World War I and its Aftermath

(1914-1930)

Prepared by Mr. Danny Jarrett
A: Examine the reasons why the United States remained neutral at the beginning of World War I but later became involved
1. What were the factors leading to the start of World War I?
2. Which event sparked the beginning of World War I?
3. What was America’s foreign policy at the beginning of World War I?
4. During his reelection campaign in 1916, President Woodrow Wilson promised to stay out of the European conflict, but in April of 1917, Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. What helped bring about this change?
5. Which factor contributed most to the United States’ entry into World War I on the side of the Allied Powers?
6. Why did President Woodrow Wilson use the statement, “The world must be made safe for democracy”?
7. From 1914 to 1916, as World War I raged in Europe, why were many Americans not able to remain neutral in thought or action?
8. Which reason did President Wilson give Congress and the American people for America’s entry into World War I?
9. How did the United States view Germany’s resumption (i.e. return to) of unrestricted submarines warfare in 1917?

B: Identify political and military turning points of the war and determine their significance to the outcome of the conflict.
10. What was the major military turning point of World War I?
11. What military strategy and weapons helped lead to an Allied victory during World War I?
12. What was the purpose of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points?
13. Explain Wilson’s principle of “Peace without Victory”.
14. Why did Senator Henry C. Lodge and the “Irreconcilables” refuse to approve U.S. membership in President Wilson’s League of Nations?
15. Which set of requirements was Germany forced to accept as a result of the peace treaty ending World War I?
16. Which countries were members of the Big Four that signed the Treaty of Versailles to end World War I?

C: Assess the political, economic, social, and cultural effects of the war on the United States and other nations.
17. How did the U.S. government increase control of the economy during the World War I?
18. What was the role of the Committee on Public Information?
19. Who was the head of the War Industries Board?
20. What role did many American women play during World War I, which helped gain support for their suffrage movement?
21. How did the Red Scare, Sacco and Vanzetti trial, and the Palmer Raids challenge American freedoms guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution?
22. What conflict did the “Clear and Present danger” ruling of the Supreme Court in Schenck v. United States illustrate?
23. What effect did the rise of the Bolsheviks in Russia have in the United States during WWI?
24. What did Eugene Debs, Nicola Sacco, and Charles Schenck all have in common?
25. What impact did U.S. participation in World War I have on American foreign policy at the end of the war?
26. What impact did U.S. participation in World War I have on America’s economy?
27. What part of the U.S. Constitution was challenged by the Supreme Court decision in Schenck v. U.S.??
28. What action best demonstrated the United States effort to isolate itself from European conflicts after World War I?
29. What was the main cause of the migration of African Americans to the North during World War I?
30. What Constitutional issue was exposed in the principle of a “clear and present danger” in Schenck v. United States?
A: **Examine the reasons why the United States remained neutral at the beginning of World War I but later became involved**

**The Roots of War**

In 1914, **World War I (WWI)** broke out in Europe. Although it originally began as a conflict between European powers, it eventually involved the United States and a number of other nations. The causes of this great conflict were in place long before the first shots were ever fired.

In the years leading up to WWI, a spirit of nationalism (i.e. pride in one's own country or nationality) was sweeping across Europe. This spirit of nationalism led to certain ethnic groups within existing countries wanting self-determination or the right of a people to determine its own form of government without interference from outside. The ideal of self-determination went against the goals of occupying empires that used the policy of imperialism to dominate weaker nations or groups politically, economically, militarily, and culturally.

Another form of nationalism resulted in countries being far more concerned with their own interests than with those of Europe as a whole. In order to protect their self-interest, many nations adopted a policy of militarism (i.e. the process by which a nation builds up its military might for the purpose of intimidating and deterring other countries). Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Great Britain all practiced militarism during this period.

To protect themselves further, countries also formed alliances. Alliances are agreements between nations to help each other in the event of war. If one country in an alliance were attacked, then the other countries in the alliance would consider themselves attacked as well. This meant that an attack against one nation could actually drag several into war, thereby setting up a domino effect. By 1914, almost no nation in Europe could become involved in a military conflict without the whole continent being pulled in with it.

1. **What were the major factors contributing to the start of World War I?**
2. **What does self-determination mean?**

**The War Begins**

The spark that ignited the “Great War” finally happened on June 28, 1914. **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was visiting the province (state) of Bosnia. Operating within the province was a Serbian nationalist group known as the "Black Hand." Members of this group were radicals who believed that Bosnia belonged to **Serbia** rather than Austria-Hungary. During his visit, one of these nationalists assassinated the Archduke. Austria-Hungary accused Serbia of plotting the assassination and threatened to go to war. **Russia**, which was allied with Serbia, vowed to intervene if need be and began mobilization (the readying of troops for war). This brought **Germany** into the mix because of their alliance with Austria-Hungary. The Germans, under the leadership of **Kaiser Wilhelm II**, were known for their militarism and were viewed by much of Europe as a threat. Within two months, the dominos had fallen.

Due to the existing alliances, Europe was divided and at war. **Great Britain, France, and Russia** formed an alliance called the **Triple Entente**. Meanwhile, Germany and Austria-Hungary lined up against them as the **Central Powers**.

3. **Which event sparked the beginning of World War I?**
4. **What turned the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia into a world war?**
5. **What countries formed the Triple Entente and the Central Powers?**

**The U.S. Remains Neutral**

At first the United States did not get involved in the war. On August 4, 1914, President Woodrow Wilson officially declared the United States **neutral**, not backing either side. Many in the United States believed in a foreign policy of isolationism (i.e. the philosophy that the United States should stay out of international conflicts) and did not see a war in Europe as being of any concern to the U.S.. Many citizens became peace activists during this period. Some members of Congress like North Carolina representative Claude Kitchin, supported peace and opposed preparedness (i.e. a policy that advocated neutrality while taking steps to prepare for war). Many women also became involved in the peace movement. Because of widespread debate, U.S. policy towards the war became the key issue in the election of 1916.

Wilson narrowly won re-election running on the slogan, "He kept us out of war!" The election of 1916 also saw Jeanette Rankin of Montana become the first woman ever elected to either house of Congress by winning a seat in the House of Representatives.

6. **What was America’s foreign policy at the beginning of World War I?**
7. **What was Wilson’s campaign slogan during the 1916 presidential election?**
**The U.S. Enters the War**

Despite Wilson's original desire for neutrality, a number of factors eventually led to U.S. involvement in the war. While many recent immigrants to the United States were of German descent and tended to favor the Central Powers, most of the country's public opinion supported the Triple Entente. This was in large part because U.S. bankers had loaned large amounts of money to Great Britain and had a vested interest in them winning the war. In addition, the British had managed to cut the main lines of communication from Germany to the United States. This meant that images of the war that reached the United States predominantly came from Great Britain. As time passed, people in the U.S. came to see Kaiser Wilhelm II and his German forces as ruthless aggressors, while viewing the Triple Entente as defenders of freedom.

8. Why did many Americans side with the Triple Entente?

**The Lusitania and the Zimmerman Telegram**

One of Germany's fiercest weapons in WWI was their dreaded U-boats (submarines). Hidden under water, these U-boats wreaked havoc (caused problems) in the Atlantic Ocean during the war. The Germans warned all nations that they would attack any ships entering or leaving British ports. President Wilson rejected the warning, arguing that no warring party (i.e. nation at war) could be allowed to disrupt shipping by neutral countries on the high seas. In reality, however, the U.S. was not entirely neutral. Unknown to passengers, the U.S. had begun shipping military supplies to Great Britain aboard commercial cruise liners. A German U-boat torpedoed one of these liners, the Lusitania, in 1915 using a German military strategy known as unrestricted submarine warfare (attacking ships without warning). Twelve hundred people died in the attack, including 128 U.S. citizens. People in the U.S. were furious! A wave of anti-German sentiments (feelings) swept across the country. Not wanting to pull the United States into the war, Germany in 1916 agreed not to attack anymore passenger ships without a warning with the Sussex Pledge. However, in 1917, the Germans resumed their unrestricted submarine warfare on merchant and commercial ships, moving the United States that much closer to war.

9. Why did President Wilson reject Germany's warning about attacking ships entering or leaving British ports?

10. Why did German U-boats attack the Lusitania?

11. What German military strategy pushed the U.S. to war?

It was also in 1917 that the U.S. intercepted the Zimmerman Telegram. Arthur Zimmerman, the German Foreign Minister, sent a telegram to the German embassy in Mexico. In his telegram, Zimmerman told embassy officials to ask Mexico to attack the U.S. if it declared war on Germany. In return, Germany promised to help Mexico win back the land the U.S. had acquired as a result of the Mexican-American War. As you might imagine, news of this communication did not go over well in the United States. Anti-German sentiments increased even more and President Wilson chose to break off, diplomatic relations with Germany. Likewise, the sinking of more U.S. ships meant that the United States could no longer stay neutral. In March of 1917, Wilson made an idealistic case for war when he said, "The world must be made safe for Democracy". In making an idealistic argument, Wilson was appealing to the sense of noble purpose and principle for waging the war. He wanted the U.S. public to see the war as a battle between good and evil; he wanted the people to view it as a fight between democracy and tyranny (i.e. oppressive government). His appeals were well received. Congress passed a war resolution on April 6, 1917.

12. Why was the Zimmerman Telegram significant?

13. What reason did President Wilson give Congress and the American people for America's entry into World War I?
B: Identify political and military turning points of the war and determine their significance to the outcome of the conflict.

U.S. INvolvement in World War I

When the United States finally entered the fighting in 1917, Europe had already been bleeding for three years. The war featured new technology like the machine gun (i.e. mechanical gun that could fire lots of rounds very rapidly), hand grenades (i.e. hand-held explosives that could be thrown at the enemy) and mustard gas (i.e. poisonous gas first used by the Germans). These advanced weapons greatly transformed warfare. Leaders on both sides had great difficulty adjusting their tactics. As a result, the European powers found themselves at a virtual stalemate (i.e. neither side with an advantage) and their armies mired (difficult to escape from) in trench warfare. Trenches were long ditches in which soldiers would take cover while they fired on the enemy. Since they could not advance without being exposed to fire and suffering heavy losses, both sides were forced to live for long periods of time in wet, dirty, rat infested trenches. Meanwhile, the territory that lay between the two sides was considered a "No man's land," covered with barbed wire and land mines (hidden explosives beneath a thin layer of earth), no soldier could cross it without likely being wounded or killed.

14. Why did the fighting in Europe result in a stalemate?

15. What were the problems associated with the Trench warfare?

The "Doughboys" Arrive

To command the U.S. forces, President Wilson chose General John J. Pershing. Unfortunately, however, the U.S. was not prepared to send a large army to Europe right away. In order to boost the number of U.S. soldiers, Congress passed the Selective Service Act authorizing a draft of young men for military service. Three million draftees, as well as National Guardsmen and volunteers, were assembled and trained in a matter of months. Called the American Expeditionary Force (AEF), many of them were shipped overseas to fight in WWI. These U.S. soldiers became known as "doughboys." No one is certain as to the origins of the nickname, but there is no doubt that these soldiers played a vital role in helping the Triple Entente and its allies defeat the Central Powers.

16. Who was chosen to lead the U.S. troops in Europe?

17. What was the Selective Service Act?

18. Why were the doughboys significant?

African-Americans in the War

More than 300,000 African-Americans volunteered or were drafted to serve in the war. Most of them never saw combat due to discriminatory policies that kept them separated from white troops. One group that did serve with great distinction was the 369th Infantry Regiment. Known as the "Harlem Hell Fighters," this group of black soldiers actually convinced their white commanders to loan their services to the French, who then used them in combat. The entire regiment received France's highest combat medal for their bravery and distinguished service during the war.

19. What group received France's highest combat medal for bravery during WWI?
TURNING POINTS IN THE WAR

RUSSIA PULLS OUT
By early 1917, the Russians were tired of fighting. They had lost almost 2 million lives, not to mention the countless sick and wounded. Many of their people were starving while the nation's resources were used for the war effort rather than to feed the hungry. Then, in March of 1917, the Russian Revolution took place. Czar Nicholas II was forced from power and a new republic was set up. This republican government did not last long, however. By November of 1917, the Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, had taken over the country and established a Communist regime (i.e. government). Having received assistance from Germany in exchange for a guarantee of peace, the Bolsheviks pulled Russia out of the war. With the Russians no longer involved, the Germans did not have to worry about fighting anyone to the east of them and could focus on fighting their enemies to the west.

20. Why did Russia pull out of WWI?
21. Who were the Bolsheviks?

U.S. TROOPS SAVE PARIS AND HELP TURN THE WAR
Now that Russia was no longer a concern, Germany concentrated all of its efforts on taking Paris. Within two months, the German forces were within fifty miles of the French capital. Then, in early June 1917, U.S. Marines helped fight off the advancing Germans and turn the tide of the war. With Paris saved, the Allies (countries fighting against the Central Powers) used a new weapon, the tank, to push through the German lines. Sensing that the war had turned against them, the Germans had no choice but to seek terms of peace. Finally, on November 11, 1918, an armistice (cease-fire or agreement to stop fighting) was declared and WWI came to an end.

22. What was the major military turning point of WWI?
23. What weapon helped lead to an Allied victory during WWI?
24. When did WWI end?

AFTER THE WAR
Once the fighting stopped, the leaders of the warring nations met together for a peace conference in Paris. The conference was dominated by the Big Four (Britain, France, Italy, and the United States). President Wilson went to the conference with no desire to punish Germany, nor did he hope to acquire territory for the United States. Wilson's goal was to help establish peace and stability in Europe. He put forth a peace proposal known as the "Fourteen Points." Among other things, Wilson's plan called for a reduction in armaments (weapons) and the right of self-determination (power to govern oneself) for ethnic groups like those in Austria-Hungary. Wilson also proposed the League of Nations. The purpose of the League would be to provide a place where countries could talk about their differences rather than go to war. The ideals behind the League of Nations were ones, which Wilson had held for some time.

25. What countries formed the Big Four?
26. What was the purpose of President Wilson's Fourteen Points?
27. What were some of the major parts of Wilson's Fourteen Points?

Even before the United States entered the war in 1917, Wilson had alluded (i.e. mentioned) to them in a speech he gave to the U.S. Senate. In his speech, Wilson stated that the only lasting peace would be a peace that united nations. He called for a "peace without victory," and stated that a peace imposed by a victor upon a loser would only give birth to resentment that leads to conflict. The only lasting peace, Wilson believed, would be a peace agreed upon by "equals". This belief was at the heart of Wilson's peace plan and the League was meant to be the institution through which such a peace could be reached. A number of nations joined. Ironically, however, the United States was not one of them. Isolationism grew strong again in the U.S. after the war and therefore, the U.S. Senate would not approve membership in the League. One of the foremost opponents to U.S. membership in the League of Nations was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. Lodge and other U.S. Senators called "Irreconcilables" feared that commitment to an international organization would lead to an alliance that might drag the nation into another costly war.

28. Explain Wilson's principle of "Peace without Victory".
29. Why did Senator Henry C. Lodge and the "Irreconcilables" refuse to approve U.S. membership in President Wilson's League of Nations?
THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

While Wilson wanted peace and stability, many of his European allies wanted retribution (revenge and payment). The European countries had suffered longer and lost far more lives than the U.S. (over 8 million Europeans died in WWI — roughly 5,000 per day). In June of 1919, the Allies forced Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty made Germany take total responsibility for the war (Guilt clause) and imposed harsh conditions. Those conditions included 33 billion dollar payment or reparations to the Allies, demilitarize or dismantle their military, and give up colonies and territory. These harsh conditions ultimately led to economic depression and great bitterness, on the part of most Germans. Wilson's predictions about "peace" imposed by victors upon the defeated proved to be true. The resentment felt by the German people ultimately made it possible for a young, charismatic leader named Adolf Hitler to rise to power and plunge Europe back into war.

30. Which set of requirements was Germany forced to accept as a result of the peace treaty ending WWI?

31. What were the effects of the Treaty of Versailles?

C: Assess the political, economic, social, and cultural effects of the war on the United States and other nations.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR IN THE U.S.

GOVERNMENT INCREASES ITS ROLE

Although the fighting had taken place overseas, World War I had a huge effect on life in the U.S. as well. For starters, the war in Europe meant an increased role for government in the United States. Using powers granted to him by Congress, Woodrow Wilson helped establish the War Industries Board. Led by Bernard Baruch, this board placed controls on the nation's economy as it sought to obtain supplies for the U.S. military and its allies. Wilson also set up the Committee on Public Information (CPI), which was led by George Creel. The purpose of the CPI was to encourage public support for the U.S. war effort. Through various forms of propaganda (misinformation), the CPI painted a picture of the Germans as evil monsters that it was the nation's duty to fight and defeat.

32. Who was the head of the War Industries Board?

33. What was the role of the Committee on Public Information?

In 1917, Wilson appointed future president, Herbert Hoover, to head the Food Administration. Hoover's task was to encourage the U.S. population to conserve food and fuel that could be used in the war effort. The government also used the methods of rationing (limiting the amount of food that is distributed) and price controls (raising the price to force consumers to buy less). This led to the idea of daylight savings time. By having citizens turn their clocks ahead one hour during certain months, people would have more daylight and have to burn less fuel.

34. How did the U.S. government increase control of the economy during the World War I?

The federal government also passed a number of laws limiting civil liberties (i.e. rights of every citizens). In the name of protecting national security, Congress passed the Espionage and Sedition Acts. These acts made it illegal to interfere with the draft, obstruct the sale of Liberty Bonds, or make statements considered disloyal to, or critical of, the government, the Constitution, or the U.S. military. For example, Socialist leader, Eugene V. Debs (American Railway Union leader), was actually sentenced to ten years in prison under these laws for criticizing the U.S. government. Just a few years earlier, he had been a candidate for president.

35. Why did Congress pass the Espionage and Sedition Acts?

36. How did the Espionage and Sedition Acts affect Eugene V. Debs?
“THE RED SCARE”

Initially, the Russian Revolution encouraged people in the United States. U.S. citizens were glad to see a monarch like the czar replaced with a republican form of government. However, when the Bolsheviks took over and instituted Communism (i.e. political and economic philosophy in which the government owns all property and individual rights mean little compared to the welfare of the state) it alarmed many in the United States. Business leaders and government officials, along with a growing number of citizens, feared that such a revolution might occur in the United States. This led to a period known as the "Red Scare". When anarchists (i.e. those who want to bring down any form of government) attempted to assassinate U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and Standard Oil's John D. Rockefeller, many associated the attacks with Communism. In response, Palmer authorized the Palmer Raids, in which suspected communists and other "subversives" (i.e. somebody involves in activities intended to undermine or overthrow a government or other institution) were arrested, jailed and deported.

37. What contributed to the Red Scare?
38. What was the purpose of the Palmer Raids?

More than 500 immigrants were deported (i.e. returned to native country) back to their countries of birth as a result of Palmer's actions. This association of immigrants with communism and anarchy eventually resulted in one of the most controversial trials to U.S. history. In 1920, two Italian immigrants believed to be anarchists were accused of murder in Massachusetts. Although the evidence against them was disputable (i.e. weak), Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were found guilty. Despite the fact that many believed they were convicted simply because they were immigrants, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927.

39. Why was the Sacco & Vanzetti trial controversial?

GROWTH OF THE KKK

Fear of communism and mistrust of immigrants also contributed to increased membership in the Ku Klux Klan. Originally, only targeting blacks in the 1920's, the Klan grew in numbers as it expanded to attack Jews, Catholics, and immigrants. Large numbers of people in the North and the South flocked to join the organization. Using intimidation and fear, Klansmen burned crosses outside people's homes, sent hate letters, and put pressure on employers to fire black or immigrant workers. When this was not enough, Klan members resorted to lynching and other forms of violence against those they persecuted.

40. What led to the growth of the KKK during the 1920s?

DECLINE OF THE UNIONS

The year 1919 saw a great deal of labor unrest in the United States. Many people came to believe Communists were behind the various strikes that occurred. One strike that got notable attention involved the United Mine Workers and their leader, John L. Lewis. The union had made a "no-strike" agreement with the government during World War I, but with the signing of the armistice in Europe, Lewis and the union claimed that the agreement was no longer valid. The government disagreed and obtained a court order making the strikers return to work (i.e. injunction). For the next several years, the unions lost much of their influence as economic conditions improved and labor movements were identified with communism.

41. What factors contributed to the decline of labor unions during the 1920s?
THE SUPREME COURT BACKS ANTI-COMMUNISM

Many of the provisions taken by the government to combat communism and other perceived threats put severe restrictions on civil liberties. In 1919, a case came before the Supreme Court that dealt with this very issue. An opponent of WWI named Charles Schenck was arrested for urging draftees not to report for duty. Schenck claimed that the arrest violated his First Amendment right to free speech. In the case of Schenck v. U.S., the United States Supreme Court ruled that the government could silence free speech when there is a "Clear and present danger" involved.

42. Why was the Supreme Court case Schenck v. U.S. significant?

THE DAWES PLAN & WASHINGTON NAVAL CONFERENCE

Soon after the Treaty of Versailles, it became evident that a devastated German economy would make it difficult to achieve stability in Europe. Stability was crucial if peace was to be maintained. For this reason, a U.S. banker named Charles G Dawes came up with the Dawes Plan. Under this plan, U.S. and Allied bankers loaned Germany money to boost its economy and industrial recovery. Although the measures helped some, Germany and other countries ended up defaulting on the loans. Economic depression eventually engulfed Europe and the United States. The prediction that economic instability in Germany might contribute to future wars was on its way to being accurate.

43. What was the Dawes Plan?
44. What was the purpose of the Dawes Plan?

THE WASHINGTON NAVAL CONFERENCE

Following World War I, the United States, Great Britain, and Japan found themselves possessing the world's most powerful navies. Concerned that a naval race could lead to the same kind of conflict that had occurred in Europe, the U.S. invited Japan and Great Britain to Washington, D.C. for the Washington Naval Conference. The three countries agreed to measures designed to keep each nation's navy from becoming too threatening by limiting the building of large warships and smaller naval vessels. They believed that a balance of naval strength would deter any thoughts of aggression (i.e. war). In reality, however, the U.S. and Great Britain's agreement not to fortify their positions in the Pacific actually favored the Japanese. These territories would become vulnerable targets of Japanese expansion just a few years later.

45. What was the purpose of the Washington Naval Conference?