

US History World War I

Learning Target:

- I can explain how numerous events would eventually lead the U.S. into WWI.*
- I can identify challenges facing U.S. troop mobilization.*

5. The United States Enters The War

Events Leading To War –

Election of 1916 –

- Wilson narrowly defeated Republican Hughes to win re-election
- Ran on the slogan “He Kept Us Out Of War”
- Wilson still hoped to negotiate peace without entering the war

The Zimmerman Telegram –

- Diplomatic relations between US and Germany had been cut with continued attacks on US ships in the war zone
- March 1, 1917 – American newspapers published an intercepted telegram from German foreign secretary Arthur Zimmerman to the German minister in Mexico
- Telegram proposed a German alliance with Mexico to help them conquer the territory they lost in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona
- Infuriated Americans and caused Wilson to conclude the US could no longer stay neutral

Declaration of War –

- April 2, 1917 – Wilson addressed Congress asking for a declaration of war
- Senate declared war on April 4, 1917 (House followed 2 days later)
- Six senators and 50 representatives voted against war

Mobilization The Troops For War –

Selective Service Act –

- Passed on May 18, 1917
- Required men 21-30 to register with local draft boards (would become 18-45)
- 24 million men registered – 2.8 million of them drafted
- Over ½ of the 4.8 million Americans who served in WWI were drafted

Segregation in the Armed Forces –

- Minorities faced open segregation and discrimination in the armed services
- 370,000 blacks served in WWI
- Blocked from service in the marines and could only perform kitchen duty in navy
- Most blacks were assigned to segregated units commanded by white officers

Sending The Troops To France –

American Expeditionary Force (AEF) –

- Name for the American forces sailing to France to fight
- Included the regular army, National Guard, draftees, and volunteers
- First troops landed in France in June of 1917

John J. Pershing –

- Commander of the AEF
- Refused to allow allied commanders to dictate how to use American forces
- Insisted Americans fight as a separate unit rather than being added slowly to other units already in battle

US Convoy System –

- Merchant vessels transported US troops escorted by US warships
- Not one soldier died in transport to France
- US also laid 60,000 mines in the North Sea to disrupt German U-Boats

American Forces In France –

- July 4, 1917 – Americans marched through Paris to cheers
- America believed itself to be repaying the France for the Revolutionary War
- For several months American forces improved French infrastructure
 - Railroads, docks, telephone/telegraph lines, hospitals, ammo depots
- Did not fight until 1918

Reading Like A Historian Questions

How does Wilson’s opinion about American neutrality change from speech A to speech B? What changes it?

In speech A he believes the US must promote peace and stay neutral.

In speech B he believes the US must make the world safe for democracy.

American ships and lives have been taken by the Germans.

How do the last two paragraphs in speech B try to impact American feelings about the war?

It tries to ensure Americans that are actions are just and selfless.

Why does historian Zinn claim that Wilson’s reasons for war are flimsy? What does Zinn suggest the real reasons are? What evidence does he give?

The British had been intruding on U.S. rights on the seas also.

The U.S. would financially benefit more from an Allied victory.

JP Morgan loaning great amounts of money to the allies.