

# World War I

*The Emergence of Modern  
America (1890–1930)*



Origins and causes

**The Great War**

The home front

An imperfect peace

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the narrative of World War I and the role played by the U.S. in the conflict:

- The events of the war's early years
- American neutrality and the events that brought it into the war
- The events of the war once the U.S. joined the Allies.



After the assassination in Sarajevo,  
the powers of Europe quickly became  
embroiled in a war that engulfed the  
whole of the continent.

Watch this animation to find out about the  
origins and early events of World War I.

Press **start** to begin.

start





In the early years of the war, until 1917, the U.S. remained **neutral**. It favored this position for a few reasons:

- It was a war between European powers that had little to do with the U.S.
- American industries experienced increased demand from Europe during the war.
- Some hoped that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society could move beyond warfare.



Although many Americans were happy to stay neutral and reelected Wilson in 1916 as the man who kept them out of the war, Germany began making it difficult to remain inactive.

How did Germany provoke America?





**RMS *Lusitania*** was a British cruise ship sunk by a German submarine in May 1915. It was a turning point in ending U.S. neutrality. Press the buttons to find out about the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the reactions of the British, German and American governments. Press **start** to begin.

start



What mysteries surround the attack on the *Lusitania*?



Who was to blame for the sinking of the *Lusitania*?  
Was it unavoidable or could it have been prevented?  
Who has ultimate responsibility for actions in war?

Read the following information about the people involved and discuss as a class how much you think they were to blame. When you have decided, drag the marker to the appropriate place on the slider scale.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





The **Zimmermann Telegram** was a coded message that played a key role in the U.S. joining the war. It was sent from Germany to Mexico in January 1917. British intelligence intercepted the message and sent it to the U.S.

Can you determine what Germany offered Mexico?  
Press on each section of highlighted text to type your ideas about the proposed agreement.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



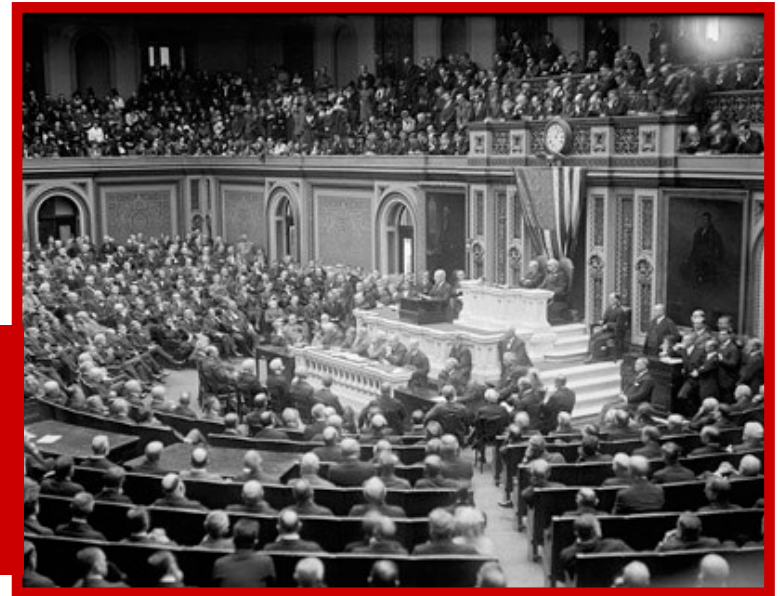




While Germany wanted to keep the U.S. out of the war, Britain most certainly wanted their help. The British government waited until February 24<sup>th</sup> to share the message with the U.S. They waited for two reasons:

- to keep Germany from knowing its codes had been broken
- to let U.S. feelings toward German grow as hostile as possible.

The message was in the press by March 1<sup>st</sup> and a month later the U.S. declared war on Germany.





# The role of America in the war

Although the U.S. remained neutral for many years, that did not mean that loans and supplies were not flowing to Europe.



When the U.S. did finally enter the war, both the **standing army** and the supply of munitions were sorely lacking. However, the industrial boom and the use of assembly lines made it easy to adapt factories to start producing more weapons.

By the armistice, military technology was taking off, yet few American-made weapons had made it to battle by that point.





The intervention of the U.S. on the side of the Allies helped to change the course of the war, eventually resulting in victory for the Allies.

Watch this animation to find out about the later events and armistice of World War I.

Press **start** to begin.

start

