

# The United States Enters World War I

## Guide to Reading

### Connection

In the previous chapter, you learned about President Wilson's reforms and the effects of the Progressive Era. In this section, you will discover what events led to the United States entering World War I.

### Main Idea

- President Wilson promoted a moral approach to diplomacy in his attempts to bring democracy to Mexico. (p. 367)
- Old alliances and nationalist sentiments among European nations set the stage for World War I. (p. 368)
- British propaganda and business interests led most Americans to a pro-British stance on the war. (p. 371)

- Despite efforts to stay officially neutral, the United States entered the war after German submarines destroyed American ships. (p. 372)

### Content Vocabulary

guerrilla, nationalism, self-determination, propaganda, contraband, U-boat

### Academic Vocabulary

stability, emphasis, erode

### People and Terms to Identify

Pancho Villa, Franz Ferdinand, Allies, Central Powers, Sussex Pledge, Zimmermann telegram

### Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the principles that guided President Wilson's foreign policy.

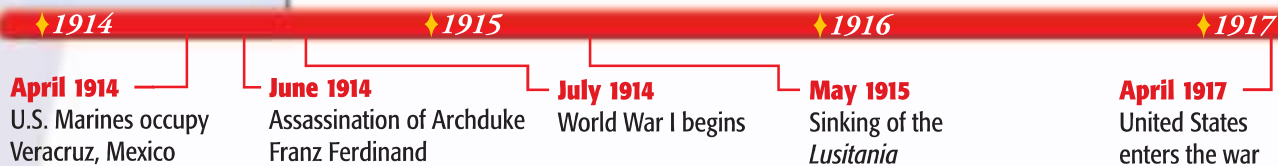
- **Discuss** the causes and results of American intervention in Mexico and the Caribbean.
- **Explain** the causes of World War I and why the United States entered the war in 1917.

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** As you read about the start of World War I, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by identifying the factors that contributed to the conflict.



### Preview of Events



The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

**11.4** Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.

**11.4.4** Explain Theodore Roosevelt's Big Stick diplomacy, William Taft's Dollar Diplomacy, and Woodrow Wilson's Moral Diplomacy, drawing on relevant speeches.

**11.4.5** Analyze the political, economic and social ramifications of World War I on the home front.

## The Big Idea

**The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events.**

President Wilson believed that promoting democracy around the world would make the United States more stable and prosperous. These ideals led to U.S. involvement in the Mexican Revolution. In Europe, tensions following the unification of German states resulted in alliances between nations. Austria-Hungary and Serbia went to war after Serbian nationalists assassinated the heir to the Austria-Hungary throne. The system of alliances guaranteed that other nations would join the conflict. World War I had begun. Although the United States tried to remain neutral, it entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1917.

## Woodrow Wilson's Diplomacy

**Main Idea** President Wilson promoted a moral approach to diplomacy in his attempts to bring democracy to Mexico.

**Reading Connection** Do you know someone who attempted to lead others by setting a good example? Read on to learn how President Wilson tried to use moral ideas in dealing with Mexico.

As president, Wilson resolved to “strike a new note in international affairs” and to see that “sheer honesty and even unselfishness . . . should prevail over nationalistic self-seeking in American foreign policy.” Wilson believed that democracy was essential to a nation’s **stability** and prosperity, and that the United States should promote democracy in order to ensure a peaceful world free of revolution and war. Other forces at work, at home, and abroad frustrated his hope to lead the world by moral example.

### ★ An American Story ★

Edith O’Shaughnessy could not sleep on the rainy night of April 20, 1914. Living at the American embassy in Mexico City, the wife of diplomat Nelson O’Shaughnessy was well aware of the growing crisis between Mexico and the United States. Earlier that day, President Wilson had asked Congress to authorize the use of force against Mexico. In her diary, O’Shaughnessy described the tensions in the Mexican capital:

“I can’t sleep. National and personal potentialities [possibilities] are surging through my brain. Three stalwart railroad men came to the Embassy this evening. They brought reports of a plan for the massacre of Americans in the street to-night, but, strange and wonderful thing, a heavy rain is falling. . . . Rain is as potent as shell-fire in clearing the streets, and I don’t think there will be any trouble.”

The next day, O’Shaughnessy reported that the conflict had begun: “We are in Mexico, in full intervention! . . . Marines are due to-day in Vera Cruz. . . .”

—adapted from *A Diplomat’s Wife in Mexico*

Wilson strongly opposed imperialism. His policy of Moral Diplomacy forced him to become involved in the Mexican revolution.

**The Mexican Revolution** From 1884 to 1911, a dictator, Porfirio Díaz, ruled Mexico. Díaz encouraged foreign investment in Mexico to help develop the nation’s industry. A few wealthy landowners dominated Mexican society. The majority of the people were poor and landless, and they were increasingly frustrated by their circumstances. In 1911 a revolution erupted, forcing Díaz to flee the country.

Francisco Madero, a reformer who appeared to support democracy, constitutional government, and land reform, replaced Díaz. Madero, however, proved to be an unskilled administrator. Frustrated with Mexico’s continued decline, army officers plotted against Madero. Shortly before Wilson took office, General Victoriano Huerta seized power in Mexico, and Madero was murdered—presumably on Huerta’s orders.

Huerta’s brutality repulsed Wilson, who refused to recognize the new government. Wilson believed the United States had the moral obligation to discriminate between good and bad governments and intervene to put good people in power. Wilson was convinced that without the support of the United States, Huerta soon would be overthrown. Wilson, therefore, tried to prevent weapons from reaching Huerta, and he permitted Americans to arm other political factions within Mexico. In a message Wilson sent to authorities in Mexico he stated:

“Mexico is starving and without a government . . . the people and Government of the United States cannot stand indifferently by and do nothing. . . .”

Wilson’s desire to lead by moral example and promote Moral Diplomacy found him deeply involved in Mexico’s political affairs.



*Raising the flag at Veracruz* ➤

**Wilson Sends Troops Into Mexico** In April 1914, American sailors visiting the city of Tampico were arrested after entering a restricted area. Though they were quickly released, their American commander demanded an apology. The Mexicans refused. Wilson used the refusal as an opportunity to overthrow Huerta. He sent marines to seize the Mexican port of Veracruz.

Although the president expected the Mexican people to welcome his action, anti-American riots broke out in Mexico. Wilson then accepted international mediation to settle the dispute. Venustiano Carranza, whose forces had acquired arms from the United States, became Mexico's president.

Mexican forces opposed to Carranza were not appeased, and they conducted raids into the United States hoping to force Wilson to intervene. **Pancho Villa** (VEE-yah) led a group of **guerrillas**—an armed band that uses surprise attacks and sabotage rather than open warfare—that burned the town of Columbus, New Mexico, and killed a number of Americans. Wilson responded by sending more than 6,000 U.S. troops under General John J. Pershing across the border to find and capture Villa. The expedition dragged on as Pershing failed to capture the guerrillas. Wilson's growing concern over the war raging in Europe finally caused him to recall Pershing's troops in 1917.

Wilson's Mexican policy damaged U.S. foreign relations abroad. The British ridiculed the president's actions, calling it an attempt to "shoot the Mexicans into self-government." Latin Americans regarded his "moral imperialism" as no improvement on Theodore Roosevelt's "big stick" diplomacy. In fact, Wilson followed Roosevelt's example with his actions in the Caribbean. During his first term, Wilson sent marines into Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic to preserve order and to set up governments that he hoped would be more stable and democratic than the current regimes.

**Reading Check** **Examining** Why did President Wilson intervene in Mexico?

## The Outbreak of World War I

**Now Try** **Old alliances and nationalist sentiments among European nations set the stage for World War I.**

**Reading Connection** What stories are you familiar with that are based on old feuds or alliances? Read on to discover how European nations formed political alliances that brought most of the continent into war.

Despite more than 40 years of general peace, tensions among European nations were building in 1914. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, complex alliances, a naval race, and concern over nationalism created problems among the powers of Europe and set the stage for a monumental war.

**The Alliance System** The roots of World War I date back to the 1860s. In 1864, while Americans fought the Civil War, the German kingdom of Prussia launched the first of a series of wars to unite the various German states into one nation. By 1871 Prussia had united Germany and proclaimed the birth of the German Empire. The new German nation rapidly industrialized and quickly became one of the most powerful nations in the world.

The creation of Germany transformed European politics. In 1870, as part of their plan to unify Germany, the Prussians had attacked and defeated France. They then forced the French to give up territory along the German border. From that point forward, France and Germany were enemies. To protect itself, Germany signed alliances with Italy and with Austria-Hungary, a huge empire that controlled much of southeastern Europe. This became known as the Triple Alliance.

### Picturing History

**Moral Imperialism** President Wilson sent General John Pershing (below) to stop Pancho Villa's (right) raids into the United States. **Why was Villa conducting these raids?**



The new alliance alarmed Russian leaders, who feared that Germany intended to expand eastward into Russia. Russia and Austria-Hungary were also competing for influence in southeastern Europe. Many of the people of southeastern Europe were Slavs—the same ethnic group as the Russians—and the Russians wanted to support them against Austria-Hungary. As a result, Russia and France had a common interest in opposing Germany and Austria-Hungary. In 1894 they signed the Franco-Russian Alliance.

**The Naval Race** While the other major powers of Europe divided into competing alliances, Great Britain remained neutral. Then, in 1898, the Germans began to build a navy challenging Great Britain's historical dominance at sea. By the early 1900s, an arms race had begun between Great Britain and Germany, as both sides raced to build warships. The naval race greatly increased tensions between Germany and Britain and convinced the British to establish closer relations with France and Russia. The British refused to sign a formal alliance, so their new relationship with the French and Russians became known as an "entente cordiale"—a friendly understanding. Britain, France, and Russia became known as the Triple Entente.

**The Balkan Crisis** By the late 1800s, **nationalism**, or a feeling of intense pride of one's homeland, had become a powerful idea in Europe. Nationalists place primary **emphasis** on promoting their homeland's culture and interests above those of other countries. Nationalism was one of the reasons for the tensions among the European powers. Each nation viewed the others as competitors, and many people were willing to go to war to expand their nation at the expense of others.

One of the basic ideas of nationalism is the right to **self-determination**—the idea that people who belong to a nation should have their own country and government. In the 1800s, nationalism led to a crisis in southeastern Europe in the region known as the Balkans. Historically, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had ruled the Balkans. Both of these empires were made up of many different nations. As nationalism became a powerful force in the 1800s, the different national groups within these empires began to press for independence.

Among the groups pushing for independence were the Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes. These people all spoke similar languages

and had come to see themselves as one people. They called themselves South Slavs, or Yugoslavs. The first of these people to obtain independence were the Serbs, who formed a nation called Serbia between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Serbs believed their nation's mission was to unite the South Slavs.

Russia supported the Serbs, while Austria-Hungary did what it could to limit Serbia's growth. In 1908 Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, which at the time belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs were furious. They wanted Bosnia to be part of their nation. The annexation demonstrated to the Serbs that Austria-Hungary had no intention of letting the Slavic people in its empire become independent.

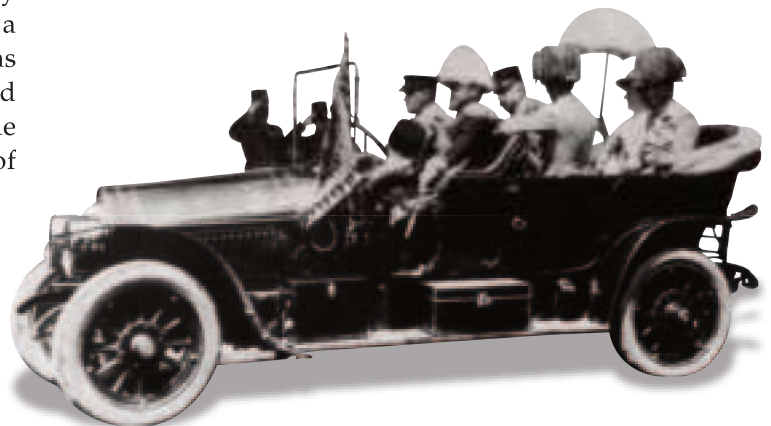
**A Continent Goes to War** In late June 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the Archduke **Franz Ferdinand**, visited the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. As he and his wife rode through the city, a Bosnian revolutionary named Gavrilo Princip rushed their open car and shot the couple to death. The assassin was a member of a Serbian nationalist group nicknamed the "Black Hand." The assassination took place with the knowledge of Serbian officials who hoped to start a war that would bring down the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Austro-Hungarian government blamed Serbia for the attack and decided the time had come to crush Serbia in order to prevent Slavic nationalism from undermining its empire. Knowing an attack on Serbia might trigger a war with Russia, the Austrians asked their German allies for support. Germany promised to support Austria-Hungary if war erupted.

Austria-Hungary then issued an ultimatum to the Serbian government. The Serbs counted on Russia to

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**Fateful Couple** Archduke Franz Ferdinand and wife Sophia visit Sarajevo the day of the assassination.



back them up, and the Russians, in turn, counted on France. French leaders were worried that they might someday be caught alone in a war with Germany, so they were determined to keep Russia as an ally. They promised to support Russia if war began.

On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia immediately mobilized its army, including troops stationed on the German border. On August 1, Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, it declared war on France. World War I had begun.



**Germany's Plan Fails** Germany had long been prepared for war against France and Russia. It immediately launched a massive invasion of France, hoping to knock the French out of the war. It would then be able to send its troops east to deal with the Russians.

The German plan had one major problem. It required the German forces to advance through neutral Belgium in order to encircle the French troops. The British had guaranteed Belgium's neutrality. When German troops crossed the Belgian frontier, Britain declared war on Germany.

With Britain's declaration of war, all members of the Triple Entente were now involved in the war. Those fighting for the Triple Entente were called the **Allies**. France, Russia, and Great Britain formed the backbone of the Allies. Italy joined them in 1915 after the other Allies promised to cede Austro-Hungarian territory to Italy after the war.

Italy's decision to join the Allies broke up the Triple Alliance. What remained of that former alliance—Germany and Austria-Hungary—joined with the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria to form the **Central Powers**.

The German plan seemed to work at first. German troops swept through Belgium and headed into France, driving back the French and British forces. Then, to the great surprise of the Germans, Russian troops invaded Germany. The Germans had not expected Russia to mobilize so quickly and had not prepared for an immediate war in the east. They were forced to pull some of their troops away from the attack on France and send them to the eastern front to stop the Russians. This weakened the German forces just enough to give the Allies a chance to stop them. The Germans drove to within 30 miles (48 km) of Paris, but stubborn resistance by British and French troops at the Battle of the Marne finally stopped the German advance. Because the swift German attack had failed to defeat the French, both sides became locked in a bloody stalemate along hundreds of miles of trenches that would barely change position for the next three years.

The Central Powers had greater success on the Eastern Front. German and Austrian forces stopped the Russian attack and then went on the offensive. They swept across hundreds of miles of territory and took hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Russia suffered 2 million killed, wounded, or captured in 1915 alone, but it kept fighting.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What incident triggered the beginning of World War I?

## American Neutrality

 **British propaganda and business interests led most Americans to a pro-British stance on the war.**

**Reading Connection** Have you ever decided to buy a product based on the advertising? Read on to learn about the effects of propaganda and U.S. efforts to stay neutral.

When the fighting began, President Wilson declared the United States to be neutral in an attempt to keep the country from being drawn into a foreign war. "We must be impartial in thought as well as in action," Wilson stated. For many Americans, however, that proved difficult to do.

**Americans Take Sides** Despite the president's plea, many Americans showed support for one side or the other. This was especially true for recent immigrants from Europe. Many of the 8 million German Americans, for example, supported their homeland. The nation's 4.5 million Irish Americans, whose endured centuries of British rule, also sympathized with the Central Powers.

In general, though, American public opinion favored the Allied cause. Many Americans valued the heritage, language, and political ideals they shared with Britain. Others treasured America's historic links with France, a great friend to America during the Revolutionary War.

**Pro-British Sentiment** One select group of Americans was decidedly pro-British: President Wilson's cabinet. Only Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan favored neutrality. The other cabinet members, as well as Bryan's chief adviser, Robert Lansing, and Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Britain, argued forcefully on behalf of Britain. American military leaders also backed the British. They believed that an Allied victory was the only way to preserve the international balance of power.

British officials worked diligently to win American support. One method they used was **propaganda**, or information designed to influence opinion. Both the Allies and the Central Powers used propaganda, but German propaganda was mostly anti-Russian and did not appeal to most Americans. British propaganda, on the other hand, was extremely skillful. Furthermore, Britain cut the transatlantic telegraph cable from Europe to the United States, limiting news about the war mainly to British reports. Stories

arrived depicting numerous German war atrocities, including the charge that Germans used corpses from the battlefield to make fertilizer and soap. Although many such reports were questionable, enough Americans believed them to help sway American support in favor of the Allies.

**Business Links** American business interests also leaned toward the Allies. Companies in the United States, particularly on the East Coast, had strong ties with businesses in the Allied countries. As business leader, Thomas W. Lamont stated, “Our firm had never for one moment been neutral: we did not know how to be. From the very start we did everything that we could to contribute to the cause of the Allies.”

Many American banks began to invest heavily in an Allied victory. American loans to the cash-hungry Allies skyrocketed. By 1917 such loans would total over \$2 billion. Other American banks, particularly in the Midwest, where pro-German feelings were strongest, also lent some \$27 million to Germany. Even more might have been lent, but most foreign loans required the approval of William McAdoo, the secretary of the Treasury. McAdoo was strongly pro-British and did what he could to limit loans to Germany. As a result, the country’s pros-

perity was intertwined with the military fortunes of Britain, France, and Russia. If the Allies won, the money would be paid back; if not, the money might be lost forever.

**Reading Check** **Evaluating** How was American prosperity intertwined with the military fortunes of the Allies?

## Moving Toward War

**Main Idea** **Despite efforts to stay officially neutral, the United States entered the war after German submarines destroyed American ships.**

**Reading Connection** Describe a time when you tried to remain neutral during a disagreement between friends. What steps did you take? Read on to discover how Germany’s actions at sea led America to war.

Although most Americans supported the Allies and hoped for their victory, they did not want to join the conflict. They still remembered the events of the Civil War. However, a series of events gradually **eroded** American neutrality and drew the nation into the war firmly on the side of the Allies.

## Profiles IN HISTORY

### Jeannette Rankin 1880–1973

As he addressed the “Gentlemen of the Congress” on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson actually misspoke. Sitting in the chamber listening to the president’s request for a declaration of war against Germany was Representative Jeannette Rankin—the first woman ever elected to Congress.

Rankin was born in Missoula, Montana, in 1880. She became a social worker and participated in the woman suffrage movement. In 1916 she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Montana—one of the few states at that time that allowed women to vote. As a representative, Rankin sponsored legislation to grant federal voting rights for women and to provide health services for them.

Apart from her title as the first woman in Congress, Rankin is remembered most for her strong pacifism. She was one of 56 legislators who voted against the nation’s entry into World War I. “I want to stand by my country,” she said, “but I cannot vote for war.”

In 1940 Rankin ran again for Congress as a representative from Montana. She ran on an isolationist policy and won. In 1941 she was the only member of Congress to vote against declaring war on Japan and entering World War II.

After leaving Congress in 1943, Rankin continued working for peace. In 1968, at 87 years of age, she led thousands of women in the March on Washington to oppose the Vietnam War.



**The British Blockade** Shortly after the war began, the British deployed their navy to blockade Germany and keep it from obtaining supplies. The British planted mines in the North Sea and forced neutral ships into port for inspections in case they were trying to transport valuable materials to Germany or its neutral neighbors. British officials also expanded their definition of **contraband**, or prohibited materials, to prevent neutral countries from shipping food to Germany.

The Germans knew that the Allies depended on food, equipment, and other supplies from both the United States and their overseas empires. If Germany could strangle that trade, it could starve the British and French into surrendering. To get around Britain's blockade, the Germans deployed submarines known as **U-boats**—from the German word *Unterseeboot* (meaning “underwater boat”). In February 1915, the Germans announced that they would attempt to sink without warning any ship they found in the waters around Britain.

Germany's announcement triggered outrage in the United States and elsewhere. Attacking civilian vessels without warning violated an international treaty stipulating that military vessels must reveal their intentions to merchant ships and make provisions for the safety of the targeted ship's crew and passengers before sinking it. The Germans claimed that many merchant ships were actually warships in disguise and that their U-boats would be placed at great risk if they revealed themselves before firing.

The issue reached a crisis on May 7, 1915. Despite warnings from Germany, the British passenger liner *Lusitania* entered the war zone. A submerged German submarine fired on the ship, killing nearly 1,200 passengers—including 128 Americans. Many Americans were outraged and regarded the attack as an act of terrorism, not war. Others argued that the passengers traveling on ships of foreign nations did so at their own risk.

Wilson steered a middle course on the issue of the U-boats. He refused to take extreme measures against Germany, saying that the United States was “too proud to fight.” Nevertheless, he sent several diplomatic notes to Germany insisting that its government safeguard the lives of noncombatants in the war zones.

Late in March 1916, Wilson's policy was tested when a U-boat torpedoed the French passenger ship *Sussex*, injuring several Americans on board. Although Wilson's closest advisers favored breaking off diplomatic relations with Germany immediately, the president, busy with the crisis in Mexico, chose to issue one last warning. He demanded that the

German government abandon its methods of submarine warfare or risk war with the United States.

Germany did not want to strengthen the Allies by drawing the United States into the war. It promised with certain conditions to no longer sink merchant ships without warning. The Sussex Pledge, as it was called, met the foreign-policy goals of both Germany and President Wilson by keeping the United States out of the war a little longer.

Wilson's efforts to keep American soldiers at home played an important part in his reelection bid in 1916. Campaigning as the “peace” candidate, his campaign slogan, “He kept us out of the war,” helped lead Wilson to a narrow victory over the Republican nominee, Charles Evans Hughes.

**The United States Declares War** Following Wilson's reelection, events quickly brought the country to the brink of war. In January 1917, a German official named Arthur Zimmermann cabled the German ambassador in Mexico, instructing him to make an offer to the Mexican government. Zimmermann proposed that Mexico ally itself with Germany in the event of war between Germany and the United States. In return, Mexico would regain its “lost territory in Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona” after the war. Germany hoped Mexico would tie down the American forces and prevent them from being sent to Europe. British intelligence intercepted the **Zimmermann telegram**. Shortly afterward, it was leaked to American newspapers. Furious, many Americans now concluded war with Germany was necessary.

Then, on February 1, 1917, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. German military leaders believed that they could starve Britain into submission in four to six months if their U-boats could return to a more aggressive approach of sinking all ships on sight. Although they recognized that their actions might draw the United States into the war, the Germans did not believe that the Americans could raise an army and transport it to Europe in time to prevent the Allies from collapsing.

Between February 3 and March 21, German U-boats sank six American merchant ships without warning. Finally roused to action,



**Student Web Activity** Visit the *American Vision: Modern Times* Web site at [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Student Web Activities—Chapter 6** for an activity on World War I.



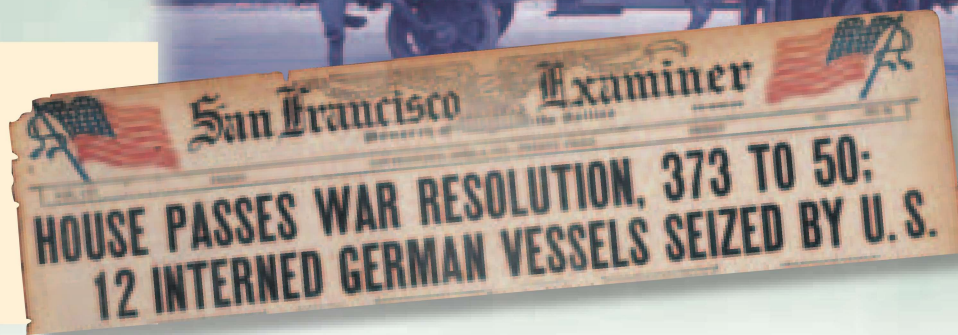
*“The world must be made safe for democracy.”*

—Woodrow Wilson, April 1917



### **Picturing History**

**Americans Go to War** Congress voted heavily in favor of entering the European war. Here, excited Americans wave from an Army recruitment truck. **What events pushed the United States to finally declare war?**



President Wilson appeared before a special session of Congress on April 2, 1917, to ask for a declaration of war against Germany.

“It is a fearful thing to lead this great peaceful people into war. . . . But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things which we have always carried nearest to our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations. . . .”

—quoted in the Congressional Record, 1917

After a spirited debate, the Senate passed the resolution on April 4 by a vote of 82 to 6. The House concurred 373 to 50 on April 6, and Wilson signed the resolution. America was now at war.

**Reading Check Summarizing** How did Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare lead to American entry into World War I?

### **HISTORY Online Study Central**

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to [tav.mt.glencoe.com](http://tav.mt.glencoe.com) and click on **Study Central**.

## **SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT**

### **Checking for Understanding**

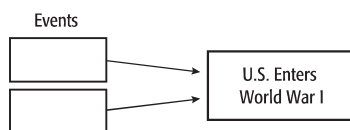
- Vocabulary** Define: stability, guerrilla, nationalism, emphasis, self-determination, propaganda, erode, contraband, U-boat.
- People and Terms** Identify: Pancho Villa, Franz Ferdinand, Allies, Central Powers, Sussex Pledge, Zimmermann telegram.
- Name** the two alliances that Europe was divided into at the start of World War I.

### **Reviewing Big Ideas**

- Concluding** Why did most of President Wilson's cabinet members support the British?

### **Critical Thinking**

- Historical Analysis Synthesizing** How did European nationalism contribute to the outbreak of World War I?  
**CA HIT**
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to identify the events that led the United States to enter World War I.



### **Analyzing Visuals**

- Analyzing Time Lines** Examine the time line on page 370. How does the order in which countries declared war reflect the European alliance system?

### **Writing About History**

- Expository Writing** Imagine that you are a Mexican citizen living in Mexico between 1914 and 1917. Write a script for a radio newscast in which you discuss American actions in Mexico. Include specific events and information.

**CA 11WA2.4a**