FROM NEUTRALITY TO INVOLVEMENT: THE US AND WORLD WAR I

1914-1920
• SSUSH15 The student will analyze the origins and impact of U.S. involvement in World War I.
  a. Describe the movement from U.S. neutrality to engagement in World War I, with reference to unrestricted submarine warfare.
  b. Explain the domestic impact of World War I, as reflected by the origins of the Great Migration, the Espionage Act, and socialist Eugene Debs.
  c. Explain Wilson’s Fourteen Points and the proposed League of Nations.

• SSUSH16 The student will identify key developments in the aftermath of WW I.
  a. Explain how rising communism and socialism in the United States led to the Red Scare and immigrant restriction.
FROM NEUTRALITY TO WAR

- What caused WWI?
- **Nationalism** – devotion to one’s nation; concept sweeping through Europe
- **Militarism** – glorification of the military; arms race
- **Alliances** – Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary vs. France, Russia and Great Britain
ASSASSINATION EXACERBATES WAR

- June 1914 – Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary killed by Serb nationalists
- Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia
- Others within alliances follow and war begins
DEADLY TECHNOLOGY

- Trench warfare – soldiers dig trenches; new form of battle
- New weapons prove devastating:
  - Machine gun
  - Poison gas
  - Submarines
  - Tanks
  - Airplanes
DOMESTIC IMPACT

• A number of responses came from Americans reacting to the violence in Europe.
  
• 1. Tensions ran high as newspapers reported devastating news on a daily basis.
  
• 2. Americans (many of whom were immigrants) tended to support their native lands.
  
• 3. Threats of violence in American streets arose from those supporting either side.
PRESIDENT WILSON URGES NEUTRALITY

- Two groups dominate American public opinion:
  - 1. **Isolationists** – America should stay out of war
  - 2. **Interventionists** – America should enter the war
- In August 1914, US President Woodrow Wilson (left) urged Congress to officially declare neutrality.
- “The United States must be neutral in fact...as well as in name...”
MOVEMENT TOWARDS INVOLVEMENT

• To feed its population and supply its industries with raw materials, Germany relied heavily on imported goods.
• The British (with their superior navy) was able to implement a successful blockade of many German ports.
• To retaliate, Germany began using unrestricted submarine warfare.
• German U-boats expanded attacks not only against war-time vessels, but commercial ships as well.
MOVEMENT TOWARDS INVOLVEMENT

- In 1915, Germany stepped up its attacks on sea vessels to include neutral passenger ships.
- In May 1915, the British liner *Lusitania* was sunk off the coast of Ireland killing 128 Americans.
- Despite the loss of American lives, President Wilson continued his policy of neutrality.
AN END TO US NEUTRALITY

• January 1917 – Germany sends telegram (known as the ZIMMERMAN NOTE) proposing an alliance with Mexico

• Germany promised Mexico a return of the lands lost to US in the Mexican War of the 1840s

• Public support for war against Germany swells.

• Wilson asks Congress to declare war on Germany in April 1917.
In order to focus all attention on the war effort, President Wilson took steps to assure that American citizens would not take actions that would interfere with American victory in Europe.

In 1917, Congress passed the Espionage Act.

The Espionage Act outlined the penalties for spying, sabotage and obstructing the war effort.

The law also banned the use of the US Postal Service to send anti-war materials.
EUGENE DEBS AND THE RISE OF SOCIALISM

- Eugene Debs
- Famous socialist and union leader.
- Socialism – system under which the means of production are publically controlled rather than owned by individuals
- Debs was arrested after making a series of anti-war speeches urging American men not to fight.
- Was convicted under the laws of the Espionage Act and sentenced to 10 years in prison.
- Debs and the Socialist Party would be a major player in early 20th century politics.
WAR’S IMPACT ON DEMOGRAPHY

• Seeking employment and escape from racism, approximately 1.2 million African American moved to Northern industrial cities in the early 1900s.
• Trend accelerated as defense manufacturing jobs became available during the war.
• Temporary suspension of immigration led to an increased demand for black laborers.
• Rise of black populations in cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland and St. Louis.
THE WAR ENDS

• In November 1918, Germany officially surrenders.
• Treaty of Versailles officially ends war one year later in 1919
WILSON AND THE FOURTEEN POINTS

- Wilson’s Fourteen Point plan – list of terms resolving World War I; included proposed League of Nations
- Wilson wanted “Peace Without Victory” – no winner, no loser
- Wanted the “Great War” to be the war that ended all wars
- Most of Wilson’s ideas were rejected by Allies; Germany forced to pay reparations – payments for war damage
- League of Nations – world organization that would increase and support cooperation between countries
AMERICANS OPPOSE THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

- American opposition to US involvement in the League of Nations led the US Senate to refuse to ratify the Treaty of Versailles.
- Isolationists believed that by joining the League of Nations, the US would become involved in future conflicts all around the world.
- In the end, the US never joined the League of Nations.
THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNISM

- In the 19th century, philosopher Karl Marx developed a new theory of politics and economics.
- Marx’s theory was known as communism.
- Marx believed that oppressed workers around the globe would work to overthrow the capitalist system.
- Under communism, the workers (not individuals or the government) would share the means of production and distribution. Idea appealed to many industrial workers.
- In 1917, communist revolutionaries (the Bolsheviks) overthrew the czar in Russia and created a new, communist nation called the Soviet Union.
- Many believed the goal of this new, powerful communist country was to work to destroy capitalism all over the world.
THE RED SCARE

• After World War I, labor unions began relentlessly to strike for higher wages.
• Many suspected these strikes were organized by communists.
• The fear that the US would face a similar fate as Russia (now communist Soviet Union), led to a period in US history called the Red Scare.
• These fears were further heightened by a series of bombings and attacks against public officials and buildings thought to be the work of communists.
The Red Scare led to a series of new social and legal restrictions on immigration. A new wave of “nativism” swept the country. The Ku Klux Klan experienced a strong revival throughout the country in opposition to immigrants, Jews and Catholics.
THE QUOTA SYSTEM

• In 1924, Congress reacted to the new wave of anti-immigrant sentiment by passing the National Origins Acts.
• Part of this legislation created the Quota System.
• The Quota System set limits on the number of immigrants who could come from each country.
3-2-1

• List three reasons the United States decided to enter World War I.

• Identify two domestic impacts of the decision to enter World War I.

• Give one reason new restrictions were placed on immigrants after the end of World War I.