Grades 5–8 Answer Key

Answers listed below indicate main points and themes that students may address in their responses. For additional answers supplied by students, refer to research sources cited in the lessons, as well as the Great War videos.

LESSON 1

World War I “Firsts”

What were the main countries of the Allies and the Central Powers?
The war started in 1914. The primary Allies were Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy (joined 1915), and the United States (joined 1917). The Allies faced the Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria (joined 1915).

ACTIVITY SHEET 1

Test Your Smarts: WWI’s New Ways of War

Fill in the Blank

THE SKIES: AIRPLANES

1. reconnaissance
2. Possible answers include: air-to-air combat, bombing, and disrupting the enemy.
3. dogfights; aces.
4. the Red Baron (or Manfred von Richthofen)
5. zeppelins

THE SEAS: SUBMARINES

6. U-boat
7. Unterseeboot
8. Allied
9. Possible answers include: barriers (nets), mines, depth charges, and convoys, among others
10. Lusitania, or RMS Lusitania

Questions

1. How did submarines and airplanes in WWI change how wars were fought? What dangers did pilots and sailors face?

Airplanes expanded war from just the land and sea to the air. Reconnaissance planes spied on enemy positions, and fighter and bomber planes attacked each other as well as enemy lines. Airplanes were also used to attack civilians, putting non-combatants far from the fighting in harm’s way. This new kind of warfare was very dangerous for those operating the planes. Pilots faced mechanical malfunctions and failures, little in the way of training, and often lacked basic safety measures (like parachutes).

Submarines, though dating back to the American Revolution, entered their modern phase during WWI, thus greatly expanding the nature of war at sea. Submarines could easily sink surface ships with little to no warning, creating terror for those traveling at sea. The successful use of submarines in WWI paved the way for their more extensive use in WWII and the Cold War. Submariners faced cramped living conditions and the frightening possibility of death with no escape.

2. How did these new technologies change the lives of soldiers?

New usages of submarines and airplanes impacted soldiers. Airplanes attacked trenches and created a new hazard for men already dealing with machine gun and artillery fire. Soldiers traveling to France from the United States, Canada, and Great Britain on troop transports were potential targets for German submarines, especially in the war zone directly surrounding the British Isles.

3. How did advances in airplanes and submarines, as well as new weapons in WWI, influence the way that wars are fought today?

WWI witnessed the birth of modern warfare. Whether previously in use or being used in war for the first time, technologies like airplanes, submarines, tanks, machine guns, and hand grenades all paved the way for the greater global catastrophe of WWII. Germany’s “lightning war” and the Allied bombing of Germany and Japan were a direct result of the innovations and lessons learned in WWI. Since WWII, these technologies have advanced even further, to include things like stealth bombers and nuclear submarines, all while impacting civilians with no connection to war.

LESSON 2

A Global War

How did WWI impact countries outside Europe?
The existence of colonialism and imperialism before 1914 meant that the peoples of Africa and Asia would be drawn into a conflict not of their making. When the Ottoman Empire and Japan entered the war in 1914 (on the side of the Central Powers and Allies, respectively), World War I spread to the Near/Middle East and the Pacific. In Africa and the Middle East especially, millions of civilians were directly impacted
by the war. They faced the threat of famine, starvation, and deportation. This expansion of the war increased global interactions, contributing to the rapid spread of influenza in 1918–19.

**How were the experiences of African Americans and Native Americans different from the experiences of other soldiers?**

Although fighting for many of the same reasons as other American soldiers, African Americans experienced racial prejudice abroad as at home. Most served in labor and support units, with only 40,000 of the approximately 400,000 in service seeing combat in the segregated 92nd and 93rd Divisions. Though not U.S. citizens during the WWI era, Native Americans were drafted along with all other American men.

**In what ways did women contribute to the war?**

Women served in every capacity during WWI except front-line combat. Over 12,000 served in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, working in support activities like code breaking, naval intelligence, translating, recruitment, and stenography. Women also served in the U.S. Army and Navy Nurse Corps, receiving equal pay and benefits. On the home front, women provided support through fund-raising, volunteering, gathering supplies, and even knitting. Women also replaced men in factories, building weapons and other materials needed for the war, and some organized auxiliaries of the American Red Cross. In Europe, women served as physicians and nurses, while also continuing in their pre–1917 roles as ambulance and truck drivers. They also served in organizations like the Salvation Army and the YMCA.

**Activity Sheet 2**

**Unsung American Heroes**

**Choctaw Telephone Squad**

**QUESTION 1: What was life like for Native American soldiers during World War I?**

Native American soldiers during World War I?

Though not U.S. citizens, Native Americans volunteered and were conscripted for service during WWI. Native Americans served alongside their fellow Americans and were considered excellent fighters. Many were assigned to scouting missions that, while dangerous, were viewed (by Native Americans) as a means to demonstrate their strength as warriors.

**QUESTION 2: What were some of the achievements of Native American troops, including the Choctaw?**

Choctaw Indians helped pioneer a new form of military intelligence: the use of their native language as a secret code for the Allies. They translated field telephone calls, radio messages and field orders into the Choctaw language, providing critical help in winning key battles during the final months of the war. The Choctaw code was never broken by German intelligence. These experiments led to the much wider use of Navajo and other languages as code by U.S. forces in World War II.

**Female U.S. Navy Yeomen**

**QUESTION 1: What kind of work did female U.S. Navy Yeomen do during the war?**

Although it was assumed that yeomen would perform only administrative duties, the women also worked as mechanics, truck drivers, telephone operators, cryptographers who created and broke codes, and even munitions makers building weapons.

**QUESTION 2: What other roles did American servicewomen play?**

Women served in the U.S. Army and Navy Nurse Corps, receiving equal pay and benefits. They served as doctors and nurses, and in clerical and administrative positions. One of the most famous Army groups was the U.S. Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit; several members were awarded military citations.

**African Americans**

**QUESTION 1: Where did African Americans serve during World War I, and what kind of racial prejudice did they face?**

African Americans served in multiple capacities during WWI. Although limited in their roles and positions, they were able to serve in the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard. In France, the majority of African Americans served in labor and support units, with 40,000 serving in the segregated 92nd and 93rd Divisions. Regardless of their position or location, they often faced racial prejudice like that experienced in the United States under Jim Crow.

**QUESTION 2: What were some of the major achievements of the Harlem Rattlers?**

The most well-known unit of the 93rd Division, the Harlem Rattlers (369th Infantry Regiment) served nearly 200 days at the front and received multiple commendations for bravery from the French government. One of the regiment’s soldiers, Private Henry Johnson, received the French Croix de Guerre, that country’s highest military honor. In 2015, Johnson was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his role in single-handedly fighting off a German raid in May 1918.

**Lesson 3**

**The American Home Front**

**What factors contributed to the U.S. joining the war?**

The main factors were Germany’s resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917 and the subsequent sinking of several American ships. Also contributing was the revelation...
of the Zimmerman Telegram, in which Germany’s foreign minister offered to help Mexico recover territory in the American southwest in exchange for Mexico declaring war on the United States.

How was propaganda used to get people to support the war?
Under the direction of the Committee for Public Information (CPI), the Wilson administration sought to convince Americans to support the war through posters, pamphlets, and films. These materials appeared all across the country, bombarding people with pro-war imagery that championed and created sympathy for the Allies and portrayed Germany in a negative light. One of the most successful CPI programs was the “Four-Minute Men,” community-oriented groups that delivered speeches in public spaces in support of the war effort.

Why were German Americans targeted during the war?
German Americans were accused of being more loyal to Germany than the United States. Even President Wilson attacked the loyalty of “hyphenated Americans” who might have divided loyalty, and many called for 100% Americanism for every citizen. Some feared German Americans would act as spies or saboteurs, even though many German Americans proudly served during the war.

Can you think of similar instances in U.S. history?
Internment and relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Can you identify any uses of propaganda during WWI similar to propaganda today? What are the similarities and differences?
Answers can vary. Modern advertising stems from the “media blitz” by the CPI during WWI. The use of emotion-evoking imagery can be seen throughout other 20th-century wars as well, such as anti-war images during the Vietnam War, and negative portrayals of Saddam Hussein’s character and regime in 2003. But it was during WWI (through the CPI) and WWII (through the Office of War Information, or OWI) that the U.S. government established specific agencies charged with influencing public opinion.

ACTIVITY SHEET 3
German Americans in WWI
Questions
1. What was life like for German Americans before World War I?
German Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States. They owned thousands of businesses and were very successful. Many lived in close-knit communities where German was the primary language, and they operated German-language schools, bars, operas, newspapers, and other cultural groups and societies.

But German Americans also were among the earliest immigrant groups to arrive in the United States, and they were one of the most assimilated groups in the United States. Because of this and their Western European heritage, they were subjected to less of the prejudice faced by more recent immigrants from eastern and southern Europe in the early 20th century.

2. Why were German Americans considered disloyal to the United States during the war?
When the United States entered WWI in 1917, a message of “100% Americanism” was pushed by the Wilson administration and the CPI. Anger toward Germany was so strong that German Americans came under attack simply because of their ethnic/cultural heritage. The existence of German espionage and the desire by many German Americans for the United States to stay out of the war prior to 1917 also added to Americans’ anxiety.

3. What were some of the ways German Americans were mistreated?
Most German American businesses were forced to close. Some German Americans were physically attacked by people who thought they were disloyal. German words and phrases were no longer used and were replaced (this included calling hamburgers “liberty steaks” and sauerkraut “liberty cabbage”). German Americans over the age of 14 were classified as “enemy aliens” and had to register with the U.S. government. Thousands were arrested by the government and more than 2,000 were placed in internment camps and held prisoner during the war.

4. Do you think it was fair for German Americans to be mistrusted?
Answers will vary.

5. Can you think of similar types of prejudice in the United States today?
Answers will vary but can include similar prejudice surrounding other ethnic and minority groups.