

Name: _____

US Entry into WWI

Opener: Excerpts from President Wilson's Declaration of Neutrality (August 19, 1914)

When European nations started declaring war in 1914, President Wilson gave the following speech to announce America's neutrality in the war.

Read the speech and answer the analysis questions at each pause.

"The effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say and do. Every man who really loves America will act and speak in the true spirit of neutrality, which is the spirit of impartiality and fairness and friendliness. The spirit of the nation in this critical matter will be determined largely by what individuals and society and those gathered in public meetings do and say, upon what newspapers and magazines contain, upon what ministers utter in their pulpits, and men proclaim as their opinions upon the street.

Pause: What is Wilson's main point in this paragraph? What does Wilson mean when he says "the effect of the war upon the United States will depend upon what American citizens say and do?"

. . . The people of the United States are drawn from many nations, and chiefly from the nations now at war...Some will wish one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. It will be easy to excite passion...Those responsible for exciting it will assume a heavy responsibility for dividing the people of the United States . . . Such divisions amongst us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of the proper performance of our duty as the one great nation at peace . . .

Pause: What is Wilson's warning in this passage? How do you think some might "excite passions" of others?

I venture...to speak a solemn word of warning to you against that...breach [break] of neutrality which may spring out of...passionately taking sides. The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men's souls. We must be impartial (neutral) in thought, as well as action, must put a curb upon our sentiments, as well as upon every transaction that might be construed [seen] as a preference of one [side] to the struggle...

Pause: What do you think Wilson means when he says "We must be impartial (neutral) in thought, as well as action?" Why does he give this warning?

Name: _____

US Entry into WWI

Stations Directions: Today you will be working in groups to determine what ultimately caused the US to enter WWI. At each station, analyze the documents to determine the different reasons why the US ultimately went to war in 1917.

Station	Guiding Questions (you don't have to answer, but can use them as a guide at each station)	What Reasons or Evidence do you see that explains why the US entered the war in 1917?
1: Unrestricted Submarine Warfare	1. What happened to the Lusitania? How did it affect American opinion about the war? (hint: Documents A & B) 2. Germany apologized for the sinking of the Lusitania, but they also blamed America. Why do you think Germany felt justified? (hint: document A) 3. What was the Sussex Pledge? Why did it represent another step toward war for the US? (Hint: doc C)	
2: Economic Ties	1. The US claimed neutrality at the beginning of the war, but how do their economic activities show that they were not truly neutral before entering the war? How were they economically involved in the war? 2. What do Zinn and Turner argue about US economic interests in the war? What evidence supports the arguments of the two historians?	
Station	Guiding Questions (you don't have to answer, but can use them as a guide at each station)	What Reasons or Evidence do you see that explains why the US entered the war in 1917?

Name: _____

US Entry into WWI

3: The Zimmerman Telegram	1. A conspiracy is a secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful. Why do you think many in the US viewed the Zimmerman Telegram as a conspiracy against the US—what was the telegram? 2. How did Americans react to the Zimmerman Telegram? What was its effect on public opinion about the war in the US?	
4: Public Opinion & Propaganda	1. Why did events in Belgium help shift the opinions of many Americans against the Germans? 2. How was propaganda used to shape public opinion in America? 3. Why do you think many Americans started to see WWI as a moral struggle about humanity, rights, and freedom? How did it shape the way they felt about the war and what was happening in Europe? 4. Before the US entered the war, many Americans were involved in the humanitarian efforts for the war. How did these efforts help draw the US closer to war? Compare these relief efforts with the current humanitarian crisis in Syria (if you are unsure about what is currently happening in Syria, just ask!)	

Name: _____

US Entry into WWI

The US Declares War

On April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson went before a joint session of Congress to seek a Declaration of War against Germany. Four days later, on April 6, Congress officially issued a declaration of war against Germany. Below are portions of Wilson's speech asking for a declaration of war.

"The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind. It is a war against all nations. American ships have been sunk, American lives taken...and the ships and people of other neutral and friendly nations have been sunk and overwhelmed in the waters in the same way...proper nations do not fill their neighbor states with spies or plot conquest with plans of deception or aggression...

Our motive will not be revenge...but the championing of human rights...Our objective now is to spread the principles of peace and justice against selfish and autocratic power...the world must be made safe for democracy...We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest...We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind."

1. According to Wilson, why should the US declare war? What events have made war necessary?

2. What other factors or pressures might have led Wilson to ask for a declaration of war?

3. According to Wilson, what is the goal of the US in the war?

Name: _____

US Entry into WWI

Debrief

“It is a common misconception (widely believed myth) that the US was not involved in WWI until 1917. That belief is completely false.”

-Historian Saje Mathieu

Provide support for Mathieu’s claim. Why is it false to claim that the US was not involved in WWI before 1917? Provide specific examples or reasons.
