



UNITED STATES ARMY
CMH
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY



History and Heritage

Module C – The Meuse-Argonne Offensive

American Imperialism and the First World War; aka, “The Great War”

1865 - 1918



Lesson Introduction



Tasks:

- Acquire basic knowledge of the US Army's history
- Identify Army Values highlighted during the First World War
- Develop a sense of pride and heritage as members of the US Army

Conditions

- **Timeframe:** 20-minute block of instruction
- **Location:** Classroom environment
- **Equipment:** Projectors, Speaker System, Slide Deck, and Videos
- **Student Resources:**
 - Note taking materials
 - Water source
 - Sensory Systems (Eyes and Ears)
 - Cognitive Functions (Brain)
 - Response Mechanism (Voice)





Terminal Learning Objective



Standards

Pre-Requisite Reading:

- Trainees read pages 1-14 of *“Army History and Heritage, CH-3”*

Key learning points:

- What were the Army’s concerns prior to World War I
- What event triggered World War I
- What led to American involvement in World War I
- How the “Lost Battalion” influenced the Meuse-Argonne Offensive
- How the Meuse-Argonne Offensive influenced World War I
- How the highlighted individuals displayed Army Values

Lesson validation:

- Verify knowledge through checks on learning





The Army Values



Respect

Definition: Treat people as they should be treated. This is the same as do unto others as you would have done to you.

Why is Respect important?

Due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others; admiration due to ability, quality, or achievement is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people and for them to appreciate us in-kind.

>> Remember: the Army Values transcend circumstance <<





Manifest Destiny



After the Civil War ended, the Army focused on **Reconstruction** and **Security of the Frontier**

The concept of “Manifest Destiny” soon drove American Imperialism

Immigration and industrialization boomed

- New York City was “The Golden Door” for European immigrants
- California’s “Angel Island” for Asian immigrants

The “American West” was being tamed

- Indian Wars and “Buffalo Soldiers”
- “Boomers and Sooners” land rushes
- Gold and Oil Rushes
- The “Oregon Trail”
- Trans-American Railroads



Art inspired by Manifest Destiny





European Powder Keg



In the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, and new reality of “Total War”, the late-19th Century Europe was one of ***Defensive Alliances***

1839: First Treaty of London

- Backed sovereignty of Belgium
- Backed sovereignty of Luxembourg

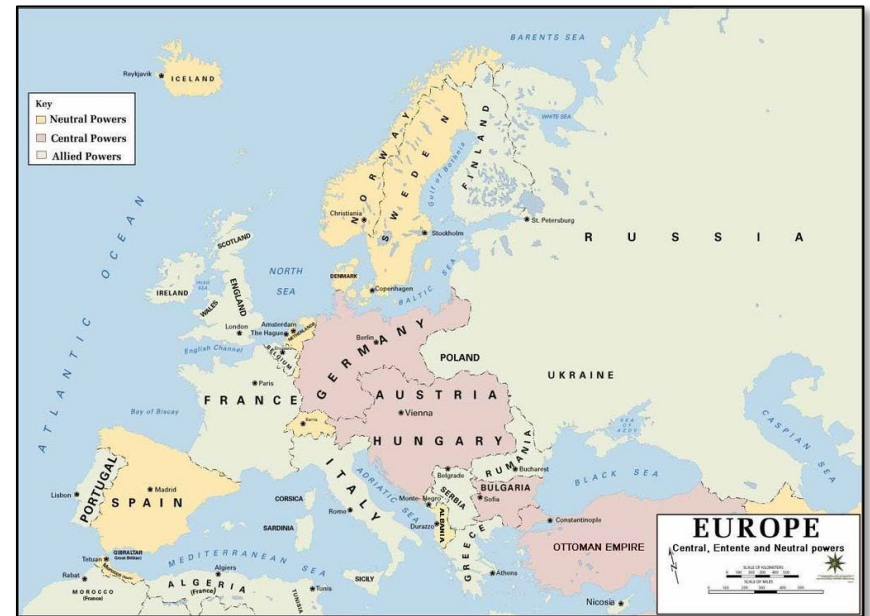
1871: German Empire formed

1879-83: German Defense Treaties

- Austro-German Treaty
- Triple Alliance
- Austro-Romanian Alliance

1894: Franco-Russian Alliance

- French and Russian Defensive Pact
- Response to German dominance



Europe, 1914





What Caused World War One



“One day the great *European War* will come out of some damned foolish thing in the *Balkans*.” – Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, 1888

On 28 June 1914, tensions broke in Serbia:

- **Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand** and his wife were shot and killed by Gavrilo Princip
- Austria-Hungary delivered an impossible ultimatum to the Serbian government
- Serbia tried arbitration to resolve the dispute
- **Austria-Hungary declared war** against Serbia on 28 July 1914



Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand





Tactics and Technology



Typified by **Trench Warfare**, machine guns, and barbed wire



Chemical Weapons and protection became widespread



Late-war use of **Tanks** to replace cavalry charges and break stalemates



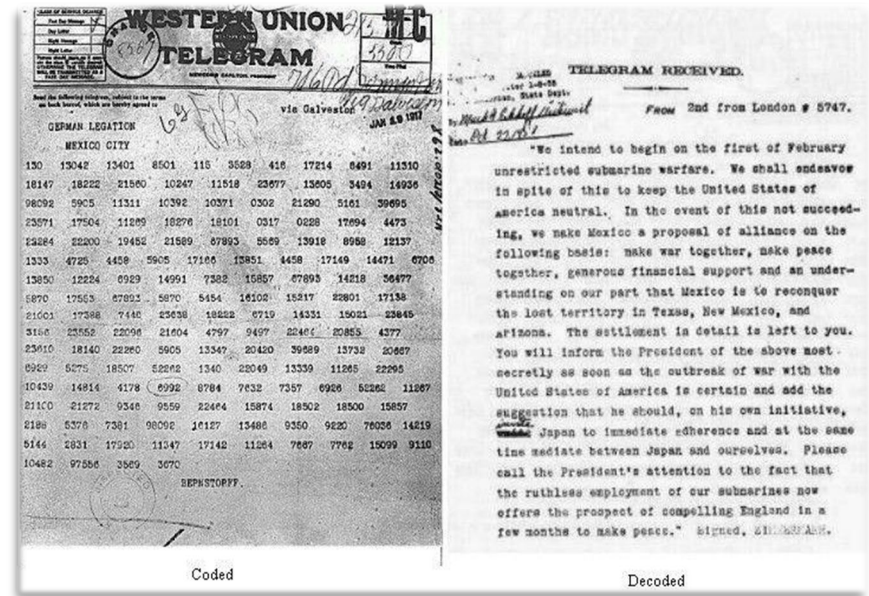
Planes were used for reconnaissance and led to "Aces" becoming Heroes





Why Did We Enter World War One?

- In 1917, the British intercepted the “**Zimmerman Telegram**” which proposed a German-Mexican alliance if the US joined the war
- Britain informed the US; the **US declared war on Germany**
- Mobilization was slow due to training and a small war industry
- As US forces arrived in France, allied morale rose dramatically
- Plans were then made to turn the balance of power into allied favor



The Zimmerman Telegram

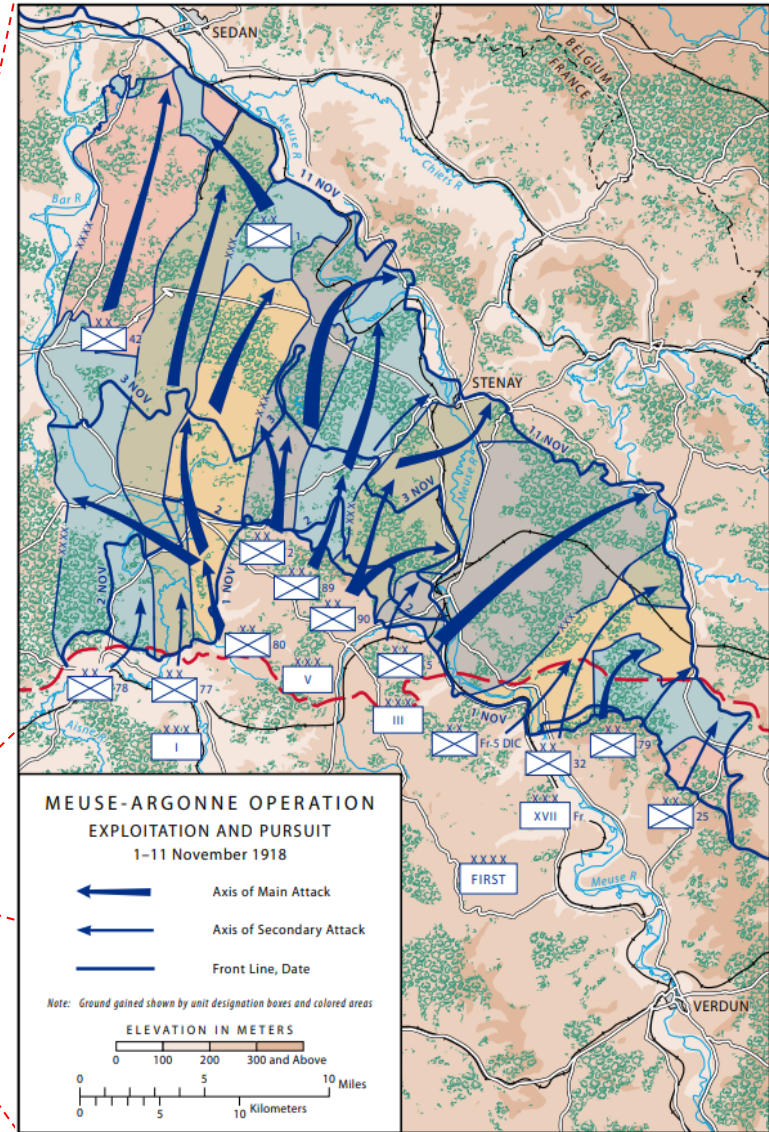




Meuse-Argonne Offensive



- Over 2-Million American, French and British troops assembled in the Argonne Forest
- On 26 September 1918, the allies began the **Meuse-Argonne Offensive**
- The attack stalled shortly after it began
- Nine companies under Major Charles Whittlesey penetrated the German line
- His force of 550 men became surrounded
- It was called the “**Lost Battalion**”





VIDEO CLIP



- 1c. Module C – the Lost Battalion Video

(10:00 length)

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgNxijbDIJM>

(12:30 length)





Meuse-Argonne Outcome



The “Lost Battalion” *disrupted the German line for six days*

- English, French, and American forces reinitiated the offensive; forced the Germans back across the border
- News of allied success sparked *public unrest in Germany*
- German leadership sued for peace
- At 1100 on 11 November 1918, the Armistice was signed
- “The Great War” was now over



The Armistice of Compiègne





Army Values - Respect



MAJ Charles Whittlesey

- Lawyer from New York
- Assigned to the 77th Division
- Commanded the “Lost Battalion” during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive

The Major received his amended orders to “advance without regard to flanks or losses”.

What may seem to be irrational to ordinary people was well understood by the Major. If the war was to end, his orders had to be followed, despite his mixed feelings.

He respected the chain of command and performed his duty. Later, because of his success, LTC Whittlesey was awarded the Medal of Honor on December 24, 1918.

Charles Whittlesey was not one to acknowledge the accolades of others. Instead, he focused attention toward honoring his enlisted Soldiers and advocating peace.

- Respect





Army Values - Respect



Cher Ami

- Carrier Pigeon with MAJ Whittlesey's force
- Delivered a critical message under heavy fire
- Saved over 200 men in Meuse-Argonne

The Major wrote a quick message which was strapped to the pigeon's leg.

"We are along the road parallel 276.4 Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven's sake stop it"

Twenty-two minutes later, Cher Ami arrived at Mobile Pigeon Loft #9. He was missing an eye, a leg, and had been shot through the breast and wing.

On June 13th, 1919, Cher Ami died at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. Cher Ami's body was preserved and resides at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. It is difficult to say how many families owe their existence to the courage and self-sacrifice of one brave bird.

- Respect





Check on Learning



- What were the Army's concerns prior to the First World War?
- What triggered World War I?
- What led to American involvement in First World War?
- How did the Meuse-Argonne offensive influence the outcome of the war?
- What is the importance of Respect?



TIMELINE

Spanish-American War (1898)

- 25 April: United States declares war on Spain
- 1 May: Battle of Manila Bay
- 1 July: Battle of San Juan Heights
- 16 July: Spanish forces surrender at Santiago de Cuba
- 13 August: American forces occupy Manila, Philippines
- 10 December: Treaty of Paris signed, ending the war

Philippine War (1899–1902)

Root Reforms (1899–1917)

Boxer Rebellion (13 July–15 August 1900)

Maj. Walter Reed confirms that mosquitos transmit yellow fever (1901)

Construction of the Panama Canal (1907–1914)

Wright brothers test flights at Fort Myer, Virginia (1908–1909)

Joint U.S. force occupies Veracruz, Mexico, to enforce arms embargo (1914)

Mexican Punitive Expedition (14 March 1916–7 February 1917)

World War I (1917–1918)

1917

- 6 April: United States declares war on Germany
- 26 June: 1st Division of the AEF lands in France

1918

- 28–30 May: Battle of Cantigny
- 15 July–6 August: 2nd Battle of the Marne
- 12–16 September: Battle of Saint-Mihiel
- 26 September: Start of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive
- 11 November: Armistice

Bonus March (1932)

- 28 July: President Herbert C. Hoover calls on Army to disperse Bonus Marchers in Washington

Civilian Conservation Corps established (1933)

World War II (1939)

- 1 September: Nazi Germany invades Poland, starting World War II

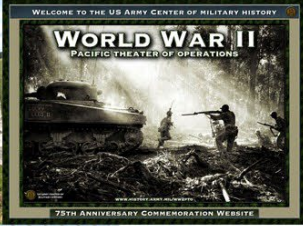
Period Covered



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“History Starts Here”

