

THE ENTRY OF THE USA INTO THE WAR IN 1917

Task

Fill the gaps in the following account using the word list below, then answer the questions which follow.

isolationism	trade	Jutland	unrestricted	Arizona	Atlantic
50,000	neutral	Democracy	Lusitania	Wilson	hospital
German	morale	U-Boats	Zimmerman	Depression	munitions

A. Why did America join the war on the side of the allies?

- The USA had never been involved before as an ally of any European power, and had remained _____ in 1914. Many Americans were of _____ descent and approved of the policy of _____.
- The sinking of the passenger ship _____ had caused some anti-German feeling, but President _____ tried to counter this when he presented himself for re-election in 1916. Part of his campaign was based on the idea of keeping out of the war. He won the election.

1. Moral reasons

For the majority of the war, the German navy was bottled up in her northern ports. There was only one major confrontation at sea - the Battle of _____ (May 31, 1916) - and the result was indecisive. The Germans therefore used submarines (_____), firstly to sink British ships and thereby open up _____ routes for Germany, and secondly to sink American ships which were supplying Britain with essential war materials. When the USA protested, the Germans suspended this policy of _____ submarine warfare, but in 1917 they resumed the policy out of sheer desperation.

Wilson declared war on Germany shortly afterwards, stating that:

“Vessels of every kind, whatever thief flag, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning or thought of help – the vessels of friendly neutrals, even _____ ships. Since the start of the war the Germans have had spies here in America. Now she means to stir up enemies at our very doors. The world must be kept safe for _____”.

2. Political reasons

Although Wilson made the USA's entry into the war seem like a matter of conscience, you can see that he hinted at political reasons too. The German foreign secretary, _____, sent a telegram to his ambassador in Mexico which said that

“We intend to begin unrestricted submarine warfare. If there is a war with the USA, we will offer Mexico an alliance – make war on our side, and Mexico can re-conquer the lost territory of Texas, New Mexico and _____”

2. Economic reasons

There was another reason too. Despite officially being a neutral country, American business interests realised that big profits could be made by trading with Europe, and goods poured across the _____ almost from the start of the war. If Germany sank America's ships, trade with France and Britain would stop. This would mean unemployment in America. _____ could set in. Moreover, if the Allies lost the war, they would not pay back the money America had lent them.

B. How important was the role played by the USA in ending World War One?

- The Americans needed time to recruit, train and send over their armies, but within a few months they were sending over _____ men a month.
 - They had few _____ factories, tanks or aeroplanes, but their navy was quickly in use in the Atlantic.
 - American money loans were particularly useful.
 - Perhaps most importantly, they gave the allies a boost in _____ and a hope of victory in 1918.
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C. Questions

1. Is it fair to argue that the USA's entry into the war in 1917 was not as important to the Allied cause as the help that she had provided before that point? Explain your answer.
2. How did the entry of the USA contribute towards
 - (a) The launch and
 - (b) The eventual failureOf Germany's Spring Offensive?
3. Here are three reasons why America joined the war on the side of the Allies:
 - (a) Moral reasons
 - (b) Economic reasons
 - (c) Political reasonsWhich one of these was the most important? Explain your answer carefully.