

The United States Goes to War

A. The Road to War

- Sinking of the Lusitania and other liners pushed the U.S. closer to war
- Wilson threatened to sever diplomatic ties Germany
- Germany promised not to sink liners without warning or assurance of passenger safety

1. **Wilson's actions criticized**

- a. Most Americans approved
- b. Some politicians, like Theodore Roosevelt, felt he wasn't doing enough
- c. Others accused Wilson of abandoning neutrality
 - i. Originally trade with warring nations had stopped
 - ii. By 1916, however, arms sales to the Allies reached \$500 million, 80 times the amount in 1914

2. **Preparedness and peace**

- a. National Defense Act (1916) passed to increase number of soldiers in standing army
- b. National Guard and Navy also increased
- c. Wilson won election in 1916 on slogan "He Kept Us Out of War"

- d. Called for peace without victory, but warring nations refused to mediate
- 3. **Diplomatic relations broken**
 - a. Germany resumed full-scale u-boat warfare
 - b. Wilson broke off diplomatic relations
 - c. Zimmerman Note was intercepted
 - i. Proposed that Mexico enter an alliance with Germany against the U.S.
 - ii. Promised return of lost territories in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona
 - d. Wilson reluctantly asked Congress for a declaration of war

B. Congress declares war

- 1. Before Congress, Wilson condemned Germany's submarine warfare as "wanton and wholesale destruction"
- 2. Declared "The world must be made safe for democracy"
- 3. Congress overwhelmingly voted for a declaration of war

C. Mobilizing American Military Power

- 1. Few rushed to volunteer for military service
- 2. Congress passed the Selective Service Act
 - a. Required men 21-30 to register with local draft boards

- b. Later extended 18-45
- 3. by war's end, some 24 million had registered and 2.8 were drafted
- 4. many argued that the draft would promote democracy
 - a. bring together soldiers from different backgrounds
 - b. minority and foreign-born soldiers, however, faced discrimination
 - i. assigned to segregated units
 - ii. taught civics and English
 - c. citizenship was offered to some 10,000 Native Americans serving

D. Over There

- 1. American troops sailed to France as part of the American Expeditionary Force
- 2. The first, under command of Gen. John J. Pershing, arrived in June of 1917
- 3. To handle increasing numbers, army compounds constructed
- 4. Some 10,000 American women worked in hospitals and volunteered for the Red Cross, YMCA, etc.

5. Convoy system of merchant vessels and American warships transported troops, supplies and volunteers
6. Warships laid some 70,000 mines across the North Sea to ward off German u-boats

E. The End of the War

1. America's entry came just in time
 - a. Allied morale was shaky with mutinies amongst French troops
 - b. Italian forces were on the verge of collapse
 - c. Pressure on the eastern front relieved when Russia sued for peace
2. Germany's last bid for victory
 - a. On March 21, 1918, Germans launched a do-or-die offensive
 - i. 1 million troops
 - ii. 6,000 heavy guns, including Big Berthas which could fire 250-300 pound shells up to 74 miles
 - iii. By late May, Allies had been pushed to within 50 miles of Paris
 - b. Americans joined unified Allied army
 - i. Helped French force halt Germany at Chateau-Thierry

- ii. Marines launched counterattack to recapture Belleau Woods and two other villages
 - c. On July 15, Germans threw everything into final assault
 - i. Allied lines held
 - ii. American troops spearheaded counterattack to push Germans back for good
- 3. Allied victory
 - a. In late summer, Allies launched a major offensive along the entire western front
 - b. Americans fought as a separate army under Pershing
 - c. Central Powers began to disintegrate, German morale collapsed
 - i. Mutinies broke out in both army and navy
 - ii. Civilians took to streets, demanding food, not war
 - iii. Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to the Netherlands
 - iv. The new government immediately agreed to an armistice
 - d. On November 8, 1918, German representatives were issued terms of surrender

- i. Evacuate all occupied territories
 - ii. Surrender enormous amounts of war materials, including much of fleet
 - iii. Allies reserved the right to occupy parts of German territory
- e. At 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, all fighting ceased