

Reasons Why the U.S. Becomes Involved in WWI

1. Cultural Similarities
 - a. U.S. and Britain share a common language and ancestry

2. Germany is politically undesirable
 - a. Acceptance of monarchical rule
 - b. Prominence of militarists in German Politics
 - c. Lack of Democratic Traditions

3. Wilson wants a say in the peace process
 - a. "Peace without victory" (only a peace between equals can last)
 - b. 14 Points
 - i. No secret treaties
 - ii. Absolute freedom of the seas
 - iii. Free trade among all nations
 - iv. Arms reduction
 - v. Rights of self-determination in Europe and colonies
 - vi. League of Nations
 - c. Wilson tries to mediate early in the war, but nobody listens to him
 - d. Wilson realizes that to be taken seriously, he must go to war

4. Economic
 - a. The U.S. traded with both sides, but much more with the Allies
 - b. 1914: exported 800 million to Allies, only 170 million to Central Powers
 - c. By 1917, the U.S. had loaned over 2.25 billion to the Allies, and if they lost, they were afraid they wouldn't get paid back

<i>US Trade with Nations at war in millions of dollars</i>			
Nation	1914	1915	1916
Great Britain	\$594	\$912	\$1527
France	\$160	\$369	\$629
Italy	\$74	\$185	\$269
Germany	\$345	\$29	Less than 1

5. Propaganda
 - a. The British cut all the trans-Atlantic telegraph lines, so the U.S. only received information about the war from the British
 - b. The U.S. media began to promote negative images of the Germans

6. U.S. was naïve about war
 - a. All of the images of war (especially the movies) were glorified

7. Unrestricted Submarine warfare
 - a. German subs sink any supply ships headed toward Britain
 - b. German objective was to make the British surrender by depriving them of all supplies
 - c. Germany justified this because the British navy was blockading their ports
 - d. January 1915: Germany begins unrestricted submarine warfare
 - e. Feb. 1915: Lusitania is sunk (128 Americans dead) running guns
 - f. Sept. 1915: Germany pledges to end unrestricted warfare
 - g. March 1916: Germany sinks French passenger liner Sussex
 - h. Feb. 1917: Germany is desperate, so they renew, knowing the U.S. will join the war, but they gamble that the U.S. will arrive too late to help

8. Zimmerman Note
 - a. Telegram intercepted by Britain, states that if Mexico attacks the U.S., Germany will make sure they get back the Southwest after the war

9. Britain secretly tells the U.S. that they are going to lose
 - a. Jan. 1917: Britain admits they are running out of men and money, and they are sure they are going to lose the war

10. Make the world "safe for democracy"
 - a. Wilson's progressive idealism
 - b. Wilson is afraid that the democracies of Europe will be defeated

Entry of the United States into WWI

Isolationism

The United States originally pursued a policy of [isolationism](#), avoiding conflict while trying to broker a peace. This resulted in increased tensions with Berlin and London. When a German U-boat sank the British liner [Lusitania](#) in 1915, with 128 Americans aboard, U.S. President [Woodrow Wilson](#) vowed, "America is too proud to fight" and demanded an end to attacks on passenger ships. Germany complied. Wilson unsuccessfully tried to mediate a settlement. He repeatedly warned the U.S. would not tolerate unrestricted submarine warfare, in violation of international law and U.S. ideas of human rights.

Making the case

In January 1917, after the Navy pressured the Kaiser, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare. Britain's secret Royal Navy [cryptanalytic](#) group, [Room 40](#), had broken the German diplomatic code. They intercepted a proposal from Berlin (the [Zimmermann Telegram](#)) to Mexico to join the war as Germany's ally against the United States, should the U.S. join. The proposal suggested, if the U.S. were to enter the war, Mexico should declare war against the United States and enlist Japan as an ally. This would prevent the United States from joining the Allies and deploying troops to Europe, and would give Germany more time for their unrestricted submarine warfare program to strangle Britain's vital war supplies. In return, the Germans would promise Mexico support in reclaiming Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona.

U.S. declaration of war on Germany

After the British revealed the telegram to the United States, President Wilson, who had won reelection on his keeping the country out of the war, released the captured telegram as a way of building support for U.S. entry into the war. He had previously claimed neutrality, while calling for the arming of U.S. merchant ships delivering munitions to combatant Britain and quietly supporting the British blockading of German ports and mining of international waters, preventing the shipment of food from America and elsewhere to combatant Germany. After submarines sank seven U.S. merchant ships and the publication of the [Zimmerman telegram](#), Wilson called for war on Germany, which the [U.S. Congress](#) declared on 6 April 1917.

Crucial to U.S. participation was the massive domestic propaganda campaign executed by the [Committee on Public Information](#) overseen by [George Creel](#). The campaign included tens of thousands of government-selected community leaders giving brief carefully scripted pro-war speeches at thousands of public gatherings. Along with other branches of government and private vigilante groups like the [American Protective League](#), it also included the general repression and harassment of people either opposed to American entry into the war or of German heritage.