

World War I

The American Experience in World War I

World War I began in 1914 and by 1918 was the first truly global war. It involved more than 30 nations and every inhabited continent!

On April 6, 1917, Congress declared war against Germany and the United States quickly took steps to ready the entire country for war. Millions of men



entered the armed forces through the Selective Service Act and were given basic combat training. By June 1917, the first U.S. troops were in France.

Homefront to Frontline

The U.S. went from a standing army of 120,000 in 1914 to more than 4 million serving in the Armed Forces by 1918. Even when not fighting, servicemen had many duties, including training, carrying supplies to the front line, repairing equipment and draining damaged trenches.



The first use of Native American languages as a substitute for code occurred during WWI. Choctaws from Oklahoma made up the largest unit of code talkers; they translated radio messages and field orders into their native language, a key in winning important battles during the final months of the war. The Choctaw code was never broken by German intelligence.



By the end of the war, almost 30,000 American women served overseas. They worked as doctors, nurses, drivers, secretaries and filled many other roles that were vital to operations on the Western Front.



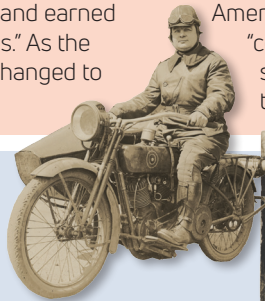
Want to learn more about food in WWI? Check out the Museum's digital exhibition, *War Fare*. <https://www.theworldwar.org/explore/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/warfare>

Doughboys

American infantrymen serving along the Texas-Mexico border, at the time of Pancho Villa's raids in 1916, marched through a lot of dust and earned the nickname "Adobes." As the nickname spread, it changed to "Doughboys."

Cooties

The poor conditions in which soldiers of all armies lived meant that they suffered from lice infestations. American Doughboys called them "cooties" and special de-lousing stations were set up to deal with the scourge.



Technology

War spurs innovation — from weaponry to wristwatches. The need to treat injured soldiers modernized medicine, from the use of blood transfusions to X-rays. Plastic surgery was created to help injured soldiers adjust back into civilian life.



World War I was the first time that motorcycles were used in combat service on a large scale. Harley-Davidson provided around 15,000 for military use during the war.

Mobilizing America

When men went "over there" to fight, women and children made valuable contributions to the home front.

Boy and Girl Scouts helped sell Liberty Bonds to help finance the war. Some children worked for the Junior Red Cross assembling Friendship Boxes for students overseas. Liberty Gardens were also an important part of rallying the war effort as food was essential to preparedness.

Jeanette Rankin

In November of 1916, Jeanette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to Congress, a remarkable feat given that women could not vote until the 19th Amendment's ratification in 1920.



Henry Johnson

In 1918, an African-American porter joined the all-black New York National Guard, which became the 369th Division, also known as the Harlem Hellfighters. Severely wounded in a trench attack, Johnson continued to fight, saving the lives of his fellow servicemen. He was the first American to receive the Croix de Guerre and was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the 2nd highest U.S. Army decoration for valor.



John Lewis Barkley

John Lewis Barkley, a draftee from Holden, Mo., was among the most decorated American soldiers. He received six medals for bravery. On Oct. 7, 1918, Barkley single-handedly held off a German force of several hundred men from inside an abandoned French tank with a broken German machine gun and ammunition.



Eddie Rickenbacker

Eddie Rickenbacker was the leading American WWI flying ace with 26 confirmed aerial victories. Before the war, he earned the nickname "Fast Eddie" from his experience racing in the Indianapolis 500. Later, during WWII, he survived 24 days in a life raft after the B-17 Flying Fortress in which he was flying ditched in the Pacific Ocean.



TIMELINE

1917

- April 6** The United States declares war on Germany.
- May 19** The Selective Service Act is passed, requiring all men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for military service.
- June** The AEF, led by General John J. Pershing lands in France.
- Aug. 8** U.S. Food Administration is created.
- Nov. 20** The Battle of Cambrai begins.

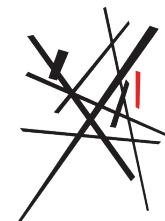
1918

- Jan. 26** The U.S. Army Tank Corps is created.
- March** The Flu Pandemic, also known as Spanish Flu, starts at Fort Riley, Kan.
- June 6** The Battle of Belleau Wood, where Marines earn the nickname "Devil Dogs," begins.
- Sept. 26** The Meuse-Argonne Offensive begins, the largest use of U.S. field army ever in American history.
- Nov. 11** The Armistice ends WWI.



Learn more about what started World War I at: www.theworldwar.org/June28

Download a companion teaching guide at www.mo-nie.com using code: **WWOneTeach**



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