

## SAMPLE

### PRIMARY DOCUMENT ESSAY – WORLD WAR I

Until the April of 1917, when war between the United States and Germany was declared, America had considered itself neutral. However, once involved in the war, the United States and many of its citizens contributed and played a very important role in the outcome of World War I. Whether it was because of its generous donation of war funds, supplies, or soldiers, America gave a great deal of help to the Allied war effort.

Even before America had entered the war, as stated by John Mosier in *The Myth of the Great War*, the U.S. had already been donating money to the Allied forces. \$3.5 billion of the total \$10.5 billion that had been donated to the Allied forces was raised and used before America had declared itself as part of the war in Europe. Since many German ports and trade routes were blocked, it was logical and easier to trade and provide for the Allies. Britain was obtaining almost \$75 million in supplies from the United States by 1917.

To help pay for the war, President Wilson encouraged American citizens to buy Liberty Bonds. Propaganda was heavily used to spread the word and persuade Americans to donate. Many of the ads promoted that it was a patriotic thing to do and that you should be ashamed if you didn't buy a war bond. There were many short films promoting the war bonds and the government also used famous artists to create posters supporting the cause as well as recruiting many celebrities to perform at bond rallies. In the end, the government had raised almost \$17 billion for the war effort. Along with Liberty Bonds there were also many laws passed such as the War Revenue Act of 1917, which created higher taxes and taxed many wealthy Americans. This alone increased war revenues by 400% in the next 2 years.

The United States supplied the Allies forces well during the course of WW1. The Services of Supply, or SOS, was responsible for gathering, storing, and giving supplies to the American forces. In a telegraphed message made by John J. Pershing, a commander of the American Expeditionary Force, he expresses his confidence in the capabilities of the SOS. He states that "...supply trains have never failed to reach our troops, who have never been short of food for a day..." and also says that about 25,000 tons of freight has been arriving per day at many French ports and that the amount will surely increase.

Back at the home front, many laws were passed to regulate the use of goods. Congress passed acts like the Lever Food and Fuel Control Act which gave the government power to set prices on fuel and food and control the production of goods that the military needed. Wilson also made agencies to increase food production and encourage people to eat less and to grow their own gardens. Led by Bernard Baruch, the War Industries Board, or WIB, was given the power to regulate all materials needed for the war effort. In addition, since most of the men were in the war, women traded places working in gun factories assembling pistols and rifles for soldiers. With so much going into the war effort, America had a surplus amount of food and the United States became a major supplier for the Allied Powers.

As the United States entered the war they were lacking a very important element, an army. This was stated by General Henri Pétain, commander of the French armies, in a letter to French liaison officers. The Selective Service Act, passed by Congress in May of 1917, was a draft which required men from the ages of 21 and 30 to register into the armed forces. Many participated in the draft, men who did not participate in the draft were put in jail. There was also much segregation in the armed forces with African American and Latino soldiers. Some feared to give and train African Americans on the use of weapons because they thought it would pose a

threat after the war. Many Latino's couldn't even speak English and were sent to language schools before being allowed to fight in the war.

Once the recruited were assembled they had to sleep in tents until lodges were built for them. Training was intense as they learned military rules, practices, marching, and preparing for inspections. A picture taken at St. Nazaire, France on June 28, 1917, shows the enormous number of men being sent to fight. However; once in France, General Pershing wanted his troops to be trained more, saying that "sending inexperienced soldiers into battle was the same as sending them to die." The troops were sent to training camps in eastern France. They didn't begin fighting until 12 months later when they hit the front lines. They had to build miles of trenches and set up barbed wire in the middle of the night to protect themselves from German gunfire.

During the war, women also worked overseas. Many were nurses that took care of wounded soldiers overseas and in the United States. The Hello Girls played an important role as switchboard operators, keeping communications open between headquarters and the front lines. Other women worked as typists, radio operators, bookkeepers, electricians, or telegraphers.

The involvement of the United States was an important factor in the outcome of the war and helped with much of the Allied war effort. They provided the Allied forces with much needed funds and supplies, and finally, an army. American citizens back home gave up many comforts to provide for the war effort and American troops helped fight for it. The surplus of supplies and trained army prepared troops against German attacks and gave the Allied forces an advantage, which greatly affected the outcome of the war. In short, the Allied Powers should be grateful that Germany ticked off the United States.