



Americans at War

Objectives

1. Understand the setbacks that the Allies faced in 1917 and 1918.
2. Discover how American forces contributed to the Allied victory.
3. Explain the agreement that ended the fighting.

Main Idea

After the United States declared war, it took time before American troops were ready for combat.

Vocabulary Builder

sustain (suh STAYN) *v.* to nourish or strengthen; to keep going



Connect Main Ideas to Earlier Events/Ideas

Recall that Pershing already had experience commanding U.S. troops on foreign soil. Connect that main idea to Pershing's role in World War I.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Connect Main Ideas to Earlier Ideas Each chapter in this textbook focuses on a different time period or aspect of American history. As you read the chapters, think about how the events of one time period connect to events of other periods. Finding the connections will increase your understanding of history.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

sustain, p. 718

dictate, p. 721

Key Terms and People

convoy, p. 718

John J. Pershing, p. 718

Vladimir Lenin, p. 719

communism, p. 719

armistice, p. 721

★ **Background Knowledge** As you have read, Congress declared war in April 1917. However, more than a year passed before American troops made a significant contribution to the war.

Joining the Fight

While the United States prepared its army, the Allies in Europe were growing increasingly desperate. From February through April 1917, German submarines sank 844 Allied vessels. Britain's top naval official predicted that Germany would win the war unless the flow of supplies from America increased.

Protecting Allied Shipping In order to maintain the flow of products needed to sustain the war effort, Allied naval leaders developed a convoy system. A **convoy** is a large group of merchant vessels sailing together. Light, fast Allied destroyers accompanied the convoys. The first convoys reached Britain in May. Soon, Allied ship losses fell to a fraction of what they had been.

American Expeditionary Force Meanwhile, American forces were preparing to go overseas. The U.S. Army chose **John J. Pershing** to command the American Expeditionary Force, as American troops in Europe were known. A dashing and dedicated general, Pershing had led the pursuit of Pancho Villa in Mexico.

Pershing insisted that American soldiers fight in separate units under American command. Only rarely were they integrated with British or French units. This was in keeping with Wilson's orders. To influence the postwar settlement, Wilson believed, the United States had to make a victorious showing, on its own, in battle.

The first American troops reached Europe in June 1917. The unit was not ready for combat. Its purpose was to prop up sagging French morale. This First Division symbolized America's commitment to the fight and its intention to send more troops. As the newly arrived Americans paraded through Paris, crowds cheered and threw flowers.

Checkpoint How did the convoy system help the Allies?

Setbacks and Advances

During 1917, as the Allies waited for more American troops to arrive, their situation grew increasingly desperate. On the Western Front, a three-month British offensive bogged down in the mud in Belgium. To the south, Austria-Hungary and Germany scored a major victory over the Italians at Caporetto.

Russia Makes Peace In Russia, the new government that had replaced the tsar struggled to keep up the war effort. But the Russian army was exhausted. Two million soldiers deserted the front lines. By July, German troops were driving deep into Russia.

Under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, a radical faction known as the Bolsheviks seized the government on November 7, 1917. Lenin intended to set Russia on the road to communism. Communism is an economic and political system based on the idea that social classes and the right to private property should be eliminated. Lenin embraced the ideas of the German thinker Karl Marx, who had predicted that workers around the world would unite to overthrow the ruling class.

Lenin's first order of business was to pull Russia out of the war. In March 1918, Russia and Germany signed a peace agreement, called the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It transferred some 30 percent of Russia's territory to Germany.

The peace in the east was a huge setback to the Allies. It allowed the German army to shift 40 divisions to the Western Front. The stage was now set for a crucial showdown. Could Germany knock out the Allies before the bulk of American forces reached Europe?

Germany Attacks On March 21, 1918, the German army unleashed a series of daring attacks. The goal of this "peace offensive," as Germany called it, was to defeat the Allies quickly and bring peace on German terms.

Main Idea

The arrival of American troops eventually helped turn the war in favor of the Allies.



Biography Quest



Alvin York
1887–1964

Alvin York was a poor, uneducated farmer from the hills of Tennessee. He was also a man of deep religious beliefs. "I didn't want to go and fight and kill," he later wrote. "But I had to answer the call of my country."

Sergeant York became the most decorated American soldier of World War I. During one battle, he captured 132 Germans and 35 machine guns almost single-handedly.

Biography Quest Online

After the war, how did York use his fame to help children?

For: The answer to the question about York

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Pershing traveled to the French army's headquarters to pledge that American troops would now fight under French command. "Infantry, artillery, aviation, all that we have are yours," he declared. "Use them as you wish." The vow, made public, raised French spirits. But two months passed before the Americans could make a significant contribution to the Allied cause.

The advancing Germans broke through Allied lines in Belgium and France. By the beginning of June, Germany had reached the town of Château-Thierry (shah TOE tyeh REE), on the Marne River, less than 50 miles from Paris. As many as a million Parisians fled in panic before the approaching enemy. By this time, however, American troops had arrived to reinforce the Allies.

Turning the Tide American and French troops counterattacked near Château-Thierry. The French commander assigned American units to evict German troops from a narrow, heavily forested area called Belleau (BEH loh) Wood. The Germans had fortified the forest with barbed wire, artillery, and machine guns.

During three weeks of intense, often hand-to-hand combat, U.S. Marines suffered heavy casualties. But, in their first major battle of the war, they succeeded in driving the Germans out.

Germany had lost some 800,000 men since the start of 1918. Yet, the offensive continued. In mid-July, the Germans attempted a new drive toward Paris. The drive gained a bit of ground and then stalled. With more than a quarter million Americans participating, the Allies counterattacked. The Germans had to pull back. Costs to both sides were high in this Second Battle of the Marne.

Battle of the Argonne Forest Weakened by influenza and deprived of supplies by the Allied blockade that had tightened since America's entry into the war, Germany's army was losing the will to fight. Now, it was the Allies' turn to take the offensive.

In September 1918, Allied forces pushed forward along a line that stretched from the North Sea to Verdun. The Americans were toward the right. More than one million American soldiers advanced on heavily fortified German positions between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest in northeastern France.

At first, the Americans advanced slowly. But as November began, German defenses finally crumbled under the unrelenting assault. Farther north, French and British forces advanced as well.

Checkpoint What role did American troops play at Belleau Wood?

The Armistice

By early autumn, Germany's military and political leaders realized that their cause was lost. Their army had no reserves, whereas the arrival of Americans had assured the Allies of a fresh supply of soldiers. The German leaders decided to seek an armistice. An **armistice** is a halt in fighting that allows peace talks to begin.

Germany knew that France and Britain wanted to impose a harsh settlement. But President Wilson had recently proposed a "Fourteen Points" peace plan, founded on principles for international cooperation. (See Section 4.) On October 6, the head of the German government sent Wilson a note requesting an armistice based on the Fourteen Points. But Wilson ultimately had little say.

A Harsh Armistice France and Britain **dictated** the terms of the armistice. They required Germany to pull back its troops on the Western Front. Germany also had to cancel the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and hand over its entire fleet of U-boats.

Meanwhile, the other Central powers—Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire—had asked for an armistice, too. None of them was in any position to resist Allied demands.

Wilson's major impact during this period was his insistence that the Kaiser, the absolute monarch of Germany, must step down. On November 9, Kaiser Wilhelm II fled to Holland. There, he soon gave up the throne. Germany became a republic.

Main Idea

After more than four years of fighting, the war finally ended in November 1918.

Vocabulary Builder

dictate (DIHK tayt) v. to direct or order a specific action

Links Across Time

Honoring Veterans

1921 The day World War I ended has been remembered ever since. On November 11, 1921, the body of an unidentified American soldier was laid to rest in the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

1938 November 11 was made a national holiday, Armistice Day. The name of Armistice Day was later changed to Veterans Day.

Link to Today Online

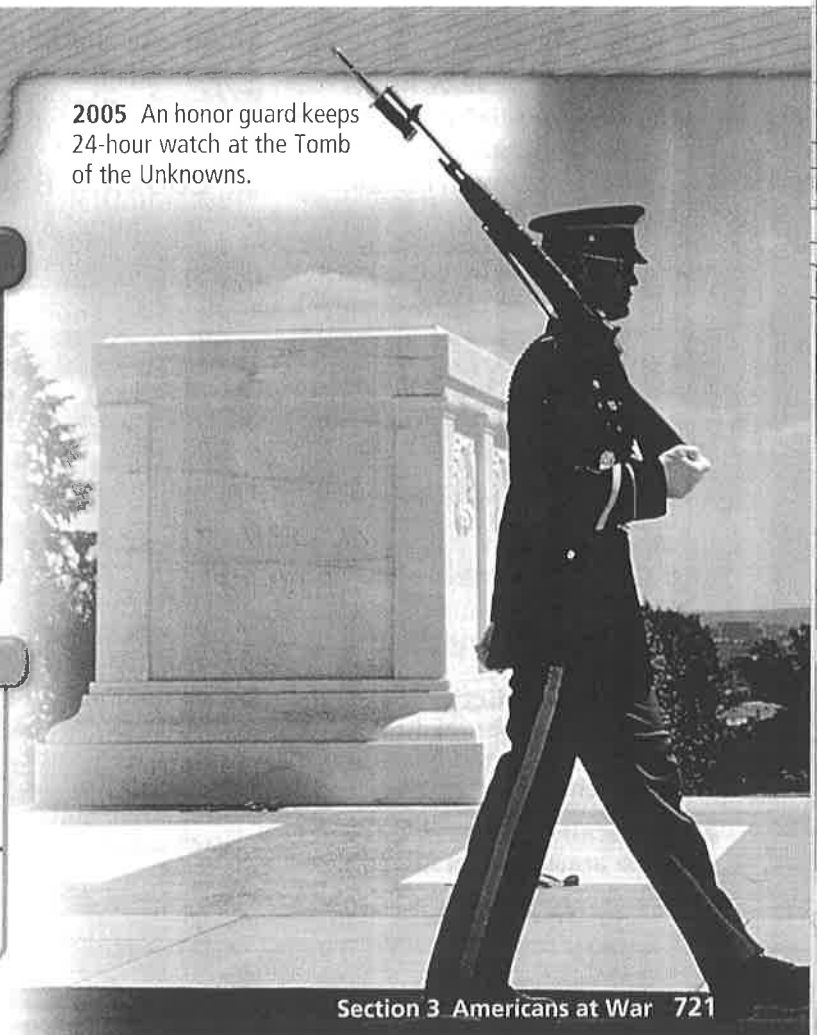
Veterans Day Today Each year, on November 11, we continue to honor those who have served in our nation's armed forces.

For: Veterans Day in the news

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2005 An honor guard keeps 24-hour watch at the Tomb of the Unknowns.





A wounded soldier returns home

War's Deadly Toll The armistice took effect at 11 A.M. on November 11—the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. The war had finally ended. At the front, soldiers could hardly believe it was true. One American soldier later recalled:

“After the long months of intense strain, of keying themselves up to the daily mortal danger, of thinking always in terms of war and the enemy, the abrupt release from it all was physical and psychological agony. Some suffered a total nervous collapse.”

—Thomas Gowenlock, *Soldiers of Darkness*

World War I was the most destructive war history had yet seen. It cost the lives of approximately 10 million military personnel—more than had died in all the wars fought in Europe during the previous 100 years combined.

In Europe, a generation of young men had lost their lives. France suffered approximately 1.3 million military deaths; Britain, 900,000; Germany, 1.6 million; and Russia, 1.7 million. American combat deaths numbered 50,000 in less than a year of fighting. Millions of other soldiers were blinded, lost limbs, suffered permanent lung damage from poison gas, or experienced psychological problems.

No one knows how many civilians died of disease, starvation, or other war-related causes. Some historians believe that as many civilians died as did soldiers. Much of northern France lay in ruins. Millions of children were left orphaned or homeless.

✓Checkpoint How did the war end?

★ **Looking Back and Ahead** The war had ended in an overwhelming Allied victory. In Section 4, you will read about the next great challenge: creating the peace.

Section 3 | Check Your Progress

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) Identify** Identify two ways the Americans contributed to the Allied victory.
- (b) Make Predictions** How do you think the war might have ended if the United States had not entered? Explain.
- (a) Recall** What were the terms of the armistice that ended the war?

(b) Draw Conclusions Why do you think Germany agreed to these terms?

Reading Skill

- 3. Connect Main Ideas to Earlier Events** Connect America's role in World War I with its role in the Spanish-American War. What was the United States fighting for in each case?

Vocabulary Builder

- 4.** Write a sentence using each of the key terms from this section: *convoy*, *communism*, *armistice*. Include a definition of the key term in each sentence.

Writing

- 5.** Create an outline for an essay tracing the progress of Allied forces during World War I. List the information in the order you would present it in the essay.