

# THE UNITED STATES IN WORLD WAR I

1917 - 1918



100 YEARS LATER



2017 - 2018



THE UNITED STATES  
WORLD WAR ONE  
CENTENNIAL COMMISSION



*A Newspaper in Education Supplement to*  
**The Washington Times**

# INTRODUCTION



THE UNITED STATES  
**WORLD WAR  
 ONE**  
 CENTENNIAL  
 COMMISSION

World War I is central to American and world history but few Americans are aware of its importance. For a variety of reasons, World War I has a much fainter imprint on the American consciousness than our other two great wars: the Civil War and World War II.

We have a sharply defined sense of the Civil War, because of its place in our history and our ability to walk its battlefields. We have a vivid mind's eye of World War II, because of its moral clarity and the national triumph it represents, as well as the presence of living veterans in our society. Both wars have also been frequently and richly depicted in popular film.

Not so World War I. It is distant in time, it was fought overseas, news coverage was less immediate, ambivalence surrounded the reasons for the war and its aftermath, and U.S. forces fought for a relatively brief period of time. But in that short period, Americans fought with the same tenacity they did in World War II, and they died at a rate surpassed only in the Civil War.

This educational guide is published in the midst of the centennial of the Great War, on the 100-year anniversary of America's entry into that war. The **United States World War I Centennial Commission** was chartered by Congress to educate the American people about World War I, commemorate our nation's role, and honor the courage and sacrifice of American servicemen and women in the war.

It is our hope that this guide will inform and inspire Americans of all generations.

Libby O'Connell, PhD  
 Commissioner

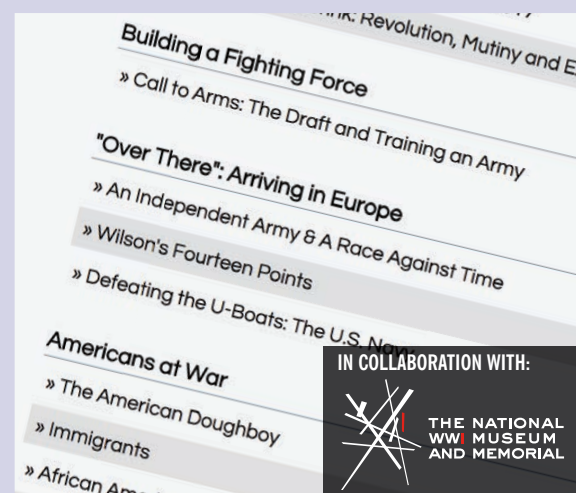
*U.S. World War I Centennial Commission*

## ONLINE RESOURCES

This Education Guide is supplemented with tools and lessons for further study, available at the website for the U.S. World War I Centennial Commission.

These resources include lessons plans, activities, videos, photo galleries, articles and other tools. The headings on our online directory of resources correspond to the page or section headings of this guide.

We also encourage you to let us know if you've used this guide or any of our online resources to teach or commemorate World War I in your community!



Learn more, and join the Commemoration at:

[ww1cc.org/edu](http://ww1cc.org/edu)

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Sketch of WW1 Memorial

## No veteran should be forgotten.

World War I was a war that changed the world. And yet, World War I is the only major war of the 20th century that does not have a national monument in the nation's capital dedicated to the Americans who wore the uniform.

Give to the National World War I Memorial in Washington DC. [ww1cc.org/Memorial](http://ww1cc.org/Memorial)

**WW1**   
 The War that changed the World

# THE U.S. IN WORLD WAR I: AN OVERVIEW



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A U.S. gun crew firing during an advance against German positions, 1918

**ON APRIL 6, 1917**, the United States of America officially entered World War I. Over the next year and a half, millions of Americans served overseas and supported the nation's war effort at home. Their contributions helped win the war and shaped both America and the world for generations.

For decades, tensions had been growing between the nations of Europe. In the summer of 1914, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was assassinated, setting off a sequence of events that eventually drew most of Europe into full-scale war. The Central Powers (led by Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire) fought the Allies (led by France, Great Britain and Russia) as the conflict spread from Europe to the Middle East and then to other parts of the world.

The United States remained neutral at the beginning of the war. Individual Americans supported one side or the other, although the majority were sympathetic to the Allies. Many contributed to relief efforts; others volunteered as ambulance drivers or nurses, or even as pilots and soldiers. However, most agreed with President Woodrow Wilson's commitment to keeping the U.S. out of the fighting.

Overseas, the war continued through 1915 and 1916. On the Western Front (in France and Belgium) the fighting bogged down into trench warfare, with combatants on both sides living and dying below ground in squalid, filthy conditions. Most of the other battlefronts also remained deadlocked. The opposing armies threw millions of men at each other in massive battles, and technological advances provided new ways of inflicting death and damage, but neither side was able to gain the upper hand. Some Americans felt that their country had a duty to step in to stop the slaughter, but

most believed that the pointless carnage proved that the U.S. had been right to stay out of the war.

However, in early 1917, a series of events changed American attitudes. Earlier in the war, Germany had prohibited its submarines from sinking civilian and neutral ships, due largely to U.S. protests. In February 1917 it resumed unrestricted submarine warfare against all ships in the war zone. Shortly afterward, an intercepted German telegram revealed a plan offering Mexico territory it had lost to the U.S. during the Mexican-American War (1846-48) in exchange for its support.

These events finally brought the U.S. into the war on the side of the Allies on April 6, 1917. In the months that followed, over four million Americans of all backgrounds entered military service and prepared to go overseas. The U.S. government took an active role in mobilizing American industry and society in support of the war effort. In France, General John "Black Jack" Pershing led the effort to organize millions of incoming American troops into an effective fighting force. Meanwhile, German successes on other battlefronts allowed them to focus their efforts on the Western Front.

In the spring of 1918, the Germans launched a major series of attacks, finally breaking the stalemate and advancing all along the Western Front. U.S. forces were thrown into action, and helped turn back the German assault. Over the summer and into the fall of 1918, the Americans played a leading role as the Allies finally pushed back the Germans on the Western Front. The Allies also advanced on other battlefronts. One by one, the Central Powers surrendered, until Germany stood alone. Finally, on the morning of November 11, 1918, Germany signed an armistice that brought the fighting to an end.

At least 8.5 million soldiers had been killed and over 20 million wounded. In America's relatively brief involvement, it suffered over 116,000 military deaths and 200,000 wounded. In addition, more than seven million civilians died worldwide, and countless others had been injured, starved, or made homeless. On top of this devastation, a global influenza (flu) pandemic in 1918-1919 struck down tens of millions more.

Against this backdrop of loss and suffering, the nations of the world came together in Paris to negotiate the post-war peace treaties. People around the globe hoped that the peace conference would lead to a new era of justice and cooperation. Unfortunately, the resulting Treaty of Versailles and its related agreements failed to capture this spirit, and in fact planted the seeds of World War II and other future conflicts.

World War I marked the end of the old European order and the beginning of an era that would be dominated by other forces, including the eventual rise of the United States as a global power. The mobilization of the U.S. economy and society and the service and sacrifice of millions of Americans helped bring an end to the war, and laid the foundation for the emergence of the U.S. as a world superpower later in the 20th Century.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME (AND NUMBER)?

For a generation, World War I was known simply as *The World War*, or *The Great War*. It was also sometimes called "*The War to End All Wars*". However, in the late 1930s, it came to be known as *World War I*, or *The First World War*, to distinguish it from the new emerging global conflict (*World War II*).

# HOW THE WAR BEGAN

ON JUNE 28, 1914, a young Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The assassination set off a chain of events that led to the start of World War I.

## EUROPE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The links of this chain had been forged over the prior century. Since 1815, European nations had used alliances to maintain the **balance of power**, so that no single country could become too powerful. There had been wars on a limited scale, and new powers arose while older ones faded, but overall, there seemed to be peace and prosperity.

But beneath this stability, powerful forces were pushing Europe toward a major conflict. Advances in medicine, food cultivation and transportation tripled Europe's population, expanding the manpower pool. **Nationalism** was on the rise, fed in part by competition for overseas colonies. By the 1900s, nearly every European power was able to field a massive army of willing patriots, ready to fight and die for their nation's honor.

## THE EUROPEAN POWERS

**Great Britain** was near the height of its strength. It was the center of world finance, a top industrial nation, and it ruled over nearly a quarter of the world's inhabitants. Britain's island geography allowed it to avoid long term alliances (although it did guarantee Belgium's neutrality). It had a small army, but a dominant navy.

**France** had historically been Europe's strongest nation, but had suffered a humiliating defeat to Germany in 1870-71. Germany worked to keep it isolated and prevent it from regaining its old prominence. France still remained a major power, and had colonies around the world, especially in North Africa and Asia.

**Germany** had been formed in 1871 by the unification of smaller German-speaking states. It had rapidly transformed into one of the world's leading industrial

countries, with its own colonial empire and a growing navy. Many Germans believed that their young nation was destined to re-energize western civilization, which created friction with the more established powers.

**Italy** had also come together as a nation relatively recently. However, it had not made the same progress, and had struggled to build a colonial empire. It was also frustrated that many ethnic Italians were under Austro-Hungarian rule to the north.

**Austria-Hungary** was a large but declining power, held together by a peculiar "dual monarchy": one ruler with two co-governments. To complicate things further, it was home to large ethnic populations, especially in Bosnia, Croatia and its other Balkan provinces.

**Russia** was considered backwards, but still formidable. The world had been shocked when it had lost to a non-European power in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. However, it remained a force to be reckoned with, due to its vast resources and population, and its claim to be defender of all Slavic peoples in Europe.

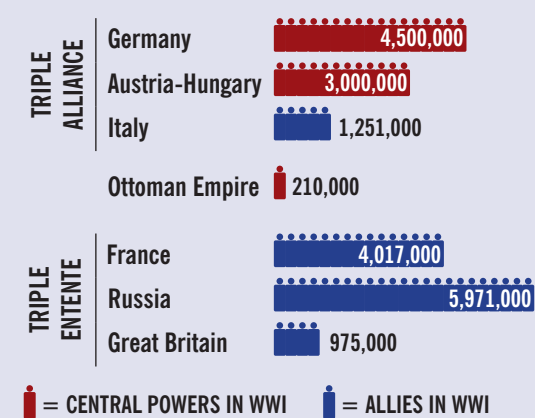
The **Ottoman Empire** (Turkey) once ruled the Middle East and North Africa, as well as much of Eastern Europe. By 1914, it had been pushed out of Europe, and had lost North Africa to various European nations. Yet it was still a sizable power, and it held an important strategic position, straddling Europe and Asia.

## THE ALLIANCES IN 1914

In the years before 1914, the system of alliances shifted into its final pre-war form. Germany and Austria-Hungary had been close for a half century. Each agreed to support the other in case of war. The addition of Italy (despite its tensions with Austria-Hungary) formed the **Triple Alliance**.

On the other side, France broke its isolation by allying with Russia. Russia had been close with Germany, but had grown suspicious of its motives. Germany's expanding power and growing navy also led Britain to

## EUROPE'S ARMIES in 1914



break with tradition and align with its old rival, France, and with Russia, forming the **Triple Entente**.

The Ottoman Empire remained neutral, although it leaned toward Germany. At the same time, the nations in both coalitions had other agreements with lesser powers. Two of these -- **Serbia** and **Belgium** -- would play key roles in the outbreak of the upcoming war.

By 1914, Europe's nations were so interconnected and intertwined that it was inevitable that a conflict between two powers would pull in one nation after another until the entire continent was at war.

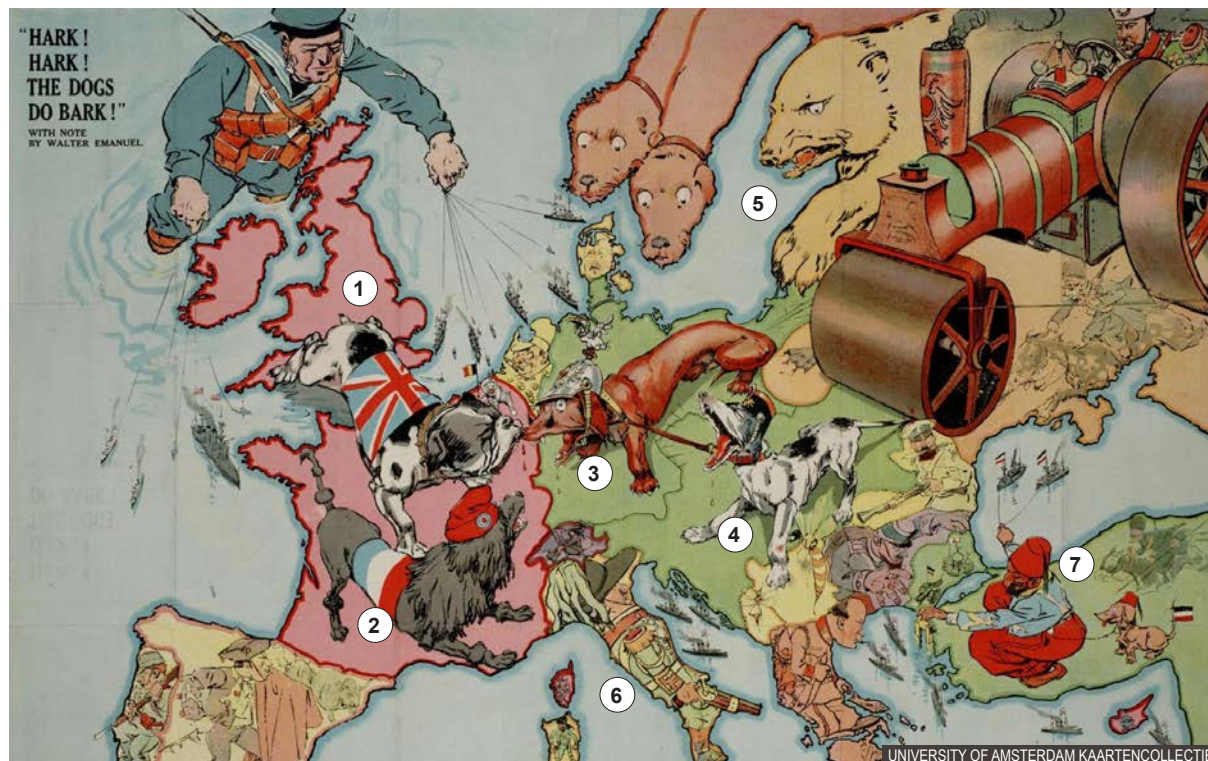
## EUROPE GOES TO WAR

The assassin Princip was part of a Bosnian Serb independence movement. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for the shooting, but knew that Russia would support its fellow Slavic nation. First it secured Germany's backing in case Russia intervened, and then it issued a series of demands to the Serbian government.

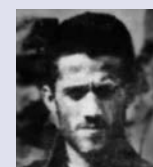
Germany's involvement escalated the situation to a continent-wide crisis. Germany assumed the alliance between France and Russia would force it to fight on two battlefronts. Its war plan (the **Schlieffen Plan**) therefore called for an overwhelming invasion to quickly defeat France before turning to deal with Russia's massive but slow-moving army. In order to strike France, Germany had to go through Belgium, which would bring in Britain to defend Belgium's neutrality.

Although Serbia accepted nearly all of Austria-Hungary's demands, Austria-Hungary declared war on July 28. As the crisis deepened, other nations activated their war plans. Huge crowds in cities across Europe demonstrated broad public support for war. The war plans took on a life of their own, despite the efforts of diplomats and even after a change of heart by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm. Military leaders insisted that the forward momentum of millions of troops and thousands of tons of supplies could not be halted.

On August 1, after Russia moved to support Serbia, Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, it attacked France and invaded Belgium. Britain immediately declared war on Germany. Europe was at war.



A British cartoon caricatures the European powers at the outbreak of war. The English bulldog (1) and French poodle (2) face the German dachshund (3) and Austrian mongrel (4), while the Russian bear (5) steamrolls in from the East. Italy (6) stands by, armed but uncommitted; the Ottoman Empire (7) sits on the sidelines, but German flags show its sympathies.

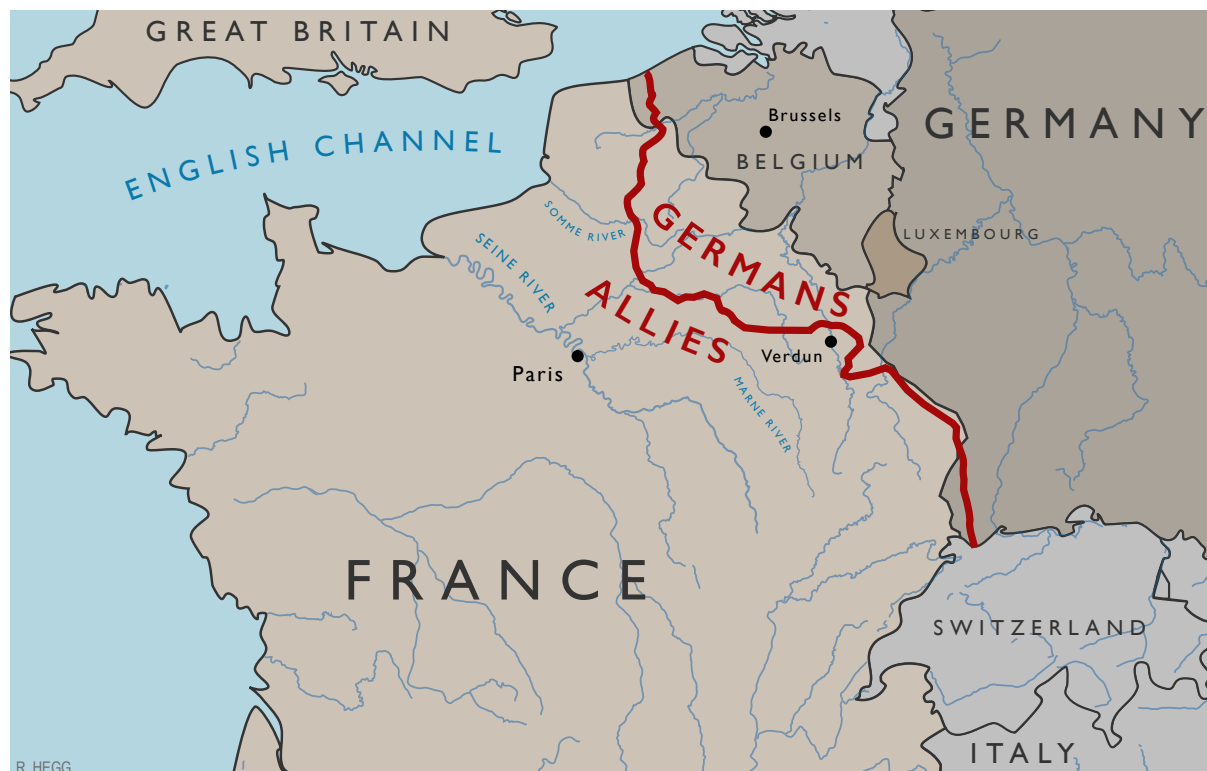


## MAN OF THE CENTURY?

19 year old Gavrilo Princip fired the shots that started a century of conflict. He has been called the 20th Century's most influential person.

# THE WESTERN FRONT: 1914 - 1916

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By early 1915, the Germans faced the Allies across a continuous 450-mile long battlefront, stretching from the coast of Belgium to the Swiss border. The line would remain essentially unchanged for over three years, despite numerous battles and millions of deaths.

**THE WAR IN EUROPE** had been set off by Austria-Hungary and Serbia, but the conflict between these two nations was soon dwarfed by the fighting between their allies. In the east, Russia's huge armies moved into Germany. In the west, Germany's attack on France drew in Belgium and Great Britain.

This struggle on the **Western Front** would eventually bring the United States into the conflict, but not until after three years of slaughter and futility.

## 1914: OPENING BATTLES

Germany's war plan called for it to quickly defeat France and then shift east to fight Russia. Its armies were to sweep down through Belgium and northern France toward Paris, like a giant swinging door. On August 4, Germany invaded Belgium, violating its neutrality. The British upheld their commitment to defend Belgium, and declared war on Germany.

However, all Britain could immediately do was to blockade Germany with its navy and to prepare its undersized army for battle. Belgium fought fiercely, but German forces quickly overwhelmed its tiny army and occupied much of the country. Germany's aggression, and the harsh actions of its troops during the invasion and occupation, outraged the world.

To the southeast, France opened the war by pushing into territory it had lost to Germany in their 1870-71

war. Tens of thousands of Frenchmen fell to German rifle and machine gun fire in wasteful attacks: 27,000 died on August 22 alone.

The Germans then began their sweep into France. The French armies, supported by the small British Expeditionary Force, could not hold them back. By early September, German troops were within sight of Paris. The Allies launched a desperate counterattack; the **Battle of the Marne** finally halted the German advance.

For the next few weeks, each side tried to get around the northern end of the other's lines, in a so-called "race to the sea". Finally, both sides ran out of room to maneuver. By year's end, the Allies and Germans faced each other along a continuous line that ran for 450 miles from the coast of Belgium, through northern France, down to the border of Switzerland. This line would remain essentially unchanged for over three years. In less than five months, the armies on the Western Front had suffered nearly two million casualties, including half a million deaths.

## 1915: DIGGING IN AND STALEMATE

The war's second year saw the front lines harden, along with the combatants' resolve. Trench lines dug for the winter became permanent, while offensives throughout the year did little but add to the death toll. As the war consumed men and resources, both sides shifted their economies to full wartime production.

In January, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson offered to mediate peace talks. No one was interested; both sides were determined that their 1914 losses would not be in vain, and both believed they would win the war.

France launched a February offensive that achieved nothing, but cost it 250,000 casualties. That same month, Germany began **unrestricted submarine warfare**, attacking all merchant ships in the waters around Great Britain without warning -- even those from neutral nations. The Germans responded to protests by pointing to Britain's naval blockade and complaining

of a double standard.

The combatants introduced new ways to inflict violence. The Germans introduced **poison gas** on the Western Front during the Battle of Ypres in April. In May, German **zeppelins** (airships) over London carried out the first aerial bombing of civilians in history.

Also in May, a German U-boat sank the British ocean liner *Lusitania*, resulting in 1,200 deaths, including 128 Americans. In response to U.S. outrage, Germany halted unrestricted submarine warfare.

Over the course of the year, the French tried and failed to push the Germans out of their territory. The British built up a massive army to join the French in the front lines. The Germans held their ground while making progress on the Eastern Front. 1915 closed with the Western Front locked in trench warfare and stalemate -- but with both sides confident of winning the war in 1916.

## 1916: UNPRECEDENTED SLAUGHTER

The war's third year was consumed by two giant offensives, one German, one Allied. These titanic battles involved millions of men and raged for months, but resolved nothing.

Germany planned to draw the French into an enormous, grinding battle that would drain them of men and supplies. They launched this effort in February by attacking at **Verdun**. For the next ten months, the armies threw millions of men and countless tons of firepower at each other. Momentum swung back and forth as the seasons changed. In the end, the Germans called off the attack. They had inflicted 370,000 casualties while suffering nearly the same number themselves, all for a gain of about three miles. The French had held on; by the standards of the war, this was counted as a victory.

The **Battle of Somme** was shorter, but even more violent and just as futile. The Somme was the first major action for Britain's new armies. On July 1, the first day of the battle, the attacking British suffered 57,000 casualties, with almost 20,000 deaths. Some units lost over 90% of their men in just minutes. As before, the attackers achieved initial success, but were unable to follow through to victory. Later in the battle, the British used tanks for the first time, but the new machines had little impact. The Allied attacks were finally halted in November by bad weather. In four and a half months they had advanced six miles, at a cost of over 600,000 casualties. German losses are uncertain, but they too were staggering: between 400-650,000 men.

*"Somme. The whole history of the world cannot contain a more ghastly word."*

FRIEDRICH STEINBRECHER  
GERMAN OFFICER

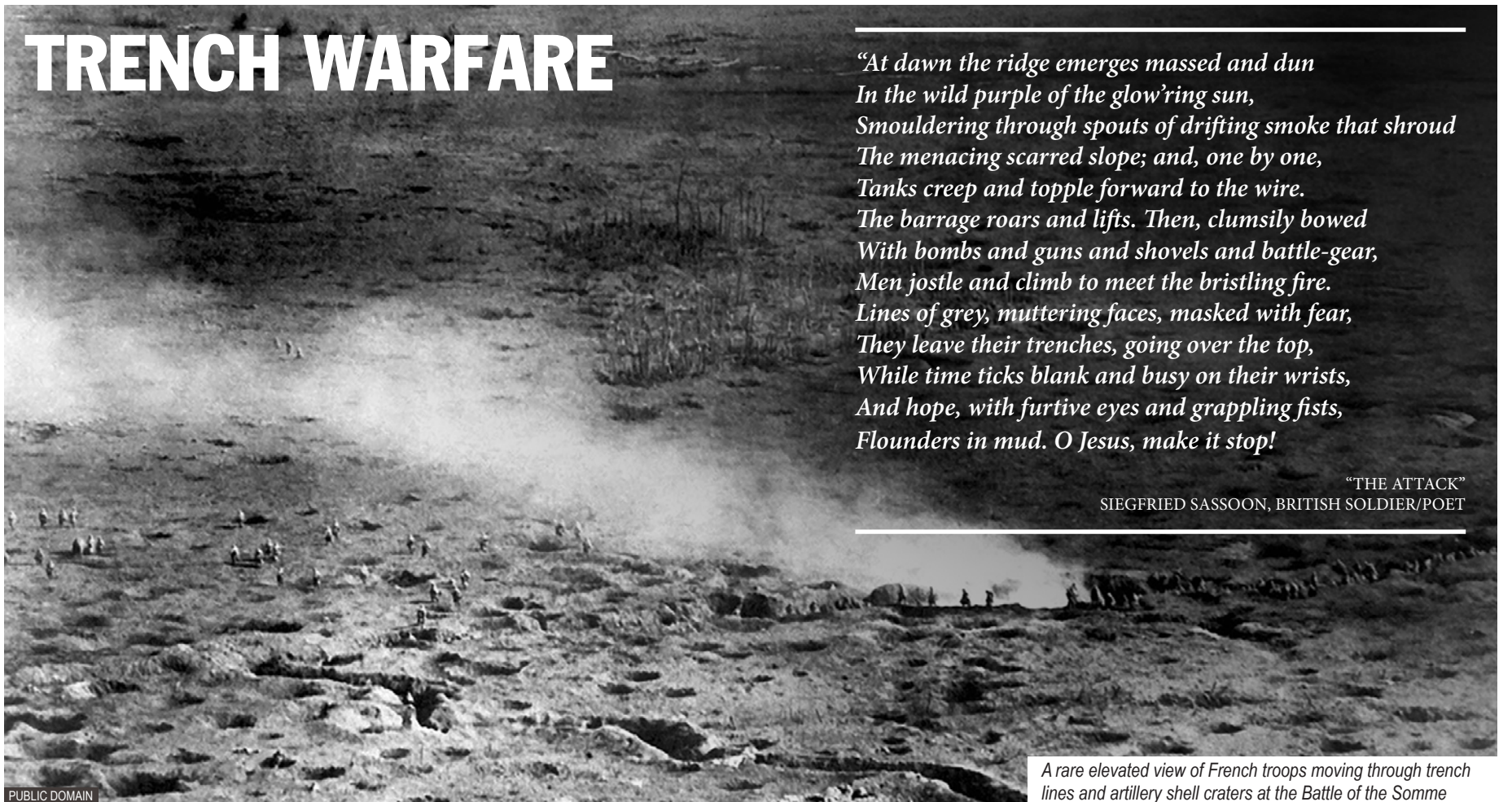
The winter brought an end to a year of slaughter and futility. Yet without a clear winner, none of the combatants was ready to end to the war. Their horrific losses only stiffened their resolve to keep fighting.

Across the ocean, Americans followed the war in fascination and horror. Many sympathized with the Allies, but most were glad that the United States was far removed from the unspeakable state of affairs overseas. No one yet knew that events in early 1917 would force America to make a crucial decision.



The "Taxicabs of the Marne" rushed 600 men across Paris for France's last-ditch effort to turn back the initial German invasion.

# TRENCH WARFARE



PUBLIC DOMAIN

*“At dawn the ridge emerges massed and dun  
In the wild purple of the glow’ring sun,  
Smouldering through spouts of drifting smoke that shroud  
The menacing scarred slope; and, one by one,  
Tanks creep and topple forward to the wire.  
The barrage roars and lifts. Then, clumsily bowed  
With bombs and guns and shovels and battle-gear,  
Men jostle and climb to meet the bristling fire.  
Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear,  
They leave their trenches, going over the top,  
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,  
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,  
Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!*

“THE ATTACK”  
SIEGFRIED SASSOON, BRITISH SOLDIER/POET

A rare elevated view of French troops moving through trench lines and artillery shell craters at the Battle of the Somme

## WEAPONS OF MODERN WARFARE



### MODERN ARTILLERY

Improved steelmaking techniques produced massive guns that launched enormous explosive shells across great distances. Artillerymen also developed new methods of aiming and concentrating their fire, increasing its deadliness. Most casualties in the war were caused by artillery.



### MACHINE GUNS

At the beginning of the war, most armies had few machine guns, gathered in specialized units. After the weapons proved their deadliness, all the armies increased their manufacture and use. Firing hundreds of bullets per minute, a single gun could wipe out dozens of men in seconds.



### POISON GAS

The most hideous weapon of the war. Gas blistered the skin, eyes, airways and lungs. Masks and protective clothing helped reduce the lethality of gas attacks. But tens of thousands died in agony, and hundreds of thousands suffered lingering effects for the rest of their lives.



### TANKS

Early tanks were called “landships” but were renamed to preserve their secrecy. The concept was simple - an armored vehicle that could cross uneven terrain to support infantry. Initial designs were primitive, but improvements increased their effectiveness later in the war.



### AIRCRAFT

The war began barely a decade after the Wright Brothers’ first flight. Airplanes initially served as scouts and observers, but pilots soon began carrying weapons into the air. Aircraft designs and weaponry improved rapidly, and soon both sides battled for control of the skies.

## LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

**WHILE ARMIES** fielded new tools of war, their commanders clung to outdated concepts and methods of fighting. As always, the soldiers in the field suffered.

For three years, men faced each other in opposing **trenches**, separated by a battered strip of “**No Man’s Land**,” often only a few hundred yards wide. Each side took turns throwing troops against the enemy. When these attacks ran out of energy, the other side would counter-attack, and things would end up more or less where they had started -- except for those killed or maimed in the fighting.

*“Months of boredom, punctuated by moments of sheer terror...”*

In between these battles, the troops endured a daily routine of tedium and random death. Men spent daylight below ground level, cleaning themselves and their weapons, and maintaining the trench. Personal time was limited; reading or writing letters from home was a favorite pastime. Nightfall gave the men more freedom to move above ground. They patrolled their area, repaired sandbags and barbed wire, and moved in supplies and reinforcements.

Their companions were vermin, disease and filth. Giant rats and hungry lice infested everything and spread infection. Frogs lived in pools of standing water,

which also caused trench foot, a skin infection that could lead to amputation. The stale air carried the smell of sweat, unwashed clothing, lingering gas, smoke and decaying corpses.

The threat of death was constant. From time to time, enemy artillery would strike, blasting metal shrapnel through the trench, or burying men alive. Snipers targeted any head that appeared over the edge of the trench

Then, at some point, troops would sense a change in the routine: increased movement and artillery fire from the enemy across the way... Was the other side planning an attack? Or perhaps rumors, reinforcements, supplies... Would it soon be time to climb out of the trenches and head toward the enemy guns?



A doctor inspects British troops for trench foot



**THE WAR IN EUROPE** quickly expanded to other parts of the world. European colonies and dominions in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific provided men and resources to their mother countries. In some cases, these colonial territories themselves became battlegrounds. The entrance of the Ottoman Empire set off fighting in the Middle East and North Africa. Fighting spread to the seas, as both sides tried to prevent shipments of vital supplies to their opponents. When colonies and other possessions are included, most of today's modern nations participated in some way.

## PARTICIPANTS IN WORLD WAR I (1914 NATIONS, IN ORDER OF DECLARATION OF WAR)

### The Allies and Associated Powers

**1914**  
Serbia  
Russia  
Montenegro  
France  
Belgium  
Great Britain\*

**1915**  
Italy  
  
**1916**  
Portugal  
Romania

**1917**  
United States  
Cuba  
Panama  
Greece  
Siam  
Liberia  
China

Brazil  
  
**1918**  
Guatemala  
Nicaragua  
Costa Rica  
Haiti  
Honduras

### The Central Powers

**1914**  
Austria-Hungary  
Germany  
Ottoman Empire (Turkey)  
  
**1915**  
Bulgaria

\* Includes Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, South Africa & other British dominions and colonies

## BEYOND THE WESTERN FRONT: 1914 - 1916

### NORTH AMERICA

While the United States remains neutral, Canada, a British dominion, immediately declares war. Thousands of U.S. citizens cross the border to join the Canadian Army. Canadian units play a vital role in nearly every major battle fought by the British in Europe, proving to be tough, effective troops -- but at a terrible cost.

### SOUTHERN EUROPE

After early Serbian victories, Germany sends men to help Austria-Hungary and convinces Bulgaria to join their cause. Under the combined assault, Serbia is overrun by late 1915. Its place is taken by Italy, which renounces its alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary. But by late 1916, the Italian front is as deadlocked as the rest of Europe.

### THE EASTERN FRONT

Russia sends its armies into Germany before they are fully mobilized, leading to a horrific defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg. It has better results against Austria-Hungary and the Ottomans in the south, until the Germans step in to bolster their allies. But staggering casualties and widespread anger on the homefront leave the army and the nation on the brink of revolution.

### THE MIDDLE EAST

The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) joins the Central Powers in late 1914. The British occupy its Mesopotamian oilfields, but are unable to advance further. Hoping to relieve pressure on the Western Front, the British invade the Gallipoli peninsula, but are pushed out by its Turkish defenders. The Arab tribes rise against the Turks, assisted by a young British officer named T.E. Lawrence.

### THE FAR EAST

Japan, an ally of Britain, seizes German-controlled territory in China as well as Germany's colonies in the Pacific. With the European powers focused closer to home, Japan expands its influence in the region.



Lawrence of Arabia

### ON THE SEAS

The German and British main fleets fight an inconclusive battle at Jutland. German U-boats (submarines) take a heavy toll on Allied shipping, until international outrage forces Germany to restrict their use. Britain's naval blockade begins strangling the German war effort and civilian economy.



German U-Boat

### SOUTH AMERICA

The countries of South America remain neutral until 1917. Allied and German naval ships use South American ports for resupply and repairs. The British and Germans fight a series of small naval battles off the coast of Chile.

### AFRICA

France's North African colonies send over 600,000 men to fight in Europe. Egypt is Britain's base for the Middle East; the Suez Canal is its lifeline to India. The Ottomans incite uprisings against British and French holdings. Farther south, the British seize control of Germany's colonies. A small German guerilla force in East Africa ties down hundreds of thousands of Allied troops until the war ends.

### SOUTH ASIA

India, a British colony, sends 1.3 million men to fight in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Hoping that wartime service will improve the status of Indians under British rule, Mohandas Gandhi encourages his countrymen to support the war effort.

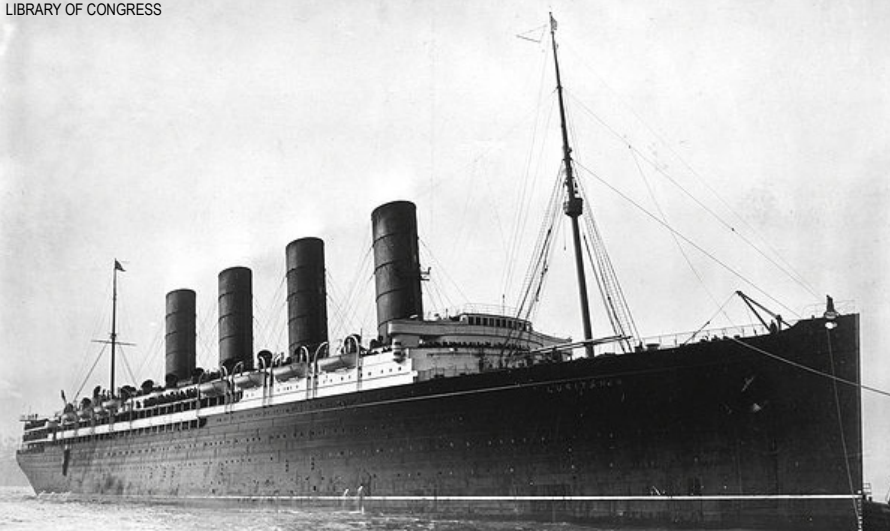
### AUSTRALIA/NEW ZEALAND

Britain's most distant dominions respond enthusiastically to its call to arms. The Battle of Gallipoli, against Ottoman forces, is a defining moment for both nations.

# U.S. NEUTRALITY: 1914-1916

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



The sinking of the Lusitania and loss of 128 American lives helped turn U.S. opinion against Germany, but did not immediately lead the nation to abandon neutrality and enter the war.

**WHEN WAR BROKE OUT** in Europe, the United States immediately declared its neutrality. President Woodrow Wilson stated that America must be “impartial in thought as well as in action.”

For a century, the U.S. had stayed out of European affairs. Most Americans preferred to continue this policy. The country was growing into its potential, and had emerged as the world’s largest

agricultural and industrial producer. It was in the midst of a shift from a rural to an urban society, which created both opportunities and challenges. Americans were focused on issues at home, rather than conflicts overseas.

On the other hand, most Americans had European roots. The majority leaned toward the Allies, thanks to a shared language and heritage with Britain and ties

with France going back to the American Revolution. At the same time, a large population of German-Americans sympathized with their mother country, and many Irish-Americans held strong anti-British feelings.

Germany’s violation of Belgium’s neutrality further tilted U.S. public opinion toward the Allies. Allied propaganda exaggerated German brutality, but there was truth behind the claims -- German troops had burned down the medieval library at Louvain and had shot Belgian civilians and Allied sympathizers, including the British nurse Edith Cavell.

The war at sea also shaped U.S. opinion. Britain’s naval blockade was unpopular, as it prevented neutral nations from trading freely with both sides. At the same time, because of the blockade, the Allies were able to purchase far more U.S. goods and supplies than the Central Powers, often with loans from American financial institutions. This imbalance gave American businesses a vested interest in an Allied victory.

Also, although the British blockade was controversial, it was far less damaging than Germany’s policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. In early 1915,

German U-boats began sinking all merchant ships going to or from Great Britain without warning. U.S. protests escalated until a German submarine sank the passenger liner *Lusitania* on May 7, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. U.S. outrage exploded, and Germany halted unrestricted sinkings.

By this point, U.S. public opinion was firmly against Germany. A “**preparedness**” movement arose that argued the U.S. needed to build up its military in case it was pulled into the war. Preparedness was backed by many prominent Americans, including former president Theodore Roosevelt. It also gave rise to the Plattsburg Movement, a series of summer camps that taught attendees basic military skills.

However, there was still no widespread support for the war. In the end, preparedness advocates were able to achieve only a small increase in the U.S. Army and Navy. In November 1916, President Wilson’s peace position was validated as he won re-election with the slogan “He kept us out of war.” Yet less than four months later, he would ask the U.S. Congress for a declaration of war.

## RELIEF EFFORTS AND VOLUNTEERISM



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### FEEDING A NATION

Immediately after the war began, Belgium faced a food crisis. The country imported most of its food, but it was now isolated by the German occupation and the British blockade.

An American-led group founded the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (CRB). Headed by future U.S. president Herbert Hoover, the all-volunteer effort raised funds, collected food supplies, chartered cargo ships, and organized distribution efforts. All the while, it navigated its way through a complex web of diplomatic and military considerations in order to ensure that food reached Belgian civilians.

The CRB fed 7.3 million Belgian and 2 million French civilians between 1914 and 1919. It demonstrated that humanitarian relief could be successfully delivered into an active war zone, and set a standard followed by aid organizations to this day.



JULIEN BRYAN | PUBLIC DOMAIN

### SAVING LIVES

When war broke out, Americans living in Paris organized a field hospital and ambulances to help the French Army. This effort evolved into the American Ambulance Field Service (later the American Field Service, or AFS) through which volunteer drivers helped save the lives of thousands of wounded French soldiers. Other organizations raised ambulance units in France and on other fronts. Ernest Hemingway famously drove for the Red Cross in Italy. Most volunteers paid their own way to Europe, and covered their own expenses.

American women played a large role in providing medical support to Allies. A number drove ambulances, many more were nurses, and some wealthy women funded and ran hospitals. One newlywed bride and her husband even spent their honeymoon volunteering in France in 1915.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

U.S. AIR FORCE

### JOINING THE FIGHT

Despite U.S. neutrality, many young American men were eager to join the fight, especially on the Allied side. Thousands crossed into Canada to join the British war effort. Others, including the poet Alan Seeger (L), served with the French Foreign Legion.

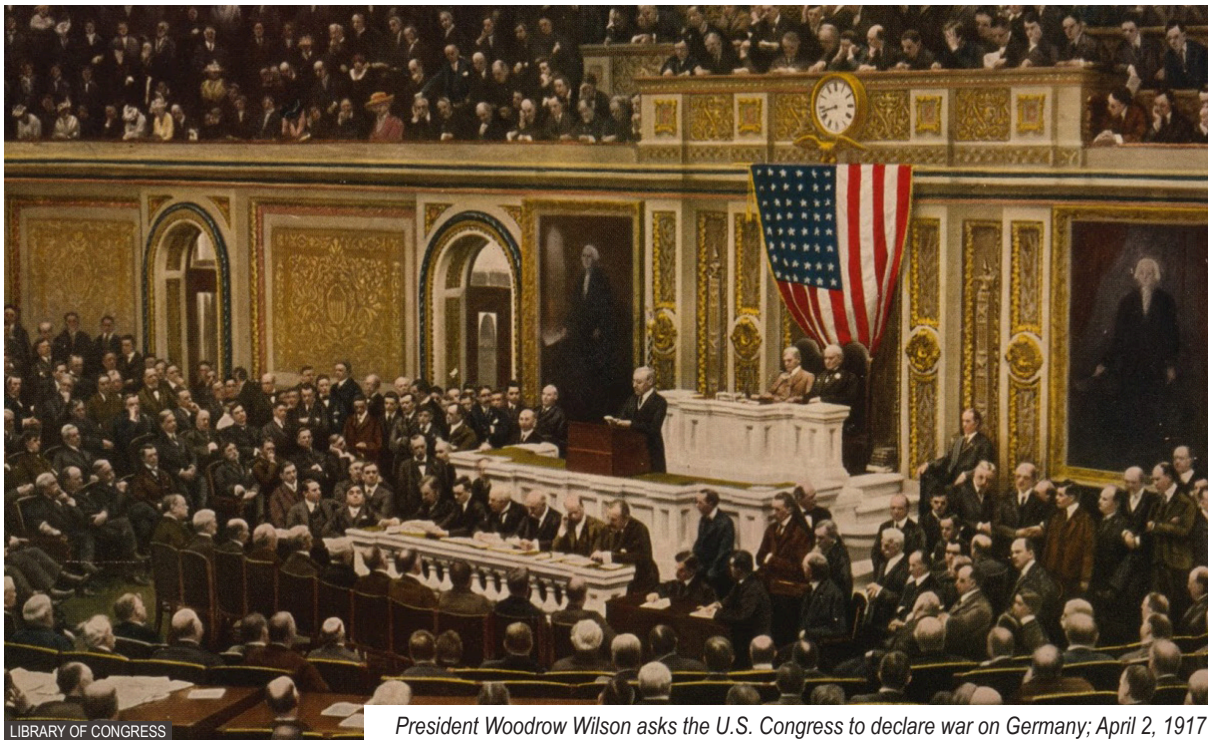
Some American volunteers flew with the Lafayette Flying Corps or the Lafayette Escadrille, attached to the French Air Force. Many of these originally volunteered with the American Field Service. Others came from the Foreign Legion, including Eugene Bullard (R), the first black fighter pilot.

When America entered the war, most of these volunteers were transferred to U.S. command. Bullard was denied a position in the U.S. Army Air Service, due to his race. Yet he, like many other American volunteers, received numerous honors and decorations from the French government.



# AMERICA ENTERS THE WAR

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President Woodrow Wilson asks the U.S. Congress to declare war on Germany; April 2, 1917

ALTHOUGH MOST of the American public was sympathetic to the Allies, the United States stayed neutral for nearly three years. However, in early 1917, a series of events finally drew America into the war.

On February 1, Germany resumed **unrestricted submarine warfare**. Britain's naval blockade was causing severe shortages for Germany's military and its civilian economy. Germany saw no reason to continue holding back its most effective naval weapon, especially considering how unprepared the U.S. was for war. German U-boats once again began sinking all ships travelling to or from Allied ports. In response, the United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany.

Then, in mid-February, the British presented the American government with a telegram they had intercepted from Germany's Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to its Ambassador to Mexico. The message promised to help Mexico recapture territory it had lost to the United States in the Mexican-American War (1846-48) if Mexico joined Germany as an ally. The

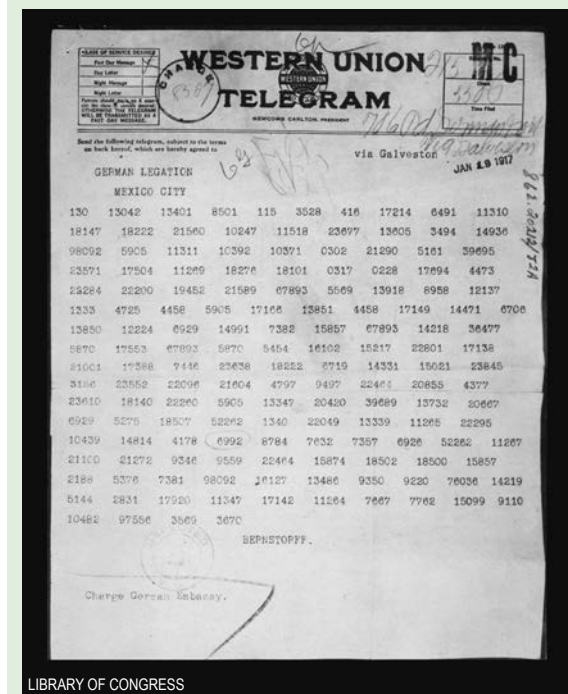
*"The world must be made safe for Democracy"*

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON  
MESSAGE TO CONGRESS; APRIL 2, 1917

**Zimmermann Telegram** (as it came to be called) was published in U.S. newspapers on March 1, further feeding U.S. outrage.

In March, the Germans sank five U.S. merchant ships, with the loss of dozens of American lives. In addition, the fall of the Tsar's regime in Russia simplified the moral argument for the Allied cause: the war was now between democratic nations and autocratic empires.

On April 2, President Wilson went to the U.S. Congress to formally ask it to declare war on Germany. The Senate granted Wilson's request two days later, followed by the House of Representatives on April 6. The United States had joined the war.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The original encrypted **Zimmermann Telegram**. The message instructed the German Ambassador to Mexico to offer Mexico the opportunity to regain Texas, New Mexico and Arizona in return for an alliance with Germany. The Mexican government refused the offer and remained neutral throughout the war.

## THE DISSENTER



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

**JEANNETTE RANKIN**, the first American woman elected to national office in the United States, was one of 50 members of the House of Representatives who voted against the U.S. declaration of war. In 1941, Rankin would be the only member to vote against war with Japan, making her the only person to vote against U.S. entry into both World Wars. Rankin was widely criticized for both votes, but held true to her pacifist principles throughout her lifetime, never regretting either vote. In 1985, Rankin was honored with a statue in the U.S. Capitol, with the inscription: "I Cannot Vote For War."

## THE ALLIES ON THE BRINK: REVOLUTION, MUTINY AND EXHAUSTION

From the Allies' point of view, events in 1917 proved that the United States had entered the war just in time.

In Russia, long-simmering discontent boiled over, due to staggering war casualties and shortages on the home-front. In March, nationwide strikes erupted, which the army refused to put down, forcing Tsar Nicholas to give up his throne.



PUBLIC DOMAIN

Russia's new provisional government made a number of reforms, but kept Russia in the war. A second revolution in November brought **Vladimir Lenin** (left) and the Bolshevik communists to power. Russia ceased fighting and signed a separate peace with the Central Powers.

After yet another disastrous offensive in April, the

French Army reached its breaking point. Numerous units mutinied, refusing to go on any more attacks. Order was restored by punishing individuals and units and by promising better conditions for frontline troops. But the French Army would be limited to defense for the time being.

Despite massive losses at the Battle of the Somme, the British were still ready to press forward. The result was the **Battle of Passchendaele** (July 31 - November 10), three months of rain, mud, and misery that cost each side a quarter million casualties with little result. The British did better in the **Battle of Cambrai** in November, thanks to their effective use of tanks, but their gains were offset by German advances in other sectors.

By year's end, the Allies had lost a coalition partner and were reduced to a simple strategy: hold on until the Americans were ready.



LIBRARY & ARCHIVES CANADA

A Canadian soldier surrounded by the mud at Passchendaele

# BUILDING A FIGHTING FORCE

THE UNITED STATES was not prepared to fight in World War I. It had a respectable navy, but the war was primarily fought by armies on land, not fleets at sea. America's army was tiny and designed to do little more than guard its borders. At a time when European armies numbered millions of soldiers, the U.S. Army, National Guard, and Marine Corps had barely 300,000 men combined.

Initially, recruitment was slow, reflecting the uncertainty the public still felt about the war. To rapidly raise a large fighting force, Congress passed the Selective Service Act (commonly known as "the Draft") to conscript men into the Army.

## THE DRAFT

All men aged 21-31 were required to register with a local draft board, and were each assigned a draft number from 1 to 10,500. They were inducted into service based on the order in which their number was selected at a drawing held by the Secretary of War.



U.S. Secretary of War Newton Baker draws the first draft number on July 20, 1917

The draft was not universally accepted. Groups and individuals raised political, legal, or moral questions. Members of certain religious faiths were given exemptions as conscientious objectors. Alvin York, perhaps the most famous U.S. soldier of the war, initially registered as a conscientious objector before deciding to serve.

However, most Americans saw it as their duty to serve their nation; over 2.7 million men would be drafted into the military.

## TRAINING

Throughout 1917 and 1918, men arrived at training camps from all corners of America. The average Army trainee would receive six months of training in the United States before shipping overseas.

Trainees were taught to drill, follow orders, and work as a team. They learned how to handle weapons and the tools of



New recruits board a train on their way to basic training at Camp Upton, New York.

*There were bartenders, saloon bouncers, ice men, coal miners, dirt farmers, actors, mill hands and city boys who had grown up in the back alleys and learned to scrap ever since they were knee high to a duck...*

ALVIN YORK  
82ND "ALL AMERICAN" DIVISION



A British instructor teaches an American trainee bayonet techniques

war, while building their physical fitness through marching and exercise.

The Army also worked to create a unified force from a diverse, disparate manpower pool. With the notable exception of African American troops (see p. 12), it largely succeeded. It made a special effort to integrate hundreds of thousands of immigrant soldiers, by teaching them English and instilling a sense of "being American" while taking into account their unique cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile, as the nation's young men actively prepared to go overseas, the public's support for the war effort grew.

As troops completed their training, they boarded trains and traveled to the East Coast. Soldiers from Northern and Southern states came together, joined by men from the Western states, in Ameri-

ca's first great national effort since the Civil War. They embarked on troop ships and steamed off to the war zone. Four out of five would travel through New York Harbor, passing under the gaze of the Statue of Liberty. For many, this would be the last view of their country that they would ever see.



A soldier from the famed "Fighting 69th" Infantry Regiment bids his young family farewell

## U.S. ARMY SOLDIERS BY STATE/TERRITORY (1917-1918)

New York	367,864
Pennsylvania	297,891
Illinois	251,074
Ohio	200,293
Texas	161,065
Michigan	135,485
Massachusetts	132,610
Missouri	128,544
California	112,514
Indiana	106,581
New Jersey	105,207
Minnesota	99,116
Iowa	98,781
Wisconsin	98,211
Georgia	85,506
Oklahoma	80,169
Tennessee	75,825
Kentucky	75,043
Alabama	74,678
Virginia	73,062
North Carolina	73,003
Louisiana	65,988
Kansas	63,428
Arkansas	61,027
West Virginia	55,777
Mississippi	54,295
South Carolina	53,482
Connecticut	50,069
Nebraska	47,805
Maryland	47,054
Washington	45,154
Montana	36,293
Colorado	34,393
Florida	33,331
Oregon	30,116
South Dakota	29,686
North Dakota	25,803
Maine	24,252
Idaho	19,016
Utah	17,361
Rhode Island	16,861
Puerto Rico	16,538
Dist of Columb.	15,930
New Hampshire	14,374
New Mexico	12,439
Wyoming	11,393
Arizona	10,492
Vermont	9,338
Delaware	7,484
Hawaii	5,644
Nevada	5,105
Alaska	2,102
Philippines	255
Other	2,817

**TOTAL 3,757,624**

SOURCE: ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE UNITED STATES LAND FORCES IN THE WORLD WAR

# “OVER THERE”: ARRIVING IN EUROPE

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**THE FIRST TROOPS** of the **American Expeditionary Force (AEF)** landed in France on June 26, 1917. Over two million Americans would arrive in Europe by the end of the war.



The AEF was commanded by **General John “Black Jack” Pershing** (left), a veteran of the Spanish-American War and commander of a 1916 raid to hunt Mexican guerilla leader Pancho Villa. On July 4, Pershing led a parade of U.S. troops through cheering crowds in the streets of Paris. The Americans marched to the tomb of the Marquis de Lafayette, the French hero of the Revolutionary War, where they declared that the U.S. had come to repay its old debt to France.

*“Lafayette, we are here!”*

COLONEL CHARLES STANTON  
STAFF OFFICER TO GEN. JOHN PERSHING  
PARIS; JULY 4, 1917

## BUILDING AN INDEPENDENT FORCE

Pershing and his staff began preparing the AEF for battle. In earlier negotiations, the British and French had pressed to use American troops to fill in their depleted ranks. President Woodrow Wilson and Pershing refused, insisting on organizing the AEF as an independent force under American command.

The Americans were assigned to the



The first troops of the American Expeditionary Force arrive in St. Nazaire, France

area around Lorraine, in the east of the Allied lines. Pershing’s staff set up camps to house the troops, training programs to prepare them for combat, and communications and supply networks.

American industry had just begun to shift to full wartime production, so U.S. units were mostly supplied with Allied equipment, especially tanks and airplanes. American troops learned Allied trench combat techniques, but Pershing insisted on additional training in marksmanship and maneuver warfare, as he intended to get the Germans out of their positions and into the open.

At first, the arrival of eager, fresh Americans provided a much-needed morale boost to the exhausted Allies.

However, this early optimism faded a bit when it became clear that the new arrivals were not ready to fight. Many British and French troops became resentful of the well-fed and well-paid doughboys, who had yet to prove themselves under fire. America’s fighting men would have to earn respect in combat, not just from the enemy, but from their allies.

On October 21, 1917, units from the U.S. Army’s First Division entered the front lines near Nancy, France. Two days later, Robert Bralet became the first U.S. soldier to fire a shot in the war when he discharged a French 75mm gun at the German lines. On the night of November 2, James Gresham, Thomas Enright and Merle Hay became the first U.S. soldiers

*Over there, over there,  
Send the word,  
send the word over there  
That the Yanks are coming,  
the Yanks are coming  
The drums rum-tumming everywhere.  
So prepare, say a prayer,  
Send the word,  
send the word to beware  
We’ll be over, we’re coming over,  
And we won’t come back  
till it’s over, over there!*

LYRICS TO GEORGE M. COHAN’S  
POPULAR 1917 SONG “OVER THERE”

to die in combat when Germans raided their trenches near Bathelemont, France.

Through the end of 1917 and into 1918, the AEF continued to grow and train. Pershing planned to spend 1918 building up an overwhelming force and then to attack and win the war in 1919. However, the Germans had other plans.

## A RACE AGAINST TIME

Germany had resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917 knowing it would likely provoke the U.S. to enter the war. However, it believed that it could defeat the Allies before enough Americans arrived to make a difference. After Russia’s departure from the war and Austrian/German victories on the Italian front, Germany began moving men to the Western Front for its own effort to win the war.

## WILSON’S FOURTEEN POINTS



As America sent its men overseas to fight, **President Woodrow Wilson** continued to make a moral case for its involvement in the war.

Wilson was a progressive and an idealist. At the same time, he was deeply prejudiced against African Americans, and for years was strongly opposed to voting rights for women. These contradictory attitudes were not unusual for the time.

In a speech to Congress on January 8, 1918, Wilson laid out fourteen concepts that summarized U.S. war aims.

Some were specific to the war: Germany was to evacuate Russia, leave Belgium and return territory taken from France in their 1870 war. Italy’s borders would be adjusted to encompass all Italian speakers (at Austria-Hungary’s expense). Austria-Hungary was to leave

the nations it had occupied. It would also offer self-government to its minorities, as would the Ottoman Empire. An independent Polish state would be established.

On a broader scale, Wilson wanted to address the issues he believed had led to the outbreak and expansion of the war. He proposed an end to secret treaties, freedom of the seas, free trade, reductions in armaments and greater rights for colonial peoples. To enforce these principles, he proposed the creation of a global “association of nations.”

Wilson’s speech came to be known as the “**Fourteen Points**”. They were embraced around the world as American idealism at its best, and were adopted by the Allies as the central message of their wartime propaganda.

However, Wilson would ultimately find it difficult to turn his ideals into reality, even in his home country.

## DEFEATING THE U-BOATS: THE U.S. NAVY

In early 1917, German submarines were sinking one in every four ships that sailed from British ports. German leaders were confident that they could minimize the U.S.’s contribution to the Allies by preventing supplies and troops from crossing the Atlantic.

The **U.S. Navy** had a sizeable fleet, and was building more ships. However, it lacked the smaller vessels needed to fight submarines and to escort merchant ships, and was undermanned.

It quickly shifted its shipbuilding program to focus on destroyers and submarine chasers. The U.S. declaration of war automatically placed the Coast Guard under Navy command, expanding its ranks. Also, since the Army had priority for manpower, the Navy expanded its recruiting to include women in support roles, freeing up more men for sea duty.

To combat the submarine threat, the

British and U.S. started grouping merchant ships in convoys and protecting them with escorts. Submarine sinkings dropped dramatically.

The U.S. Navy helped ensure that tens of millions of tons of supplies reached Europe. Two million U.S. troops safely crossed the Atlantic; only 637 were lost to German submarines. 431 sailors and coast guardsmen were killed and 819 wounded in carrying out this vital duty.



American sailors pose next to a 5-inch gun on the deck of a destroyer



ARMY HERITAGE & EDUCATION CTR

Two very different doughboys in training at Camp Custer (Michigan) in 1917.

## THE AMERICAN DOUGHBOY

Historical accounts show that U.S. infantry (foot) soldiers had been called “Doughboys” as early as the Mexican-American War (1846-48). During World War I, the term was universally adopted as the nickname for all American troops who went overseas to fight.

They came from every part of the country, and represented nearly every segment of America’s large and diverse population: Ivy League blue bloods and immigrants fresh off the boat. Country boys and city dwellers. Grandsons of Civil War veterans and grandsons of slaves. Sons of settlers and cowboys from the West, and Native American warriors carrying on their tribal traditions.

The following figures help paint a broad picture of the men who fought for America in World War I:

- **25%** of men between the ages of 18 and 31 were in military service
- The average height was **5 feet 7 1/2 inches** tall; the average weight was **141.5 pounds** - about the same as a Civil War soldier, but an inch shorter and ten pounds lighter than those who served in World War II.
- **37%** were unable to read or write
- **39%** were immigrants or sons of immigrants
- **10%** were African American
- **7 out of 10** soldiers were draftees
- **53,402** were killed in combat; **63,114** died from other causes; **204,000** were wounded

## NATIVE AMERICANS



MATHERS MUSEUM

Choctaw soldiers in uniform

Despite poor treatment by the U.S. government, many Native Americans contributed to the war effort, in uniform and on the homefront.

When the U.S. began drafting men into the military, most American Indians were not considered to be citizens, and were therefore not subject to conscription. However, they were required to register for the draft, which caused confusion, resentment and even outright rebellion.

Despite these issues, 6,500 Native men were drafted, and about 5,000 more enlisted, eager to carry on the warrior traditions of their tribes. The Onondaga and Onieda Nations even declared war against Germany. Fourteen American Indian women served in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps.

In combat, Native Americans often volunteered for dangerous positions, such as snipers and scouts, and won praise for their bravery and skill. The cost of this courage was high: about five percent of Native soldiers were killed in combat, compared to one percent for U.S. troops overall.

Although speaking native languages was discouraged or even punished in the U.S., many American Indians were fluent in their native tongue. Cherokee and Choctaw troops used their language to securely transmit communications that the Germans could not understand. These soldiers were the precursors to the better-known Code Talkers of World War II.

Native Americans supported the war on the homefront as well. They purchased \$25 million in war bonds, equal to \$75 for every Indian. Others supported the Red Cross and other relief organizations.

However, during the war, the loss of Native land increased, as cattle and sugar beet companies convinced the federal government that they needed more land to support the war effort.

Nonetheless, Native American contributions to the war helped win them greater rights as Americans. Congress granted citizenship to all Native veterans in 1919, and to all American Indians in 1924.

## AFRICAN-AMERICANS

More than 350,000 African Americans served during World War I. Many were assigned menial support roles, due to American society’s deep fears and prejudices. Despite facing racism at home and in uniform, tens of thousands of black soldiers served courageously and capably in combat.

When war broke out, black Americans debated whether or not to support the war effort if the U.S. joined the fighting. Some questioned why they should help the U.S. defend democracy overseas, when they were denied its full benefits at home.

*“Let us, while this war lasts, forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens...”*

W.E.B DU BOIS  
 JULY, 1918

When war came, many African-Americans chose to prove their right to equality by serving their country. African American troops were organized into segregated units, mostly led by white officers. In response to protests, the Army eventually trained over 1,300 black officers.

200,000 black troops shipped



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Soldiers of the 369th Infantry Regiment, wearing French gear while under French command

overseas. Many white commanders believed black soldiers would perform poorly under fire. Others feared that black combat veterans would be emboldened to resist racism when they returned home. As a result, most African Americans were assigned to labor duties in the rear areas.

General Pershing intended to train and raise an independent American army, and resisted British and French requests for U.S. troops. However, he agreed to send the French several African-American regiments from the 93rd Division.

Under French command, black troops experienced far less racism. They were given combat assignments like any other French unit, and fought with courage and skill.

The most famous of these was the 369th Infantry Regiment. Although

it was also known for its famed regimental band, which brought jazz to Europe, it was first and foremost a fighting unit. During the Meuse-Argonne offensive at the end of the war, the 92nd “Buffalo Soldiers” Division joined the fighting, serving under U.S. command. In addition, a small number of African-American women served as nurses and in the Navy.

Unfortunately, the service of black Americans had little impact on racism in the United States. Many African-American veterans faced discrimination and violence, despite their service. However, their record provided undeniable proof of the willingness and ability of African Americans to serve their nation, and further inspired the black community in its fight to achieve social and political equality.

## WOMEN



Yeomanettes serving in the U.S. Navy Reserve

World War I marked the first time American women directly participated in a war effort on a wide scale. Their contributions helped win the war, and also helped them make major strides towards equality.

### WOMEN IN UNIFORM

Women formally served in the U.S. military for the first time. The largest group was the Army Nurse Corps: over 20,000 served, and 10,000 went overseas. Nurses were often close to the front lines, and experienced artillery and gas attacks. They provided care to more than 200,000 wounded men. During the influenza pandemic of 1918-19, over 200 nurses died treating sick troops.

Over 400 women served as telephone operators in France. These “Hello Girls” spoke English and French, and played a vital role in connecting Allied communications. Although they served with the Army Signal Corps, they were considered civilians, and did not receive government recognition as veterans until

60 years after the war.

Due to the Army’s manpower needs, the Navy was short of personnel. It recruited over 11,000 “Yeomanettes” who served as clerks, electricians, drivers, mechanics, and more. The Marine Corps and Coast Guard also recruited women for the first time.

### VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS

American women had been a part of European relief efforts since the beginning of the war. Once America entered the fighting, thousands more joined efforts at home and overseas. Tens of thousands of Red Cross volunteers provided services for troops overseas, and Red Cross nurses worked alongside their Army counterparts. The YMCA helped the Army provide welfare and comfort services. The Salvation Army’s contingent was smaller, but beloved for its “Donut Dollies.” Wealthy women established hospitals and aid programs, and in some cases traveled to Europe to run them personally.



Women shipbuilders at the Puget Sound (WA) shipyard.

### WARTIME WORK

The expansion of the military pulled 16 percent of the U.S. male workforce into uniform. Women filled jobs as factory workers, clerical staff, drivers, technicians, researchers... virtually every position in every field. Most women were released from their jobs as men came home after the war. But they had proved that women could handle “masculine” work, and set the example for the “Rosie the Riveters” of World War II and future generations of working women.

### IMPACT

The contributions of women in WWI allowed the U.S. to devote its manpower to the battlefield. These women led the way for today’s military women, and enhanced the position and influence of women in American society in general.

In particular, their service provided momentum for the Women’s Suffrage movement, aimed at winning voting rights for women. President Woodrow Wilson himself publicly reversed his opposition to the movement, reflecting changing attitudes shared by many men. In 1920, the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gave women the right to vote.

*“.. We have made partners of the women in this war... Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?”*

PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON  
ADDRESS TO CONGRESS, SEPTEMBER 30, 1918

## IMMIGRANTS

During World War I, nearly forty percent of U.S. soldiers were immigrants or children of immigrants. Their service not only helped win the war, but accelerated the assimilation and acceptance of an entire generation of new Americans.

Between 1880 and 1910, 17 million immigrants arrived in the United States. By 1910, almost 15 percent of the population was foreign born. While earlier arrivals were largely British, Irish or German, most of these recent immigrants were from Eastern, Central and Southern Europe. A smaller number came from Asian countries. Their arrival increased the U.S. population while introducing unfamiliar languages and cultures into American society.

The outbreak of World War I in July 1914 led to concerns about how the immigrant population would react to the war, since most recent arrivals had direct ties to countries involved in the fighting. These concerns deepened when the United States entered the war in April 1917. Many native-born Americans were prejudiced against



Troops at Camp Gordon, GA, pose in a patriotic formation for a group photograph. Camp Gordon pioneered new approaches to training immigrant recruits, helping integrate them into the U.S. Army and building a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose

immigrants, seeing them as lazy, backward, and cowardly. Some questioned whether immigrant recruits who spoke little English and held old-world values could be trained to be effective soldiers.

Initially, it appeared that the skeptics were right. When the first foreign-born recruits and draftees began military training, many struggled to understand simple orders, and had trouble keeping up physically, due to years of poor nu-

trition and hard labor. Misunderstandings and prejudices flared up into arguments and fights, some of them serious.

The army moved quickly to address these problems. Foreign recruits were organized into training units by language, led by multilingual officers. Resources were provided for traditional celebrations and religious services, and ethnic foods were served at mealtime. At the same time, immigrants received

intensive classes in English, American history and civics.

These measures improved the morale and performance of foreign-born recruits, which helped them earn the respect of their native-born comrades. By the time their units were sent overseas, immigrant soldiers had begun to develop deeper ties to their fellow soldiers and to their adopted nation.

On the battlefield, immigrant and native-born troops toiled, fought, bled and died alongside each other. Under fire, prejudices and stereotypes were irrelevant; all that mattered was whether a man was a good soldier. The shared hardship and sacrifice forged bonds between troops of all backgrounds and reinforced their pride in serving under the stars and stripes.

Back home, the families of foreign-born soldiers were deeply invested in the war. They bought war bonds and proudly hung blue star service flags in their front windows to show that they had a loved one in uniform. By sending their young men overseas and demonstrating their support for the war effort, immigrant communities as a whole were better able to connect to mainstream American society.

**AMERICAN TROOPS** in the field were supported by a wide range of services. Hospitals cared for the wounded and sick. Relief organizations such as the YMCA, Red Cross and Salvation Army provided comfort and morale services. Military bands performed concerts of marching music and the latest popular tunes. Most important of all, there was mail from home -- sometimes containing a sweet treat to be eaten or shared with their comrades.

Many of these services were provided by volunteers, including thousands of women. Some worked just a couple of miles from the front lines, and experienced artillery or gas attacks. The doughboys would never forget those who joined them in Europe and shared some of the hardship and risk.



A diverse group of U.S. soldiers and sailors, plus an Allied friend or two, enjoy themselves at a Red Cross canteen in France

## BRINGING JAZZ TO EUROPE



James Reese Europe (L) leads the 369th Regiment's band in a performance in Paris

Many military units had marching bands, for entertainment and morale. In World War I, the most famous was attached to the **369th Infantry Regiment**, a segregated African-American unit.

Led by composer **James Reese Europe**, and drum major **Noble Sissle**, the band was made up of world class musicians from New York City and Latin America. It not only performed for U.S. troops, but introduced French audiences to jazz.

## HOSPITALS



A U.S. hospital, late 1917. Casualties would soon increase dramatically.

American volunteers had staffed and managed hospitals in France, Belgium, and England since the beginning of the war. The first U.S. military hospital arrived in Europe in May 1917. Initially, most U.S. hospitals treated Allied troops, until American forces entered heavy combat in early 1918.

Many medical innovations were introduced in World War I. X-ray equipment, blood transfusions, and better anti-infection practices all helped reduce fatalities. In addition to battlefield wounds, doctors and nurses faced another deadly opponent - the influenza pandemic of 1918-19. Many medical personnel died, heroically staying by their patients despite the risk.

## HOLIDAYS AWAY FROM HOME



Doughboys open the Christmas mail, December 1917

## RECIPE: RED CROSS WAR CAKE

The American Red Cross promoted a sweet cake recipe, promising that the end product could reach the Western Front and retain its freshness. The dried fruit helped keep it moist when shipped across the Atlantic.

The original recipe came with a recommendation: "Cake keeps fresh for a long time and can be sent to men at the front." Here is a slightly modified modern version, with only a few alterations.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup orange juice or rum for soaking raisins
- 8 ounces raisins (about one package), chopped, soaked in orange juice or rum, and drained before use
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 2 cups hot water
- 2 tablespoons lard (butter may be substituted today, but lard helped the cake stay fresher.)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
- 4 ounces pecans or walnuts, chopped
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 3 cups flour.

### DIRECTIONS:

Soak chopped raisins in orange juice or rum at least for a few hours, or up to one week. Drain.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Put sugar, hot water, lard, salt, cinnamon, cloves, and raisins, nuts, and grated zest in a large pot. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring frequently, then reduce the heat to low and cook at a simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from heat and cool in a large bowl. Sift or stir the flour and soda together, then add to liquid. Mix well. Generously grease 2 small loaf pans or one tube pan. Pour batter into the pans and bake for 45 minutes or until a knife blade comes out clean when poked into the cake. You may dust with confectioner's sugar as desired before serving.

Adapted from *The American Plate: A Culinary History in 100 Bites* by Libby H. O'Connell (Sourcebooks, 2015)



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IN 1917, the United States was not ready to fight a modern war. Not only was its military undersized, but its economy and society were unprepared for the commitment required to wage war in the 20th century.

After a slow start, the U.S. government implemented measures aimed at improving efficiency and mobilizing public involvement. Some of these efforts were controversial, but for the most part, they were successful.

The government's role in World War I set a precedent for its increased involvement in America's economy and society in general.

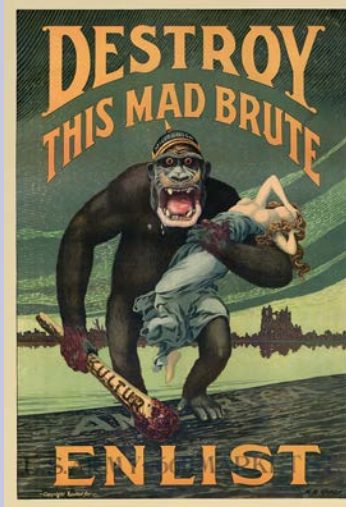
*This iconic image of Uncle Sam first appeared during the war*

## PROPAGANDA AND FREE SPEECH

In the first months after the U.S. entered the war, many Americans still did not fully support the decision to join the conflict. President Woodrow Wilson created the Committee on Public Information to encourage the American people to support the war effort. The Committee produced articles, posters (*right*), pamphlets, movies, speeches and rallies that promoted the Allied cause and painted the Central Powers (especially Germany) as enemies of democracy and civilization.

In addition, Congress passed two laws of questionable constitutionality. The Espionage Act gave the government broad powers to inspect communications by mail. The Sedition Act made it illegal to even speak against the war effort or the U.S. Government. Both laws were challenged in court; at the time, both were upheld by the Supreme Court as necessary for the war.

These measures fueled strong anti-German sentiment. German-Americans faced harassment and abuse; many changed their names to more English-sounding versions. In the hysteria, sauerkraut was renamed "liberty cabbage", dachshunds were called "liberty pups" and even German measles became "liberty measles."



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## CONSERVATION MEASURES

To free up resources for the military and for America's European allies, the government promoted conservation. The Food Administration was led by Herbert Hoover, who had organized relief efforts for Belgium. The agency promoted voluntary measures, such as meatless Mondays and wheatless Wednesdays. It offered canning lessons and modified recipes, and encouraged Americans to plant vegetable gardens in yards and vacant spaces. These measures helped double the amount of food shipped to Europe within a year and reduced U.S. consumption by 15 percent. The Fuel Administration adopted similar efforts, such as heatless Mondays and gasless Sundays.

*Promoting food conservation to immigrants*



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## PAYING FOR THE WAR

The United States would spend over \$30 billion on fighting World War I. In 1913, the 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution had established a personal income tax. Wartime increases in tax rates significantly boosted funds collected by the government.

However, most of America's wartime spending was funded by war bonds. Like savings bonds, war bonds provided purchasers with a guaranteed return at a future date. The government promoted its "Liberty Bonds" with a nationwide campaign calling on the public's patriotism. It organized huge rallies with famous actors such as Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks (*above*) and commissioned promotional posters by famous artists. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts helped sell bonds; Americans from all walks of life purchased them. War bonds would raise over \$20 billion for the U.S. war effort.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## WARTIME PRODUCTION

From 1914 to early 1917, America supplied war goods to Europe (predominantly the Allies, due to the British naval blockade).

However, when the U.S. entered the war, it faced challenges in ramping up to full wartime production. The military and private industry did not work together to prioritize manufacturing needs, and the transportation of resources and products was completely disorganized.

President Wilson created the War Industries Board to set production standards and coordinate railroad and shipping efforts. The National War Labor Board secured the cooperation of American workers by setting higher wages and an eight hour workday, and recognized the right to unionize. Many jobs were left vacant by men called into military service; women stepped in to fill the gaps.

Although these measures helped make America's war effort more efficient, the war ended before they could make a major impact on its actual output. However, they set a precedent that influenced the government's role in the economy a generation later, during the New Deal and World War II.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

*Inside an American factory producing artillery shells*

## SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Service flags were hung in the windows of homes across America, decorated with a blue star for each family member in the military. If a family member lost their life, the blue star was covered with a gold one.

Blue and Gold Star service flags were widespread during both World Wars, but fell out of use until they were revived by post-9/11 military families.

*Cover of sheet music for a popular song of the time*



UNIV. OF MAINE

# BIRTH OF AN ARMY: SPRING 1918

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BY MARCH 1918, over 300,000 American troops were in France. A few units had been called into action during the Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, but the vast majority had yet to see combat. In keeping with Commanding General John J. Pershing's plan to organize an independent American army, most of them were training in rear areas, or assigned to quiet sections of the Allied lines.

The British and French were still recovering from setbacks they had suffered in 1917, and were simply holding on until the Americans were ready. Meanwhile, Germany had quietly moved hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the Western Front -- forces that had been freed up by Russia's departure from the war and a major Austrian/German victory on the Italian front.

On March 21, the reinforced German armies attacked. They used new tactics that relied on speed and surprise, rather than the week-long artillery barrages and mass frontal assaults of the past. Short, intense artillery bombardments blasted gaps in the Allied lines that were exploited by specially trained and equipped shock troops. These "storm-troopers" bypassed strong points and moved quickly forward, opening the way for larger units to follow.

At first, the Germans made good progress, advancing deep into Allied territory. However, the battered British and French troops held, and the German attacks ground to a halt without achieving their objectives. A follow-up offensive in Flanders, to the north, resulted in a similar outcome.

At first, American forces took little part in these battles. However, as the German offensives continued, Pershing agreed to send individual units to fight under French or British command. In late May, American soldiers seized the village of **Cantigny**, in the first U.S. attack of the war. Although minor, the



FRENCH PICTORIAL SERVICE

American troops attack the village of Cantigny, in the first independent U.S. action of the war

action was an important step forward for American troops.

A few days later, U.S. forces reinforced Allied positions in the Chemin des Dames area northeast of Paris, where they prevented the Germans from crossing the Marne River to threaten the French capital. To the west, U.S. Marines halted the enemy advance at Belleau Wood and then retook the wood, proving that Americans were capable of standing toe-to-toe with battle-hardened Germans.

The Germans launched their last assault, which they optimistically named Den Friedensturm (Peace Offensive), just to the east of their previous effort. As before, they achieved initial successes, crossing the Marne River near the town of **Chateau-Thierry**. Once again, French and American forces rallied to throw back the German advance. Over 85,000 U.S. troops saw action -- the largest number of Americans in combat since the Civil War. The failure of this last offensive ended German hopes of winning the war.

As the last German attack stalled, the Allies launched a major counter-offensive along the Aisne and Marne rivers.

For the first time, multiple American divisions fought shoulder-to-shoulder, as 270,000 U.S. troops pushed the Germans back. Two newly-formed American corps led much of the advance, inspiring further Allied confidence in U.S. troops and leadership. In August, the advance ran its course, and the Allies paused to regroup.

The performance of U.S. forces in this **Aisne-Marne Offensive** proved that the Americans were ready to take on a full share of the upcoming fighting. The various units that had been placed under Allied command during the German offensives were brought back under American control, and the First United States Army was officially formed on July 24th, with Pershing as its commander.

When the Germans had resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917, they had gambled that they could defeat the Allies before the Americans could field an effective fighting force. America's rapid ability to project power proved that a poor wager. The First Army now stood ready for upcoming American offensives that would help end the war.

## AMERICAN AIRMEN

The U.S. Army had just 35 pilots when it joined the war, all in the Signal Corps. It began an intensive program to recruit and train pilots and support personnel.

The first U.S. aviation squadron entered combat in February 1918, manned mostly by pilots who had previously volunteered with the French. American-trained squadrons soon joined the fighting, and on May 24, the Air Service of the U.S. Army was officially formed.

Most American pilots flew French planes, since U.S. aircraft production was still ramping up. Training was hazardous, causing twice as many deaths as combat. In addition, brand new U.S. pilots faced experienced German foes, resulting in heavy early losses.

Despite these challenges, American pilots steadily improved. 71 pilots shot down at least five aircraft, earning "ace" status. Former race car driver **Eddie Rickenbacker** (below) led all Americans with 26 victories. U.S. aviation helped beat back the German Spring Offensives, and helped control the skies in the final Allied offensives of the war.



U.S. AIR FORCE

## SERGEANT STUBBY

Stubby was smuggled to France by the 102nd Infantry Regiment of the 26th (Yankee) Division. He took part in 17 battles, surviving shrapnel and gas injuries.

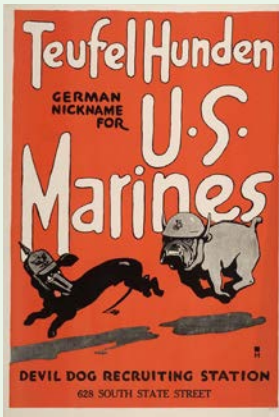


SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Stubby's canine senses helped warn his human comrades of danger. He could smell incoming gas attacks and hear inbound artillery and approaching enemies. He even captured an enemy spy trying to sneak into camp at night. Stubby also served as a mercy dog, finding and comforting wounded soldiers on the battlefield.

For his actions, Stubby was "promoted" to Sergeant. After the liberation of Chateau-Thierry, the women of the town made him a special blanket for him to wear his many awards.

Stubby returned home as a hero and celebrity. Upon his death, he received an obituary in the New York Times.



Marine Corps recruiting poster after the Battle of Belleau Wood

## DEVIL DOGS: THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

Most of America's troops in France were soldiers in the U.S. Army. However, 30,000 **U.S. Marines** (officially part of the Navy) made important contributions to victory on the Western Front.

Marines had arrived with the first U.S. troops in June 1917. By March 1918, nearly 10,000 were in France. Most were organized in a brigade under the U.S. Army's Second Division.

On June 1, the Marine brigade went into action near Belleau Wood, along the Marne River. Despite being told to retreat, the Ma-

rines dug in and fought back a German assault. They then attacked to push the Germans out of the woods. For three weeks, the Marines battled the enemy head-on. Due to their inexperience and the strength of the German positions, Marine casualties were high. But after 20 days of brutal fighting, the Marines controlled the wood.

According to legend, the Marines at Belleau Wood were called "Teufelshunde" or "Devil Dogs" by their German opponents. The nickname endures today as part of the Marine Corps' legacy.

IMAGE: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



# ON TO VICTORY: THE HUNDRED DAYS

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U.S. artillerymen firing gas shells at German positions during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive

**THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE** had planned to build up and then go on the attack in 1919. Germany's Spring Offensives in early 1918 forced U.S. troops into the line sooner. Their impressive performance led to the formation of the First U.S. Army, and gave Allied leaders the confidence to press forward against the drained and demoralized Germans.

The Allies initial task was to push back the advances the German attacks had made in their lines. In August, American units supported Allied offensives in the Somme, Oise-Aisne, and Ypre-Lys areas. These drives reclaimed the territory captured by the Germans, and pushed the Germans back towards their defensive positions at the **Hindenburg Line**.

On September 12, the Americans launched their first offensive at **St. Mihiel**, supported by French troops, artillery, airplanes and tanks. Thanks to Pershing's careful planning and the ag-

gressive leadership of field commanders, the assault moved forward rapidly, disrupting a German withdrawal. The attack's objectives were quickly achieved, and Pershing halted to organize his forces for the next effort.

On September 26, the Allies launched offensives all along the Western Front, in what would become known as the **Hundred Days Offensives**. The AEF had the task of attacking between the Meuse River and the western edge of the Argonne Forest. This area was heavily defended, and complicated by difficult terrain. But Pershing believed that if his troops could push forward with enough momentum, they could break into the open areas behind the German lines. The **Meuse-Argonne Offensive** would involve 1.2 million American troops, making it the largest battle in U.S. history.

The offensive opened with an enormous artillery barrage. In three hours, the Allies used more ammunition than

both the North and South had fired in the entire Civil War. The American attack made good progress at first, piercing two out of three German defensive lines. But logistical problems and the inexperience of some attacking units stalled the assault in front of the third German line. Experienced troops took the lead, and began a steady push through the German fortifications. The area was finally cleared by October 31.

The Allied pressure all along the Western Front was accompanied by success on other battlefronts. Germany's ally Bulgaria was knocked out of the war in late September, followed by Ottoman Turkey at the end of October.

On November 1, American forces once again moved forward. They easily broke through the German lines and advanced rapidly. On November 4, Austria-Hungary gave up. Germany stood alone. The Allied victory was all but complete, yet the troops in the field continued to fight and die while their leaders negotiated an end to the war.

## SERGEANT YORK

Raised in rural Tennessee, Alvin York was an expert woodsman and a crack shot. He was also devoutly religious, and initially registered as a conscientious objector before going to war.



On October 8, 1918, York single-handedly attacked several German machine gun positions that had pinned down his patrol. At the end of the engagement, he had silenced the guns and captured 132 prisoners.

York received the U.S. military's highest award, the Medal of Honor, and numerous other decorations. He returned home a national hero but declined all offers to make money from his fame. Thanks in part to the classic Hollywood film, *Sergeant York*, he remains the most famous U.S. soldier of the war.

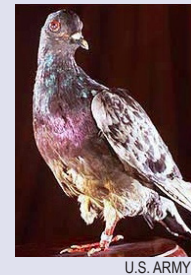
## THE LOST BATTALION AND CHER AMI

On October 2, 1918, over 500 soldiers of the U.S. 77th Division were surrounded by Germans in the Argonne Forest. For six days they held on, running low on food, water, and ammunition. They sent runners for help; none made it through. Worse, due to an error in a message sent by carrier pigeon, Allied artillery began bombarding the trapped unit.

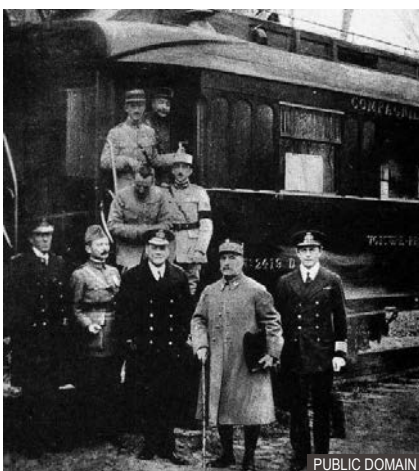
Desperate to end the shelling, the Americans sent their last pigeon. But the bird, named Cher Ami (French for "Dear Friend") was shot down by the Germans, dashing the hopes of the encircled men.

Yet despite severe injuries, Cher Ami somehow delivered his message to division headquarters, 25 miles away. The artillery stopped and a relief force rescued the survivors of the "Lost Battalion" four days later.

Cher Ami became famous, and was even awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Today, he can be seen at the American Museum of Natural History.



## THE ARMISTICE: THE ELEVENTH HOUR OF THE ELEVENTH DAY OF THE ELEVENTH MONTH



Allied generals pose after the signing of the Armistice, the morning of November 11, 1918

**BY THE END** of September 1918, German's military leaders were forced to accept that defeat was inevitable. The army was on the brink of collapse, and there was unrest on the homefront. The civilian government was finally emboldened to demand an end to the war.

On October 3, the German government sent a note to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, accepting his Fourteen Points as the basis for peace. However, while the other Allies were happy to promote Wilson's ideals as wartime propaganda, they were unwilling to apply them to actual negotiations with the Germans. Also, a number of Allied leaders -- including General Pershing -- believed that the

best way to end the war was to drive to Berlin. As talks went back and forth, the fighting continued.

Then, in early November, a mutiny by the German navy spread to cities throughout Germany. Fearing a repeat of the communist takeover in Russia, the Germans and the Allies accelerated their negotiations. On November 9, German revolutionaries declared a republic. The German Kaiser gave up his throne and fled to Holland.

Early on November 11th, the Germans met the Allies near Paris to sign an Armistice ending the fighting. The agreement set 11:00am Paris time as the moment the truce would begin - the 11th hour of

the 11th day of the 11th month.

The fighting continued until the last possible moment. As a result, there were 10,944 casualties, including 2,738 deaths, on the war's last day. Most occurred within a period of three hours. The last soldier to be killed in World War I was Henry Gunther, an American of German descent, who was killed just sixty seconds before the guns fell silent.

The news of the armistice was met with jubilation in the Allied nations. But although the fighting was over, it would take months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to formally end the war with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

# MAKING PEACE

IN JANUARY 1919, the combatant nations gathered in Paris for a peace conference. Five treaties would be negotiated at the conference, one for each of the Central Powers. The most important was the **Treaty of Versailles**, between the Allies and Germany.

Initially, the conference was led by England, France, the United States, Italy and Japan, but most major decisions were made by the first three powers. Lesser Allies and representatives from colonies and subject territories around the world also came to Paris. The Central Powers were not represented; they would be compelled to accept the terms negotiated by the victors.

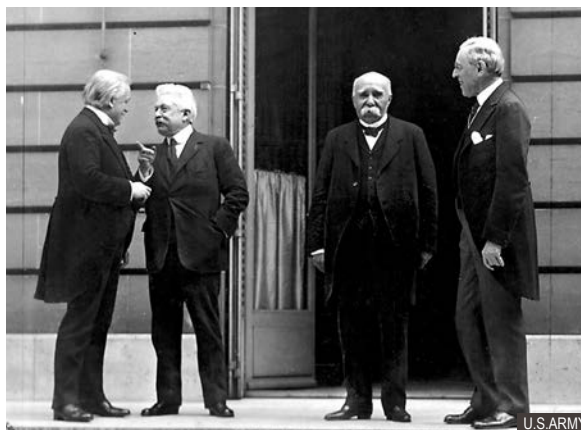
## HOPES MEET REALITY

The Allied nations had claimed they were fighting for justice and freedom. As a result, many around the world (including the absent Central Powers) hoped that U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points would form the basis for the final peace. Wilson had proposed firm but fair terms and a vision of a world ruled by open agreements, reduced armaments, self-government and international cooperation.

However, his allies had other priorities. Britain and France demanded a "war guilt clause" requiring Germany to accept responsibility for the war. France in particular insisted on harsh terms that stripped away Germany's territory, restricted its military's size, and required it to pay **reparations** to compensate the Allied nations.

Britain was less interested in punishing Germany, but was concerned with maintaining its empire. France had its own colonies, and shared this goal. These interests conflicted with Wilson's ideas about self-government for all peoples. Wilson did get the Allies to agree to establish the **League of Nations**. This international body was intended to preserve peace by promoting dialogue and preventing disputes, and would enforce its efforts by calling upon the military forces of member nations.

The Germans protested the terms of the treaty, but relented when the Allies threatened to begin fighting again. The Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28; treaties with the other Central Powers followed. Austria-Hungary was split in two and many of its minorities were



Allied leaders in Paris (L to R): British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Italian Premier Vittorio Orlando, French Premier Georges Clemenceau, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson. Lloyd George, Clemenceau and Wilson dominated the peace conference

given independence. Bulgaria lost territory as well. The Ottoman Empire was dismantled. All the Central Powers were forced to pay reparations to the Allies.

## SEEDS OF FUTURE CONFLICT

France and Britain had achieved most of their goals, and many Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman subjects had secured their independence. However, much of the rest of the world was disappointed by the results in Paris.

Italy and Japan felt that they had been ignored, despite their contributions. This dissatisfaction would fuel the rise of militarism in both nations. America's war aims were also not met: the outcome bore little resemblance to Wilson's Fourteen Points, which would weaken his case when he tried to secure U.S. Senate support for the Treaty of Versailles.

For many colonial peoples, the war's wasteful devastation had already tarnished European civilization. The way that subject territories were ignored at the peace conference further fueled independence movements around the globe. Many former Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman subjects were unhappy with the borders the Allies had drawn for their new nations, which often ignored deep ethnic and religious divisions. The resulting

unrest led to conflict throughout the 20th century, which continues today in the Middle East.

Most importantly, the Treaty of Versailles and the way in which it was imposed led to deep and sustained resentment in Germany. Nationalists began spreading a narrative that Germany's armies had not been defeated, but "stabbed in the back" by its politicians. These sentiments would be exploited by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party in their rise to power in the 1930s, and contributed to the start of World War II barely a generation later.

## THE U.S. RETURNS TO ISOLATIONISM

When President Woodrow Wilson brought the Treaty of Versailles back to the United States, the public and many state legislatures favored the treaty. However, the U.S. Senate, which held the constitutional power to ratify all treaties, opposed it. Many senators believed that the League of Nations powers undermined Congress's own power to declare war.

In response to this opposition, Wilson began a national tour to rally support for the Treaty. However, in late 1919 he suffered a breakdown and a major stroke. Wilson's condition eventually improved, but he never fully recovered.

With Wilson sidelined, Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, attached fourteen "reservations" to the pact, a play on Wilson's original Fourteen Points. Wilson stubbornly refused to accept any changes and told Senate Democrats to vote against the altered Treaty in November 1919. At a final vote in March 1920, the Treaty failed by seven votes.

By the 1920 presidential campaign, the American public had tired of international obligations and idealism. Republican President Warren G. Harding won election by promising a "return to normalcy," ending any chance of reviving the debate.

The U.S. signed separate treaties with Germany and the other Central Powers in 1921, but never joined the League of Nations. America would remain aloof from global politics until World War II.

## THE AFTERMATH

### THE HUMAN COST

World War I was one of history's deadliest wars, causing over 20 million deaths.

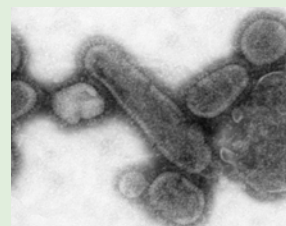
Over 8.5 million soldiers lost their lives, and more than 21 million were wounded. There were about 7 million civilian deaths, and countless others were injured, starved or made homeless.

This table presents conservative estimates for **military casualties** of the major combatant nations.

	Dead	Wounded
Germany	1,773,000	4,216,058
Russia	1,700,000	4,950,000
France	1,357,800	4,266,000
Austria-Hungary	1,200,000	3,620,000
Great Britain	908,371	2,090,212
Italy	650,000	947,000
Romania	335,706	120,000
Ottoman Empire (Turkey)	325,000	400,000
United States	116,516	204,002
Bulgaria	87,500	152,390
Serbia & Montenegro	48,000	143,148
Belgium	13,716	44,686
Portugal	7,222	13,800
Greece	5,000	21,000

### THE INFLUENZA PANDEMIC

The deadliest influenza (flu) pandemic in modern history struck the world in 1918-1919. Researchers now believe that the virus originated in China,



CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL  
The deadly 1918-1919 flu virus

made its way to North America with Chinese laborers, and incubated in U.S. Army training camps in early 1918. It traveled overseas with U.S. troops, and spread rapidly across Europe and the rest of the world, aided by wartime conditions. Estimates vary, but 20-100 million people died -- adding another layer of misery to a world already devastated by war.

### INTERVENTION IN RUSSIA

Nearly 13,000 U.S. troops took part in Russia's Civil War from August 1918 to April 1920. Other Allied nations also sent men; some actively



BOLANDERA | WIKIMEDIA COMMONS  
Monument to veterans of the U.S. intervention in Northern Russia

fought alongside the Russian anti-communists ("Whites") against the Bolsheviks ("Reds"). U.S. forces primarily carried out defensive operations and guarded American property. However, American participation poisoned relations between the U.S. and communist Russia (which became the Soviet Union in 1922).



AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

ABOVE: The Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France, the largest U.S. military burial ground in Europe. INSET: One of the hundreds of statues across America memorializing World War I's Doughboys

**WORLD WAR I** changed the world. It ended the era of monarchies and set in motion the decline and fall of colonial empires. It introduced mass industrial warfare and gave rise to over a century of conflict, including a second global war that was the largest in human history.

Yet its legacy extended beyond disruption and devastation. The war saw the introduction of large scale humanitarian efforts. It led to technological innovations that had widespread peacetime benefits. Subjugated peoples around the world were emboldened to pursue self-government. International organizations arose that formed the model for similar institutions today.

The United States initially retreated from international politics shortly after the war. However, World War I represented a turning point in its relationship with the world. It emerged as the undisputed leader in economic production, and became the center of global finance.

At home, the war fundamentally changed American society. The role of government in daily life significantly expanded. Women and minority groups staked

their claim to their fair share of rights and opportunities. The assimilation of millions of immigrants was greatly accelerated.

America's participation in World War I shaped its future and influenced the course of global events. As the U.S. commemorates its World War I centennial, the war's impact continues to be felt, from the highest levels of international politics to the countless local street corners, parks and cemeteries that host memorials bearing witness to the service and sacrifice of the America's World War I generation.

## WWI MEMORIALS: GET INVOLVED

Grants are available for local WWI memorials needing care: (Apply by June 15, 2017) [ww1cc.org/100memorials](http://ww1cc.org/100memorials)

Be a Memorial Hunter! Track down hidden and forgotten WWI memorials near you: [ww1cc.org/hunter](http://ww1cc.org/hunter)

## AMERICA'S VETERANS

The vast majority of America's 4.7 million veterans continued to contribute to U.S. society and their communities upon returning home. However, many struggled, due to physical wounds and psychological scars. In 1922, the New York Times reported that veteran suicides averaged two per day -- likely a very low estimate, given the reporting standards of the time.

### SERVING THOSE WHO SERVED

Veterans took action to address these issues. Existing groups, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), greatly expanded. New groups were formed, including the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and the American Legion, which became the world's largest veteran organization. The American Gold Star Mothers was the first of several groups for those who lost a family member in service. These organizations helped veterans in need, lobbied the government for better care and benefits, and took active roles in their local communities. Their work laid the foundation for America's modern veterans community.

### VETERANS DAY

One year after the war ended, nations around the world

marked the first Armistice Day on November 11, 1919. Americans observed the holiday until after World War II, when it was renamed Veterans Day to honor the service of veterans in all conflicts.

Today, communities across the United States mark Veterans Day with ceremonies and celebrations saluting America's veterans. (Memorial Day in May honors those who lost their lives serving the nation.) The country's largest Veterans Day parade takes place on New York City's Fifth Avenue -- the same route as the parades that welcomed home thousands of troops after World War I.



A diverse group of modern veterans marches in a recent Veterans Day Parade in New York City

## POPPIES



Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian physician, wrote the most famous poem of the war after seeing poppies blooming on graves of the fallen. McCrae himself died from disease in 1918, near the end of the war.

*"In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
 Between the crosses, row on row"*

FROM "IN FLANDERS FIELDS"  
 POEM BY LT COL JOHN MCCRAE, CANADIAN ARMY

Inspired by McCrae's poem, American Moina Michael began a campaign promoting the poppy as a symbol of remembrance. Her efforts led to the adoption of the poppy as a memorial symbol in the United States and in English-speaking countries overseas.

In recent years, awareness of the poppy's significance has declined in the U.S., although it remains strong in Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The U.S. World War I Centennial Commission has launched a national campaign to revive the poppy as a national symbol while raising funds for a new national memorial for America's World War I generation in Washington, D.C.

To learn more about this effort, visit:

[ww1cc.org/poppy](http://ww1cc.org/poppy)

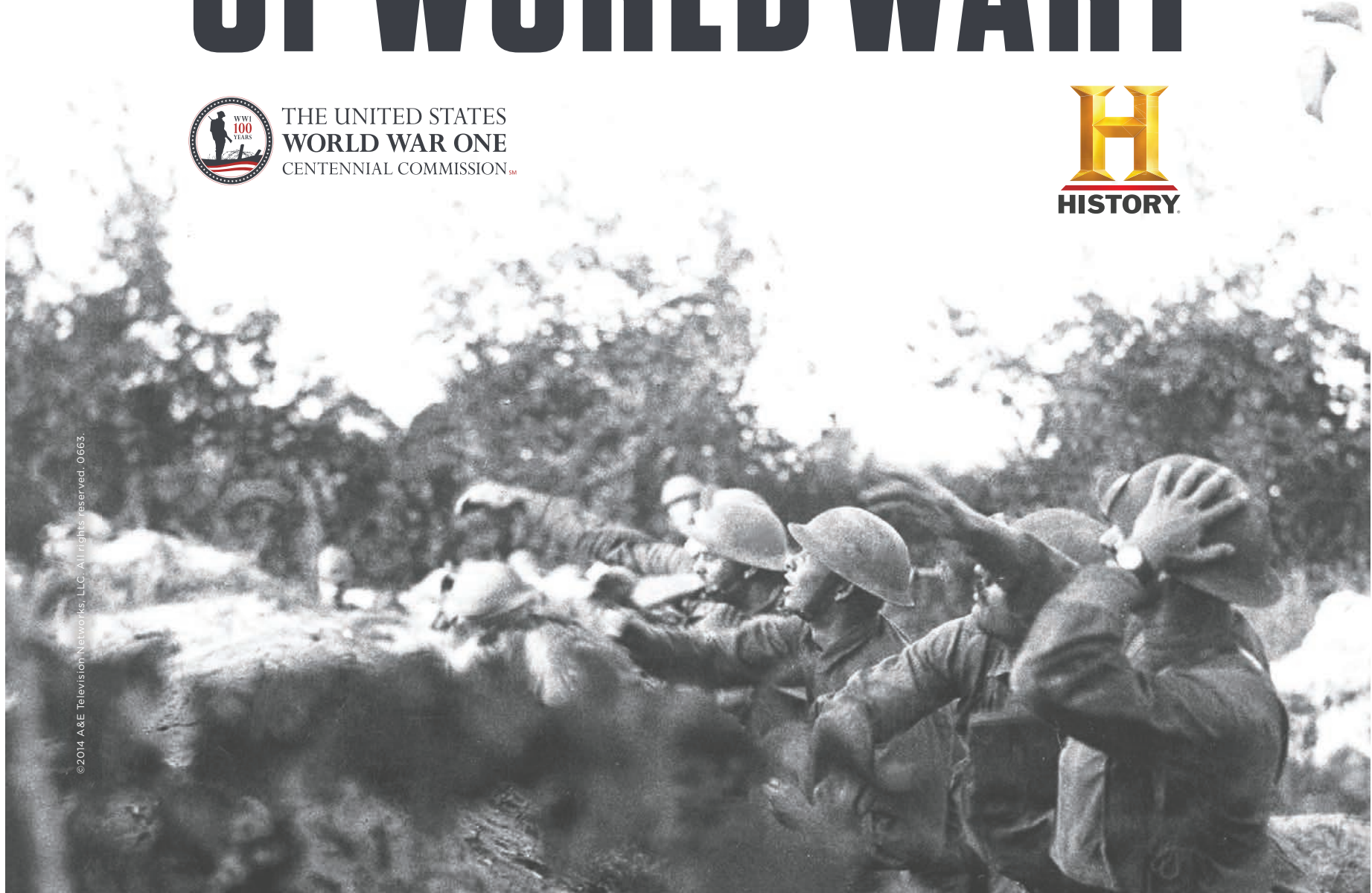
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