



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

LESSON

2

GRADES 8–11

This curriculum is aligned with
the New York State
P–12 Learning Standards.



The New York State Museum is a program of
The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Office of Cultural Education

Inquiry: NEW YORK IN THE GREAT WAR



Exhibition Areas: American Entry into the War | “Over Here”: The Home Front



Private T. P. Loughlin of the 69th Regiment, New York National Guard,
(165th Infantry) bidding his family farewell.

Courtesy of the National Archives

LESSON

2

OBJECTIVES

- ✦ Students will be able to explain the concept of total war and how it affects the whole population.
- ✦ Students will be able to analyze New York State's distinct contribution to the war effort.
- ✦ Students will evaluate the importance of civic acceptance and participation to the effort in total war and why some people/groups may reject the sacrifices demanded of them.

Inquiry: NEW YORK IN THE GREAT WAR



Exhibition Areas: American Entry into the War | “Over Here”: The Home Front

RATIONALE

During a time of total war, the entire population is required to participate in the war effort if a nation-state is to succeed or survive. Thus it is important for students to be able to identify what sacrifices are being made, and at what cost. The lesson, *New York in the Great War*, allows students to explore the sacrifices being made in their home state, which proved to be one of the many factors that led to an Allied Victory.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

New York State and its citizens played a critical role in America's efforts during World War I both on the battlefield and on the home front, through industrial production as well as civic participation and debate. While the United States Government remained officially neutral when World War I broke out in August 1914, thousands of American citizens chose to serve abroad with foreign armies. Many immigrants left New York State to defend their ethnic homelands in Europe on both sides of the conflict, for both the **Allied** and **Central Powers**. British recruitment of Americans was particularly high, as strong cultural ties existed between the United States and the United Kingdom as well as with other British dominion territories, such as Canada. As many as 35,000 members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force listed their place of birth as the United States. With Congress' declaration of war, the United States sought to expand its armed forces from a peacetime level of less than 200,000 to 4 million soldiers. In total, more than 500,000 New Yorkers responded to the nation's call to arms.

New York's non-combatant citizens plunged into the war effort at home as well. As men joined the military, women joined the industrial and agricultural labor force as never before. Charitable and relief organizations, such as the **American Red Cross** and the Young Men's Christian Association (**YMCA**), saw rapid growth and unprecedented civic participation as people helped one another. Across New York, industries shifted to the production of war materials. Many private companies produced much needed materials for the war, such as **Remington Arms** in Illion, Savage Arms in Utica, Lackawanna Steel and Curtiss Aeroplane Company in Erie County, **Bausch and Lomb** and **Eastman Kodak** in Rochester, **General Electric** in Schenectady, and **Alcoa's** plant in Massena. By the end of the conflict, New York State held the largest number of defense contracts compared to any other state in the nation. Many of New York City's meatpacking plants processed and canned meats for use by American troops. Food production was devastated in Europe, and American foods were increasingly shipped to our own troops and abroad to our allies. Domestic food shortages and rising food prices threatened the poor and compelled all to make do with less. To help combat this, thousands of New Yorkers planted **war gardens** across the state. Even in the United States, which had become the breadbasket of the **Allied** cause, starvation threatened poor families as the cost of basic food items skyrocketed.



LEARNING STANDARDS



New York State Learning Standards: <http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-p-12-common-core-learning-standards-for-english-language-arts-and-literacy>

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

NYS K-12 Social Studies Framework: <https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-k-12-social-studies-framework>

8.4 WORLD WAR I AND THE ROARING TWENTIES:

Various diplomatic, economic, and ideological factors contributed to the United States decision to enter World War I. Involvement in the war significantly altered the lives of Americans. Postwar America was characterized by economic prosperity, technological innovations, and changes in the workplace. (Standards: 1, 2, 4; Themes: SOC, GOV, ECO, TECH)

8.4b International, economic, and military developments swayed opinion in favor of the United States siding with the Allies and entering World War I. Domestic responses to World War I limited civil liberties within the United States.

11.6 THE RISE OF AMERICAN POWER (1890–1920):

Numerous factors contributed to the rise of the United States as a world power. Debates over the United States' role in world affairs increased in response to overseas expansion and involvement in World War I. United States participation in the war had important effects on American society. (Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4; Themes: GEO, SOC, GOV, ECO)

11.6b While the United States attempted to follow its traditional policy of neutrality at the beginning of World War I, the nation eventually became involved in the war. President Woodrow Wilson led the nation into war with the hope of reforming the international order through his Fourteen Points.

11.6c World War I had important social, political, and economic effects on American society.



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WARM-UP:

Introduce the concept of **total war**, whereby nearly every aspect of a society's industry and population are engaged at some level towards military victory. Then lead an open-ended discussion on what the term **self-sacrifice** can mean, and why many people throughout history stressed the importance of this concept, especially in times of conflict. We also suggest that the class discuss ways in which we sacrifice, especially for those we love, today.

GUIDED INSTRUCTION:

Visit this exhibition gallery via field trip or access our accompanying online exhibition (www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibitions/WWI) in a classroom setting, focusing especially on the Exhibition Areas: *American Entry into the War* and *"Over Here": The Home Front*. Introduce students to the areas that they will be exploring, especially if visiting online. Then provide one example that the class does together, answering one of the questions in the independent practice.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE:

Ask students to search the exhibition (within the gallery or independently online) and find specific examples of the following:

- 1) Ways New Yorkers contributed towards Allied victory in the First World War, both before and after America entered the conflict.
- 2) Examples where citizens reacted against such sacrifices.
- 3) Ways that New York's industry, commerce, and high population impacted the war effort.
- 4) The importance of producing food during this conflict.

ADVANCED PRACTICE:

Have students create a campaign in which they encourage personal sacrifice about a current or past event.

OR

Ask students to read the following quote and write a short essay, providing examples of how American citizens might make varying personal sacrifices on behalf of their nation in times of war, connecting it to their own ideas of personal sacrifice:

"New York's pride is in the pride of things done. Her leadership is no more due to her great wealth or her large population than to the patriotism of her citizens and the uses to which her wealth is put. In every war in which this country has engaged, she has shown a spirit of sacrifice that has made her preeminent among the States."

~Gov. Charles S. Whitman, April 6, 1918

ASSESSMENT:

Teachers will evaluate the students on their responses to following criteria:

- Why did New York's citizens make personal sacrifices towards the war effort?
- Why was New York State's industry and infrastructure important during the war?
- Why was food important for the war effort?
- What effect does the self-sacrifice of individuals have upon a community?
- Why might some groups or individuals not support the sacrifices being asked?