

# The First World War

## Section 2



### MAIN IDEA

The United States helped turn the tide for an Allied victory.

## Key Terms and People

**isolationism** a policy of not being involved in the affairs of other nations

**U-boats** small German submarines

**Lusitania** passenger ship sunk by German U-boats during World War I

**Sussex pledge** Germany's promise not to sink merchant ships without warning and without saving lives

**Zimmerman Note** German telegram proposing an alliance between Germany and Mexico

**Selective Service Act** U.S. law requiring young men to register for the military draft

**convoy system** strategy of surrounding troop-transport ships with destroyers or cruisers for protection

**Communists** people who seek the equal distribution of wealth and the end of all private property

## Section Summary

### UNITED STATES STAYS NEUTRAL

Most Americans thought World War I did not concern them. They favored **isolationism**. This was a policy of not being involved in the affairs of other nations.

However, U.S. businesses sold many war goods to the Allies. They could not sell to Germany because of a British blockade. Germany used **U-boats** to wage naval warfare. These were small submarines. In 1915 they sank the passenger ship **Lusitania**. This violated the laws of neutrality. Many American lives were lost. Tensions rose between the United States and Germany.

Why couldn't American businesses sell war goods to the Germans?

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### HEADING TOWARD WAR

The German government agreed to attack only supply ships. However, in 1916 they attacked the French passenger ship **Sussex**. President Wilson threatened to end diplomatic ties with Germany. The Germans issued the **Sussex pledge**. They promised not to sink merchant vessels without warning or saving lives.

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Germany went back to unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917. The United States ended diplomatic relations with Germany. The Germans sent a telegram called the **Zimmerman Note** to Mexico. Germany wanted Mexico as an ally against the United States. The Americans got copies of the note and called for war. A revolution in Russia removed Czar Nicholas II from power. Now Americans supported the Allies even more. When Germany sank three American merchant ships, America declared war.

Why did the United States end diplomatic relations with Germany?

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**AMERICANS IN EUROPE**

In order to raise an army, Congress passed the **Selective Service Act**. This required young men to register to be drafted into the armed forces. Most young men went willingly. Almost nothing was ready for the new recruits. Still, training for the soldiers was intense. General John J. Pershing led the American Expeditionary Force that sailed to Europe. To transport the troops, a **convoy system** was used. This called for surrounding troop-transport ships with cruisers and destroyers for protection.

Underline the name of the leader of the American troops.

Meanwhile, **Communists** took over Russia. They believed there should be an equal distribution of wealth and no private property. They pulled Russia out of the war. The Germans pushed the Allies back to the Marne River. American troops were a major factor in the war. They helped stop the German advance.

**THE WAR ENDS**

The Germans launched a last attack at the Second Battle of the Marne. They lost, and the Allies pushed them back into Belgium. In the Battle of the Argonne Forest, the Americans suffered 120,000 casualties. However, the Central Powers lost the will to keep fighting. On November 11, 1918, a truce, or armistice, went into effect.

Where did the Germans launch their last attack?

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**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Elaborate** Before the United States entered the war, many Americans went to Canada and volunteered to fight on the side of the Allies. Write two paragraphs telling whether you might have done this or not, and why.