



# MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

## World War I Primary Resources



John Singer Sargeant, *Gassed*, 1918

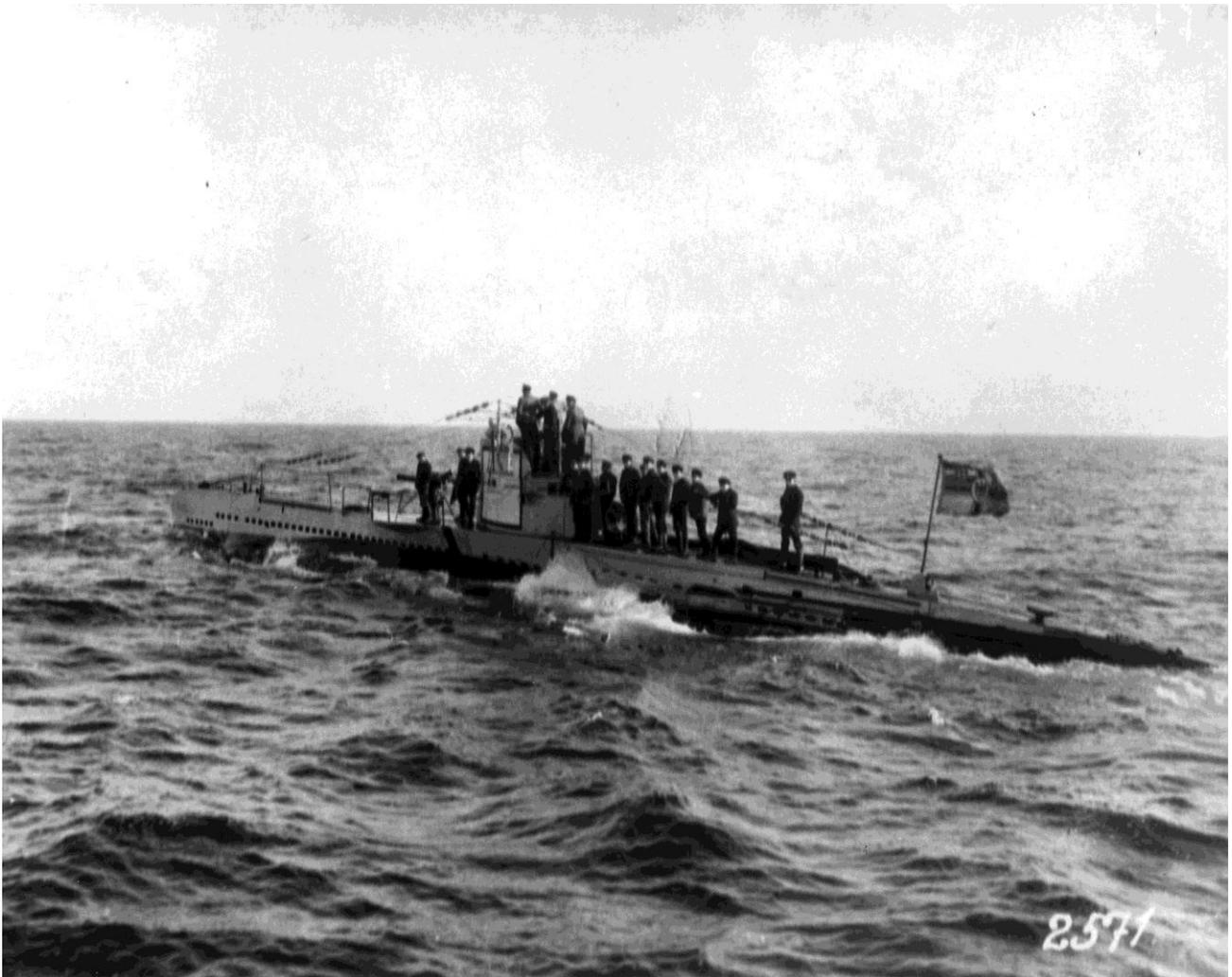
### Background

World War I was triggered by an act of terrorism. On June 28, 1914, while visiting Serbia, Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by Gavrilo Princep, a man with ties to Yugoslav nationalists. While this act of terrorism served as the catalyst for war, in reality, the tensions leading up to World War I had been building for decades. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European nations hoped to maintain a balance of power through a system of alliances. Unfortunately, rather than ensure political equilibrium and peace, these alliances ended up dragging many nations into war. Both the Allies and the Central Powers expected a fast, decisive war. Instead, due to the changing face of modern war, the conflict degenerated into a bloody stalemate.

Committed to a policy of isolationism, many Americans wanted no part of the war in Europe. Despite initial American neutrality however, anti-German sentiment grew in the United States with the sinking of the passenger ship *RMS Lusitania* by German U-Boats on May 7, 1915. The publication of the Zimmerman Note in January 1917 caused further tensions, and a month later the American public was further incensed when Germany resumed a campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare against ships in the Atlantic Ocean. With the fall of tsarist Russia in March 1917, the last impediment to American involvement in a war to make the world “safe for democracy” was removed. On April 6, 1917, despite the fact that he had been re-elected under the slogan “He kept us out of war,” President Wilson led the United States into World War I.

American manpower and supplies turned the conflict decisively in favor of the Allied powers. On November 11, 1918, Germany signed an armistice, effectively ending World War I. As President Wilson took his place at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, America’s role as a superpower and arbiter in international affairs had begun.

**Primary Document #1**  
**German Submarine - c. 1917**



## **Background Information: Primary Document #1**

During World War I, airplanes, mustard gas, machine guns, tanks, and submarines revolutionized warfare. Each new technology had a unique role to play on the battlefield, and German submarines or “U-Boats” were widely regarded as the terror of the seas during World War I.

Although U-Boats were clearly able to sink enemy military vessels, as the war went on, sinking Allied or Neutral commercial vessels became their primary objective. By targeting the supply lines and economies of the Allied nations, Germany hoped to be able to cripple the Allies and win the war.

The Atlantic and the waters around Great Britain soon became a warzone. The German Embassy in the United States warned those attempting to cross the Atlantic that any vessel flying the British flag or the flag of one of its Allies was liable to be destroyed by a German U-Boat. Despite this threat, trade and travel across the Atlantic Ocean continued.

On May 7, 1915, a German U-Boat sank the passenger liner *RMS Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland – an act that resulted in the deaths of 1,189 passengers. 129 of those killed were Americans. International public opinion turned against Germany in the aftermath of this event. Anxious to avoid war, the United States called on Germany to abandon its policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. For a time, Germany did abandon an overt policy of sinking neutral vessels. In 1917 however, Germany returned to this policy – providing the American public with one more reason to enter the war on the side of the Allied Powers.

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

1. When did the United States become involved in World War I? Why?
2. Describe the circumstances behind the sinking of the *Lusitania*. How did this affect people in the United States?
3. Should the *Lusitania* have been targeted by a German U-Boat? Why or why not?
4. How would you rate the effectiveness of Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare? Did it accomplish what it was intended to accomplish? Cite evidence to support your claim.
5. What inferences about life on a U-Boat can you make based on the photograph? How do you think service aboard a World War I U-Boat compares to service on a submarine today?

**Primary Document #2**

**New Recruits, c. 1917**



## **Background Information: Primary Document #2**

Although the United States entered World War I in 1917, few American troops arrived in France before 1918. This delay was largely due to the fact that the American military was not prepared for war and had to be built up.

As the call to enlist went out, young men from around the country joined the military in droves. The U.S. Army quickly ballooned from an army of 190,000, to an army of nearly 5 million.

This photograph depicts a group of recruits headed to a military base for basic training. The mood is celebratory, and oral histories of the period indicate that many young recruits expected World War I to be an adventure. The experience of trench warfare would temper this perspective.

African Americans are conspicuously absent from this photograph.

Approximately 371,000 African Americans served in the U.S. military during World War I in segregated units commanded by white officers. The majority of African American soldiers were relegated to support duties behind the lines, but several African American regiments placed under French command and did participate in the fighting.

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

1. What is Patriotism? What is Nationalism? Do you think Patriotism and Nationalism were important factors in World War I? Why or why not?
2. What inferences can you make about the men in the photograph? Do they support the war effort? Cite evidence to support your claims.
3. Based on this photograph, what judgments would you make about the support of the war effort in the United States?
4. What conclusions can you draw based on the attire of the men in the photograph? Are they professional soldiers?
5. How would a group of military recruits today differ from the group shown in this picture?

Primary Document #3

Letter from Harry Kendall to his mother, November 1917

(23)

151-170 B'n.  
American Expeditionary  
Forces. Via New York

MACARTHUR  
ARCHIVES

Dearest Mother,

This is just  
to let you know that I  
have arrived safely on  
the other side.  
I am perfectly well and  
enjoying good health.

Your devoted son  
Harry C. Kendall

Received Saturday, November  
17<sup>th</sup> 1917

### **Background Information: Primary Document #3**

When the United States entered World War I, most of the young men who joined the military had never traveled out of their city or state. Many of them would end up serving in Europe, thousands of miles away from their homes. Despite being separated by such great distances, families and friends tried to stay in touch with each other.

The text of this letter from Harry Kendall to his mother reads:

“Dearest Mother, This is just to let you know that I have arrived safely on the other side. I am perfectly well and enjoying good health. Your devoted son, Henry C. Kendall.”

The letter was received by Mrs. Kendall who wrote at the bottom:

“Received Saturday, November 17, 1917.”

Today U.S. soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines are stationed all around the world. Many of these men and women are able to stay in contact with their families and friends through email, social networking sites, and cell phones. In World War I however, most had to rely on letters – which could take weeks to arrive. Even with the telegraph, communication for these men and women was far from instant.

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

1. Who is the author of the letter? What do you think his role is during World War I?
2. What do you think the author means when he says he has arrived safely “on the other side?” Where is the “other side?” Offer evidence to support your claim.
3. To whom is the author writing the letter? Why do you think the author wrote such a brief letter home?
4. The stamp at the top of the page was added years later and indicates that the letter is preserved in the MacArthur Memorial Archives. Why would a letter like this be preserved? What can it tell historians about people who lived during World War I?
5. Has communication during wartime changed since World War I? How do soldiers communicate with their families today? Cite examples to support your claims.

Primary Document #4

"Nurses," The Illustrated War News, July 25, 1917

THE ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS. JULY 25, 1917. EACH NUMBER COMPLETE IN ITSELF. New Series. — PART 59

5762  
175  
2  
14.8

8d

# THE ILLUSTRATED WAR NEWS



ON THE WESTERN FRONT:  
NURSES, WITH BILLY, THEIR PET,  
WAITING TO SEE THE QUEEN.

MICARTYNE ARCHIVES

RF

PRICE EIGHTPENCE: BY INLAND POST, 8d. PUBLISHED BY "THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS," AT 172, STRAND, LONDON, W.C. 2  
REGISTERED AS A NEWSPAPER FOR TRANSMISSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND TO CANADA AND NEWFOUNDLAND BY MAGAZINE POST.

## **Background Information Primary Document #4**

During World War I, record numbers of American women joined the civilian workforce or served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps. This was a relatively unprecedented development because prior to the war, few women had worked outside the home.

This was not just an American phenomenon however. Women in all of the Allied and Central powers played a role in the war effort by serving as nurses or civilian workers. Many governments quickly realized that women could be a valuable part of the workforce because for every woman working, a man was freed for military service. It was also very clear that a country could not effectively mobilize to win the war without the help of women workers.

As a result, women were inundated with advertising campaigns that encouraged them to participate in the war effort. Most of the poster art of the World War I period made the case that working outside of the home or joining the Nurse Corps was a glamorous and noble pursuit. Although this advertising was encouraging women to take on non-traditional roles, it was a message fully supported by society and governments. Ironically, when the war ended, women were encouraged to leave their jobs and the percentage of women workers fell drastically.

This magazine cover depicts three British nurses. Despite the fact that nursing was often dangerous – especially close to the front lines – most photographs of female nurses tend to ignore the trauma of the battlefield in favor of highlighting the femininity of the nurses.

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

1. Who were the major Allied powers during World War I? The Central Powers? Which Allied nation published this magazine?
2. What roles did women play during World War I? What inferences can you make about the importance of women during the war effort based on this photograph?
3. Who was the intended audience for this magazine? Why do you think news about the war was distributed in a magazine format?
4. Compare and contrast the distribution of information during World War I and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Do you think the public is better informed or less informed about wars today than they were during World War I? Cite examples.
5. How has the role of women changed since World War I?

**Primary Document #5**

**Casualty Report, *The New York Times*, March 25, 1918**

**Pershing Reports Col. MacArthur Wounded;  
Only 13 Names on the Day's Casualty List**

*Special to The New York Times.*

WASHINGTON, March 25.—The casualty list reported by General Pershing today contained the names of only thirteen men, and was even smaller than that of yesterday, which was the smallest in weeks. There were no men killed in action, and only seven wounded. The list made the total casualties of the overseas army 2,125.

The only commissioned officer in today's list was Colonel Douglas MacArthur, who was recently unofficially reported as having been gassed, and who is now officially reported as severely wounded. How he was wounded is not disclosed, and this may refer back to the gassing.

Colonel MacArthur, who was Chief of Staff of the Rainbow Division, formerly was the War Department's censor in Washington. He recently was decorated for bravery.

**SUMMARY OF CASUALTIES TO DATE.**

	Previously Reported.	Reported March 25.	Total.
<b>Deaths.</b>			
Killed in action.....	166	0	166
Killed or prisoner.....	1	0	1
Killed by accident.....	154	0	154
Died of disease.....	727	3	730
Died, other causes.....	2	0	2
Lost at sea.....	237	0	237
Suicide.....	11	0	11
Unknown causes.....	14	1	15
Died of wounds.....	40	1	41
Executed.....	1	0	1
Civilians.....	7	0	7
Gassed.....	6	0	6
<b>Total deaths.....</b>	<b>1,366</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1,371</b>
Wounded.....	687	8	695
Captured.....	22	0	22
Missing.....	37	0	37
<b>Grand total.....</b>	<b>2,112</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2,125</b>

**CASUALTIES REPORTED MARCH 25.**

The casualties reported today are:

**Died of Wounds—1.**

IRBY, JOHN T., private.

**Died of Disease—3.**

ICKENS, FLETCHER, private; pneumonia.

ATSON, TOM, private; pneumonia.

OWERY, WINTHROP S., private; rupture of liver.

**Died of Cause Unknown—1.**

RICKSON, JOSEPH E., private.

**Wounded—1.**

MacARTHUR, DOUGLAS, Colonel.

**Wounded Slightly—7.**

THOMAS, OSCAR E., Corporal.

COLLINS, EDWARD J., private, first class.

HASTINGS, JAMES M., Corporal.

LEYSHOCK, JOHN, Corporal.

TOOHEY, HENRY, private.

TRENT, CHARLIE A., private.

WIDDIS, JOSEPH B., private.

## **Background Information Primary Document #5**

When World War I started in Europe, both the Allied and the Central Powers expected a fast decisive war. Instead, the conflict quickly degenerated into a bloody stalemate. For example, in the four month Battle of the Somme in 1916, the Allies gained a mere 125 square miles of territory at the cost of 600,000 casualties. German casualties numbered 650,000.

This pattern would be repeated throughout the war, with disease also claiming countless victims. When the war ended, 35,000,000 people – military/civilian had been killed or wounded in the conflict.

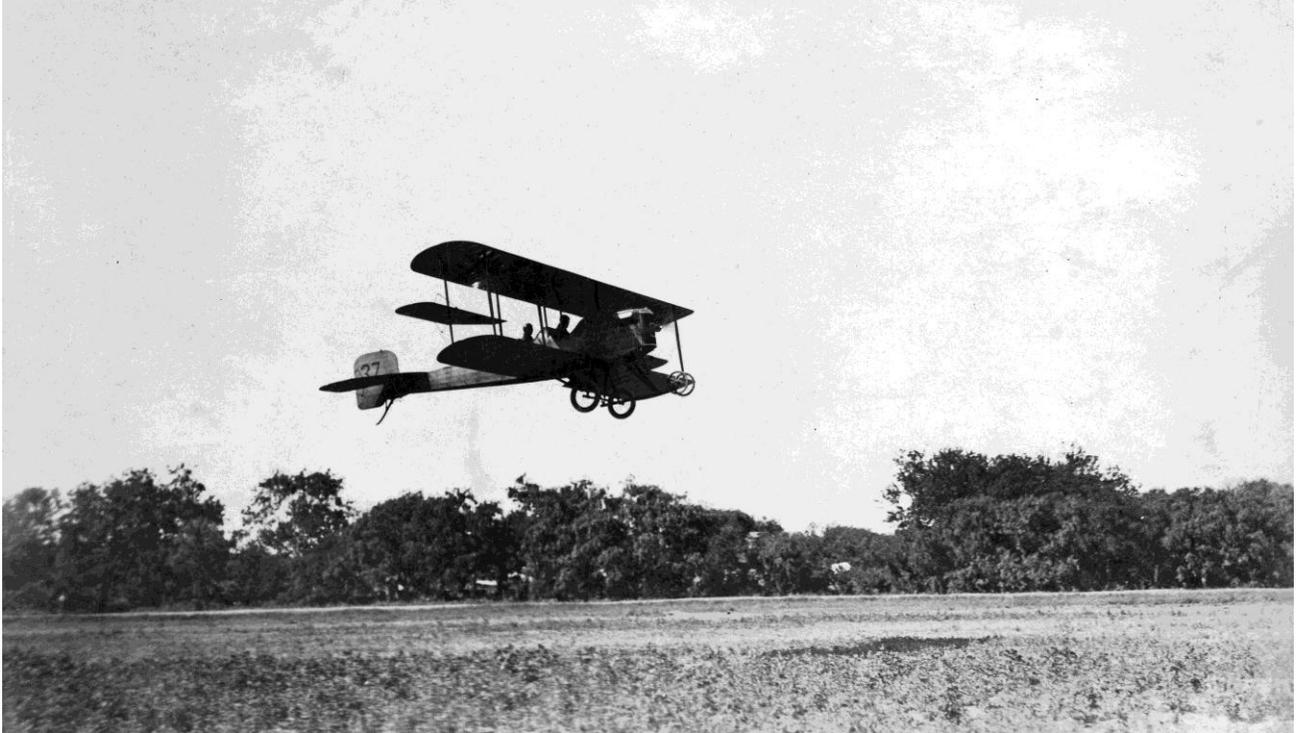
On the Homefront, people would have anxiously scanned newspapers for casualty reports. Interestingly, the report breaks down the casualties into categories like “killed in action,” “killed by accident,” “lost at sea,” “suicide,” “died of wounds,” etc.

This casualty report mentions a Col. Douglas MacArthur – the future World War II general. Caught in a mustard gas attack, MacArthur was severely injured. Mustard gas was not usually fatal, but it did incapacitate soldiers for a period of a few days to months. Soldiers caught unprotected in these attacks suffered from blindness, blisters on their skin, and respiratory problems. In fatal cases, mustard gas destroyed the mucous membranes in the lungs – causing internal bleeding.

### **Primary Source Analysis:**

1. What was the purpose of this newspaper report? Who is the intended audience?
2. What information is included in the report? Why would this information be important?
3. What does this newspaper report say about the relationship between the “homefront” and the battlefield?
4. The report states that Col. Douglas MacArthur has been injured in a mustard gas attack. What is mustard gas? What kinds of symptoms would someone have after exposure to mustard gas?
5. Do print or online sources of news list casualty reports for wars today? Why or why not?

**Primary Document #6**  
**Unidentified Airplane, c. 1918**



## **Background Information Primary Document #6**

World War I was the first war in which airplanes played a major role. At the start of the war, airplanes were mainly used for reconnaissance. It quickly became apparent however that airplanes could also play a more direct combat role.

At first, pilots simply carried pistols or rifles and attempted to shoot at enemy planes. Some pilots even carried bombs to drop on enemy positions. These efforts resulted in limited success. Eventually however, machine guns were mounted on some planes, ushering in the age of the fighter plane and making aerial combat far more deadly. As the war progressed, bombers soon joined fighter planes in the skies.

Superiority in the air remained directly related to technological superiority – meaning that the side with the fastest, most advanced airplanes tended to dominate the skies.

**Primary Source Analysis:**

1. When was the airplane invented? By whom?
2. How did the invention of the airplane change transportation?
3. Based on the photograph, what conclusions can you draw about the role of airplanes during World War I? What did airplanes do in World War I?
4. In what ways has the use of airplanes in combat changed since World War I?
5. How has the airplane changed the nature of war? Are these positive or negative changes? Cite examples to support your claims.