Reason 1: Economic Ties

Background: In 1914, Americans were interested in making money, and Europe had become a key place to sell US goods, including war materials, and to give loans that would be paid back with interest (interest is the extra money someone who borrows money has to pay to the person who gives them the loan). If the Allies were defeated by the Central Powers, they probably wouldn't be able to repay their debt to their US lenders. Many businessmen therefore supported the 'Preparedness Movement,' arguing the US should prepare to enter the war on the side of the Allies. The US economy benefited greatly from doing business in Europe.

Document A: US Economic Ties

Even though the United States was officially a neutral nation, its economy was in a recession and many saw the war as a financial opportunity to trade. The US economy profited greatly from orders for war supplies from the British, French AND Germans…The US was eager to trade with all European nations, but the British blockaded Germany to block their ability to trade, so US economic support largely went to the Allies instead.

Value of U.S. exports (items sold to other countries) for 1914:

- 1914 - $824.8 million to Allies
- 1914 - $169.3 million to Central Powers

Value of U.S. exports for 1916:

- 1916 - $3.2 billion to Allies
- 1916 - $1.2 million to Central Powers

Value of U.S. loans for 1917:

- 1917 - $2.5 billion to Allies
- 1917 - $27 million to Central Powers

Additional Loans made by JP Morgan (a US businessman & banker):

- 1914 - $100 million to France
- 1914-1917: $500,000,000 to all Allied powers to buy weapons and war goods

Document B: Historian Howard Zinn on the importance of US economic interests in WWI. (*interest is the extra money someone who borrows money has to pay to the person who gives them the loan)

"With World War I, England became more and more a market for American goods and for loans at interest. In 1915, Wilson lifted the ban on private bank loans to the Allies, and JP Morgan and others could now begin lending money in such great amounts and charge interest on repayment…If the Allies did not win the war, the US knew they would not be able to repay these loans and the US economy could be ruined"

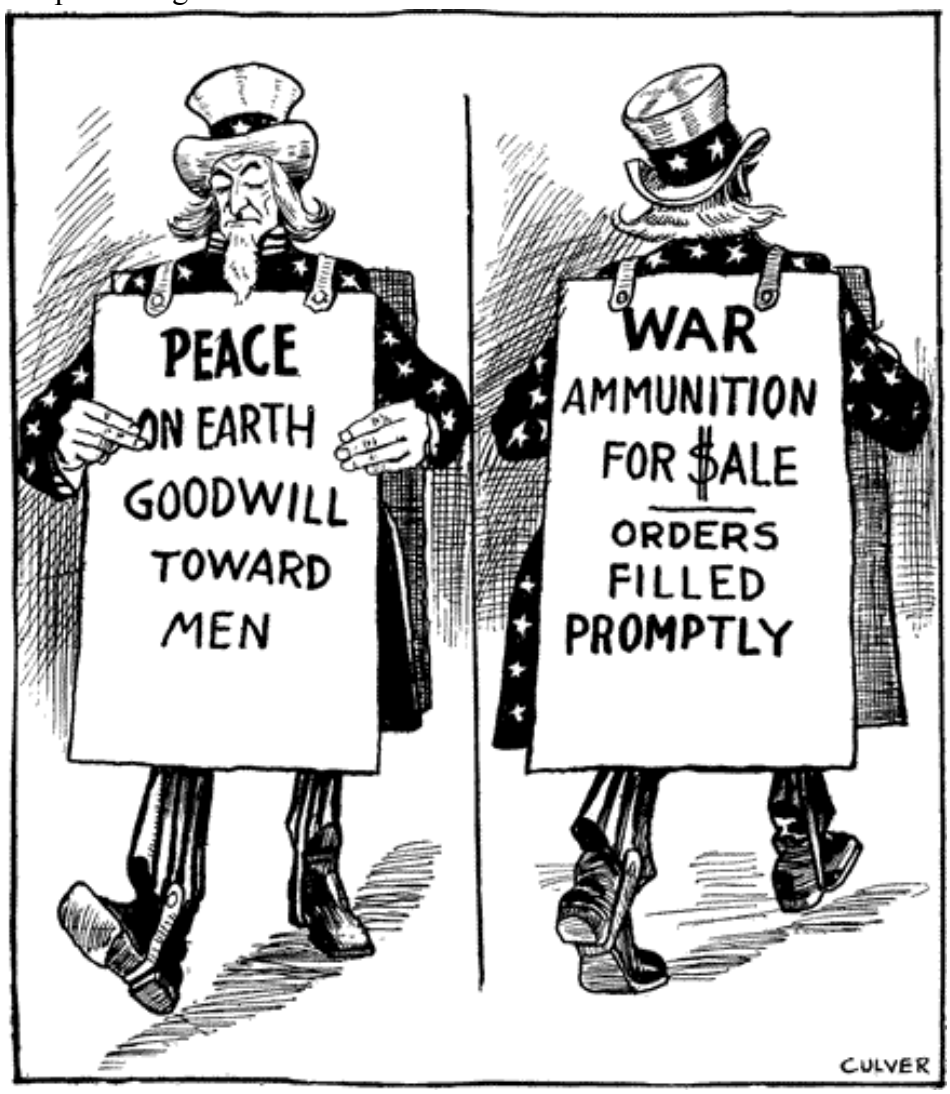
--Howard Zinn, A People's History of the United States, 1980.

Document C: A War for Business?

"Wall Street wanted war. American participation in the war against Germany would constitute the most tremendous and profitable success in the history of American finance… The war created 21,000 new American millionaires…There are individuals who have made millions out of the war in the manufacture of munitions [ammo] and weapons"

-- John Kenneth Turner, Shall It Be Again? 1922

Document D: A political cartoon entitled "The Sandwich Man" shows Uncle Sam as a hypocrite, advertising his desire for peace on the front board of his two-sided advertising board and promoting the sale of ammunition to both the Allies and Central Powers on the back.



Reason 2: Unrestricted Submarine Warfare & Violating US Neutrality

Background: During WWI, Great Britain's navy very effectively blockaded Germany, preventing them from receiving needed supplies and food. In response, Germany started a policy of **unrestricted submarine warfare**. Under this policy, German U-boats (submarines) attacked and sank ships, even those from neutral countries like the US, angering many Americans.

Document A: The Lusitania

In 1915, German submarines sank a British passenger ship called the Lusitania, killing 128 Americans on board. In addition to civilians, the Lusitania was carrying thousands of US manufactured weapons for the Allies.



CUNARD

Established 1840

EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL

LUSITANIA

Fastest and Largest Steamer now in Atlantic Service Sails

SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.

Transylvania..Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.
Orduna.....Tues., May 18,10 A.M
Tuscania.....Fri., May 21, 5 P.M
LUSITANIA..Sat., May 29, 10 A.M
Transylvania..Fri., June 4, 5 P.M

Gibraltar—Genoa—Naples—Piraeus
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

ROUND THE WORLD TOURS
Through bookings to all principal Port of the World.
COMPANY'S OFFICE. 21-24 State St., N. Y.

NOTICE!

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

Left: Before the sinking of the Lusitania, Germany issued warnings such as these, informing citizens that ships flying the British flag, or the flag of any of her allies, were subject to attack as they passed through the waters off the British Isles. The warning is the article on the right, while the post on the left is an advertisement for passengers to travel on the Lusitania.



The Seattle Star

The Only Paper in Seattle That Dares to Print the News

LAST EDITION

LUSITANIA IS SUNK BY GERMAN SUBMARINE; 1,400 FOLK ABOARD

PROMINENT AMERICANS AMONG PASSENGERS

LONDON, May 7.—(7:30)—No reports of loss of life in the sinking of the Lusitania have been received up to this hour tonight. There is a general feeling of relief about the crowded Cunard line offices.

NEW YORK, May 7.—(4:25 p. m.)—The Cunard company gave out the following cable: "Liverpool—A Cork newspaper reports 200 passengers landed."

LIVERPOOL, May 7.—The latest information regarding the Cunard line offices here at 7:20 p. m., stated that the Lusitania was struck by a torpedo at 2 p. m., and sank in 33 minutes.

NEW YORK, May 7.—The Cunard officials gave out the fourth cable received as follows: "LIVERPOOL, 2:33 p. m.—Queenstown wired 'Large steamer just arrived in vicinity apparently rendering aid. Tugs patrolling on spot, taking boats in tow. Motor fishing boats with two Lusitania boats hearing probably for Kinsale end. Have wired Kinsale agent to render every assistance and to advise us if any boats are towed in there.'"

Late this evening the report reached here that the vessel either was beached or sunk in water so shallow that she can be salvaged.

LIVERPOOL, May 7.—The giant Cunard liner Lusitania, with a heavy passenger list of American citizens, was torpedoed and sunk off the Irish coast this afternoon. No loss of life is reported as yet.

Small boats of every description were rushed from Queenstown to Old Head of Kinsale, off which point the liner was torpedoed.

An unconfirmed report reaching here said the Lusitania was beached.

The first word that the liner was in trouble was picked up by wireless at Landsend. It reported that there was a very decided list to the steamer and that assistance was urgently wanted.

Later Queenstown also picked up appeals for aid and the port authorities rushed everything possible to the aid of the steamer.

LIFEBOATS ARE SIGHTED

Lusitania Most Palatial

Left: *The Seattle Star* reporting the sinking of the Lusitania:

Document B: Public Opinion

There was widespread public outcry against the sinking of the Lusitania, and many Americans demanded an apology. However, despite this anger toward German actions, when New York newspapers asked editors around the country how the United States should respond to the *Lusitania* sinking, only six out of the thousand who responded (6%) said the US should enter the war.

The editorial below appeared in an American newspaper the day after the Lusitania sank.
***New York Times* editorial**

WAR BY ASSASSINATION!

...In the history of wars there is no single deed comparable in its inhumanity and its horror to the destruction, without warning, by German torpedos of the great steamship *Lusitania,* with more than 1800 souls aboard, among them more than 100 Americans.

--*New York Times* editorial, 1915

Document C: The Sussex Pledge

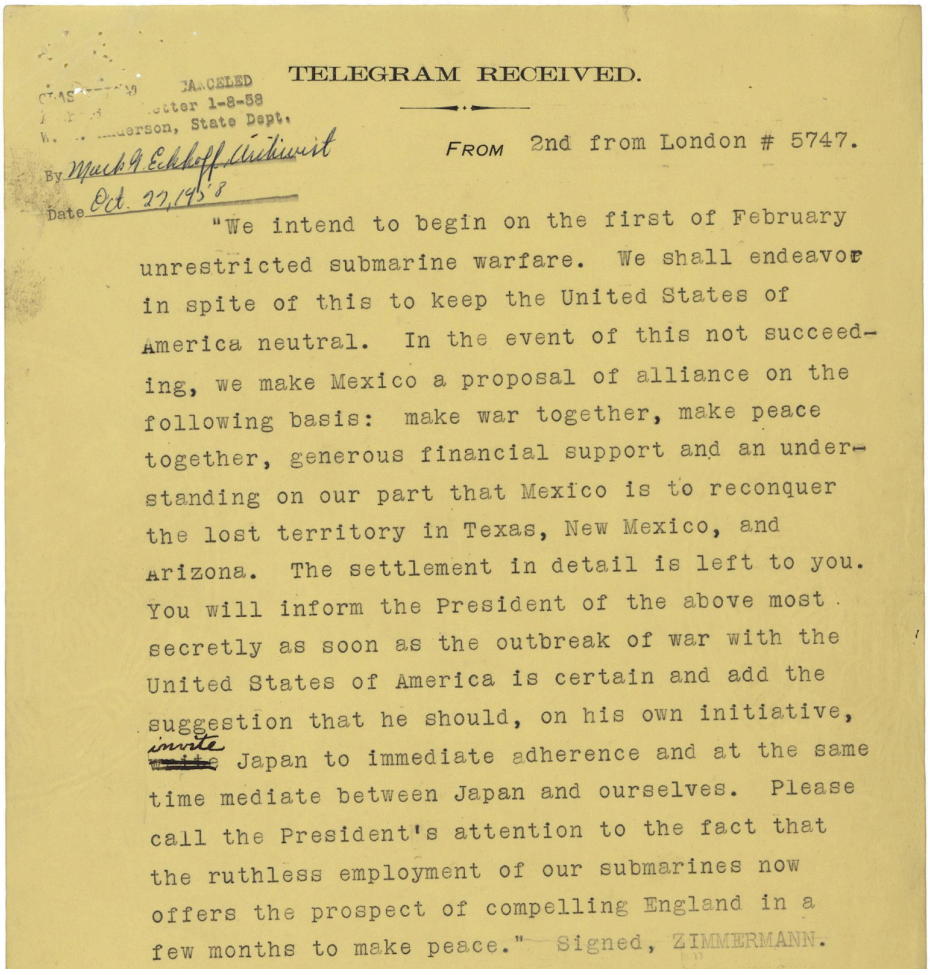
President Wilson threatened that if Germany continued attacking neutral ships, the US would take action. Fearing the entry of the United States into the war, Germany tried to appease (calm) the United States by issuing the **Sussex pledge in May 1916, changing their policies about unrestricted submarine warfare**. In the Sussex Pledge, Germany promised:

- Passenger ships would not be targeted
- Merchant (trade) ships carrying weapons would be given a warning before being sunk in order to allow the crew to evacuate safely

Germany repealed (canceled) the Sussex Pledge in January of 1917 because Germany believed it could win the war before the US entered. Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare against US ships in February. In April 1917 (2 months later), the US declared war on Germany.

Reason 3: The Zimmerman Telegram & Plots against the US

This telegram was sent by German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to the President of Mexico in 1917. The Germans promised they would help the Mexicans reclaim New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona from the United States (land which they had lost during the Mexican-American War, 1846-1848). Relations between the US and Mexico had been tense since President Wilson sent troops into Mexico to "stabilize" the country in 1914.



TELEGRAM RECEIVED.

CANCELED
Letter 1-8-58
Emerson, State Dept.
By Mack 9 Eckhoff Archivist
Date Oct. 22, 1958

FROM 2nd from London # 5747.

"We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. We shall endeavor in spite of this to keep the United States of America neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together, make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The settlement in detail is left to you. You will inform the President of the above most secretly as soon as the outbreak of war with the United States of America is certain and add the suggestion that he should, on his own initiative, invite Japan to immediate adherence and at the same time mediate between Japan and ourselves. Please call the President's attention to the fact that the ruthless employment of our submarines now offers the prospect of compelling England in a few months to make peace." Signed, ZIMMERMANN.

Doc B: "When the Zimmerman Telegram was published in the newspapers, American public opinion turned to support war against Germany. Wilson reluctantly knew after this point, war with Germany was inevitable.:

--Historian Barbara W. Tuchman, 1966



PENDLETON, OREGON, THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 1917. NO. 9058

GERMANY PLOTS AGAINST THE U. S.

THE ZIMMERMAN LETTER

Here is a copy of Zimmerman's instructions to Von Eckhardt, sent through Von Bernstorff, which is in possession of the United States government. It is as follows:

"Berlin, Jan. 19, 1917.—On the first of February we intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this, it is our intention to endeavor to keep neutral the United States of America.

"If this attempt is not successful we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico. That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas and Arizona. The details are left to you for settlement.

JAPANESE AID IS SOLICITED.

"You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in confidence as soon as it is certain that there will be an outbreak of war with the United States and suggest that the President of Mexico, on his own initiative, should communicate with Japan, suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time offer to mediate between Germany and Japan.

JAPAN AND MEXICO SOUGHT AS ALLIES IN TEUTON SCHEME

Document Bearing Instructions to Von Eckhardt in Mexico City is Intercepted; Has Been in Possession of U.S. Government for Some Time; Sinister Sequence of Events Explained; Big Concessions Offered as Bait.

WASHINGTON, March 1.—[illegible] some time. The exposure gave it has been revealed that Ger[illegible]the lie [illegible]

Left: A US newspaper reporting on the release of the Zimmerman Telegram.

Reason 4: German & Ottoman Brutality & The War as "Good vs Evil"

Background: Even before World War I began, American opinion had been more negative toward Germany than toward any other country in Europe. By 1917, many Americans felt that a German victory would be a threat to American ideals and freedom. After reports of German brutality in Belgium in 1914 and German attacks on neutral ships, the American citizens increasingly came to see Germany as the aggressor in Europe. In 1914 Germany invaded Belgium and attacked the civilian population, destroying property and killing over 23,000 Belgians. In the Ottoman Empire, the Ottoman Turks massacred millions of Armenians, who were an ethnic minority in the empire.

Document A: Bryce Report into German Atrocities in Belgium, May 12, 1915
During the war, the German Army occupied neutral Belgium. There were widespread reports that the Germans were mistreating civilians in Belgium, including this report by a British official.

> "Individual acts of brutality treatment of civilians, rape, plunder, and the like - were very widely committed...there is evidence that intoxication was extremely common among the German army...Many of the worst actions appear to have been committed by men under the influence of drink [alcohol]..."

Document B: Theodore Roosevelt, Letter to the Duke of Earl [a British royal], 1915
Theodore Roosevelt wrote a letter describing how German actions in Belgium impacted US public opinion about the war.

"There is such a thing as international morality...There have been [changes] in American opinion about the war. The actions of the Germans in Belgium have created feelings in favor of the Allies."

Document C: Humanitarian Efforts (humanitarian aid refers to welfare/assistance to people or places in need)
After Germany invaded Belgium, future president Herbert Hoover created a massive relief organization, the Commission for Relief in Belgium. The organization sent 6 million tons of food and millions of dollars worth of clothing and supplies to just about every European country, saving close to 10 million lives.



Special trucks and ships were operated by the CRB to distribute rations to more than 2,500 villages and towns. Posters were made to encourage participation in the relief effort.



Created by Catherine Brown, Cedar Shoals HS, GA

Document D: Headlines from *The Washington Herald* and *The New York Times* about the Armenian Genocide in the Otoman Empire. During WWI, the Ottoman Turks, allied with Germany, massacred millions of Armenians in Turkey because they were a different ethnic group. (The Ottoman Empire is present day Turkey).



THE MASSACRE OF A NATION

All of the Horrors, Tortures and Barbarities of History Surpassed in List of Cruelties Practiced by Turks on Defenseless Armenians.

MAP SHOWING CITY OF VAN IN ASIATIC TURKEY

RUINS OF CITY OF VAN

AN ARMENIAN OUTRAGE AND HER CHILD

MILLION ARMENIANS KILLED OR IN EXILE

American Committee on Relief Says Victims of Turks Are Steadily Increasing.

POLICY OF EXTERMINATION

More Atrocities Detailed in Support of Charge That Turkey Is Acting Deliberately.

Created by Catherine Brown, Cedar Shoals HS, GA

Reason 5: Propaganda & Public Pressure to Join the War **Propaganda is information, statements or ideas used to influence the way people think or to promote a certain belief or point of view.

Document A: Public Opinion & Propaganda

"The American people enthusiastically launched themselves into the war in part due to the power of propaganda in generating common action...newspapers have been controlled and used to create favor for the war as our duty to humanity...the war was framed as good vs evil, democracy vs German autocracy (a system of government with one supreme leader holding power)."

--James Duane Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in the United States*, 1935

Document B: The term "The Rape of Belgium" was used in the United States as a propaganda device to describe the brutality Germans were using in Belgium.



ONDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1917

The RAPE of BELGIUM

AS witnessed by Hugh Gibson, First Secretary of our Legation in Brussels, when the Germans broke through Belgium.

His personal diary—the day to day history of all that he saw—can be given you now that the seal of diplomatic neutrality is broken.

The opening instalment appeared in yesterday's Sunday Tribune—a new chapter will be published daily and Sunday for about six weeks. Read to-day's (yesterday's if you can still get a copy), and to make sure of reading all of it leave an order with your newsdealer now.

—NOTE—

This remarkable story will appear daily and Sunday in The Tribune over a period of about six weeks. The Tribune's Circulation Department will receive subscriptions for the length of the story, and will mail the Daily and Sunday Tribune during its run for the special price of $1.25. This is a real opportunity. Notify us to-day!

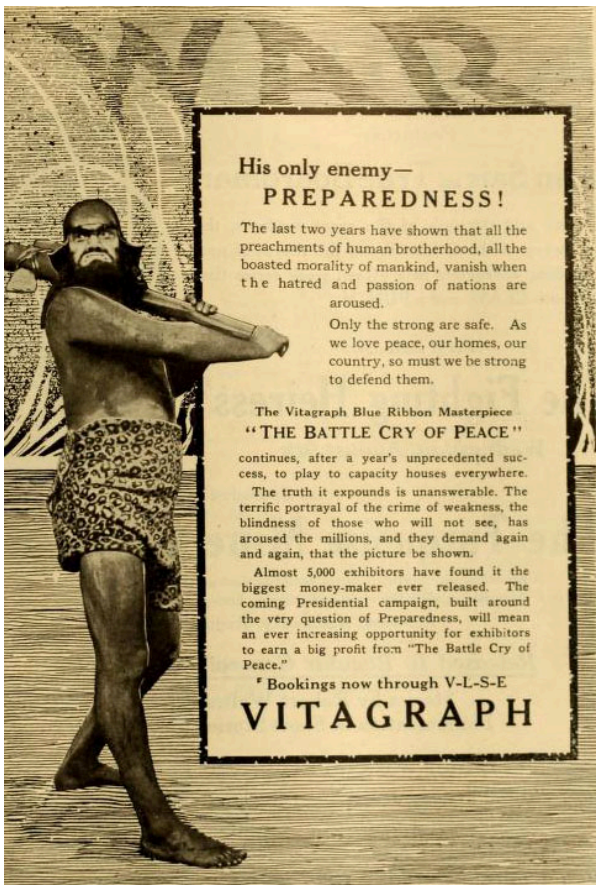
Document C: British Propaganda

Even before the US entered the war, British and American newspapers created Propaganda poster such as they one below to turn public opinion against the Germans:



The Ape represents German soldiers. His helmet says "militarism," while his club says "kulture," the German spelling of culture. Germans were seen as uncivilized animals (brutes) who were trying to force their version of "culture" on others.

Document D: The Preparedness Movement



The Preparedness Movement was started by US leaders who wanted the US to prepare to join WWI. They created movies and posters like the one on the left that sent the message that being prepared was the only way to stop the Germans and keep America safe. In 1916, the movement pressured President Wilson to sign the National Defense Act, doubling the size of the US Army.

Created by Catherine Brown, Cedar Shoals HS, GA