

The Great War

World War I, 1914–1918

“The world must be made safe
for democracy.”

President WOODROW WILSON, 1917 War Address

On May 7, 1915, Ernest Cowper was chatting with a friend aboard the *Lusitania*, a British passenger ship traveling from New York to the British Isles, as it passed the lush, green coast of Ireland. Looking into the water, Cowper suddenly felt a stab of terror when he spotted a German torpedo just seconds before it hit the ship. Peering through the periscope the German

submarine captain watched hundreds of people jumping into the water in a desperate attempt to reach empty lifeboats. The ship sank within eighteen minutes, killing 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans. Cowper was one of the lucky survivors, a Toronto newsman whose vivid recollections soon appeared in American newspapers.

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was a defining moment for the United States during World War I, often also called the Great War. The nation had remained neutral when the war began nine months earlier in August 1914, refusing to choose sides among the European powers involved, led by Great Britain and France on one side and Germany and Austria-Hungary on the other. When, however, the war spread to the high seas and American business initiated a lucrative arms trade with Great Britain, Americans increasingly found themselves in the line of fire.

American newspapers highlighted the tragic deaths of innocent women and children on the *Lusitania*, stirring outrage against Germany. One U.S. news report described the corpse of a mother embracing her three-month old baby, noting that “her face wears a half smile. Her baby’s head rests against her breast. No one has tried to separate them.” This description inspired the first American war-era propaganda poster, pictured here. The image, by artist Fred Spear, showed a mother and her baby sinking into the depths of the sea accompanied by one word—“Enlist.”

Not all Americans, however, blamed Germany for the attack. German Americans pointed out that the *Lusitania* was secretly transporting munitions from New York to Britain. Rural Americans castigated Northeast business interests for trading primarily with Britain, fearful that favoring Britain and its allies would draw America into the war. President Woodrow Wilson offered a competing vision of the *Lusitania*’s importance. Through increasingly strident diplomacy Wilson decided to defend the rights of neutrals to travel wherever they liked. This stance put the United States on a collision course with Germany that resulted in America entering the war two years later. Once America entered the war, President Wilson gave the country a larger purpose than defeating Germany. Introducing a new, and controversial, vision of American world leadership, Wilson promised to achieve a lasting peace by spreading democracy throughout the world.

To mobilize the nation’s economic and manpower resources to fight the grim trench warfare underway along the Western Front, the government unfurled a far-reaching propaganda campaign, offered unprecedented support to labor unions, and raised a mass army through conscription. Americans suffered severe casualties in a short time, and their war effort helped the Allies defeat Germany by November 1918. The nation expected a peace treaty that embodied Wilson’s promise to make this conflict “the war to end all wars.” Americans held conflicting visions, however, over how to achieve this goal.

What meaning does this poster attach to the sinking of the *Lusitania*?

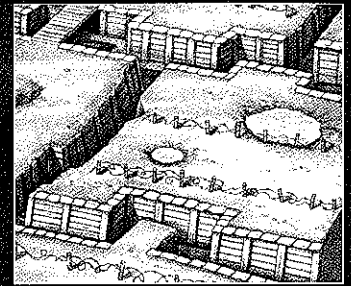
NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal no-

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ENLIST

The Decision for War

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that

In the summer of 1914, Europe ignited as war swept across the continent (20.1). Instead of the easy victory that many Europeans expected, the war turned into a prolonged global struggle that took the lives of millions of men. World War I pitted the Allies, initially composed of Britain, France, Belgium, and Russia, and eventually totaling eighteen nations including Italy and the United States, against the Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, expanding by 1915 to include the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria.

Europeans rushed into battle without taking the time to pause and consider what a general war would mean. Americans, however, followed a completely different road to war, openly debating whether this was their war to fight. It took two and a half years for the United States to enter the war. By then few illusions remained about the horror of modern warfare. Unlike Europeans in 1914 Americans knew they were committing to total war—and that winning would require the complete economic and psychological mobilization of the home front.

The War in Europe

On June 28, 1914, a nineteen-year-old Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip arrived in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, as part of a terrorist band that intended to assassinate the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, who was also visiting the city. Princip belonged to the Black Hand, a Slavic nationalist group based in the neighboring independent country of Serbia that longed to free Bosnia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The group's first attempt to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand failed when the bomb that one of Princip's conspirators threw at the archduke's motorcade bounced off the side of the car carrying him, injuring two Austrian officers instead. Eluding the police Princip disappeared into the crowd. Later in the day the archduke made a fateful decision to visit his injured staff members. On the way to the hospital, the driver made a wrong turn down a narrow street and began slowing down to put the car in reverse. Standing at the end of the street was Princip, who could barely believe his good fortune as he saw the archduke and his pregnant wife coming toward him. Seizing the opportunity he stepped forward, pulled a pistol from his pocket, and fired, killing them both.

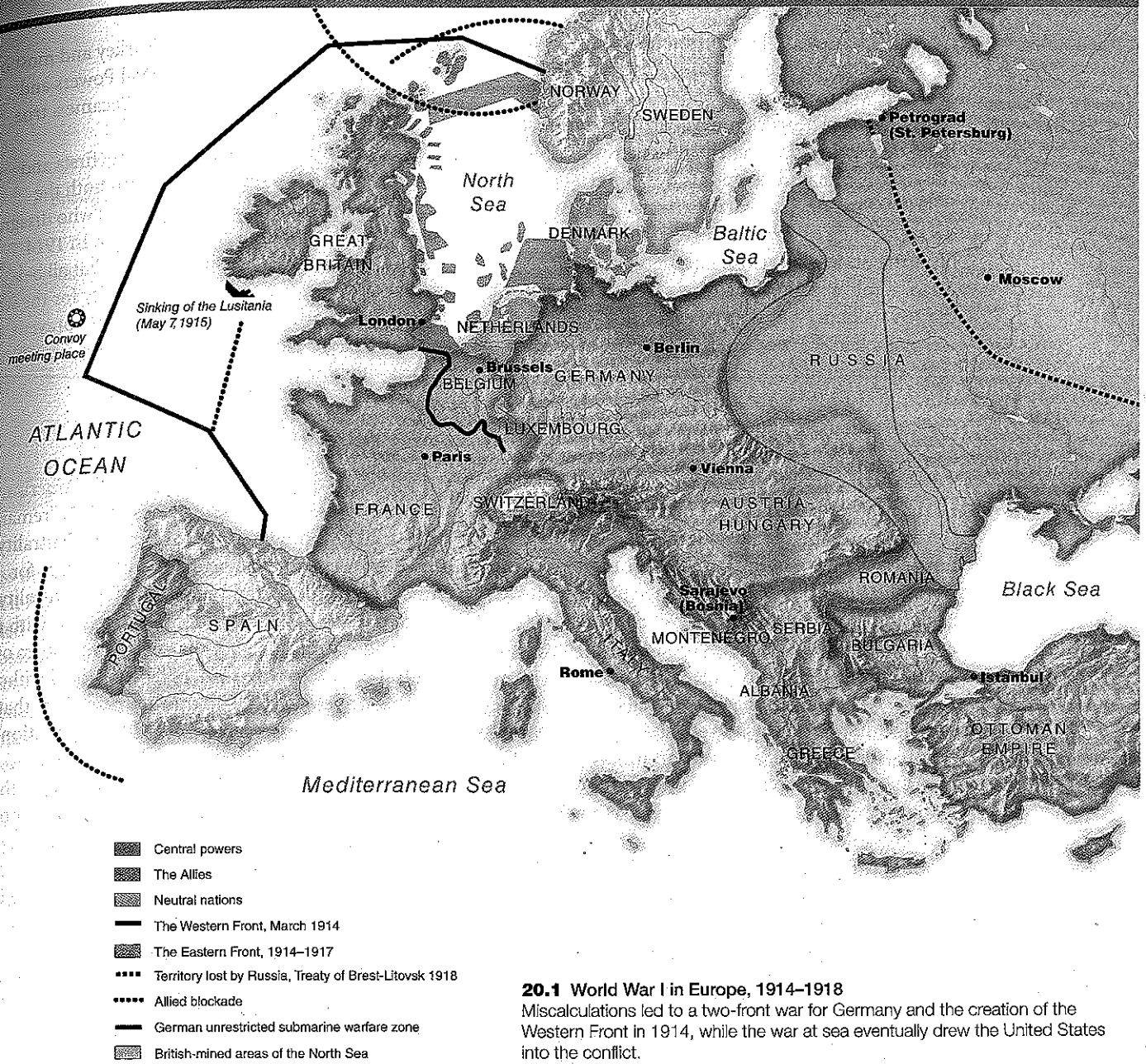
World War I began with these two deaths and ended four years later with more than nine million more. In responding to the assassination, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany all tried to leverage the crisis to fulfill longstanding territorial ambitions, events summarized on the timeline, "Countdown to War, 1914" (20.2). Austria-Hungary and Russia vied

"Mr. Mayor, it is perfectly outrageous! We have come to Sarajevo on a visit and have had a bomb thrown at us."

ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND after surviving the Black Hand's first assassination attempt

for control of the Balkans, which offered ready access to the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East. Germany hoped to become the dominant power in Europe and had recently challenged the world dominance of France and Britain by building a strong navy, acquiring colonies, and winning the Franco-Prussian War in 1871.

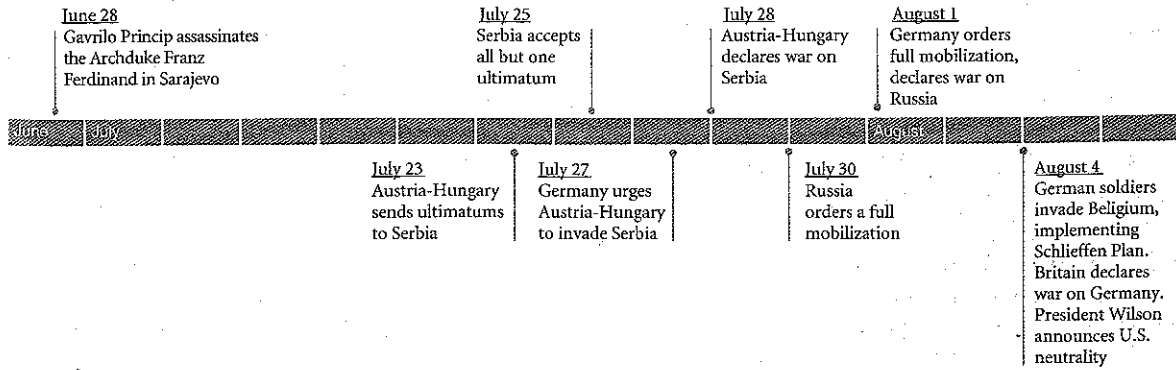
Austria-Hungary held Serbia responsible for the assassination and demanded that the Serbian government make amends. In response Serbia chose appeasement over confrontation. Serbia accepted all of Austria-Hungary's demands except the one insisting that Austro-Hungarian judges participate in the trials of any Black Hand terrorists captured in Serbia. Without actually reading the Serbian response, German Kaiser Wilhelm II encouraged Austria-Hungary to quickly invade and annex Serbia. The next day, when the Kaiser read the Serbian statement, he jotted in the margins: "a great moral victory for Vienna; but with it every reason



- Central powers
- The Allies
- Neutral nations
- The Western Front, March 1914
- The Eastern Front, 1914-1917
- Territory lost by Russia, Treaty of Brest-Litovsk 1918
- Allied blockade
- German unrestricted submarine warfare zone
- British-mined areas of the North Sea

20.1 World War I in Europe, 1914-1918
 Miscalculations led to a two-front war for Germany and the creation of the Western Front in 1914, while the war at sea eventually drew the United States into the conflict.

Countdown to War, 1914



20.2 Timeline, 1914
 Choices made after the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand led to World War I.

Why did the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand spark a general European war that soon spread to the world?

for war is removed.” His comments came too late. An hour later, on July 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

As Austro-Hungarian naval artillery bombarded Belgrade, Serbia’s capital city, Russia resolved to stand by Serbia and defend its own interests in the Balkans. Russian Tsar Nicolas II made a momentous decision when he ordered a general mobilization of his army on July 30, 1914. Germany viewed the Russian mobilization as a direct threat. Ever since the 1894 alliance between Russia and France, Germany had worried about fighting a two-front war sometime in the future. In 1905 the German chief of staff Alfred von Schlieffen developed a plan that called for Germany, in the event of war, to attack and quickly defeat France while the cumbersome Russian army mobilized. The Schlieffen Plan avoided the well-defended border between France and Germany and instead sent German troops on a northward arch. Passing quickly through Belgium German troops would enter France through the undefended northern border and encircle Paris within six weeks. Germany could then turn its full forces against the much larger Russian army.

For the Schlieffen Plan to work, Germany needed to strike first. With Russia refusing to halt its mobilization, Germany declared war on Russia on August 1, 1914, and put a modified version of the Schlieffen Plan into motion. Two days later Germany declared war on France. When German troops crossed into Belgium on August 4, Britain declared war on Germany, fulfilling its 1839 pledge to guarantee Belgium independence.

The Schlieffen Plan quickly unraveled. German troops encountered unexpected resistance from the Belgian army and had difficulty resupplying a mass army on the move, giving the French and British time to mobilize. In the east Russia attacked with its partly mobilized army sooner than Germany expected, prompting German Chief of Staff Helmuth von Moltke to divert some troops from France to defend Berlin. At the Marne River, 35 miles northeast of Paris, the French and British successfully stopped the German drive toward Paris. Instead of defeating France quickly, Germany’s attack ignited a general European war. As each army dug defensive trenches in France and Belgium, the trench deadlock of the Western Front took shape. For nearly four years men would live and die in the complex system of earthworks that ran for 550 miles from the North Sea to Switzerland. To bolster their forces Britain, France, and Germany began immediately enlisting men and resources from their colonies. When the

Ottoman Empire (which ruled Turkey and most of the Middle East) joined the Central Powers and Italy joined the Allies, the conflict became a true world war.

American society contained many first- and second-generation immigrants from both the Central Powers and the Allied nations who disagreed over which nation had started the war. In 1914 President Woodrow Wilson believed that all belligerents shared collective responsibility for the war. Wanting to both stay out of the war and prevent bitter divisions from ripping America apart, Wilson proclaimed the United States neutral.

The Perils of Neutrality

As war engulfed Europe Wilson advised Americans to avoid “passionately taking sides” and to “remain impartial in thought, as well as action.” Neutrality, however, turned out to be a difficult concept for Americans to define and maintain. Did neutrality mean trading with both sides selectively, or with no one? Did Americans have the right as members of a neutral nation to travel wherever they liked without coming under attack? The conflicting visions that emerged as Americans confronted these questions created a strident debate as the war wore on.

The dilemma was how to remain neutral without inflicting serious damage on the American economy. Since the 1890s American foreign policy had focused on protecting American business interests abroad (see Chapter 19). Cutting off trade completely with Europe would have had severe consequences for American citizens. At first Wilson tried to limit America’s financial involvement in the war by banning private American bank loans to the belligerent nations. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan believed the loan ban would “hasten a conclusion to the war” by making it impossible for the countries at war to buy the arms that they needed to continue fighting. Wilson, however, lifted the ban in 1915. The Allies were running short of cash, and Wilson feared a widespread U.S. recession if these nations stopped buying American goods.

Trading with or loaning money to both sides was another possible way to stay neutral. In theory American manufacturers and banks were free to do business with both Britain and Germany. In practice, however, the chart of U.S. Exports to Europe, 1914–1917 (20.3) reveals that they chose primarily to help the Allies. By 1917 American banks were loaning Britain an average of \$10 million a day. In contrast American trade with Germany had dropped

U.S. Trade with Nations at War

	1914	1915	1916	1916 Figure as a Percentage of 1914 Figure
Britain	\$594,271,863	\$911,794,954	\$1,526,685,102	257%
France	\$159,818,924	\$369,397,170	\$628,851,988	393%
Italy	\$74,235,012	\$184,819,688	\$269,246,106	364%
Germany	\$344,794,276	\$29,563,954	\$288,899	0.08%

Italy joined the Allies in April 1915

to less than 1 percent of what it had been in 1914. Even if American manufacturers and banks had wanted to help Germany, trade became nearly impossible when Britain used its navy to blockade waterways leading to Germany and cut the international cable between the United States and Germany. The country's financial elite, however, had no desire to trade with both sides. Many upper-class Americans revered British culture and had warm feelings towards the French. Widespread publicity of German atrocities against Belgian civilians also fanned anti-German sentiment. Newspapers published vivid accounts of German soldiers burning homes, ransacking museums, and executing random Belgian civilians in retaliation for guerrilla attacks against the German army. The press embellished these stories with fabricated tales of German soldiers cutting off women's breasts and children's hands.

Some Americans remained skeptical of such reports, seeing them as little more than British propaganda. America's disproportionate aid to the Allies alarmed the sizable German American and Irish American communities (the latter hated British rule of Ireland). People in the Midwest and South accused Eastern banks of violating the principle of neutrality, thereby pulling the nation slowly into a war most Americans did not want to fight. These critics embraced a strict vision of neutrality and wanted the government to announce an arms embargo that would prevent American companies from trading with nations at war.

When the war spread to the high seas, these conflicting visions provoked heated debate over

America's role in the war. Facing a trench stalemate on the Western Front, Britain used its superior navy to establish a blockade around the Central Powers that included mining the North Sea. The blockade immediately affected American trade. American ships could not sail through the North Sea to Germany without first allowing the British to search their cargo for contraband, merchandise such as guns or ammunition that Britain wanted to stop from entering Germany. In mounting its blockade Britain soon violated international law by adding cotton and food to the contraband list. The 1915 political cartoon, *Britannia Must Be More Careful How She Waves the Rules* (20.4), inverted the traditional motto associated with British naval dominance, "Britannia Rules the Waves," to criticize the blockade's effect on neutral countries, especially the United States. The cartoon depicts American shipping as a crying child that Uncle Sam is trying to comfort. Other neutral countries affected by the blockade (Norway and Sweden) bawl inconsolably, while John Bull, the symbol of Great Britain, tells Uncle Sam that "I'm trying to hit him," pointing to the German Kaiser, who raises a menacing sword at his foe. In March 1915 Wilson formally protested British blockading

20.3 U.S. Exports to Europe, 1914-1917

The nation's robust trade with Britain, France, and Italy—allied nations fighting Germany—provoked debate among Americans holding conflicting visions of neutrality.

20.4 Britannia Must Be More Careful How She Waves the Rules

This 1915 political cartoon criticizes Britain for mining the North Sea and preventing American ships from trading with Germany.



Copyrighted, 1915, by John T. McCutcheon.

“The American people do not want to go to war to vindicate the right of a few people to travel or work on armed vessels.”

Missouri Senator WILLIAM J. STONE to President Wilson, 1916

“I cannot consent to any abridgement of the rights of American citizens in any respect. The honor and self-respect of the nation is involved.”

WILSON’S reply

20.5 German Warning to Travelers in the War Zone

When Wilson criticized Germany for sinking the *Lusitania*, German Americans pointed out that the German government had published warnings like this ahead of time urging Americans to stay off ships headed to the war zone.

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

practices. The British eventually agreed to buy enough American cotton to offset the loss of the German market.

The president proved less accommodating when Germany declared all the waters around Britain a war zone and threatened to attack any ship that entered the area. To combat the British blockade Germany turned to a new weapon, its U-boat, or submarine, to launch surprise torpedo attacks against Allied merchant and naval ships. International law recognized a naval blockade as a legal weapon of war, but required that the attacking ship give the merchant vessel’s crew time to evacuate, and if necessary, take them aboard before

sinking the ship and cargo. These pre-war customs rendered the U-boat useless, removing the element of surprise that made it such an effective weapon. Once spotted, armed merchant vessels did not hesitate to attack fragile U-boats.

On May 7, 1915, a German U-boat sunk the *Lusitania*, a British passenger ship sailing off the coast of Ireland. Calls for war swept through the press. “Germany must surely have gone mad,” surmised one Richmond newspaper. Wilson sent a series of notes demanding that Germany pay reparations and accept the right of Americans to travel on any ship they wished. The

Germans defended the sinking, pointing out that they had published warnings to passengers in American newspapers (20.5) and that the *Lusitania* was carrying munitions as part of its cargo.

The *Lusitania* sinking was an ideological turning point for the United States. In reaction to the crisis, Wilson redefined the meaning of neutrality, thus putting the United States on an eventual collision course with Germany. The president moved away from his initial definition of neutrality as remaining “impartial in thought, as well as action.” The president now embraced neutrality as a concept that first and foremost gave neutral nations the irrevocable right to trade and travel wherever they liked. Secretary of State Bryan urged Wilson to ban Americans from traveling on ships headed to the U-boat-patrolled waters around Great Britain. Wilson refused. Convinced that the president’s preoccupation with the rights of neutrals would lead to war, Bryan resigned in protest.

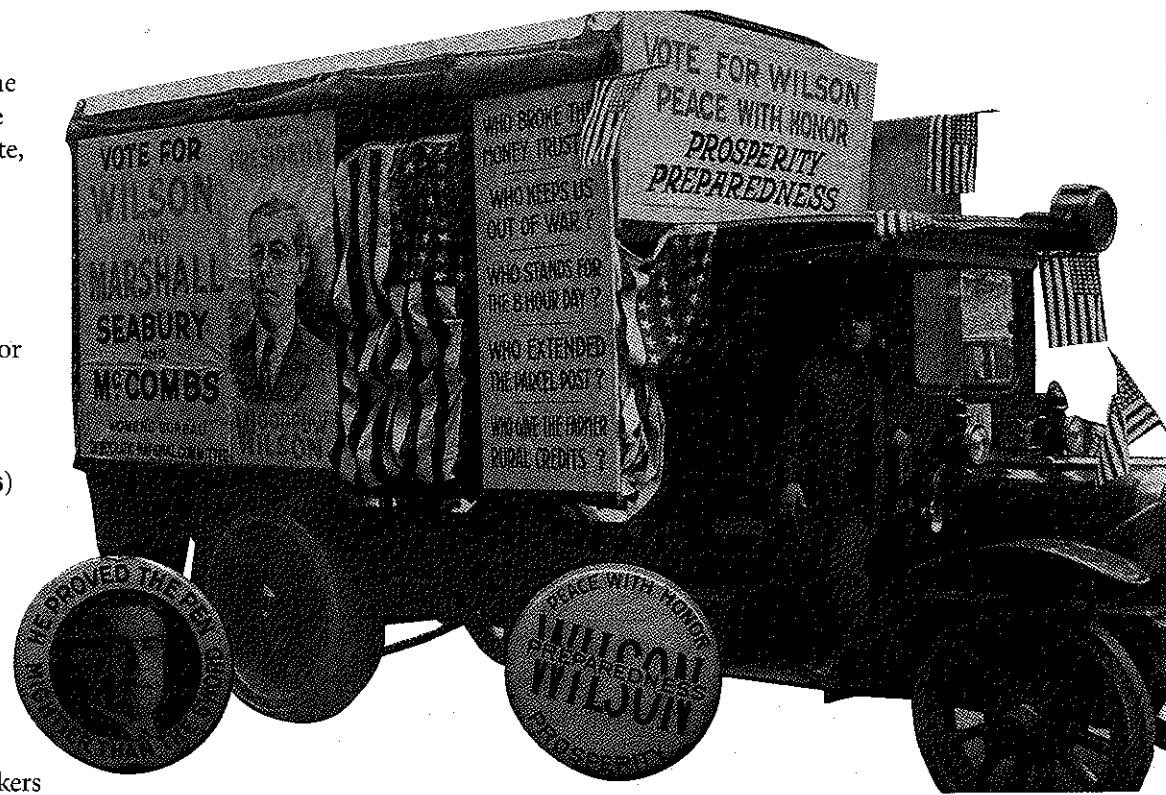
As the United States and Germany argued over the *Lusitania*, a German U-boat sunk another British passenger ship, the *Arabic*, in August 1915, leaving two Americans among the dead. Worried about further provoking the United States, Germany stepped back. On September 1, 1915, Germany issued the *Arabic* Pledge, promising not to sink passenger ships without warning. Germany renounced surprise attacks on merchant ships in May 1916 following another controversial torpedoing sinking. For the moment Germany’s pledges averted war with the United States.

The debate deepened when prominent pro-Ally political, business, and financial leaders formed the National Security League and began lobbying for universal military training to give all men of fighting age instruction in drilling and marksmanship. In response Progressive reformers formed the American Union Against Militarism to denounce any preparations for war. The appeal of the pacifist

vision made the 1916 song "I Didn't Raise My Son to be a Soldier" a hit. Taking stock of the controversy swirling around the preparedness versus peace debate, Congress authorized only a modest, but still controversial, increase in the size of the peacetime army.

Recognizing the potency of antiwar sentiment, Wilson ran for reelection in 1916 on the slogan "He Kept Us Out of War." The banners covering a Wilson reelection campaign truck (20.6) revealed the strong connections that Wilson drew between domestic and foreign issues. Wilson reminded voters of his Progressive reform agenda, which included a Federal Reserve System that "broke the money trust" and passage of an eight-hour day for railroad workers (see Chapter 18). The slogan "Peace with Honor" referred to Wilson's success in securing pledges from Germany that respected America's right to trade with the Allies. This overseas commerce created the prosperity that Democrats boasted about on the same sign. During the campaign Wilson noted that twice he had sent his trusted advisor Colonel Edward House to Europe to negotiate a peace settlement, lamenting that House had returned home empty-handed each time. At the same time he campaigned on the slogan of preparedness to underscore his commitment to defending the country if necessary.

In contrast to the Wilson campaign, the Republican challenger Supreme Court Justice Charles Evan Hughes never developed an effective slogan or theme. The Hughes campaign believed that Woodrow Wilson had won the presidency in 1912 because progressive Republicans had supported Theodore Roosevelt's run as a third-party Progressive Party candidate over the incumbent Republican president William Howard Taft (see Chapter 18). With the conservative and progressive factions of the Republican Party now reunited, Hughes tried to avoid controversy with vague calls "for law and liberty" and "undiluted Americanism." On election night, with returns from California still uncounted, Wilson went to bed certain that he had



20.6 Wilson Campaign Slogans

In a tight race for reelection in 1916, Woodrow Wilson emphasized his progressive legislative agenda and championed his success at keeping the nation out of the war without sacrificing national honor or economic prosperity. [Source (buttons): Cornell University, Carl A. Kroch Library, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections]

lost the election. He awoke to discover that he had won reelection by only 23 electoral votes, 277–254.

After the election Wilson tried once again to negotiate a settlement. On January 22, 1917, he outlined a plan for "peace without victory" based on "American principles, American policies." Democracy, freedom of the seas, no entangling alliances, and equality of rights among nations were, Wilson asserted, "the principles and policies of forward-looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community." Wilson's desire to export democracy overseas while simultaneously protecting American access to foreign markets promised to greatly expand America's imperial reach. No longer limiting American intervention to its Pacific colonies or nearby Latin American countries (see Chapter 19), Wilson proposed remaking Europe in the image of America.

Wilson's words had little effect on European leaders. Unbeknownst to the president Germany had already decided to resume unrestricted submarine warfare. Having staked everything on Germany's

willingness to let Americans travel unmolested in the war zone, Wilson's neutrality policy collapsed.

America Enters the War

Germany expected the Allies to capitulate quickly once German submarines cut off the lifeline between the United States and Britain. Even if the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare brought the United States into the war, Germany knew that it would take at least a year for the American government to raise, train, and equip an overseas force. By then Germany would have won the war.

To further hamper the deployment of American troops to France, the German government tried to distract the U.S. government by provoking a border conflict between the United States and Mexico.

Throughout 1914–1917, German spies had spent nearly \$12 million to support rebel factions in Mexico hostile to the United States who resented the U.S. government's active involvement in Mexican domestic politics. In 1916 Francisco "Pancho" Villa raided American border towns, hoping to

draw U.S. troops into Mexico and destabilize the new U.S.-backed constitutional government headed by Venustiano Carranza. Much as Villa anticipated, Wilson sent a twelve thousand-troop punitive expedition under the command of Brigadier General John J. Pershing into Mexico in 1916 to arrest Villa. Carranza angrily denounced the American expedition as an invasion of Mexico. Tensions between the two countries escalated dramatically after a deadly clash in Carrizal on June 21, 1916. Wilson began planning for war with Mexico, but just in time learned that American troops had attacked first at Carrizal. After months of talks between U.S. and Mexican negotiators, American troops left Mexico in January 1917.

That same month the German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann sent the **Zimmermann Telegram** to Mexico stating that in the event of war with the United States, Germany would help Mexico recover Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona (territory lost in the nineteenth century) if Mexico started a borderland war with the United States. Zimmermann also asked Mexico to mediate between Germany and Japan (which had joined the Allied side in 1914), hoping to entice Japan into attacking America's Pacific colonial possessions. Carranza had no interest in fighting the United States after the

American withdrawal from Mexico, and Germany had no men or munitions to offer. Carranza, however, never had a chance to respond. In one of the war's greatest intelligence coups, British intelligence agents intercepted and deciphered the secretly coded telegram. When the State Department released the Zimmermann Telegram to the press six weeks later, many Americans viewed it as evidence that Germany had hostile intentions against the United States. Antiwar activists denounced the telegram as a forgery, but Zimmermann confessed to sending the note. With war between Germany and the United States growing more likely, Zimmermann wanted the United States to believe the threat was real so they would keep troops at home to protect the border.

Despite the public outcry over the Zimmermann Telegram, Wilson still hesitated. The president broke off diplomatic ties with Germany, but still no

declaration of war came. German submarines began sinking over half a million tons of Allied shipping per month, and the Allies warned Wilson that without these supplies they were

"It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war."

President WILSON, 1917 war address before Congress

doomed. Finally, on April 2, 1917, Wilson went before Congress to ask for a declaration of war, laying out war goals that went far beyond simply defeating Germany. "We are glad, now that we see the facts," Wilson proclaimed ". . . to fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples . . . for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to chose their way of life and of obedience."

Congress declared war with a vote of 90 to 6 in the Senate and 373 to 50 in the House, but a vocal minority opposed going to war. Republican Senator George W. Norris from Nebraska expressed the "rich man's war, poor man's fight" sentiment that ran deep in rural America. Only four days into her term as the first female member of Congress, Jeannette Rankin (R-Montana) cast her maiden vote against the war. She lost her reelection in 1919, but returned to Congress in 1940. Sticking to her pacifist principles, she was the only legislator who voted against entering World War II after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Critics expressed their opposition freely during the debate over declaring war, but once the nation was officially fighting Germany, most Americans rallied behind the flag.

Conflicting Views among the Allies on the War's Purpose

Wilson claimed that the United States "had no selfish ends to serve" by going to war. Skeptical voices from revolutionary Russia soon prompted Wilson to defend this claim. On November 7, 1917, seven months after the United States entered the war, the Bolshevik revolutionary Vladimir Lenin seized power in Russia with promises of peace, land, and bread. Lenin's Communist government immediately published secret Allied treaties, revealing that Tzarist Russia, Britain, and France had agreed to enlarge their empires at the expense of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire if they won the war. This disclosure exposed evident competing visions on the Allied side: Wilson's vague promises that the war was about democracy and the now-revealed territorial ambitions of the Allies.

Trying to bridge this gap, Wilson outlined a broad statement of Allied war goals in his Fourteen Points speech to Congress on January 8, 1918.

In the Fourteen Points Wilson envisioned a world dominated by democracy, free trade, disarmament, self-determination, resolved territorial disputes in Europe, and a league of nations to mediate future international crises. He explicitly linked the spread of democracy with the expansion of capitalism, a position that gained new urgency as Russian Communists began confiscating private property and promising to redistribute wealth throughout the population. Whether spreading democracy meant increasing political rights and free trade or reallocating wealth became a cornerstone of the ideological debate between the United States and the newly formed Soviet Union throughout the twentieth century.

Free trade and freedom of the seas offered more than an antidote to communism, however. These principles also advanced American economic interests at the expense of major imperialist powers like Britain and France. The Fourteen Points speech revealed some contradictions in Wilsonian idealism. Like other world leaders Wilson advanced principles that protected the interests of his own country. Yet Wilson also demanded some sacrifices from

Americans to make this "the war to end all wars." Once they joined the general association of nations that Wilson proposed, Americans faced modifying their traditional desire to act unilaterally in the Western Hemisphere.

Wilson's Fourteen Points further declared that all peoples should enjoy self-determination, or a voice in selecting their own government. Using this principle Wilson proposed redrawing the map of Eastern and Central Europe along ethnic lines and even proposed extending this right to colonial populations. Robert Lansing, who replaced Bryan as secretary of state, remained dubious. The principle of self-determination "is simply loaded with dynamite," Lansing noted. "It will raise hopes which can never be realized."

Shortly after Wilson issued his Fourteen Points, another model emerged for how the war might end when Lenin negotiated a separate peace with Germany. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk officially ended the war between Russia and Germany on March 3, 1918. This treaty reflected Germany's complete victory over Russia and exposed the full

imperialist thrust of German war goals. The treaty made Ukraine, parts of Poland, Finland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia satellite states of Germany. Map

"God gave us his Ten Commandments and we broke them. Wilson gave us his 14 points—well, we shall see."

French Prime Minister GEORGE CLEMENCEAU, 1918

20.1 illustrates Russia's territorial losses in 1918. With these gains Germany intended to eliminate Russia as a future rival and expand its empire into resource-rich eastern lands.

The Brest-Litovsk treaty gave the Allies an idea of the terms that a victorious Germany might impose on them. This knowledge hardened the British and French resolve to achieve total victory and inflict equally punitive terms of their own. The treaty even convinced Wilson that maintaining peace in Europe would require weakening Germany militarily and economically.

With Russia out of the war, Germany finally had the opportunity to fight the one-front war it had sought in 1914. Now holding a clear manpower advantage, Germany prepared to strike along the Western Front. As the American government raced to mobilize the nation's men and industry for total war, many in Europe feared that the United States had entered the war too late to save the Allied side.

The War at Home



America could not mobilize, supply, and feed an army without granting new powers to the federal government. The federal government used a mix of incentives, threats, and patriotic appeals to negotiate the preexisting class, gender, and racial conflicts that threatened to make wartime cooperation difficult. Official propaganda urged unity, but Americans retained conflicting visions about regulating big business, unionizing, female suffrage, and racial equality.

Gearing Up for War

Wilson's democratic rhetoric convinced many Progressive reformers that they could count on the president to use his wartime powers to rein in big business (see Chapter 18). The president, however, feared that the war would make corporations more powerful than ever. "We shall be dependent upon the steel, oil, and financial magnates," Wilson privately worried. "They will run the nation." Wilson's concerns were well-founded. Increased wages and federal protections for unions improved the lives of many workers, but the resurgent power of big business prevented Progressives from making these wartime

reforms permanent.

In the winter of 1917, gridlock paralyzed the railroad system. Blizzard conditions, fuel shortages, and poor coordination among private railway companies prevented trains from delivering tons of war-related freight. Labor unrest also created havoc as skilled railway workers left in droves for better-paying factory jobs and railway unions prepared to strike. To sort out this mess, the federal government took over management of the railroads for the duration of the war.

The Railroad Administration met union demands for high wages, standardized equipment, and coordinated the use of tracks. To improve the flow of needed materials, the newly created War Industries Board (WIB) ranked industries so that those most critical to the war effort received raw materials ahead of nonessential wartime businesses. Steel, for example, went first to manufacturers producing guns and ships, while factories making civilian cars, freezers, and corsets (they needed steel for the inner stays) had to wait. The government paid railroad companies handsomely for wartime use of their trains and track to mute their objections to government management of the railroads. When private companies regained control of railroad lines in 1920, the nation's railroad network lay in shambles, a victim of heavy wartime traffic and the government's failure to properly maintain the lines.

Food Administration director Herbert Hoover chose a different path to ensure that the country produced enough to feed civilians at home, soldiers, and refugees overseas. Congress had given the president near dictatorial powers to regulate the food and fuel industries in the 1917 Lever Food and Fuel Act. Hoover, however, opted to use high prices and patriotic appeals to control the nation's food supply rather than rationing. To stimulate production Hoover had the American and Allied governments pay high prices for agricultural goods. To curb civilian demand Hoover organized a massive propaganda campaign around the slogan "food will win the war." Citizens signed pledge cards vowing to observe wheatless Mondays, meatless Tuesdays, and porkless Saturdays. Urging Americans to conserve wheat for shipment overseas, the Food Administration plastered the country with posters that tried to popularize cornmeal, which did not transport well, as a tasty and acceptable substitute for wheat flour. The agency offered housewives cornmeal recipes and cooking classes, and even tried to enlist the

20.7 "Little Americans Do Your Bit!"

This propaganda poster showing a three-year-old saluting a bowl of corn-based porridge underscored the total mobilization of American society.



**Little
AMERICANS**
Do your bit

Eat Oatmeal-Corn meal mush-
Hominy- other corn cereals-
and Rice with milk.

Save the wheat for our soldiers.

Leave nothing on your plate



cooperation of finicky toddlers (20.7) by urging them to eat cornmeal instead of oatmeal.

Americans responded well to Hoover's patriotic appeals to conserve food, but whether the government could quell labor unrest for the duration of the war remained questionable. Wilson quieted industrial class conflict by throwing money at the problem. The steel, copper, petroleum, and meatpacking industries enjoyed a healthy increase in profits once they began selling their products to the government. Wilson also offered industrialists, still bristling over Progressive-era laws that curtailed monopolies and regulated working conditions (see Chapter 18), an olive branch by giving them a role in setting the government's wartime price, wage, and production codes.

Labor benefited during the war as well. The government built high wages and union protection into its wartime contracts in exchange for a no-strike pledge from labor. The National War Labor Board (made up of representatives from government, business, and labor) required industries that accepted government contracts to honor the eight-hour day and forty-hour week. These companies also had to pay a living wage, maintain high safety standards, and recognize a union's right to recruit members at work. Not all labor groups benefited equally from the sudden government attention. Official support for collective bargaining helped the more moderate unions that formed the American Federation of Labor. Radical labor groups that continued to oppose the war suffered when the government arrested their leaders and members for sedition.

Even the gains for moderate labor unions proved fleeting, however. Workers received higher wages, but after adjusting for the considerable wartime inflation, real wages only increased 4 percent. When the war ended and the government canceled its contracts, workers lost federal protection for organizing unions. Without the government stopping them, many manufacturers quickly returned to their old union-busting ways (see Chapter 21).

Black Migration

Immigrants had long provided American industry with a source of inexpensive labor. The war disrupted the flow of immigrants to the United States at the exact moment that the demand for industrial goods exploded. In 1914, 1.2 million immigrants entered the country. In 1917 only 110,618 arrived. Labor recruiting agents soon turned to white and black Southerners to fill the void. During the war over half a million African Americans migrated from Southern farms and cities to the North, lured by offers of high-paying industrial jobs. The African American painter Jacob Lawrence celebrated this mass exodus in a series of paintings he completed in the 1940s. His first painting showed brightly dressed streams of families preparing to board trains through doors marked "Chicago," "New York," and "St. Louis" (20.8). Many migrants exalted at their newfound freedom in the North. "I can quit any time I want," noted one migrant, without forfeiting a year's pay as in the sharecropping system. Another man realized that in Chicago he was no longer afraid "to rub up against a white person" accidentally on the street or sit down next to one on a streetcar. In the South he had constantly feared the consequences of an unintended breach of Southern racial etiquette. Migrants also discovered, however, that despite the absence of overt segregation or intimidation, racial prejudice existed in the North as well.

20.8 The First Wave of the Great Migration (1916-1919)

"Around the time of WWI, many African-Americans from the South left home and traveled to cities in the North in search of a better life," wrote artist Jacob Lawrence to explain this 1940 painting.



How did workers and unions fare during the war?

The migration of Southern blacks northward also unveiled regional and class tensions within the black community. Working through organizations like the Urban League and the Young Men's Christian Association, paternalistic Northern middle-class blacks tried to help Southern migrants adjust to the rhythms of industrial jobs and urban life. Besides wanting to genuinely assist recent arrivals, middle-class blacks worried that migrants' rural customs might harm the reputation of the entire Northern black community. A list of dos and don'ts published by the *Chicago Defender*, a newspaper serving the African American community, entreated migrants to watch their language, mind their manners, respect the law, keep their houses clean, and send their children to school.

The Urban League had reason to fear that racial rioting might accompany the arrival of black workers from the South. The explosive combination of economic competition, housing shortages, and latent racial hostility triggered a series of racial riots in Northern cities during the war. The most deadly one occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois, in July 1917. In East St. Louis companies intentionally recruited immigrants and Southern blacks to undermine union activism. Company owners knew that racial and ethnic prejudices would prevent native-born whites from allowing these new workers to join their unions, which in turn undermined the union's ability to mount a strike. Viewing black migrants as potential strikebreakers, white workers initiated a series of minor attacks on black workers that escalated into a full-fledged racial riot on July 2, 1917. The anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells-Barnett interviewed over fifty black eyewitnesses for a report that she submitted to Congress, including one witness who recalled seeing black men exit homes with their hands raised. As they pled for their lives, mobs stoned them to death. Overall the riot left nine whites and thirty-nine blacks dead and hundreds wounded on both sides. The subsequent congressional investigation held white employers, labor leaders, and politicians responsible, but six thousand African Americans left the city anyway.

Female Suffrage

The war inadvertently provided an opportunity for women to gain suffrage and for the temperance reform movement (see Chapter 21), where women held leading roles, to build momentum. Mobilizing the home front meant securing the active cooperation of women. Over the course of the war, savvy female

leaders successfully parlayed their newly recognized economic clout into a demand for political power.

Women did the shopping and cooking in most homes, so the Food Administration needed their full support for its food conservation efforts to succeed. "Will you have a part in Victory?" queried one propaganda poster above the image of a young woman in a stars and stripes gown scattering seeds in a "victory garden" to provide vegetables for her family. Over eight million women volunteered for Red Cross work, producing surgical dressings, sweaters, socks, and mittens for soldiers and refugees. With workers in short supply, companies increasingly recruited women to fill positions in factories, and the government hired many as clerks. In desperate need of laborers, companies in Bridgeport, Connecticut, even hired airplanes to scatter leaflets throughout residential neighborhoods that urged housewives to apply for jobs in munitions factories. Overall, however, few homemakers entered the workforce. Instead, the eight million women already at work shifted positions, taking advantage of new, albeit temporary, opportunities to work at better paying and higher skilled jobs.

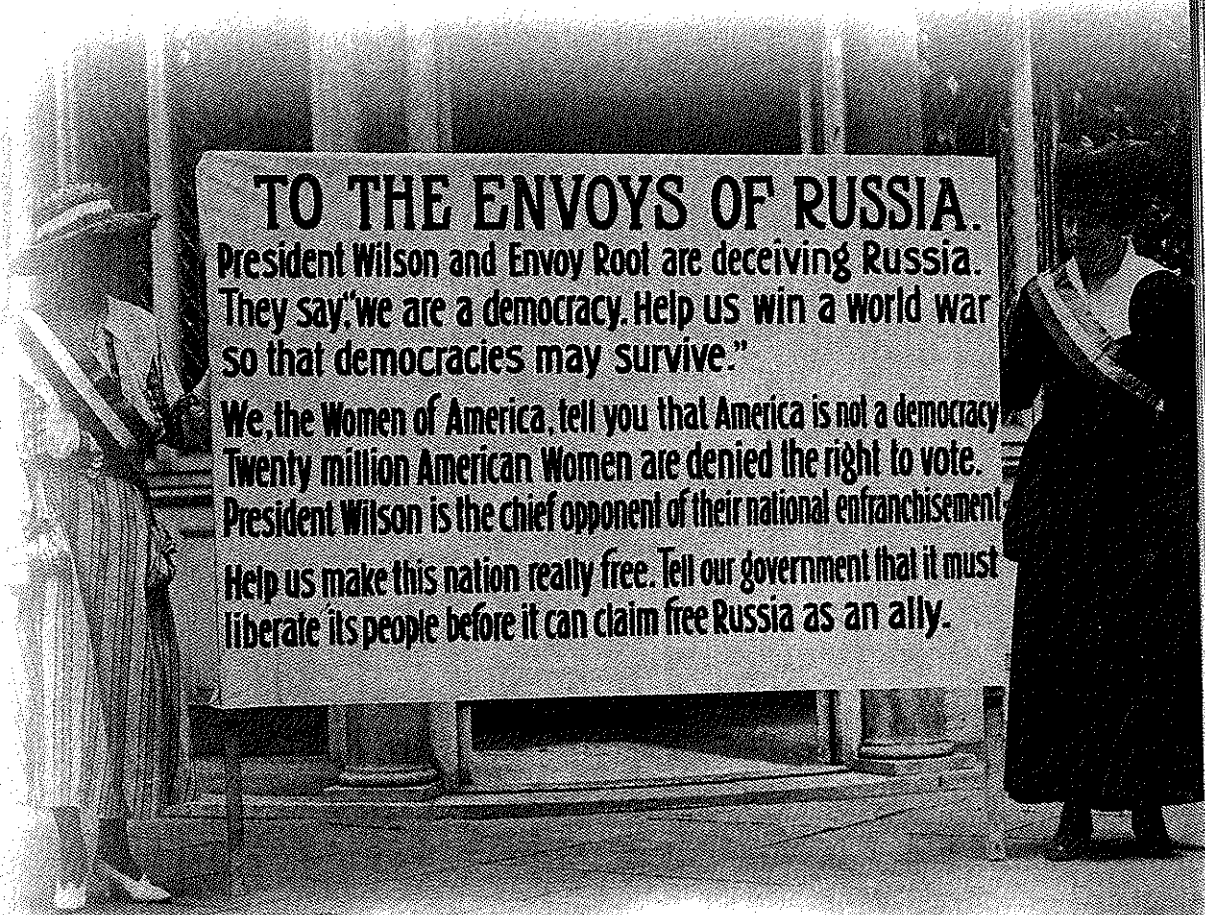
Suffragists wanted the nation to thank women for their war work by giving them the right to vote. The vision of an engaged female citizenry working actively to defend the nation reduced the appeal of longstanding arguments against votes for women. In the past the close ties between female suffragists and the temperance movement had led some urban and midwestern male residents to resist enfranchising women because so many women supported prohibition. The South feared that female suffrage meant extending the right to vote to black women. Other opponents argued that the male head of the household adequately represented his family's interests in the public domain, holding fast to a vision of women as primarily domestic, not public, figures.

In the 1910s the middle- and upper-class women leading the suffragist movement had divided into radical and conservative factions (see Chapter 18) and each offered a competing vision of how to obtain the vote for women. For months members of the militant National Woman's Party stood outside the White House with banners asking "how long must women wait for liberty?" Once the United States entered the war, militant suffragists turned Wilson's democratic rhetoric against him. They erected a sign (20.9) intended to embarrass Wilson as he greeted a Russian delegation from the parliamentary government that ruled Russia for a short time in 1917 before Lenin seized power. Wilson hoped to

convince the delegates to keep Russia in the war so democracy could triumph over autocracy in Europe. The suffragists instead focused on the recent introduction of female suffrage in Russia, urging the envoys to "help us make this nation really free" by convincing Wilson to support female suffrage.

Daily scuffles broke out between outraged war supporters and the picketing suffragists, whom the press vilified as unpatriotic. After the police arrested the suffragists, the women initiated a hunger strike to protest their poor treatment in prison. After news accounts of prison guards forcing feeding tubes down the throats of suffragists leaked out, Wilson pardoned them. Unbowed the female militants returned to the White House gates, where they burned Wilson in effigy.

The more moderate National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) followed a different tack. The NAWSA presented the vote, not as a question of equality or democracy, but as a way to reinforce the traditional desire of women to protect their families (see Chapter 18). The NAWSA also seized upon wartime prejudices against German Americans, whose loyalty many Americans increasingly questioned. "It is a risk, a danger to a country like ours to send 1,000,000 men out of the country who are loyal and not replace those men by the loyal votes of the women they have left at home," NAWSA president Carrie Chapman Catt proclaimed. All these arguments eventually swayed Wilson. In September 1918 he became the first president to endorse national female suffrage, convinced that the female pacifist nature could help secure his postwar goals for a lasting peace. Congress sent the Nineteenth Amendment, a constitutional amendment that granted women the right to vote, to the states on June 4, 1919, seven months after the war ended. Final ratification came on August 26, 1920.



TO THE ENVOYS OF RUSSIA.

President Wilson and Envoy Root are deceiving Russia.

They say 'we are a democracy. Help us win a world war so that democracies may survive.'

We, the Women of America, tell you that America is not a democracy.

Twenty million American Women are denied the right to vote.

President Wilson is the chief opponent of their national enfranchisement.

Help us make this nation really free. Tell our government that it must liberate its people before it can claim free Russia as an ally.

Rallying the Public

To control the flow of information and shape public opinion about the war, Wilson formed the Committee on Public Information (CPI). Headed by George Creel, a Progressive muckraking journalist, the CPI disseminated propaganda posters, pamphlets, and films. The CPI translated its pamphlets into multiple languages to reach the nation's huge immigrant population. The agency also recruited so-called Four-Minute Men to speak before audiences in movie halls, markets, fairs, and churches. The CPI limited each speech to four minutes to fill the time that it took to change the reels for silent films in movie theatres. Creel estimated that 75,000 Four-Minute Men gave nearly seven million impassioned speeches during the war on topics such as German submarine warfare and German espionage. Hollywood helped the official propaganda effort by making movies like *To Hell With the Kaiser*, a film that depicted the German leader as a depraved lunatic who receives a much-deserved punch in the mouth from the American soldier who captures him.

20.9 Suffragists Picket the White House

The radical wing of the suffragist movement criticized Wilson, who claimed that an Allied victory would spread democracy, for refusing to support female suffrage.

The government also used war bond campaigns to win over hearts and minds. Rather than angering the public with higher taxes to pay for the war, the government financed two-thirds of the war's costs with war bonds, short-term loans that individual citizens made to the government. Secretary of the Treasury William G. McAdoo believed that Americans who bought a fifty-dollar liberty bond, a five-dollar war savings certificate, or a twenty-five cent thrift stamp felt personally connected to the war. "Any great war must necessarily be a popular movement," McAdoo noted. Financing the war through war bonds, however, made the war more expensive because eventually the government had to pay interest to each bondholder.

With the government reaching out to immigrants from Russia, Poland, and Italy through war bond campaigns and military recruitment, the war gave many immigrants a chance to feel American for the first time. Recent arrivals often lived in ethnic neighborhoods and worked alongside their compatriots, circumstances that had made assimilation difficult. Rather than having to choose between their homelands and their new country, these immigrants could openly support both during the war. "By Helping the American Red Cross You are Helping Italy," read an ad in one Italian American newspaper.

Immigrants from the Allied nations thrived during the war, but for German-Americans the war years were bleak. Wartime propaganda accentuated Americans' sense of duty, concern for troops in the field, and fears of a German invasion. *Images as History: Propaganda Posters* discusses the impact of this anti-German imagery more fully. Propaganda posters whipped up patriotic fervor and hate for the enemy to justify the war and motivate young Americans to fight. To their dismay, Progressive reformers soon realized that the same publicity techniques they had perfected to expose corrupt business practices and spur interest in reform during the Progressive Era (see Chapter 18) could also incite war hysteria. Wartime propaganda ultimately served its purpose. Americans spent nearly \$21.4 billion on war bonds purchases.

German Spies and Civil Liberties

Throughout the period of U.S. neutrality, German spies and saboteurs in the United States tried to disrupt the munitions trade between the United States and Britain. Spies planted tiny egg-shaped bombs on ships carrying munitions and detonated dynamite in several munitions factories. The most spectacular prewar strike by German saboteurs occurred at a munitions depot in Black Tom, New Jersey, on the Hudson River. Citizens as far away as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, heard the huge explosions on the morning of July 30, 1916. Shrapnel left holes in the Statue of Liberty, and shock waves shattered thousands of windows in lower Manhattan. Anxious to keep the country neutral, the government labeled each incident an accident despite clear evidence of sabotage. The government could not explain away the actions of Eric Muentzer, a German American professor who planted a bomb

"When the nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace ... will not be endured so long as men fight."

Supreme Court Justice OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES Jr., upholding the constitutionality of the Espionage Act

that exploded in an empty U.S. Senate reception room on July 2, 1915. Muentzer then broke into the house of financier J. P. Morgan, whose bank acted as the purchasing agent for the British government, where he shot and wounded Morgan.

Once the country entered the war, government propaganda urged the public to stay alert for "spies and lies" and report "the man who spreads pessimistic stories, divulges—or seeks—confidential military information, cries for peace, or belittles our efforts to win the war." The 1917 Espionage Act made it a crime to obstruct military recruitment, to encourage mutiny, or to aid the enemy by spreading lies. These prohibitions had a chilling effect on speech. The Sedition Act, passed in 1918, went even further by prohibiting anyone from uttering, writing, or publishing "any abusive or disloyal language" concerning the flag, constitution, government, or armed forces. Civil liberties and antiwar advocates challenged both laws in court, but the Supreme Court upheld the Espionage Act and Sedition Act as constitutional.

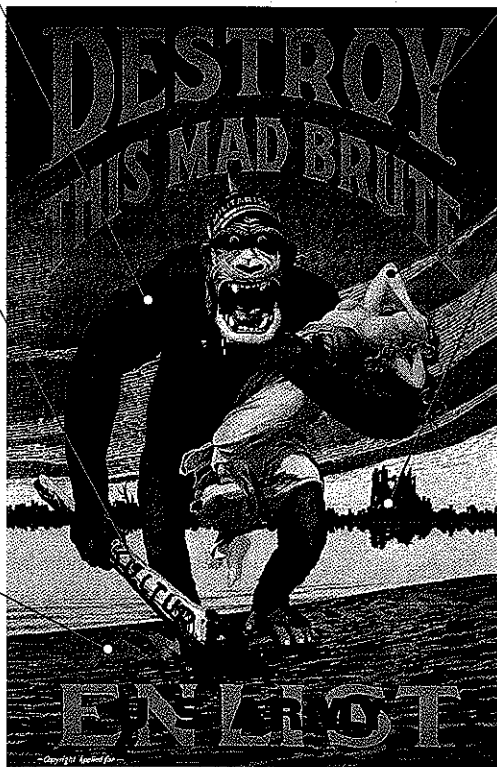
Images as History

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

In his war address Wilson told the American people that "we have no quarrel with the German people." But Wilson also privately predicted that "a nation couldn't put its strength into a war and keep its head level; it had never been done." The government soon plastered the nation with propaganda posters that relied on negative images of Germany and Germans to rally the public to support the war. Teaching Americans to

despise anything German had negative consequences on the home front, where German Americans went from being one of the most respected immigrant groups to one of the most hated. Wartime propaganda also questioned the patriotism and masculinity of men who refused to serve. What made these wartime posters effective propaganda?

This 1917 army recruiting poster depicts the Germans as savage beasts who raped, pillaged, and killed.



The gorilla carries the club of culture, alerting Americans to reject the contaminating influences of Germany's culture. Nearly half of the states banned or restricted the teaching of German, and Americans renamed the hamburger a "liberty sandwich."

The image of Germany threatening the American coastline reminded viewers that German U-boats patrolled the Atlantic coast looking for troop and merchant ships to sink.

In 1939 Adolf Hitler rallied German opinion against the former Allied nations by reprinting this poster with the caption: "When they assaulted us 25 years ago, they wrote on their rotten slanderous poster: 'Destroy this mad beast'—they meant the German people!"

Europe lays in ruins behind the gorilla-like German soldier who carries his limp female victim, a ravaged Lady Liberty, as he makes his way to American soil.

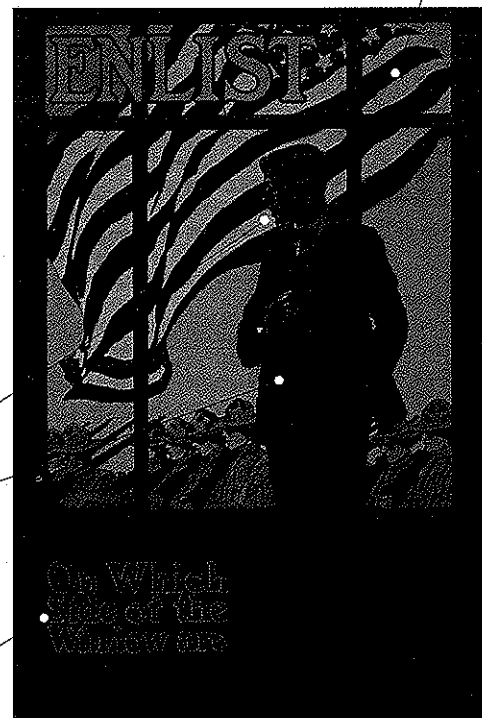
The poster shows a fearful man hiding shamefully in the dark with his back turned against the bright, vibrant scene of virile men marching proudly under a large flag.

"Destroy this Mad Brute"

This man's wistful look implies that he will regret his decision to stand apart from his countrymen.

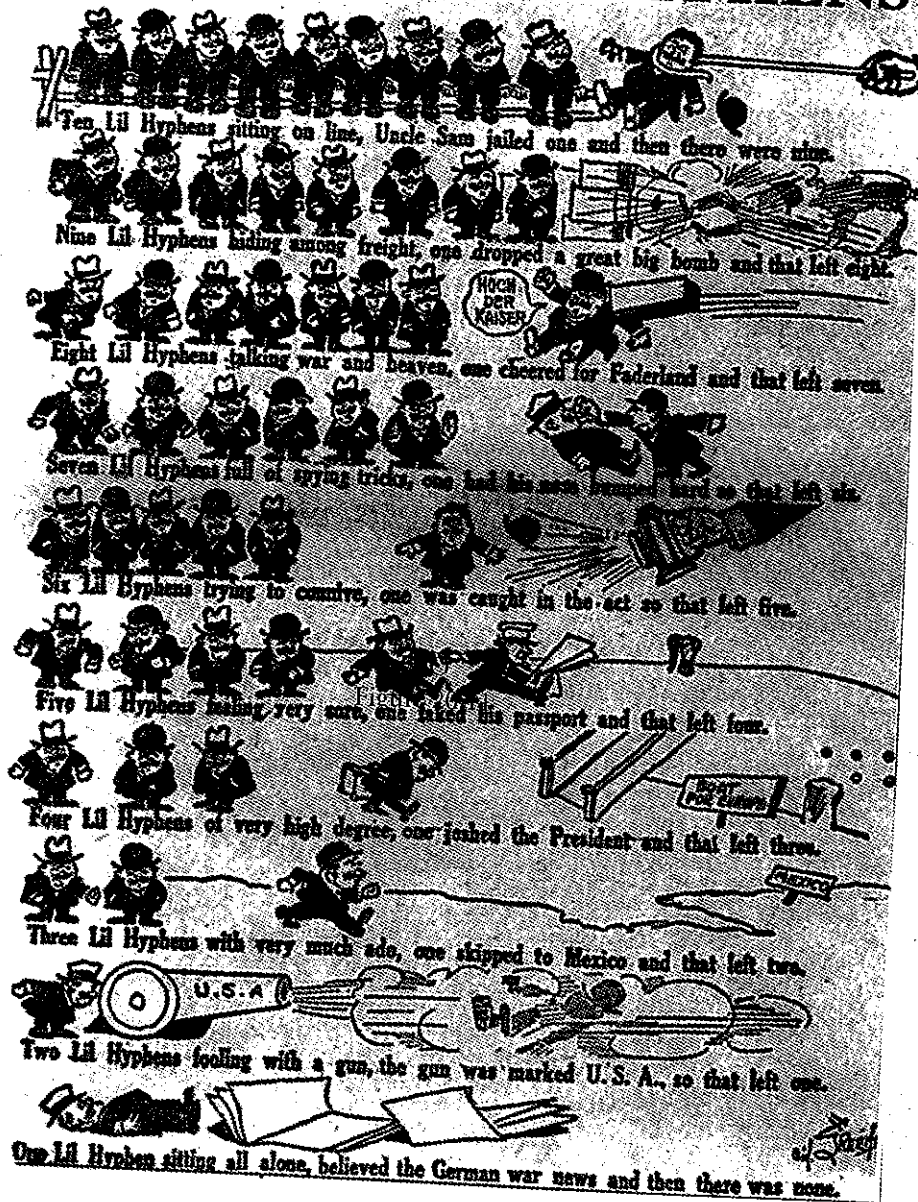
This loner is a man of privilege, reflecting concerns about the emasculating effect of urban life on middle- and upper-class American men.

Several cities held "slacker raids" where policemen stormed into movie theaters and arrested those who could not produce a draft registration card.



"On Which Side of the Window Are You?"

TEN LITTLE HYPHENS



20.10 Ten Little Hyphens

Capturing the public's fears of German espionage, this caricature implied that "hyphenated Americans" retained dangerous loyalties to their homelands. This song identified blowing up a munitions factory and criticizing the president as equal threats to national security.

Some Americans decided to take matters into their own hands, attacking German Americans and their businesses. In the war's most infamous incident of vigilante justice, a mob murdered German American Robert Prager in Collinsville, Illinois. When the first attempt to hang Prager failed, the assailants granted his request to write a letter, expecting him to detail a plot to dynamite a mine. Instead Prager wrote a letter to his mother and

father who still lived in Dresden, Germany. "Dear parents," he wrote in German, "I must die on this fourth day of April, 1918, die. Please pray for me, my dear parents." The murder went unpunished. To protect themselves from similar assaults, many German American families changed their names, stopped teaching German to their children, and purchased multiple war bonds.

The caricature *Ten Little Hyphens* (20.10) captured the growing sense that dual loyalty meant disloyalty. The lyrics in the ditty refer to real incidents of German espionage in the United States, including German agents who blew up munitions, assumed false identities by faking passports, or fled to Mexico. The caricature also referenced the demand from some patriots that "German-Americans," so-called "hyphenated Americans," drop their allegiance to their native lands and become 100 percent American. "We can have no fifty-fifty allegiance in this country," proclaimed Theodore Roosevelt.

This caricature underscored another dilemma facing the nation: how to protect itself from terrorist attacks without denying residents the right to free speech. The lyrics reveal that during the war, officials considered words as dangerous as acts of sabotage, punishing German Americans who "cheered for Faderland," or their fatherland.

Besides routing out suspected spies the Espionage and Sedition acts also helped the federal government suppress pacifists who refused to give up opposition to the war and radical political groups like the Socialist Party and Industrial Workers of the World that had long opposed capitalism. "The master class has always declared the wars; the subject class has always fought the battles," declared Eugene Debs, the leader of the Socialist Party. During the debate over declaring war, before passage of the Espionage Act, members of Congress had uttered similar denunciations of the rich and powerful. But as punishment for uttering these words in 1918, a federal judge sentenced Debs to ten years in prison. Debs became a hero in some quarters for his steady opposition to the war. In 1920, two years after the war ended, Debs made his fifth and final bid for the presidency from his jail cell and received one million votes. President Warren Harding pardoned Debs in 1921.

How does this song capture the tension between preventing espionage and protecting civil liberties?

Fighting the War



Germany had good reason to assume that it would take time for the United States to pose a threat on the Western Front. The country confronted significant challenges raising and training an army quickly. In 1917 the American armed forces numbered just over 300,000. Over the next nineteen months, however, the military grew to over four million and managed to arrive overseas just in time to prevent a German victory.

Raising an Army

When the nation entered the war, the government faced the choice of raising its armed forces with volunteers, instituting conscription immediately, or waiting until enlistments began to flag before turning to a draft. In previous wars the government had selected the third option. Wilson, however, chose to implement conscription immediately. Wilson knew that the United States needed to supply the Allies with troops, munitions, and food. The draft gave the government the power to decide who stayed at home to work in essential wartime industries and who went into the army. Letting individuals decide might deprive industry of its best workers or leave the military understrength once the initial enthusiasm for enlisting subsided. To combat the impression that conscription forced reluctant men to fight, the government renamed the draft "selective service." Selective service, the government repeatedly told the American public, placed men where they could best serve the war effort.

To offer the public a visible demonstration of male patriotism, all men registered publicly for selective service on the same day. On June 5, 1917, ship horns, church bells, and factory whistles rang out and crowds gathered to cheer for men filling out their draft registration cards. Three million men, or 11 percent of the draft-eligible population, refused either to register or to serve. Some went to jail; others managed to elude authorities by changing jobs often. The Selective Service Act allowed conscientious objectors from recognized pacifist sects to apply for noncombatant duty. Those who opposed fighting for philosophical or political reasons had no legal way to stay out of fighting units. The most famous conscientious objector of the war was Sergeant Alvin C. York who, like 80 percent of drafted conscientious objectors, eventually agreed to fight. *Choices and Consequences: Alvin York, Deciding to Serve* (page 610) explores York's decision to serve in the army. Conscripts ultimately accounted for 72 percent of

the four million men in the wartime army. Overall, 20 percent of the draft-eligible male population (ages 18–45) served in the wartime military, 15 percent of the adult male population overall.

"You're in the Army Now"

In makeshift training camps across the country, soldiers trained (sometimes with wooden rifles) and spoke eagerly of getting to France before the "big show" ended. The army reflected the diversity of the American population. Approximately 18 percent of the entire force, or one in five, were foreign-born. Nearly twelve thousand Native Americans served, composing only a small fraction of the total military force, but representing nearly 25 percent of the Native American male population. Sixteen thousand women went overseas as nurses, telephone operators, or welfare workers working in army canteens.

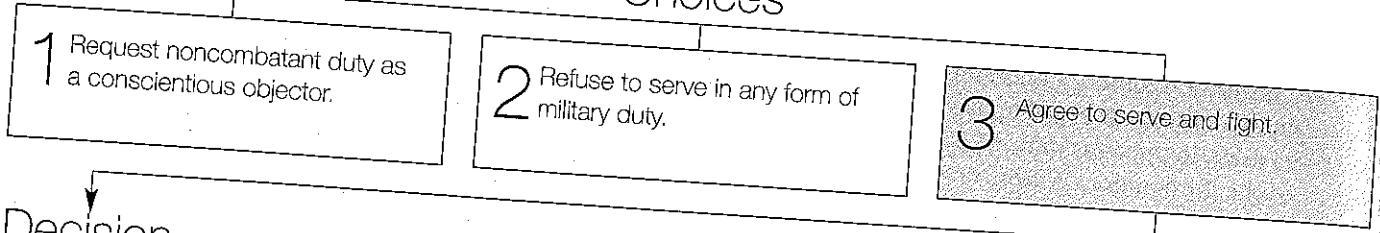
African Americans made up 13 percent of the military, though they were only 10 percent of the country's population. The wartime army remained strictly segregated. Black soldiers received few chances to demonstrate bravery or leadership since 89 percent served as labor troops under mostly white officers. Although they received little recognition from white authorities, these troops performed important logistical services by constructing the roads and bridges required to keep a modern army in the field. In France many black troops discovered a more racially tolerant environment where white French had no qualms socializing with African American soldiers. "You now know that the mean contemptible spirit of race prejudice that curses this land is not the spirit of other lands," noted the African American minister Francis J. Grimké to a group of returning black soldiers. The fear that black servicemen intended to bring the fight for democracy home provoked numerous postwar riots and lynchings that often targeted black veterans in uniform. Determined to fight back against white supremacists, black veterans helped forge a more

Choices and Consequences

ALVIN YORK, DECIDING TO SERVE

Alvin York grew up poor in the Tennessee Appalachian Mountains, where he became an expert marksman hunting wild turkeys in the forests. He spent his youth carousing, gambling, and drinking. As an adult he underwent a religious conversion and joined the Church of Christ in Christian Union, a pacifist Christian sect. Drafted six months before his thirtieth birthday, York faced an agonizing decision on whether or not to fight. "I believed in my Bible," he said. "And it distinctly said, 'THOU SHALT NOT KILL.'" But, York acknowledged, "I wanted to be a good Christian and a good American too."

Choices



Decision

Like many men claiming conscientious objector status, York faced intense pressure to fight once he entered a training camp. After several conversations about the Bible with his commanding officers, York eventually decided that

the biblical injunction "Blessed are the peacemakers" overrode the Sixth Commandment prohibiting killing because the war promised to be "the war to end all wars." York agreed to fight.

Consequences

York became the most celebrated American hero of the war for his feats on the battlefield in France. On October 8, 1918, York was credited with killing 24 German soldiers, silencing 35 machine guns, and capturing 132 enemy

soldiers during the Meuse-Argonne campaign. Surviving combat without a scratch reaffirmed York's faith in God, but on his deathbed he still wondered whether God would punish him for killing men in battle.

Continuing Controversies

What is the ultimate meaning of York's experience? Some historians note that York's transformation from pacifist to warrior demonstrated that Wilsonian ideals inspired many American soldiers to fight in World War I. With Americans divided in 1941 (before the Japanese attacked the American naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii) over the merits of entering World War II, the Hollywood film *Sergeant York* sent the message that fighting to defend the country was a citizen's Christian and patriotic duty. Others note that York personified the poorly educated and underprivileged conscript who did the bulk of the fighting along the Western Front. Some believe that the army exaggerated York's feats to boost morale. Rather than a cause for celebration, his

experience reveals the difficulty of becoming a conscientious objector during the war—an experience repeated in future conflicts, especially the Vietnam War.



Sergeant Alvin C. York, with his mother in front of his home in Tennessee

What factors constrained or influenced York's choice to serve?

militant postwar civil rights movement (see Chapter 21).

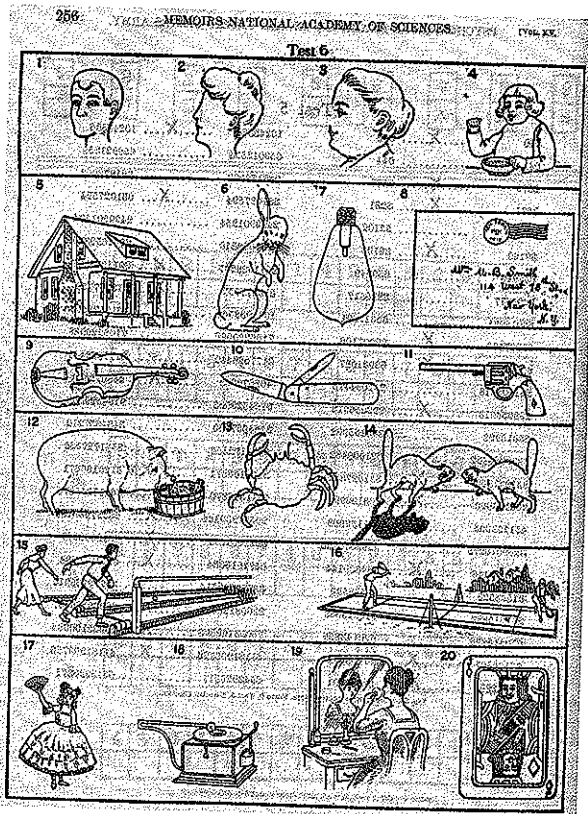
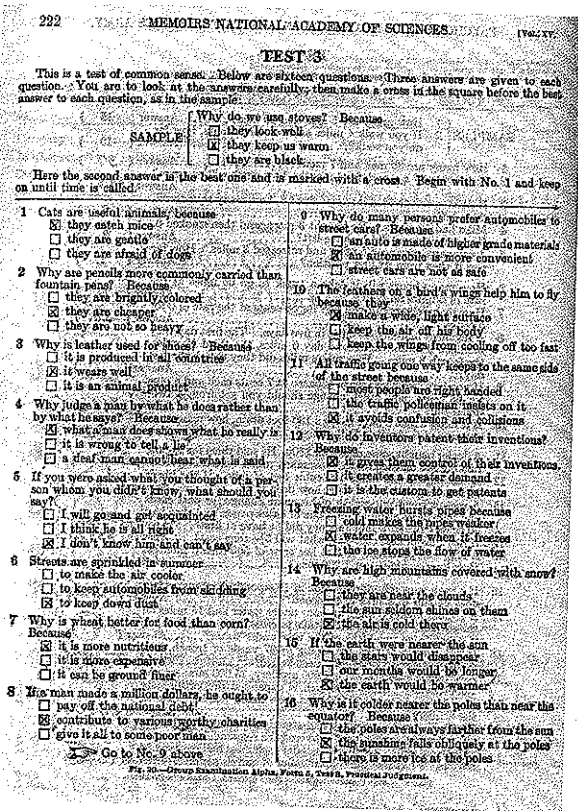
To help the army turn this polyglot force into a functioning military force, civilian psychologists administered intelligence tests to soldiers in the training camps. Quickly assessing a recruit's intelligence could help the army immediately identify whether a man was officer material or better suited for unloading boxes of supplies off ships in France. To their surprise 25 percent of the soldier population had to take the test designed for illiterates. The majority of native-born white soldiers had completed only 7 years of school, while foreign-born men averaged 4.7 years and Southern black men 2.6 years of schooling.

Psychologists claimed their intelligence tests measured native intelligence, but the test questions suggest they primarily assessed level of education, economic background, and familiarity with mainstream American culture (20.11). Tabulated exam results claimed that the white American soldiers had a mental age of 13, while the average mental age was 11.01 for Italians, 11.34 for Russians, 10.74 for

Poles, and 10.41 for American-born blacks. Some critics argued that the tests only showed that immigrants and blacks needed more comprehensive schooling. Social Darwinists, who used Charles Darwin's ideas of survival of the fittest to establish a racial hierarchy of superior and inferior human races, believed these figures validated existing ideas of white northern European superiority. After the war public schools began administering intelligence tests to determine the aptitude of their pupils, a trend that continues today.

On the Western Front

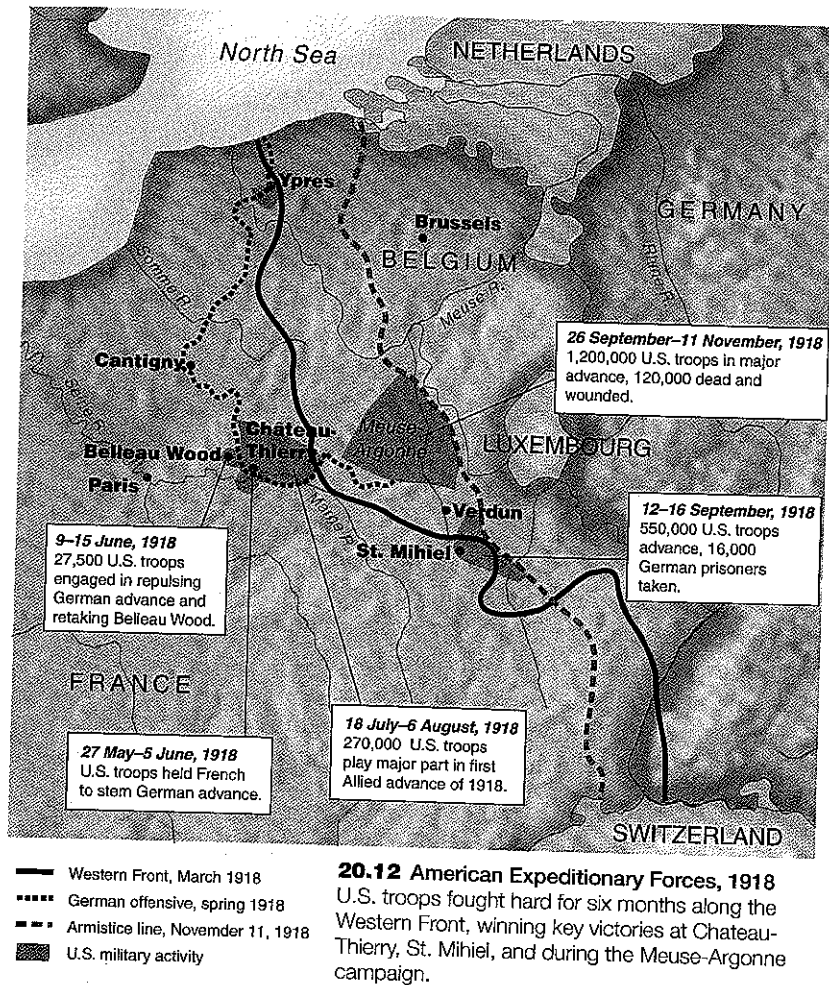
The United States entered the war at a critical moment. The peace with Russia gave Germany a clear manpower advantage on the battlefield. As U-boats began sinking Allied shipping indiscriminately, the Germans transferred over one million men from the Eastern Front with Russia to the Western Front in France. In March 1918 the Germans accomplished what many had thought impossible: They broke through the trench stalemate



20.11 Intelligence Tests for Soldiers

These questions come from an intelligence test on logic given to literate soldiers in training camps. The pictorial exam for illiterates and non-English speakers required that soldiers draw in the missing item.

Take these intelligence tests yourself. Who would fare well on these tests and why?



"I hope that you have not arrived too late."

The American ambassador to General JOHN J. PERSHING upon his arrival in France

and began marching once again toward Paris. The map (20.12) reveals how much French territory the Germans captured during their spectacularly successful spring offensives against the British and French armies.

As in 1914, however, the pace of the offensive exhausted German troops, who quickly outran their supply lines. The arriving American Expeditionary Forces, the American soldiers who fought overseas under the command of General John J. Pershing, played a critical role in stopping the German drive toward Paris in battles at Cantigny, Belleau Wood, and Chateau-Thierry. In July American soldiers fought with the French in a successful six-week counteroffensive that pushed the German army

back to where it had begun the spring offensives. These campaigns initiated American soldiers to the reality of fighting along the Western Front. Men collapsed from the strain of continuous artillery bombardments and the sight of bodies blown to bits. Soldiers diagnosed with shell shock suffered from panic attacks, and some could not sleep or speak. Private Duncan Kemerer arrived at a military hospital in such poor condition that the sound of a spoon dropping sent him frantically searching for cover under his bed.

American soldiers soon settled into the predictable routine of trench warfare. The three-dimensional trench shown in the *World War I* special feature portrays the different components of a working trench. A strip of land known as No-Man's Land separated the Allied and German trench systems. The actual distance between the two lines averaged 250 yards. Scores of barbed wire covered this barren strip of land, which was filled with huge craters formed by artillery shells.

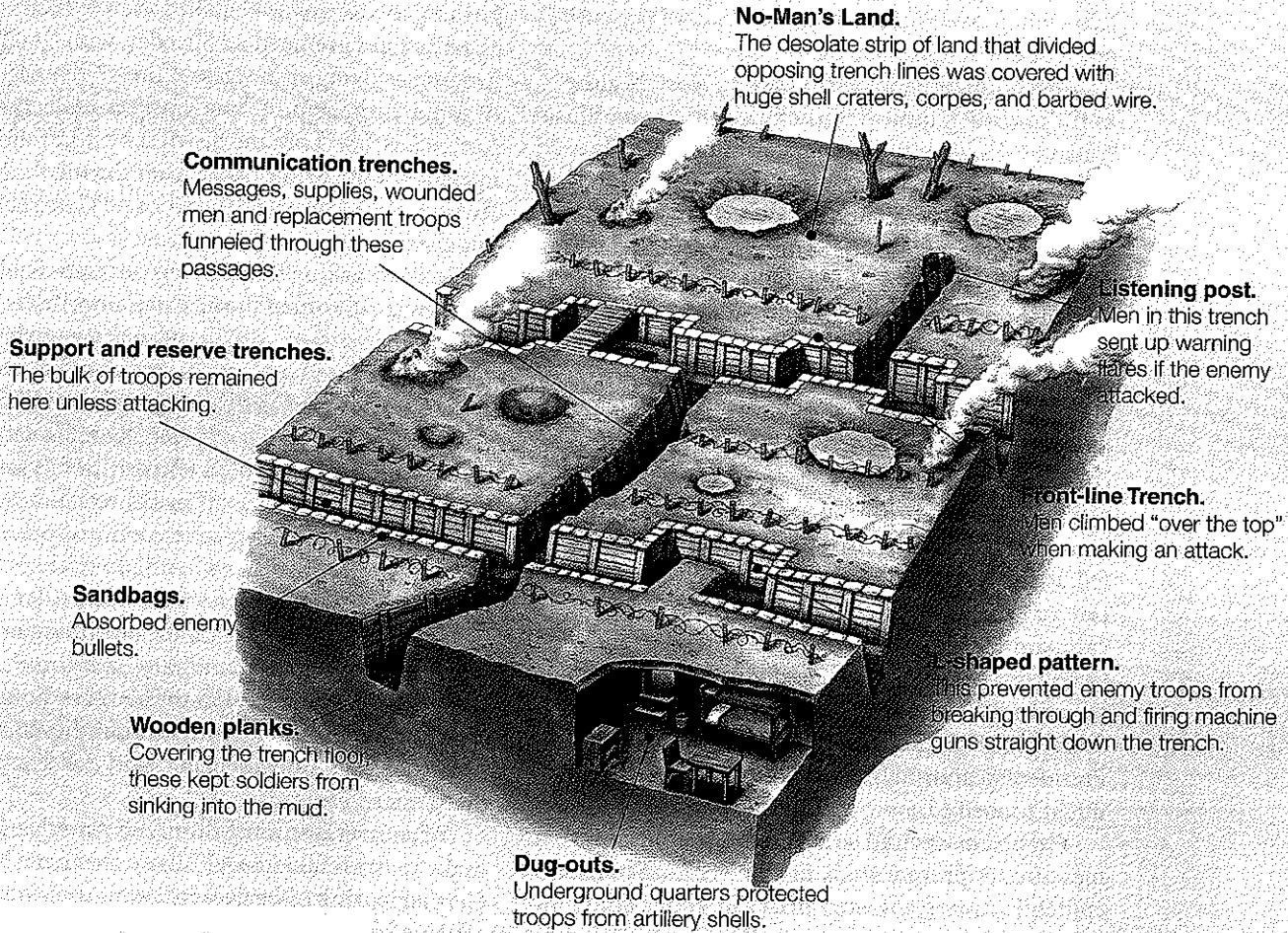
The U.S. Army rotated soldiers, putting them in the trenches for twenty-one days, with a week to recuperate in the rear before their next rotation. Each day just before sunrise, the men assembled and went on alert. If dawn passed with no enemy attack, then the men spent the day trying to stay out of sight from enemy snipers and airplanes that strafed troops with machine gun fire. By feasting on corpses rats grew to gigantic proportions and multiplied by the thousands. Adding to the misery of trench life was the constant rain in northern France, which created a thick, gooey mud. At night, No-Man's Land came alive as small patrols scrambled out of the trenches to repair damaged wire or raid enemy lines for prisoners who might reveal valuable military information.

German artillery bombarded the Allied lines, day and night. "To be shelled is the worst thing in the world," noted one American soldier. "It is impossible to adequately imagine it." Troops developed an array of superstitions to try to make sense of who lived and who died in the trenches. "They claim that a man's shell has his name on it, if it's for him," joked Sergeant Harry Weisburg. "But it is the part of a wise man to keep his nose out of the way of another man's shell." By 1918 one of every four shells fired on the Western Front contained poison gas. Troops especially feared odorless, colorless mustard gas, which caused painful burns on any exposed skin and was deadly if inhaled. Slow-moving tanks also made their first appearance on the battlefield, but the war ended before either side could exploit their full potential as an offensive weapon.

World War I

The trenches along the Western Front were intricate defense systems that both protected soldiers and added to their misery in the front lines. As a straight line, the trenches ran for 460 miles from the North Sea to Switzerland. The network of trenches, however, encompassed nearly 35,000 miles, disfiguring the Belgian and French countryside. France suffered the heaviest casualties of the Allied nations: On the whole, the number of Frenchmen who died each day (900) was twice as high as the number

of British (457) and more than four times higher than the number of Americans (195). But in the last six months of the war, the American death rate jumped to 820 a day as U.S. troops experienced their share of brutal fighting. Overall fewer American soldiers perished, but the cost to the United States was still high. More Americans died on the battlefield in World War I than in Korea or Vietnam, both much longer wars.



	Deaths	Wounded
France	1.3 million	3.0 million
Britain	950,000	2.1 million
Germany	1.8 million	4.2 million
Russia	1.7 million	4.9 million
United States	116,000	204,000
Austria-Hungary	1.2 million	3.6 million

World War I Casualties

Conflict	Total Serving	Battle Deaths	Other Deaths	Wounded
Civil War (1861-1865)				
Union	2,213,363	140,414	224,097	281,881
Confederate	600,000-1,500,000	74,524	59,297	—
World War I (1917-1918)	4,734,991	53,402	63,114	204,002
World War II (1941-1945)	16,112,566	291,557	113,842	670,846
Korean War (1950-1953)	5,720,000	33,741	2,833	103,284
Vietnam War (1964-1973)	8,744,000	47,355	10,796	153,303

America at War: Battlefield deaths, deaths by disease, and wounded

What differing perspectives do these charts and trench diagram offer on the U.S. battlefield experience?

Flu Epidemic

In 1918, in the midst of mounting battlefield casualties, the world suddenly encountered a new vicious killer. Without warning a particularly lethal strain of influenza traversed the globe. The virus became known as **Spanish Influenza** because the Spanish press first reported its outbreak. Biologists speculate that the influenza germ began as a mutated version of avian (bird) flu in the American Midwest in March 1918. American soldiers carried the germ to France, and the virus spread rapidly from Europe to Africa, Asia, and Central America. Nearly twenty-five million Americans fell ill, a quarter of the entire population, and 675,000 died.

Anecdotes of people who went to work healthy in the morning, only to die before dinnertime, illustrated how suddenly the lethal virus could strike. Influenza was usually the most severe for children and the elderly, segments of the population with weak immune systems. This flu virus attacked young adults especially hard—making it particularly unique and terrifying.

Public officials closed movie houses, schools, churches, and office buildings in an effort to contain the epidemic. Nearly one million American soldiers also fell ill, further hampering an overseas military campaign that already faced considerable challenges fighting with an inexperienced force. General John Pershing, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, and President Woodrow Wilson all suffered from the flu, but survived.

Physicians devised some useless precautionary measures to prevent transmission. Throughout the epidemic Americans wore masks in public (the microscopic virus passed easily through the fabric), boiled their dishes, and sprayed public areas with disinfectants. In mid-1919, as suddenly as it had come, the virus disappeared, having run out of susceptible human beings to infect.

The Spanish Influenza pandemic had a catastrophic effect worldwide. From 1918 to 1919, the disease killed thirty million people. Nine million men died in battle from 1914–1918. The bloodiest war to date thus coincided with the deadliest influenza epidemic yet recorded.

The Final Campaigns

In September 1918 the American army attacked St. Mihiel (20.12). The battle successfully reduced the bulge in the lines (called a “salient”), thereby weakening German defenses. Two weeks later, the Allies began a massive coordinated assault along the entire Western Front. The Americans hit the Germans hard in the Meuse-Argonne region of France, while the British and French struck farther north and west. Advancing in heavily wooded and hilly terrain against dense German fortifications, the American effort stalled. Regrouping, the Americans began pushing the Germans back in October. Battle casualty rates averaged 2,550 a day, with 6,000 Americans dying each week of the 47-day Meuse-Argonne campaign. “It was most assuredly the Americans who bore the heaviest brunt of the fighting on the whole battle front during the last few months of the war,” the German General Erich Ludendorff later recalled.

Besides making headway on the battlefield, Allied convoys also stymied the German unrestricted

submarine warfare campaign. Instead of letting individual ships take their chances at sea, British and American naval vessels began escorting groups of Allied merchant vessels across the Atlantic. At the beginning of

“I had a little bird/Its name was Enza/I opened up the window/And in-flu-enza.”

A children’s rope-skipping rhyme inspired by the 1918 influenza epidemic

November, the German military high command requested an armistice. On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the Armistice went into effect and guns fell silent along the Western Front.

What overall contribution did American troops make to the final victory? At key moments in the German spring offensives in 1918, American soldiers helped stop the Germans from taking Paris. American divisions provided key strength for the French-led counteroffensives over the summer, and in the Meuse-Argonne campaign American soldiers leveled a devastating blow to the German army that helped make British and French advances to the north possible. Also important, the prospect of fighting a million more fresh American recruits in 1919 convinced Germany to seek a negotiated peace.

Peace



The Armistice ended active fighting, but the details of the peace settlement took months to negotiate. Twenty-seven nations and four British dominions sent delegates to the Paris Peace Conference. Germany expected to join the negotiations, but instead the terms of peace were determined in secret by the Big Four: Wilson, Clemenceau, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George, and the Italian Premier Vittorio Orlando. The Versailles Peace Treaty required Germany to pay reparations and disarm. Germany signed the treaty under protest on June 28, 1919, the same date of Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination five years earlier. In the end the flawed and controversial Versailles Peace Treaty laid the groundwork for future conflict in Europe and raised questions at home about the future role America wanted to play in the world.

The Paris Peace Conference

Woodrow Wilson enjoyed worldwide popularity on Armistice Day. Throughout the United States and Europe, Wilson's idealistic pronouncements had raised hopes that the war's slaughter might pave the way for a lasting peace. Wilson broke with tradition and decided to travel overseas to negotiate the peace treaty himself, rather than sending representatives to hash out the details. As Wilson toured Paris, London, Rome, and Milan, papers greeted him as "The Savior of Humanity." British and French leaders, however, knew that four years of suffering had created a deep-seated desire for revenge against Germany within their nations. The war had hardened Wilson's view of Germany as well, and he agreed to weaken postwar Germany by eliminating its navy and colonies. He disagreed, however, with the French insistence on eviscerating the German economy and military permanently.

Certain that America had played a vital role in winning the war, Wilson felt confident asserting his equal right, along with Britain and France, to shape the terms of peace. British and French leaders, however, publicly downplayed America's contribution to defeating Germany, hoping to limit Wilson's say in the peace treaty. At the request of Allied leaders, the British and French press began printing increasingly disparaging reports about the American army's inexperience and leadership. Resentful over the Allies' apparent ingratitude for their wartime sacrifices, Americans' postwar disillusionment only grew as the treaty-making process got underway.

Wilson's domestic political problems weakened his negotiating position. In November the Repub-

licans won control of Congress despite Wilson's plea to voters to return a Democratic majority as a vote of confidence for his peace proposals. The reasons for the Republican victory were complex, a result of unease with conditions at home as well as concern about Wilson's ideals. The Democrats' loss energized opponents of the League of Nations, a Wilson-supported collective security organization where member nations agreed to mediate future international disputes to prevent wars and work together to improve global human conditions.

Domestic opponents of the League of Nations worried that by joining the international organization America would lose control over its own foreign policy and invite international meddling in the Western Hemisphere. They also doubted that the League could successfully maintain world peace. League critics divided into two camps, each offering conflicting visions of America's role in the postwar world. Isolationists, led by Republican Senator William E. Borah from Idaho, preferred adopting an official policy of neutrality. The isolationists believed that if the United States kept out of all foreign disagreements, the country could avoid going to war in the future. By contrast the faction headed by Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the Republican majority leader and chairman of Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, favored a return to the former balance of power system in Europe. Lodge wanted the United States to help rebuild, and perhaps join, a strong alliance among democratic European nations that could contain Germany indefinitely.

Eager to shore up support for the League of Nations at home, Wilson briefly sailed home to

confer with Republican leaders who were still upset that Wilson had not invited any leading Republicans to join his Paris negotiating team. The possibility of compromise appeared slim. Lodge had an intense personal dislike for Wilson, whom he regarded as sanctimonious. Wilson returned the disdain, viewing Lodge as narrow-minded. Discussion soon stalled. On the day before Wilson left to return to Paris, Lodge handed the president a pledge signed by thirty-nine senators who vowed to reject the League covenant in its present form.

Hoping to appease his Republican critics, Wilson managed to incorporate key Republican demands in the final League covenant. The League of Nations now agreed to respect the Monroe Doctrine, the 1823 American pronouncement that the Western Hemisphere was off-limits to other world powers, and to allow nations to withdraw from the League. Wilson also tried outmaneuvering his domestic critics. He opted against creating two international agreements, a peace treaty and a covenant creating the League of Nations, that would each require a separate Senate ratification. Instead Wilson decided to incorporate the League covenant into the peace treaty. The Senate, Wilson gambled, would never refuse to ratify the peace treaty, even one that contained a controversial League of Nations.

“With his mouth open and his eyes shut, I predict that he will make a Senator when he grows up.”

WILSON’S joke about his infant grandson touched upon his political troubles with Republican Senators

Allied leaders pressured Wilson to compromise as well. To get them to accept the League of Nations, Wilson gave up his idea of peace without victory. When Supreme Commander of Allied Armies Ferdinand Foch read the harsh demands of the Versailles Peace Treaty, he accurately predicted, “this isn’t a peace, it’s a twenty year truce.” The treaty required that Germany pay reparations to French and Belgian civilians for the coal mines, factories, and fields its troops had destroyed during “the war

imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany.” This war guilt clause held Germany alone responsible for starting World War I. The treaty also forced Germany to disarm. The Reparations Committee set Germany’s initial bill at \$33 billion in gold, although commissions in the 1920s significantly reduced the amount owed. The United States accepted no reparation payments, and in the 1920s even loaned Germany money to help it pay this debt. The war guilt clause and the reparations bill created tremendous resentment in Germany. In the 1930s the German chancellor Adolf Hitler cultivated this anger to fuel a resurgent national fervor dedicated to restoring German economic and military strength.

The Versailles Treaty settled old territorial disputes in Europe, but the dismemberment of the Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires created new sources of tensions. The redrawn map of eastern Europe reflected Wilson’s principle of self-determination, fulfilling the ambitions of ethnic groups in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to create their own nations (20.13). To limit Germany’s postwar strength, the Allied side disregarded the desires of German-speaking peoples in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Austria to unite with Germany. These three weak independent states remained vulnerable to future German and Soviet expansionist schemes. Twenty years later, Hitler justified his invasions of Austria (1938), Czechoslovakia (1938), and his joint invasion of Poland with Soviet leader Josef Stalin (1939) as a drive to reunite the German-speaking world separated by the terms of the Versailles Treaty (see Chapter 23).

Other nations also left the conference feeling slighted. Italy resented the Allies for denying it Austrian territory, a humiliation that the fascist leader Benito Mussolini vowed to avenge when he seized power in 1922. Japan protested the failure to incorporate into the League Covenant a statement protecting the rights of nonwhite nations, helping breed Japanese resentment against the West. In the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, the peace treaty transferred colonial possessions from the losers (the Ottoman and German empires) to the victors under a mandate system. In theory the mandate system named a Western nation as a League of Nations trustee for territories in need of political instruction before they assumed the responsibilities of self-government. In reality the mandate system simply cloaked old-style imperialism in the new rhetoric of



self-determination. By redrawing the map of the Middle East to expand their global influence, Britain and France set in motion political, religious, and cultural conflicts in the region that created tremendous strife throughout the century. Denying Arab nationalist demands for independence, France took control of newly created Lebanon and Syria. Britain ruled Transjordan (present-day Jordan) and brought together three distinct ethnic groups—the Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites—who had previously lived in autonomous regions to form the country of Iraq. When the British took over Palestine, they kept wartime promises to open up part of the territory

to Jewish immigration, angering Arab residents in the process. Competing claims to this territory continue to this day.

The Treaty Fight at Home

Wilson saw the flaws in the final treaty, but he hoped that over time the League of Nations could modify the treaty's worst excesses. To counter the initial burst of public enthusiasm for joining the League of Nations, Republicans challenged Wilson's idealistic pronouncements promising world peace. "Are you ready to put your soldiers and your sailors at the

20.13 Europe and the Middle East after the War.

The victorious Allies dismantled the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires to create independent nations in Central Europe and colonies for themselves in the Middle East.

disposition of other nations?" Senator Lodge asked the American people. The political cartoon *Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth* (20.14) captured the public's mounting concern about the League. While Wilson tries to assure Uncle Sam that the League is better than nothing, the Senate carefully examines the mule. Wary of going against public opinion too strongly, Lodge did not urge outright rejection of the Versailles Treaty. He instead proposed adding fourteen American reservations. The most important one required explicit congressional approval before American troops went overseas. Wilson

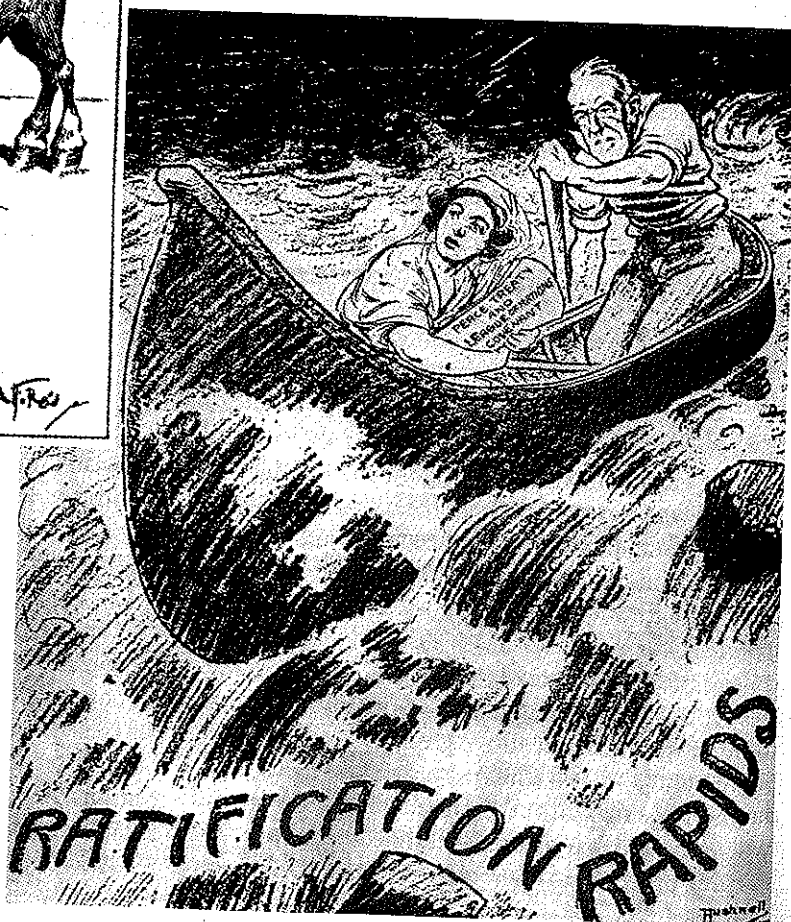


20.14 *Looking a Gift Horse in the Mouth*

This political cartoon expresses skepticism about the League of Nations. By taking a closer look, the Senate realizes that the League (represented here as a broken-down mule) is not strong enough to handle the hard work of keeping the peace.

20.15 *Ratification Rapids*

This sympathetic portrait of Woodrow Wilson trying to steer the Versailles Treaty through the ratification process illustrates how contentious the treaty debate became.



refused to accept modifications. Instead Wilson tried to create a groundswell of public support for the League that would force the Republicans to accept the treaty as written.

To reignite public enthusiasm for the League of Nations, the president traveled 10,000 miles in three weeks and made forty speeches to hundreds of thousands of people. The political cartoon *Ratification Rapids* (20.15) offered a sympathetic portrayal of Wilson, shown here using all his strength to steer the treaty and League Covenant to safety. In the cartoon a young woman clutches both documents to her breast, symbolizing both the besieged nation and innocent victims of war. In his speeches Wilson dismissed Republican concerns about sending American troops throughout the world as impractical. "If you want to put out a fire in Utah, you don't send to Oklahoma for the fire engine. If you want to put out a fire in the Balkans, if you want to stamp out the smoldering flames in some part of Central Europe, you don't send to the United States for troops," Wilson told an audience in Salt Lake City. *Competing Visions: Joining the League of Nations* further explores the debate between Wilson and Lodge.

What competing views do these political cartoons offer on the question of ratifying the Versailles Treaty?

Competing Visions

JOINING THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In 1919 President Woodrow Wilson and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge debated the wisdom and value of joining the League of Nations. Consider the exact wording of Article X, and then the differing interpretations of it offered by Lodge and Wilson. What changes in American foreign policy does each foresee arising from the League? Are there any points of agreement between the two about the future world role of the United States?

Article X of the League Covenant ignited tremendous controversy over whether the United States should join the League of Nations.

The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all the members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

Republican senator Henry Cabot Lodge contended that the League Covenant stripped Congress of its power to declare war in this August 12, 1919, congressional address.

We should never permit the United States to be involved in the internal conflict in another country, except by the will of her people expressed through the Congress which represents them.

With regard to wars of external aggression on a member of the league, the case is perfectly clear. There can be no genuine dispute whatever about the meaning of the first clause of article 10. In the first place, it differs from every other obligation in being individual and placed upon each nation without the intervention of the league. Each nation for itself promises to respect and preserve as against external aggression the boundaries and the political independence of every member of the league. ... It is, I repeat, an individual obligation. It requires no action on the part of the league, except that in the second sentence the authorities of the league are to have the power to advise as to the means to be employed in order to fulfill the purpose of the first sentence. ...

We may set aside all this empty talk about isolation. Nobody expects to isolate the United States or to make it a hermit Nation, which is a sheer absurdity. But there is a wide difference between taking a suitable part and bearing a due responsibility in world affairs and plunging the United States into every controversy and conflict on the face of the globe.

Wilson defended the League in a speech on September 25, 1919, in Pueblo, Colorado, that recalled the sacrifices of soldiers during the war, bringing many in the audience to tears.

But you will say, "what is the second sentence of article 10? That is what gives very disturbing thoughts." The second sentence is that the Council of the League shall advise what steps, if any, are necessary to carry out the guaranty of the first sentence, namely, that the members will respect and preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of the other members. I do not know of any other meaning for the word "advise" except "advise." The Council advises, and it can not advise without the vote of the United States [as a member of the Council]. ... Whether we use it wisely or unwisely, we can use the vote of the United States to make impossible drawing the United States into any enterprise that she does not care to be drawn into. ...

My friends, on last Decoration Day I went to a beautiful hillside near Paris, where was located the cemetery of Suresnes, a cemetery given over to the burial of the American dead. ... I wish some men in public life who are now opposing the settlement for which these men died could visit such a spot as that. I wish that the thought that comes out of those graves could penetrate their consciousness. I wish that they could feel the moral obligation that rests upon us not to go back on those boys, but to see the thing through, to see it through to the end and make good their redemption of the world. For nothing less depends upon this decision, nothing less than the liberation and salvation of the world.



Pushing himself to the limit to defend the League of Nations, an exhausted Wilson paid the price. On September 25, 1919, hours after he reminded a Pueblo, Colorado, audience that American soldiers had died to protect “the liberty of the world,” the president fell ill. His personal physician rushed a twitching and nauseated Wilson back to Washington, D.C., where two days later he suffered a stroke. His life in the balance and permanently paralyzed on his left side, Wilson spent the rest of his presidency hidden in the White House. Wilson, the British Prime Minister Lloyd George remarked, was “as much a victim of the war as any soldier who died in the trenches.”

The White House kept the president’s illness a secret, issuing a vague statement that he was recovering from exhaustion. For weeks, however, Wilson only spent three hours a day out of bed and saw no one except his physician, Dr. Cary Grayson, and his family. His wife carefully controlled all correspondence reaching the president and helped compose his replies. Critics later accused her of serving as a shadow president during Wilson’s convalescence, but Edith Wilson steadfastly maintained that Wilson made every decision himself. Wilson rejected all private suggestions that he resign, and still refused to accept any reservations to the Versailles Treaty.

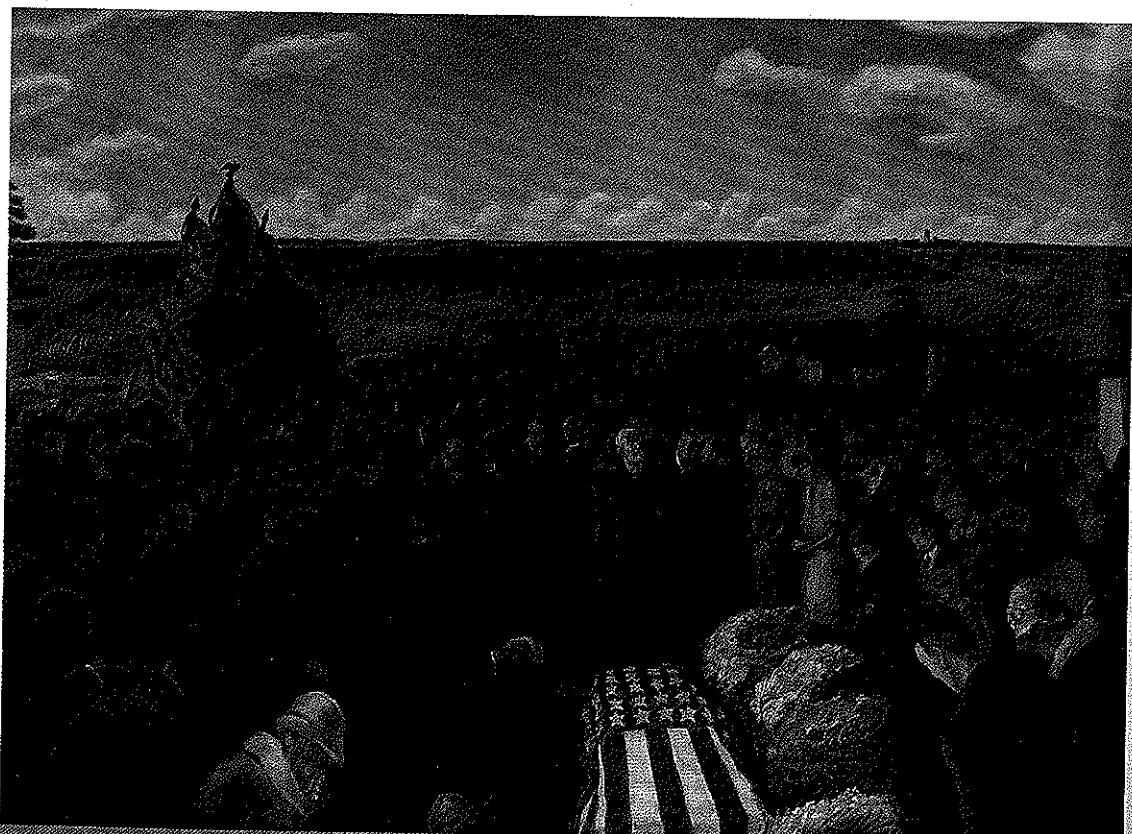
With Wilson absent from the public stage, opposition to the League of Nations spread. Wilson’s refusal to compromise doomed the treaty to defeat. The Senate rejected both the original treaty and one with Lodge’s reservations attached. The Senate therefore never ratified the Versailles Treaty. It took two more years for the war to end officially for the United States. In October, 1921, the Senate finally ratified separate peace treaties with Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

Nations that ratified the Versailles Peace Treaty also agreed to join the League, with the exception of Germany, which was not allowed to join until 1926. The League remained headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1920 until 1946, when the United Nations took its place. Wilson won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to establish the League of Nations, but without American membership the League became little more than a place to air grievances.

Wilson never regained his health, and he died in 1924. The war altered countless other lives as well. Most American families of fallen soldiers opted to have their remains returned from France at government expense. John Steuart Curry’s painting, *The Return of Private Davis from the Argonne* (20.16) captured the mixture of commemorative ritual and private mourning that accompanied the reburial of his friend in a small Kansas town. The flag-draped

20.16 *The Return of Private Davis from the Argonne*

John Steuart Curry’s 1940 painting of gathered mourners burying a fallen soldier reflected Americans’ ambiguity over how to remember World War I. The artist juxtaposed the intense personal grief of the soldier’s family and community with a vast void behind them. [Property of the Westervelt Company and displayed in The Westervelt-Warner Museum of American Art in Tuscaloosa, AL]



coffin, wreaths, and honor guard offer official assurances that Davis died in service to his nation and humanity, but the emptiness of the landscape behind the mourners suggests that nothing constructive

resulted from his death. Like Curry, the nation remained undecided over whether to remember the war as a great victory or tragedy.

Conclusion

Conflicting visions over America's role in the world shaped both the American road to war and the outcome of World War I. From 1914 to the spring of 1917, the nation debated whether neutrality required ending trade with Europe, trading equally with all sides, or instead gave Americans the right to trade and travel wherever they liked. When Wilson embraced the last definition of neutrality in 1915, he managed to keep the country out of the war only by convincing Germany to curtail submarine attacks on passenger and merchant ships. When Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 and sent Mexico the Zimmermann Telegram, Wilson decided that German aggression now threatened the nation's economic and territorial interests and asked Congress to declare war.

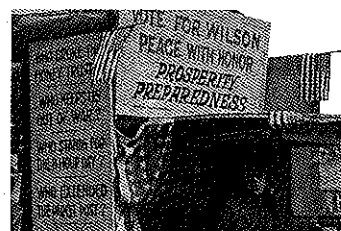
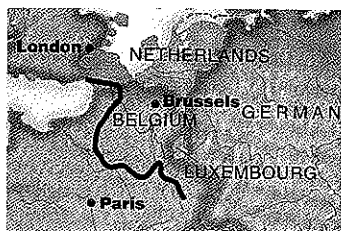
The war left a lasting imprint on the nation. Leading a divided nation into war, the Wilson administration quickly rallied public support through a massive propaganda drive, a complete mobilization of the industrial and agricultural economies, conscription, espionage and sedition laws, and war bond campaigns. All these efforts greatly extended the reach of the federal government into the private lives of American citizens. The home front experience during World War I set the precedent for how the United States would marshal its resources to combat the Great Depression and fight a much longer World War II.

After the war women had the vote and African Americans continued their migration northward. The wartime coalition had included a place for labor, but the government abandoned its support of

unions when the war ended. Progressive faith in expertise and efficiency infused some parts of the war effort, such as relying on experts to manage governmental wartime agencies and embracing conscription as the most efficient way to mobilize the armed forces. However, the Progressive drive to regulate big business languished as the war strengthened industrialists' influence within governmental circles, and the Progressive Era came to an end.

World War I shaped the twentieth century. Fledgling democratic nations replaced the former German, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires, redrawing the map of Central Europe. The war laid the foundation for World War II, and gave the world an ideal of self-determination that helped encourage colonized peoples to seek independence. The creation of the Soviet Union in 1922 would also have severe consequences for future generations.

Americans went to war to stop German aggression and make the world safe for democracy. The country remained divided, however, over what role America should have in the postwar world. The domestic debate over the League of Nations revealed strong conflicting visions— isolationism, balance of power, collective security—over how to maintain peace. Although the nation never joined the League of Nations, Wilson's democratic ideals inspired American foreign policy for decades to come. The United States continued to mold its own distinct imperial tradition—eschewing the addition of formal colonies, but continuing to extend its economic and ideological reach throughout the world.



CHAPTER REVIEW

1914

Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia

Triggers breakdown of European balance of power system

Germany invades Belgium and France

World War I begins; Wilson declares United States neutral

1915

Britain mines the North Sea; German U-boats patrol British waters

Incites domestic debate over how to stay neutral

German U-boat sinks *Lusitania*

Wilson asserts rights of neutrals to travel unmolested

1916

Villa raids American bordertowns

U.S. troops sent to Mexico; war narrowly avoided

Germany renounces unrestricted submarine warfare

Wilson wins reelection, promising "peace with honor"

Review Questions

1. Was any one nation primarily responsible for starting World War I or did Europe share collective responsibility?
2. Why was neutrality so difficult to define and maintain for the United States?
3. How did the government rally public support for the war? Consider the various types of approaches taken in presidential speeches, in propaganda posters, and by wartime governmental agencies. What were the positive versus negative consequences of these various approaches?
4. How well did the government balance the need to uncover German espionage with protecting civil liberties during the war?
5. How did women and African Americans fare during the war? Which changes were temporary? Which were more permanent?
6. What challenges did soldiers face in the trenches? How was fighting this war different from previous American wars such as the Civil War or Spanish-American War?
7. Evaluate the key flaws of the Versailles Treaty. What concerns did Americans raise about the League of Nations? In what ways did the treaty create the groundwork for future world problems?



1917

Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare; Zimmermann Telegram sent to Mexico
Congress declares war against Germany

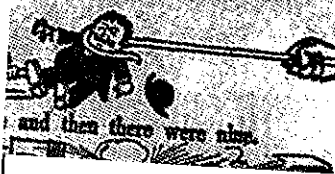
Race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois

Racial animosities intensify as Southern blacks migrate north

Bolsheviks seize power in Russia

Communist victory sets the stage for future conflicts

HYPHENS



1918

Wilson gives Fourteen Points Speech

Establishes democracy, free trade, and collective security as key postwar goals

Congress passes Sedition Act
Dilutes civil liberties and freedom of speech

Peak of influenza pandemic
Deadly flu virus kills 675,000 Americans; 30 million worldwide

1918

Wilson supports female suffrage

Ends picketing outside White House by suffragists

Armistice between Allies and Germany

Germany capitulates before Allies cross into Germany



1919

Germany signs the Versailles Treaty

Punitive terms create resentments Hitler will later exploit to rise to power

Senate rejects the Versailles Treaty

Ends strident debate on the merits of joining the League of Nations

Key Terms

Allies (World War I) Initially composed of Britain, France, Belgium, and Russia, and would eventually total eighteen nations, including Italy and the United States. 594

Central Powers Initially Germany and Austria-Hungary, expanded by 1915 to include the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria. 594

The Schlieffen Plan A military plan that called for Germany to attack and quickly defeat France while the cumbersome Russian army mobilized. 596

Western Front Complex system of trenches and earthworks that ran for 550 miles from the North Sea to Switzerland that pitted Germany against Belgium, France, Britain, and the United States. 596

U-boat German submarine, a new weapon that launched surprise torpedo attacks against Allied merchant and naval ships. 598

Lusitania British passenger ship sunk by a German U-boat on May 7, 1915, an attack that killed 1,198 passengers, including 128 Americans. 598

Zimmermann Telegram German foreign minister Arthur Zimmermann offered to help Mexico recover Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona if Mexico would start a borderland war with the United States and ask Japan to join them. 600

Fourteen Points Speech by Woodrow Wilson to Congress on January 8, 1918, that outlined a postwar world dominated by democracy, free trade, disarmament, self-determination, the settlement of territorial disputes in Europe, and a league of nations to mediate future international crises. 601

self-determination Giving people a voice in selecting their own government. 601

Nineteenth Amendment Constitutional amendment that granted women the right to vote; it was ratified August 26, 1920. 605

Committee on Public Information Government agency that controlled the flow of information and shaped public opinion about the war with posters, Four-Minute Men, pamphlets, and films. 605

war bonds Short-term loans that individual citizens made to the government that financed two-thirds of the war's costs. 606

Espionage Act (1917) Legislation that made it a crime to obstruct military recruitment, to encourage mutiny, or to aid the enemy by spreading lies. 606

Sedition Act (1918) Legislation that went even further than the Espionage Act by prohibiting anyone from uttering, writing, or publishing

"any abusive or disloyal language" concerning the flag, constitution, government, or armed forces. 606

conscientious objectors Those who opposed participating in military service because of religious, philosophical, or political belief. 609

American Expeditionary Forces Two million American soldiers who fought overseas under the command of General John J. Pershing. 612

Spanish Influenza A lethal flu virus that killed millions worldwide. 614

Versailles Peace Treaty The controversial treaty that required Germany to pay reparations and disarm. 615

League of Nations An international collective security organization composed of member nations where member nations agreed to mediate future international disputes to prevent wars and work together to improve global human conditions. 615

