News of World War I

Background
American public opinion about World War I was largely driven by the media. In particular, after the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, the coverage helped solidify anti-German sentiment in the United States.

In early 1915, the German government warned the United States that the waters surrounding the British Isles were considered war zones and enemy merchant ships would be attacked without warning. In the days before the *Lusitania* was set to depart from New York, one such warning appeared in the *New York Times* and in other newspapers around the United States.

The Germans, believing that the British were using passenger liners to carry arms and ammunition, had begun to attack merchant and passenger ships in early 1915. The culmination of these attacks came on May 7, 1915, when the German U-20 submarine sank the British passenger ship *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland, killing nearly 1,200 passengers, including 128 Americans.

The attack on the *Lusitania* was a turning point for many Americans, who saw the sinking as a ruthless attack on innocent passengers. As well as reinforcing anti-German propaganda, news accounts of the sinking of the *Lusitania* brought the war home for the first time for many Americans—and put a more vicious face on total warfare, where no target is off limits.

**Directions:** Below are three articles that appeared in the *New York Times* just before and after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Read each article, and then answer the questions that follow.

The following advertisement was received last night by The Times and other newspapers throughout the country. . . .

Notice! Travelers intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles: that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travelers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

Imperial German Embassy, Washington, D.C., April 22, 1915

—the *New York Times*, May 1, 1915
Critical Thinking

1. After reading the article excerpts, name two ways in which the sinking of the *Lusitania* revealed changes to modern warfare.

2. Why did people ignore the warning that ran in newspapers in the days leading up to the *Lusitania* voyage?

3. How did the sinking of the *Lusitania* change the way Pinchot thought of the war?

4. In today’s world, if a warning ran such as the one in the first article, would you heed it? Why or why not?

5. Which of the three news articles stirs up the most anti-German sentiment? What kind of language does it use to shape public opinion?
The Great Migration

The Urbanization of African Americans
During World War I, Northern factories were desperate for workers. Led by Henry Ford, many companies sent agents to the South to recruit African Americans. The promises of high wages and steady work resulted in the Great Migration. Between 300,000 and 500,000 African Americans left the South and moved to Northern cities.

The Race Riots of 1919
In addition to urbanizing the African American population, the Great Migration changed the characteristics of industrial cities such as Chicago, New York, Cleveland, and Detroit. In addition to altering the racial makeup of cities, the Great Migration also resulted in overcrowding, which helped spark a series of race riots in over 20 cities across the North during the summer of 1919.

The Great Migration, 1917–1930

Caption: During World War I, thousands of African Americans began the Great Migration from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North. Many African American neighborhoods, including Harlem in New York City, developed at this time.
Directions: Answer the questions below in the space provided.

Understanding Concepts
1. Why do you think Henry Ford and others wanted to recruit workers from the South?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2. What other factors besides overcrowding might have contributed to the race riots of 1919? Consider the impact of World War I ending and thousands of American soldiers returning home from Europe.
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

3. Why do you think the population of Southern African Americans became more urbanized during the Great Migration period?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

Applying Concepts
4. What kinds of cultural changes do you think the Great Migration brought to the African American community?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

5. What do you think were some of the long-term effects of the migration of African Americans from rural Southern areas to Northern urban areas?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Wilson’s Fourteen Points Speech to Congress, January 8, 1918

Background
President Wilson first presented his Fourteen Points in a speech to Congress on January 8, 1918. When the fighting stopped on November 11, 1918, the Germans signed an armistice. Designed to prevent another war, the Fourteen Points became part of the peace negotiations held at the Palace of Versailles the following year.

The first five of the Fourteen Points dealt with eliminating the conditions that led to the war while the next eight points dealt with the right of national self-determination, or the idea that the borders of countries should be based on ethnicity and national identity to help secure peace. The last of the Fourteen Points was the most important to Wilson, but was also among the most controversial. It called for the formation of an international association to promote world peace.

While Germany agreed to all Fourteen Points, it was the Allies who had major disagreements with the plan. The major issues were territory and reparations: the British didn’t believe in complete freedom of the seas, and the British and French felt that Germany should be punished and pay severe reparations.

During the next five months, the original Fourteen Points were slowly eroded, but a peace agreement was finally signed on June 28, 1919. The final treaty punished Germany harshly—and even blamed Germany for the war.

Directions: Read the excerpt from President Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech to Congress. Then answer the questions that follow.

We have no jealousy of German greatness, and there is nothing in this program that impairs it. We grudge her no achievement or distinction of learning or of pacific enterprise such as have made her record very bright and very enviable. We do not wish to injure her or to block in any way her legitimate influence or power. We do not wish to fight her either with arms or with hostile arrangements of trade, if she is willing to associate herself with us and the other peace-loving nations of the world in covenants of justice and law and fair dealing.

We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world—the new world in which we now live—instead of a place of mastery.
World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914–1920

Critical Thinking

1. Why would Wilson’s feelings toward Germany not be popular with his French and British counterparts?

2. Rewrite this section of Wilson’s speech to reflect the attitude of the French at the time.

3. How do you think the Germans felt when the Fourteen Points they had initially agreed to changed so dramatically?

4. Was the first line of the excerpt from Wilson’s speech still true after the peace talks at Versailles? What had changed?

5. Wilson was so determined to gain support for the League of Nations that he was willing to sacrifice other parts of the Fourteen Points. Judging by the passage, what was he hoping a League of Nations would achieve?
The Red Scare, Unrest, and Civil Rights
Background

When U.S. soldiers returned home from World War I, many of them could not find jobs. Instead, they found the country’s economy turning to shambles. Some resented African Americans who had taken factory jobs to keep the war machine running. At the same time, the cost of food, clothing, and shelter skyrocketed, but wages could not keep up with costs. A large number of workers had joined labor unions and held thousands of strikes in protest. Unemployed workers rioted. Some strikes and riots turned violent. Americans feared that outside forces were trying to bring anarchy—a state of lawlessness and disorder—to the United States. They blamed the Communists and Bolsheviks, called “Reds,” who had risen to power in Russia, for sparking rebellion and chaos and trying to spread radical socialism on U.S. soil. Strikes and riots were the first steps toward revolution, they said. A “Red Scare” grew, and in June 1919 terrorists set off bombs in eight cities. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, whose house was targeted, founded an agency that became the FBI. He ordered raids on Russian and radical organizations, ignored civil liberties, and arrested thousands. Though no proof of revolution from without was ever found, hundreds of people born in other countries had been deported and Americans came to associate immigrants with radicalism and disorder.

Directions: Look at the political cartoons here and on the next page. Then answer the questions.
Analyzing Political Cartoons  Cont.

World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914–1920

“What's he been doin'?”
“Overknosin' the guiment.”

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Analyzing Political Cartoons  Cont.

World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914–1920

Critical Thinking

1. In the first cartoon, describe the person that the flag is trying to put down and out. What does the cartoonist tell you about American attitudes in this depiction?

2. In the second cartoon, compare the figure being carried away to the men with the clubs. What is ironic about him “overthrowin’ the government,” as the other men say in the caption?

3. In 1920 the Republicans came to power in the United States. What might the cartoonist be suggesting by showing a Republican (“G.O.P. Fat Boy”) shaking a puppetlike straw figure labeled “Red Scare”? 