

# Inquiry: **AFTERMATH AND EFFECTS OF WWI**



Exhibition Areas:  
"Over There" | The End of the War | Legacy of WWI



EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

## LESSON

5

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



369th Infantry Regiment Homecoming Parade

Courtesy of the National Archives

# LESSON

5

## OBJECTIVES

- ✦ Students will be able to analyze short and long term results of World War I.

# Inquiry: AFTERMATH AND EFFECTS OF WWI



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## RATIONALE

World War I was a turning point in history; the results can still be seen and felt today. This was especially relevant as our military was thrust into a situation, with new technology and tactics, in which it had to adapt or perish, and we confronted and influenced other groups. Compounded on this was the lack of government control over the transition from war to peace, social impact upon political and racial groups, and the unbalanced way in which groups or individuals were honored and rewarded. This lesson, ***Aftermath and Effects of WWI***, brings light to the good and bad of the United States’ demobilization process and seeks to remember the sacrifices made by those impacted by the war.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If the United States was ill equipped for war in 1917, it was even less prepared for peace after the Allies and Germany signed an armistice on **November 11, 1918**. No mechanism was established for the demobilization of millions of men now in military service, for the care of the wounded, or the difficulties of reintegrating these men into civilian life. The administrative machinery created to organize the war effort was quickly disbanded. As troop ships arrived in New York Harbor, throngs of cheering citizens along the parade routes through the city welcomed the doughboys home. The joyous reception these soldiers received was often in sharp contrast to the realities of returning to civilian life. The valor and sacrifices displayed by African American troops in particular was largely forgotten or purposefully marginalized in the US. Many units composed of African American troops felt more appreciated in Europe, and consequently the introduction of jazz music there is accredited to black regimental bands touring after the war.

As demobilization commenced, leaders in New York City feared a massive influx of demobilized soldiers would be discharged and saturate the employment market. Efforts ensured that soldiers from inland communities and states were not discharged from military service in coastal port cities, but rather were returned to camps closer to their homes. Veterans’ bonuses and pensions were not sufficient for veterans unable to resume their civilian careers, and little aid was available. Colleges and technical schools were flooded with returning veterans for years following the war. New York State and the nation struggled to meet the needs of these veterans.

The worldwide legacy of World War I is substantial. Globally, more than 17 million people died, including over 7 million civilians; another 20 million were wounded. Perhaps the most significant legacy of the Great War, however, was in terms of how much the conflict left unresolved. World War I was not the “**War to End All Wars**,” and in fact laid the foundation for a larger and more deadly conflict just 20 years later. It is critically important to remember World War I today for what it left unresolved, as much as for what the conflict decided.



## 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.11-12.6:** Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

### **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.

**8.4c** New military technologies changed military strategy in World War I and resulted in an unprecedented number of casualties.

**8.4e** After World War I, the United States entered a period of economic prosperity and cultural change. This period is known as the Roaring Twenties. During this time, new opportunities for women were gained, and African Americans engaged in various efforts to distinguish themselves and celebrate their culture.

### **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)

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

### **11.7 PROSPERITY AND DEPRESSION (1920–1939):**

The 1920s and 1930s were a time of cultural and economic changes in the nation. During this period, the nation faced significant domestic challenges, including the Great Depression. (Standards: 1, 4; Themes: ID, TCC, SOC, CIV)

**11.7b** African Americans continued to struggle for social and economic equality while expanding their own thriving and unique culture. African American cultural achievements were increasingly integrated into national culture.





# LESSON

## WARM-UP:

Engage the students in an open-ended discussion about **cultural memory**—how people and societies collectively remember their common history and by what means people seek to commemorate and pay tribute to the past. The following quotes may aid in focusing the discussion on the legacy of the First World War.

*“In a great war for the right, the one great debt owed by the nation is that to the men who go to the front and pay with their bodies for the faith that is in them.”*

~ **Theodore Roosevelt**, from *The Great Adventure: Present Day Studies in American Nationalism*, 1919, page 9

*“I felt then, as I feel now, that the politicians who took us to war should have been given the guns and told to settle their differences themselves, instead of organizing nothing better than legalized mass murder.”*

~ **Harry Patch**, last surviving soldier of World War I

*“The best memorial for the likes of me would be to look after the soldiers who are still fighting for their country now, and equally importantly, for their families.”*

~ **Harry Patch**, last surviving soldier of World War I, from *The Last Fighting Tommy*, 2007

## GUIDED INSTRUCTION:

Visit this exhibition gallery via field trip or access our accompanying online exhibition ([www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibitions/WWI](http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibitions/WWI)) in a classroom setting. Students should focus especially on Exhibition Areas: **“Over There,”** ***The End of the War***, and ***Legacy of WWI***. Point out the unique form of combat which defined WWI, highlighting the use of new weapons technology, such as trenches, chemical weapons, machine guns, barbed wire, tanks, submarines and aircraft, and the increased devastation wrought by modern warfare. Note also how these new forms of warfare produced new and debilitating trauma, and what was done (or not done) to respond to the needs of returning soldiers. Additionally, investigate the impact our soldiers had on the spread of jazz, which was newly introduced to Europe at that time.

## INDEPENDENT PRACTICE:

In the exhibition, ask students to find specific examples where veterans were remembered, forgotten or marginalized; and how American life shifted back towards peacetime norms. Ask students to find examples of widespread social change after the war.

### ADVANCED PRACTICE:

Drawing off this exhibition and elsewhere, the class will divide into groups with each group researching a topic relating to legacy of the First World War. Each group will then present their research to the class and explain its relevance for today.

Suggested topics include:

- Local WWI memorials in your area
- Treatment of black veterans
- Lasting effects of WWI
- Sgt. Henry Johnson
- Sgt. William Shemin
- Introduction of jazz into Europe
- Pvt. Harry Patch
- Sgt. Alvin York
- Shell shock
- Treaty of Versailles
- Fourteen Points
- Veteran's Day
- Women's roles in war and peace
- Remembering the dead
- Art before and after WWI
- League of Nations
- Weimar Republic
- Neutrality, Pacifism and Nationalism
- New York State's diverse ethnic population

### ASSESSMENT:

Students will be assessed on their understanding of the following:

- When did the First World War end?
- Impact of the war on soldiers and society
- Impact of returning veterans upon society
- Ways of remembering and honoring the sacrifices people made
- Why and how sacrifices and people were forgotten



### TEACHER RESOURCES

World War I Centennial Commission: <http://www.worldwar1centennial.org/>

National History Day, Teaching World War I: <https://nhd.org/classroom-connection/world-war-i/>

*The Great War* on PBS: <http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/lesson.html>

National Education Association, World War I: <http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/60045.htm>

Teacher Vision World War I: <https://www.teachervision.com/world-war-1/teacher-resources/6679.html>

### NOTEWORTHY NEW YORKERS:

Sgt. Henry Johnson, New York native, Medal of Honor Recipient: <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/johnson/>

Sgt. William Shemin, New York native, Medal of Honor Recipient: <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/shemin/>