

[World War I: What Are We Fighting For Over There?](#)

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<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/great-war/index.html>

[Lesson Overview](#)

The Great War of 1914-1918 significantly shaped the course of the twentieth century, both at home and abroad. How can this pivotal event be personalized and brought to life for students in the new millennium? Unfortunately, increasingly fewer survivors of the World War I era are alive today to directly share their recollections of this historical time. Yet, by delving into the unique resources of [American Memory](#) and by creating World War I period newspapers of differing perspectives, students can gain an enduring understanding of The Great War.

[Objectives](#)

Students will be able to:

- utilize varied primary sources to develop a cohesive, comprehensive and historically accurate picture of the World War I era;
- analyze the historical impact of World War I on the U.S. home front and;
- answer the following essential questions:
 - What can be learned about the American character from the manner by which the United States mobilized, prepared, and participated in a world war?
 - Were the political and military goals of the Great War worth the staggering loss of human life and social disruption?
 - How does the World War of 1914-1918 validate or contradict our feelings of patriotism and reinforce or tear down our pride and gratitude as Americans?
 - How does the unfolding of World War I foreshadow the role of the United States as a prominent world power of the twentieth century?

[Time Required](#)

- Four weeks

[Recommended Grade Level](#)

- 6-8, 9-12

[Topic](#)

- World War I

[Era](#)

- Progressive Era to New Era, 1900-1929

[NYS Frameworks Standards for U.S History](#)

8.4 WORLD WAR I AND THE ROARING TWENTIES: Various diplomatic, economic, and ideological factors contributed to the United States decision to enter World War I. Involvement in the war significantly altered the lives of Americans. Postwar America was characterized by economic prosperity, technological innovations, and changes in the workplace. (Standards: 1, 2, 4; Themes: SOC, GOV, ECO, TECH)

11.6 THE RISE OF AMERICAN POWER (1890 – 1920): Numerous factors contributed to the rise of the United States as a world power. Debates over the United States' role in world affairs increased in response to overseas expansion and involvement in World War I. United States participation in the war had important effects on American society. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4; Themes: GEO, SOC, GOV, ECO)

[Lesson Preparation](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/great-war/preparation.html>

Materials

- [Department Assignments](#)
- [Newswire](#)
- [Newspaper Guidelines](#)
- [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#)

Resources

- [African-American Odyssey](#)
- [American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I and the 1920 Election](#)
- [American Variety Stage](#)
- [Fiddle Tunes of the Old Frontier: The Henry Reed Collection](#)
- [Inventing Entertainment: The Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings of the Edison Companies](#)
- [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](#)
- [On the Homefront: America During World War I and World War II](#) (an activity from [The Teachers Page](#))
- [Stars and Stripes](#)
- [Panoramic Photographs](#)
- [Theodore Roosevelt: His Life and Times on Film](#)
- [Detroit Publishing Company.](#)
- [Votes for Women: Selections from the National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection, 1848-1921](#)
- [Teacher's Guide to Analyzing Primary Sources](#)

Lesson Procedure

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/great-war/procedure.html>

This unit consists of three lessons which can be taught sequentially. It is also possible to use a single lesson if time constraints do not permit devoting four weeks to the study of World War I. Before beginning the unit, we provide students with background knowledge of World War I.

- Lesson One – Introduction to American Memory and Primary Sources
Students are introduced to the resources of American Memory by viewing several "[Today in History](#)" pages which focus on World War I events. The teacher and librarian model the retrieval, display, and analysis of sample primary sources on these pages. We examine a photograph, newspaper article, song, and speech. Students analyze the primary sources, recording their thoughts on the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). Before the students begin, select questions from the teacher's guide [Analyzing Primary Sources](#) to focus and prompt analysis and discussion. Primary sources are viewed online but backup hard copies can be made available. Find complete directions for this lesson in the student Lesson One: [Introduction to American Memory and Primary Sources](#).
- Lesson Two – American Leaders Speak
Students explore the World War I-era recordings of [American Leaders Speak](#). The background of the "The Nation's Forum Collection" is explained by means of the accompanying special [presentation](#). Students listen to the recording of a speech chosen from a gallery of leaders. Students analyze the speech, recording their thoughts on the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#). Before the students begin, select questions from the teacher's guide [Analyzing Recorded Sound](#) to focus and prompt analysis and discussion. The teacher follows up with the question: "Select a theme, event or issue mentioned or alluded to in the speech that you wish to further investigate". The teacher employs this feedback to assign each student to a relevant department or topic for the newspaper assignment in lesson three. Find complete directions for this lesson in the student Lesson Two: [American Leaders Speak](#).
- Lesson Three – Newspaper Project
Students use their developing familiarity with [American Memory](#) and prior knowledge of WWI to create two WWI-era newspapers – each with an opposing viewpoint regarding American involvement in the war effort. The newspaper staff includes a publisher and seven departments: Editorial Board, Mobilization Unit, Women and Minorities, Arts and Culture, Society, Leaders, and Photographic and Print Division. Each department receives a relevant newswire of issues and events (i.e., [American Memory](#) sources). Students explore [American Memory](#) (drawing upon search skills developed during lessons one and two) and write articles reporting the news of the day. When the two final products are published, students

read, review, and analyze the opposing newspaper.
Find complete directions for this lesson in the student Lesson Three: [Newspaper Project](#).

Extension

The newspaper project can be extended to other controversial world events (WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, etc.)

The final product (WWI-period newspaper) may be published on the school Web site and used by other classes as a supplemental historical resource.

Students may continue to investigate pivotal 20th century conflicts and to use primary source material.

Lesson Evaluation

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/great-war/evaluation.html>

Students are assessed by their use of the [Primary Source Analysis Tool](#).
The final product (WWI-period newspaper) is assessed by the teacher and by peer review, at the teacher's discretion

A class discussion dealing with the essential questions also helps evaluate students' enduring understanding of the WWI period.

Further Investigation

Local Connections

What are some local connections we can make to World War I and Buffalo?

- Who are some important people related to WWI?
- What are some 100th anniversary events designed to commemorate this historic event?

Current Events

- What are the similarities to the causes of WWI to world conflicts since and/or present day?
- How has the global community worked together to prevent global conflicts from occurring?
- How has the global community worked failed to prevent global conflicts from occurring?