

Over There: The Story of the American Expeditionary Forces

by Jared A. Morris

Subject(s): U.S. History II

Key Words: World War I, First Great War, Zimmerman, Isolation, American Expeditionary Force

Time Allotted: 60-90 minutes

Lesson Overview	<p>World War One was a conflict on a level never before seen on the planet. By the end of the war, thirty-two countries were involved on either the side of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) or the Allied Powers (Britain, France, Russia, and Italy). Soldiers maimed and killed each other on an industrial level over the course of four hellish years. Initially, the conflict was largely a European affair until an impressive piece of spy work by the British intelligence community brought the United States of America into the fray – the American Expeditionary Force was born.</p> <p>This lesson is a brief interactive, discovery style analysis and tour of America’s involvement in the First Great War.</p>
Compelling Question	From neutrality and isolation to full mobilization, why and how did the United States enter and participate in the First Great War?
Supporting Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Why would President Wilson and many other Americans push to keep out of the War?2) What type of event would need to occur to pull the U.S. into the war?3) How and Why did the discovery of the Zimmerman Telegram push the U.S. to declare war?4) Where did United States troops deploy? Why?5) What were some differences between the AEF’s strategy and her allies? How did this affect the war?6) What conclusions can be made about the importance of the First Great War, as well as, America’s involvement in it?
Learning Objectives	<p>Student will be able to:</p> <p>Identify key terms, locations, events, and people surrounding America’s involvement in the First Great War.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examine and discuss the key points on America’s neutrality and then America’s involvement in the First Great War.• Develop and understanding of the location and logistics in developing and deploying the American Expeditionary Force.• Compare and Contrast the AEF strategy in Europe compared to that of the French and the British.• Analyze primary sources, maps, and other resources to create discourse, stimulate inquiry, and develop an understanding of key aspects of the United States in World War I.

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C3 Standards & Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2.Geo.12.9-12 Evaluate the consequences of human-made and natural catastrophes on global trade, politics, and human interaction. • D2.His.1.9-12 - Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. • D2.His.15.9-12 Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument. • D2.His.16.9-12 Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past. • D2.His.11.6 Use other historical sources to infer a plausible maker, data, place of origin, and intended audience for historical sources where this information is not
Materials/ Resources	<p>-Over There. Story Map: https://arcg.is/0eTy5m</p> <p>-Over There, Student Interactive Guide</p> <p>-Key for Over There, Student Interactive Guide</p> <p>-Access to class computers – or this can be done as a class using the teacher/classroom computer and projector.</p>
Modifications/ Extensions	<p>There are numerous ways these materials can be used. The multiple resources included allow for modifications are extensions to fit the students, teacher, class, etc. This can be used in parts as a whole depending on purpose and timeframe.</p>

Contextual Essay

World War One was a conflict on a level never before seen on the planet. By the end of the war, thirty-two countries were involved on either the side of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire) or the Allied Powers (Britain, France, Russia, and Italy). Soldiers maimed and killed each other on an industrial level over the course of four hellish years. Initially, the conflict was largely a European affair until an impressive piece of spy work by the British intelligence community brought the United States of America into the fray – the American Expeditionary Force was born.

The years leading up the First Great War were marked by major growth in nationalist sentiment, militarism, and alliances. Following the Russo-Japanese War, which was the first major military event of the twentieth centuries, countries bound themselves into alliances throughout Europe and parts of Asia. These alliances were tested in June of 1914. An assassin, Gavrilo Princip, struck

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down the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The event caused a chain reaction that plunged nation after nation into war.

The United States, led by President Woodrow Wilson, maintained an isolated position for the first three years of the war. Woodrow Wilson even ran on an “anti-war” platform that won him re-election in 1916. The U.S., being a nation of immigrants, had divided loyalties on the conflict. Also, much of America saw the war as a problem caused by European militarism and figured it was their job to see their way out of it. They saw no reason for U.S. intervention as the Central Powers and Allied Powers pounded away at each other across the Atlantic.

As the war dragged on, the Allies were looking for any advantage to break the stalemate of the Western Front. A crucial piece of intelligence work took place in the beginning of 1917. The war had been raging on in Europe for three years at the time and the United States still remained neutral. Then the impressive British intelligence team led by Admiral “Blinker” Hall and his Room 40 crew decoded a message they intercepted on January of 1917. The message was sent by German Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmerman, to officials in Mexico. Germany had revealed that they would attack shipping vessels regardless of the cargo or people aboard and pushed Mexico to attack the United States. They hoped that if Mexico could attack the United States, then it would prevent her from focusing on the war in Europe. Mexico did not agree to the offer, but this moves President Wilson to ask Congress for a declaration of war on Germany and the Central Powers. On April 6, 1917, the United States officially ends its isolation and neutrality – now the country had to organize, train, and transport her troops across the Atlantic to the horror that awaited them.

The United States took volunteers and instituted a draft to develop the force that would head “over there.” Over the course of the next year, Americans trained and used large refit steamers to transport troops across the Atlantic to England and France. Once “in country” the first test of the American Expeditionary Force came at St. Mihiel, France. Led by American General John J. Pershing, American and French forces battled numerous entrenched German armies over the course of four rainy and muddy days. The win in this battle by the Allies, led by the Americans, set the stage for what was yet to come...The Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

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On the early hours of September 26, 1918, the United States set loose its largest offensive of the first Great War. With an “on the move” strategy, General John J. Pershing’s troops were not to dig in and continue the trench-style of warfare that had plagued the Allies up to that point. Instead, the American Expeditionary Force troops were to consistently push forward against the German battle lines in hopes of keeping them off guard. The goal of the offensive was to cut off the German Second Army in order to prevent them from being reinforced or resupplied. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was one of the largest American Military offensives in history. The battle lasted 47 days and over 1.2 million Americans participated. That final 47-day push was the surge needed to bring the German military to its knees. On the 11th hour of the 11th day of November at 11:00 a.m. the First Great War came to an end as Germany officially surrendered.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS: See “Key for Over There, Student Interactive Guide”