

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE AMERICA AND THE GREAT WAR

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Twenty-Three should enable the student to understand:

1. The background factors and the immediate sequence of events that caused the United States to declare war on Germany in 1917.
2. The contributions of the American military to Allied victory in World War I.
3. The extent of government control of the economy during World War I and the results of that control.
4. Propaganda and the extent of war hysteria in the United States during World War I.
5. The announced American objectives in fighting the war.
6. Woodrow Wilson's successes and failures of Versailles.
7. The circumstances that led the United States to reject the Treaty of Versailles.
8. The economic problems the United States faced immediately after the war.
9. The reasons for the Red Scare and the upsurge of racial unrest in postwar America.

Main Themes

1. How the United States, which had leaned toward the Allies since the outbreak of World War I, was eventually drawn into full participation in the war.
2. That the American intervention on land and sea provided the balance of victory for the beleaguered Allied forces.
3. How the Wilson administration financed the war, managed the economy, and encouraged public support of the war effort.
4. That Woodrow Wilson tried to apply his lofty war aims to the realities of world politics and that he substantially failed.
5. That the American war effort had profound economic, social, and racial significance.

Glossary

1. *belligerent*: Any nation involved in a war.
2. *Bolsheviks*: The most radical and organizationally the strongest of the contending socialist groups in Russia in 1917. Also known as Reds, or simply as communists. Led by Lenin, in November 1917 the Bolsheviks won control of the central government of Russia from a moderate coalition that had taken charge provisionally after the March 1917 popular revolution, which deposed the czar.

Pertinent Questions

The Road to War (pp. 776-779)

1. What was the most important underlying source of the tensions that led to World War I? What sparked the conflict? Which nations were referred to as the Allies? the Central Powers?

2. What considerations forced the United States out of its professed stance of true neutrality? To what degree was this decision based on economics?
3. Why did Germany rely on U-boats (submarines)? Why did it back off early in the war from the unrestricted use of U-boats?
4. Before 1917, how did Wilson balance the demands for preparedness and the cries for peace? What effect did his position have on the 1916 election?
5. What key events early in 1917 combined to finally bring the United States fully into World War I?

“War without Stint” (pp. 779–783)

6. On what aspect of the war did American entry have the most immediate effect?
7. How did the United States raise the troops necessary for the massive war effort?
8. What roles did women and African Americans play in the military? How were African-American troops treated?
9. What impact did the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) have on the ground war in Europe?

The War and American Society (pp. 783–785)

10. On what two methods did the Wilson administration depend to finance the war effort? How did the war cost compare with the typical peacetime budgets of that era?
11. Describe the role of the War Industries Board (WIB) and the National War Labor Board. How successful were they? (What implications did they have for the future of American politics?)
12. On balance, what was the economic impact of the World War I era?
13. What was the “Great Migration” inspired by World War I? What was its impact?

The Search for Social Unity (pp. 786–792)

14. What groups made up the peace movement prior to and, to a lesser extent, during World War I?
15. What tactics did the Committee on Public Information employ to propagandize the American people into unquestioning support of the war effort? In what other ways did the government suppress criticism? Who suffered most?
16. How did private acts of oppression supplement the official campaign to suppress diversity and promote unity? Who suffered most?

The Search for a New World Order (pp. 792–796)

17. Into what three major categories did the Fourteen Points fall? How did the points reflect the ideas of progressivism?
18. What obstacles did Wilson face in getting the European leaders to accept his approach to peace? What domestic development weakened his position?
19. How did Wilson structure the American negotiating team in Paris?
20. Which of Wilson’s ideals were most directly challenged at Versailles? Why were the allies so insistent on reparations?
21. What consequences did American intervention in the Russian Civil War have on the course of the Russian Revolution and the future of Soviet-American relations?
22. What victories for his ideals was Wilson able to salvage? What, in Wilson’s view, was his key victory in the negotiations?

23. What were the arguments and motives of domestic opponents to the League of Nations? Who was the leading opponent in the Senate? How much of the blame for the treaty's defeat should be laid on Wilson himself?

A Society in Turmoil (p. 796)

24. What happened to the American economy in the postwar years? Why?
25. What inspired the labor unrest of 1919? What were the most important strikes? What did the wave of strikes reveal about the labor movement?
26. Describe the nation's postwar racial climate and its causes. Why did some black soldiers feel a sense of betrayal?
27. What inspired the Red Scare of 1919 to 1920? Was the threat real or imagined?
28. What did the results of the election of 1920 indicate about the mood of the American people?

Patterns of Popular Culture: Billy Sunday and Modern Revivalism (pp. 788-790)

29. How did Billy Sunday combine fundamentalism with showmanship? What effect did World War I have on the revival movement?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. "Triple Entente"
2. "Triple Alliance"
3. Bosnia and Serbia
4. *Lusitania*
5. Charles Evans Hughes
6. Nikolai Lenin
7. IQ test
8. John J. Pershing
9. Argonne Forest offensive
10. Herbert Hoover
11. Bernard Baruch
12. Ludlow Massacre
13. Women's Peace Party
14. Bolshevik
15. David Lloyd George
16. George Clemenceau
17. "White" Russians
18. "irreconcilables"
19. Henry Cabot Lodge
20. steel strike of 1919
21. Marcus Garvey
22. Comintern

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. Was American involvement in World War I inevitable? What forces worked to maintain neutrality? What forces propelled the country away from neutrality and into full belligerency?
2. Describe the suffering that the Great War visited on Europe. Why is it said that the United States emerged from the war as "the only real victor"?
3. What surprises did America face as the reality of "war without stint" unfolded? How did the American people respond to them? What long-term legacies came from these responses?
4. Despite his tumultuous reception by the peoples of Europe and the generally favorable response he received on his tour in the western United States, Wilson faced troublesome opposition from both European statesmen and the United States senators. Why did he encounter such intransigence? Did he respond in a rational and politically effective way?
5. Explain how the war and the demographic shifts accompanying the war effort raised the aspirations of African Americans. How were their hopes dashed? What conflicts arose?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. The first two countries to begin fighting in the conflict that later became known as World War I were:
 - a. Austria-Hungary and Serbia.
 - b. Belgium and Germany.
 - c. France and Italy.
 - d. Russia and Poland.
2. In the early years of World War I, from 1914 to 1916, the United States:
 - a. became an arsenal for the Allies.
 - b. maintained a genuinely neutral stance.
 - c. remained politically and economically isolated from European affairs.
 - d. became sympathetic toward the Central Powers because of the English blockade of Germany.
3. President Wilson protested German violations of American neutrality more harshly than British violations because:
 - a. he admired the British and favored their cause.
 - b. a profitable trade was resulting between the United States and the Allies.
 - c. German actions cost some American lives.
 - d. of all of the above.

4. Woodrow Wilson's reaction to the sinking of the *Lusitania* was to:
- ask Congress for a declaration of war.
 - break diplomatic relations with Germany.
 - impose a complete embargo on exports to both sides.
 - demand assurances from Germany that such outrages would not recur.
5. How did Wilson react to the question of military preparedness versus pacifism from 1914 to 1916?
- He was among the first leading Americans to urge a rapid military buildup.
 - He was a consistent pacifist right up to the eve of the declaration of war.
 - Initially opposed to a military buildup, by the end of 1915 he came to support preparedness.
 - Initially a staunch militarist, early in 1915 he backed off from this bellicose posture for fear of antagonizing the Central Powers.
6. In the presidential election of 1916, the Democrats emphasized:
- that Wilson had managed so far to keep the nation out of the European war.
 - domestic issues strongly and almost ignored the European war as an issue.
 - a belligerent stand against German violations of American neutral rights and that a Democratic victory for president and Congress would lead to immediate military intervention on the Allied side.
 - that the United States should take a firm stand against both German and British violations of American neutral rights and should not support or trade with either nation.
7. The significance of the Zimmermann telegram was that it:
- induced Mexico to join Germany as an ally.
 - inflamed American public opinion against Germany.
 - showed that England was not negotiating in good faith.
 - gave encouragement to the peace faction in the United States.
8. The key immediate cause of the American declaration of war against Germany in the spring of 1917 was the:
- sinking of the *Sussex*.
 - Bolshevik revolution in Russia.
 - reports of German atrocities against civilians.
 - German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare.
9. Which of the following statements concerning the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) is true?
- The AEF broke the stalemate in favor of the Allies.
 - Due to its inexperience, the AEF proved largely ineffective in actual combat.
 - Due to the lateness of its arrival in Europe, the AEF saw relatively little significant combat.
 - Casualties among the AEF were proportionately larger than among any of the other Allied armies.

10. Which were the *two* principal methods that the U.S. government used to finance the war effort? (Mark two letters.)
- Deficit spending and printing more Federal Reserve notes.
 - Loans in the form of "Liberty Bonds."
 - Increased taxes on corporations, incomes, and inheritances.
 - Cutting most forms of federal domestic spending, including education and welfare.
11. Herbert Hoover was significant to the American effort in World War I as head of the:
- Rationing Board.
 - Food Administration.
 - War Industries Board.
 - Industrial Workers of the World.
12. Such expressions as "liberty cabbage" and "liberty sausage," as used during World War I, were an indication of:
- food shortages in America.
 - American food relief to Belgium.
 - American hostile reaction to things German.
 - American patriotic fervor to increase the food supply by planting home "victory gardens."
13. As used in reference to the period of the Great War, the expression "Great Migration" means:
- blacks moving from the South to northern industrial cities.
 - urban easterners moving west to agricultural jobs to meet the great demand for food.
 - rural dwellers moving to big cities all over the country.
 - desperate refugees fleeing war-torn Europe for America.
14. The main purpose of the Committee on Public Information, during World War I, was to:
- inform American consumers about wartime regulations and restrictions on food, gasoline, nylon, and the like.
 - infiltrate behind German lines and distribute flyers to the German and occupied citizens urging them to undermine the war effort.
 - gather data about troop movements and plans of the Central Powers.
 - disseminate pro-war propaganda and promote public support of the war in the United States.
15. Which of the following was not one of the principal figures along with Wilson in the Versailles negotiations?
- Lloyd Georgia
 - Bernard Baruch
 - Vittorio Orlando
 - Georges Clemenceau
16. Which of the following was *not* included in Wilson's Fourteen Points?
- freedom of the seas
 - reduction in armaments
 - reparations from those guilty of starting the war
 - removal of economic barriers to trade between nations

17. Which of the following nations was *not* represented at the Paris Peace Conference?
- France
 - Italy
 - Britain
 - Russia
18. In the Senate debate on ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, the so-called irreconcilables were those who were adamantly opposed to:
- isolationism.
 - United States membership in the League of Nations.
 - interjecting partisan politics into foreign relations.
 - any modification of the treaty as it was originally drafted.
19. Both the Palmer Raids and the Sacco and Vanzetti case may be cited as evidence in the aftermath of World War I of the depth of feeling in America against:
- radicalism.
 - German-Americans.
 - Italian-Americans.
 - internationalism.
20. In the first few years after World War I, relations between blacks and whites in America were generally characterized by:
- grudging acceptance due to common economic distress.
 - extreme resentment, race riots, and numerous lynchings.
 - relative cordiality due to the blacks' gallant service in the war.
 - notable improvement due to new legal safeguards for blacks, which had been enacted during the progressive period.

True-False Questions

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

- The "Central Powers" of World War I included Germany, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey), and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- At the time of its sinking by a German submarine, the British ocean liner *Lusitania* was carrying munitions as well as passengers.
- Woodrow Wilson's victorious presidential campaign in 1916 was significantly aided by his pledge that the United States would immediately enter World War I on the Allied side if he were reelected.
- In World War I, Russia started out on the Allied side but joined Germany in fighting against the Allies after the communists took over.
- After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, popular support for World War I was so great that the military draft authorized by Congress never had to be implemented.
- Most African-American soldiers in World War I were confined to noncombat roles, but some did fight in the offensives of 1918.
- The principal commander of German military forces was Johan Pershing.
- The biggest defeat of American ground forces in World War I was in the Argonne Forest.

9. Bernard Baruch headed the War Industries Board.
10. Government actions during World War I resulted in a significant increase in labor union membership between 1917 and 1919.
11. Unlike in France and Great Britain where opposition to the Great War was treated harshly, the United States allowed antiwar dissidents to speak and operate freely without supervision or harassment.
12. In the Ludlow Massacre, German officers killed several hundred Russian prisoners of war suspected of being communists.
13. During and shortly after World War I, there were several race riots in southern cities, but race relations remained relatively harmonious in northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and the St. Louis area.
14. The limited U.S. military intervention in Russia was designed to help the so-called White Russians.
15. British Prime Minister David Lloyd George supported all of Wilson's Fourteen Points, but Georges Clemenceau of France resisted because of severe damage to his nation.
16. The Fourteen Points contained a proposal for an alliance of western European and north Atlantic powers against the newly created Soviet Union.
17. On his way to Paris for the peace conference, Wilson visited several European cities and encountered considerable public acclaim for his idealistic ideas.
18. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge was a key figure in the senate's refusal to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations.
19. The Comintern was a consortium of western European nations to oppose the spread of communism.
20. Marcus Garvey promoted the ideology of black nationalism.

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