the vote would make women less feminine, more worldly, and less able to perform their primary tasks as wives and mothers. The National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage protested

that only radicals wanted the vote and declared that woman suffrage, socialism, and feminism were “three branches of the same Social Revolution.”

Carrie Chapman Catt, an efficient administrator and tireless organizer, devised the strategy that finally secured the vote for women. Catt, who grew up in Iowa, joined the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association at age 28 shortly after her first husband died. Before remarrying, she insisted on a legal agreement giving her four months a year away from her husband to work for the suffrage cause. In 1915, she became president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the organization founded in 1890 and based in part on the society organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in 1869.

Catt coordinated the state campaigns with the office in Washington, directing a growing army of dedicated workers. The Washington headquarters sent precise information to the states on ways to pressure congressmen in local districts. In Washington, they maintained a file on each congressman and senator. “There were facts supplied by our members in the states about his personal, political, business and religious affiliations; there were reports of interviews; . . . there was everything that could be discovered about his stand on woman suffrage.”

The careful planning began to produce results, but a group of more militant reformers, impatient with the slow progress, broke off from NAWSA to form the National Women’s Party (NWP) in 1916. This group was led by Alice Paul, a Quaker from New Jersey, who had participated in some of the suffrage battles in England. Paul and her group, using tactics borrowed from the militant British suffragettes, picketed the White House, chained themselves to the fence, and blocked the streets. They carried banners that asked, “MR. PRESIDENT, HOW LONG MUST WOMEN WAIT FOR LIBERTY?” In the summer of 1917, the government arrested more than 200 women and charged them with “obstructing the sidewalk.” That was just the kind of publicity the militants sought, and they made the most of it. Wilson, fearing even more embarrassment, began to cooperate with the more moderate reformers.

The careful organizing of NAWSA and the more militant tactics of the NWP both contributed to the final success of the woman suffrage crusade. The war did not cause the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, but it did accelerate the process. Fourteen state legislatures petitioned Congress in 1917 and 26 in 1919, urging the enactment of the amendment. Early in 1919, the House of Representatives passed the suffrage amendment 304 to 90, and the Senate

approved by a vote of 56 to 25. Fourteen months later, the required 36 states had ratified the amendment, and women at last had the vote. “We are no longer petitioners,” Catt announced in celebration. “We are not wards of the nation, but free and equal citizens.” But the achievement of votes for women would not prove the triumph of feminism, nor the signal for the beginning of a new reform movement that the women leaders expected to occur.

PLANNING FOR PEACE

Woodrow Wilson turned U.S. participation in the war into a religious crusade to change the nature of international relations. It was a war to make the world safe for democracy—and more. On January 8, 1918, in part to counteract the Bolshevik charge that the war was merely a struggle among imperialist powers, he announced his plan to organize the peace. Called the Fourteen Points, it argued for “open covenants of peace openly arrived at,” freedom of the seas, equality of trade, and the self-determination of all peoples. But his most important point, the fourteenth, called for an international organization, a “league of nations,” to preserve peace. The victorious Allies, who had suffered grievously in the conflict, had less idealistic goals than did Wilson for peacemaking.



The Versailles Peace Conference

Late in 1918, Wilson announced that he would head the American delegation at Versailles, near Paris, symbolizing his belief that he alone could overcome the forces of greed and imperialism in Europe and bring peace to the world. Wilson and his entourage of college professors, technical experts, and advisers set sail for Paris on the *George Washington* on December 4, 1918. Secretary of State Lansing, Edward House, and a number of other advisers were there; conspicuously missing, however, was Henry Cabot Lodge, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the most powerful man in the Senate, or any other Republican senator.

Lodge’s absence would prove a serious blunder, for the Republican-controlled Senate would have to approve any treaty negotiated in Paris. It is difficult to explain Wilson’s lack of political insight, except that he disliked Lodge intensely and hated political bargaining and compromise. Preferring to announce great principles, he had supreme confidence in his ability to persuade and to get his way by appealing to the people.

Wilson's self-confidence grew during a triumphant tour through Europe before the conference. The ordinary people greeted him as a savior who had ended the tragic war. But the American president had greater difficulty convincing the political leaders at the peace conference of his genius. In Paris, he faced the reality of European power politics and ambitions and the personalities of David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and Georges Clemenceau of France.

Though Wilson was more naive and idealistic than his European counterparts, he was a clever negotiator who won many concessions at the peace table, sometimes by threatening to go home if his counterparts would not compromise. The European leaders were determined to punish Germany and enlarge their empires. Wilson, however, pressed for a new kind of international relations based on his

Fourteen Points. He achieved limited acceptance of the idea of self-determination, his dream that each national group could have its own country and that the people should decide in what country they wanted to live.

From what had been the Austro-Hungarian empire, the peacemakers carved the new countries of Austria, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. In addition, they created Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, in part to help contain the threat of bolshevism in eastern Europe. France was to occupy the industrial Saar region of Germany for 15 years, after which a plebiscite would then determine whether the people wanted to become a part of Germany or France. Italy gained the port city of Trieste, but not the neighboring city of Fiume, with its largely Italian-speaking population. Dividing up the map of Europe was difficult at best, but perhaps the biggest mistake that Wilson and other major leaders made was to give the small nations little power at the negotiating table and to exclude Soviet Russia entirely.

While Wilson won some points at the peace negotiations, he also had to make major concessions. He was forced to give in to the Allied demand that Germany pay reparations (later set at \$56 billion),



Celebrating the Armistice Gaspard Maillol, a French artist, captures some of the joy and celebration when the Great War finally came to an end on November 11, 1918. That date, Armistice Day, became an important holiday in the United States, a time to honor those who had served and those who had died in World War I. Armistice Day has now been replaced by Veterans Day and has lost some of its special meaning. This painting depicts the harmony and happiness among the various Allies. Did that spirit last? Is it important to have holidays to honor soldiers and their sacrifices? (Gaspard Maillol, *Armistice Day in Paris, France, November 11, 1918*. The Art Archive/Musée des 2 Guerres Mondiales Paris/Dagli Orti.)



Blowing Bubbles, 1919

lose much of its oil- and coal-rich territory, and admit to its war guilt. He accepted a mandate system, to be supervised by the League of Nations, that allowed France and Britain to take over portions of the Middle East and Japan to occupy Germany's colonies in the Pacific as well as China's Shantung province. And he acquiesced when the Allies turned Germany's African colonies into "mandate possessions" because they did not want to allow self-determination of blacks in areas they had colonized.

Although Wilson yielded to the Allies on the fate of Germany's former colonies in Africa, he did not envision a reordering of global race relations. He opposed and finally defeated a measure introduced by Japan to include a clause in the league covenant to support racial equality in all parts of the world. W. E. B. Du Bois, who was in Paris as part of the American delegation at the first Pan-African Congress, supported the Japanese resolution for racial equality. He also spoke against colonialism and criticized "white civilization" for subjugating blacks in various parts of the world. He hoped that the Pan-African movement would become a global effort to unite



France Demands War Reparations—Cartoon



people of color around the world. But Wilson and the other leaders at Versailles ignored Du Bois.

The Versailles treaty did not represent “peace without victory.” The German people felt betrayed. Japan, which had expected to play a larger role in the peace conference, felt slighted. The Italians were angry because they received less territory than they expected. These resentments would later have grave consequences. Wilson also did not win approval for

freedom of the seas or the abolition of trade barriers, but he did gain endorsement for the League of Nations, the organization he hoped would prevent all future wars. The league consisted of a council of the five great powers, elected delegates from the smaller countries, and a World Court to settle disputes. But the key to collective security was contained in Article 10 of the league covenant, which pledged all members “to respect and preserve

against external aggression the territorial integrity” of all other members.

Wilson’s Failed Dream

While the statesmen met at Versailles to sign the peace treaty hammered out in Paris and to divide up Europe, a group of prominent and successful women—lawyers, physicians, administrators, and writers from all over the world, including many from the Central Powers—met in Zurich, Switzerland. Jane Addams led the American delegation that included Jeannette Rankin, a congresswoman from Montana (one of the few states where women could vote). They formed the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. Electing Addams president of the new organization, they denounced the harsh peace terms, which called for disarmament of only one side and exacted great economic penalties against the Central Powers. Prophetically, they predicted that the peace treaty would result in the spread of hatred and anarchy and “create all over Europe discords and animosities which can only lead to future wars.”

Hate and intolerance were legacies of the war. They were present at the Versailles peace conference, where Clemenceau especially wanted to humiliate Germany for the destruction of French lives and property. Also hanging over the conference was the Bolshevik success in Russia. Lenin’s vision of a communist world order, led by workers, conflicted sharply with Wilson’s dream of an anti-imperialist, free-trade, capitalist world. The threat of revolution seemed so great that Wilson and the Allies sent American and Japanese troops into Siberia in 1919 to attempt to defeat the Bolsheviks and create a moderate republic. But by 1920, the troops had failed in their mission. They withdrew, but the Soviet Union never forgot the American intervention and the threat of bolshevism remained.

Most Americans supported the concept of the League of Nations in the summer of 1919. A few, such as former senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, an ardent nationalist, denounced the league as the work of “amiable old male grannies who, over their afternoon tea, are planning to denationalize America and denationalize the nation’s manhood.” But 33 governors endorsed the plan. Yet in the end, the Senate refused to accept American membership in the league. The League of Nations treaty, one commentator has suggested, was killed by its friends and not by its enemies.

First there was Lodge, who had earlier endorsed the idea of some kind of international peacekeeping organization but who objected to Article 10, which obligated all members to come to the defense of the

others in case of attack. He claimed that it would force Americans to fight the wars of foreigners. Lodge, like Wilson, was a lawyer and a scholar as well as a politician. But in background and personality, he was very different from Wilson. A Republican senator since 1893, he had great faith in the power and prestige of the Senate. He disliked all Democrats, especially Wilson, whose idealism and missionary zeal infuriated him.

Then there was Wilson, whose only hope of passage of the treaty in the Senate was a compromise to bring moderate senators to his side. But Wilson refused to compromise or to modify Article 10 to allow Congress the opportunity to decide whether the United States would support the league in time of crisis. Angry at his opponents, who were exploiting the disagreement for political advantage, he stumped the country to convince the American people of the rightness of his plan. The people did not need to be convinced. They greeted Wilson much the way the people of France had. Traveling by train, he gave 37 speeches in 29 cities in the space of three weeks. When he described the graves of American soldiers in France and announced that American boys would never again die in a foreign war, the people responded with applause.

After one dramatic speech in Pueblo, Colorado, Wilson collapsed. His health had been failing for some months, and the strain of the trip was too much. He was rushed back to Washington, where a few days later he suffered a massive stroke. For the next year and a half, the president was incapable of running the government. Protected by his second wife and his closest advisers, Wilson was partially paralyzed, depressed, and unable to lead a fight for the league. For a year and a half, the country limped along without a president.

After many votes and much maneuvering, the Senate finally killed the league treaty in March 1920. Had the United States joined the League of Nations, it probably would have made little difference in the international events of the 1920s and 1930s. Nor would American participation in the league have prevented World War II. The United States did not resign from the world of diplomacy or trade, nor did the United States become isolated from the rest of the world by refusing to join the league. But the rejection of the league treaty was symbolic of the refusal of many Americans to admit that the world and America’s place in it had changed dramatically since 1914. The United States was now one of the world’s most powerful countries, but the American people had not yet integrated that reality into their sense of themselves as a people and a nation.



TIMELINE

<p>1914 Archduke Ferdinand assassinated; World War I begins United States declares neutrality American troops invade Mexico and occupy Veracruz</p> <hr/> <p>1915 Germany announces submarine blockade of Great Britain <i>Lusitania</i> sunk <i>Arabic</i> pledge Marines land in Haiti</p> <hr/> <p>1916 Army Reorganization Bill Expedition into Mexico Wilson re-elected Workmen's Compensation Bill Keatings–Owen Child Labor Bill Federal Farm Loan Act National Women's Party (NWP) founded</p> <hr/> <p>1917 Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare United States breaks relations with Germany</p>	<p>Zimmermann telegram Russian Revolution United States declares war on Germany War Revenue Act Espionage Act Committee on Public Information established Trading with the Enemy Act Selective Service Act War Industries Board formed</p> <hr/> <p>1918 Sedition Act Flu epidemic sweeps nation Wilson's Fourteen Points American troops intervene in Russian Revolution</p> <hr/> <p>1919 Paris peace conference Eighteenth Amendment prohibits alcoholic beverages Senate rejects Treaty of Versailles</p> <hr/> <p>1920 Nineteenth Amendment grants suffrage for women</p>
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Conclusion

The Divided Legacy of the Great War

For Edmund Arpin and many of his friends, who left small towns and urban neighborhoods to join the military forces, the war was a great adventure. For the next decades at American Legion conventions and Armistice Day parades, they continued to celebrate their days of glory. For others who served, the war's results were more tragic. Many died. Some came home injured, disabled by poison gas, or unable to cope with the complex world that had opened up to them.

In a larger sense, the war was both a triumph and a tragedy for the American people. The war created opportunities for blacks who migrated to the North, for women who found more rewarding jobs, and for farmers who suddenly discovered a demand for their products. But much of the promise and the hope proved temporary.

The war provided a certain climax to the progressive movement. The passage of the woman suffrage amendment and the use of federal power in a variety of ways to promote justice and order pleased reformers, who had been working toward these ends for many decades. But the results were often disappointing. Once the war ended, much federal legislation was dismantled or reduced in effectiveness and

woman suffrage had little initial impact on social legislation. Yet the power of the federal government did increase during the war in a variety of ways. From taking control of the railroads to building ships and public housing, to regulating the economy, the government took an active role. Much of that role would diminish in the next decade, but a strong, active government during the war would become a model during the 1930s for those who tried to solve the problem of a major depression.

The Great War marked the coming of age of the United States as a world power. At the end of the war, the United States had become the world's largest creditor and an important factor in international trade and diplomacy. But the country seemed reluctant to accept the new responsibility. The war and the settlement were at least in part responsible for the global depression of the 1930s, and the problems created by the war led directly to another global war, thus causing the next generation to label the conflict of 1914–1918 World War I. The war stimulated patriotism and pride in the country, but it also increased intolerance, cut off immigration from Europe, and led to disillusionment. With this mixed legacy from the war, the country entered the new era of the 1920s.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Why did the United States, so determined to stay out of the Great War in 1914, join the Allied cause enthusiastically in 1917?
2. Why did the war lead to hate, prejudice, and the abridgment of civil liberties?
3. How did the war affect women and minorities in America?
4. Why did Wilson's idealistic peace plan fail?
5. What were the long-range consequences of World War I? For the United States? For the world?

Recommended Reading

Recommended Readings are posted on the Web site for this textbook. Visit www.ablongman.com/nash

Fiction and Film

Erich Maria Remarque highlights the horror of the war in his classic *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), which is told from the German point of view; John Dos Passos describes the war as a bitter experience in *Three Soldiers* (1921); and Ernest Hemingway portrays its futility in *A Farewell to Arms* (1929). *All Quiet on the Western Front* was made into a powerful movie (1930) from Remarque's novel. Told from the German point of view, it became an antiwar classic in the 1930s. *Reds* (1981) is a Hollywood film about

socialists, feminists, and communists. It tells the story of John Reed, Louise Bryant, and their radical friends in Greenwich Village before the war and their support of the Russian Revolution after 1917. *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) is the epic story of how British writer, soldier, and eccentric T. E. Lawrence enlisted the desert tribes of Africa to fight against the Turks during World War I. *Paths of Glory* (1957), a fictionalized version of the Battle of Verdun, gives a good sense of the horrors of trench warfare.

Discovering U.S. History Online

The World War I Document Archive

www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/

This archive contains sources about World War I in general, not just America's involvement.

Lusitania Online

www.lusitania.net

This site presents a background of the luxury liner, information about its crew and its passengers, and accounts of its sinking by a German submarine.

Letters of World War I

www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/world_war_1/197437.stm

A special collection of illustrated articles on World War I, including "The War to End All Wars," "War Revolution in Russia," "The Christmas Truce," and many others. Several collections of letters home are included as well.

Great War Series

www.wtj.com/wars/greatwar

This online journal has a collection of World War I archives and several World War I articles, including "The Western Front" and "The Eastern Front."

The Balkan Causes of World War I

www.firstworldwar.com/features/balkan_causes.htm

This illustrated essay on the role of the Balkan events in precipitating World War I also includes links to a year-by-year timeline of the war.

World War I Trenches

www.worldwar1.com

Presented and maintained by a WWI enthusiast, this site provides information on armory, war maps, photos, documents, timelines, and other data concerning the prosecution of the world's first global war.