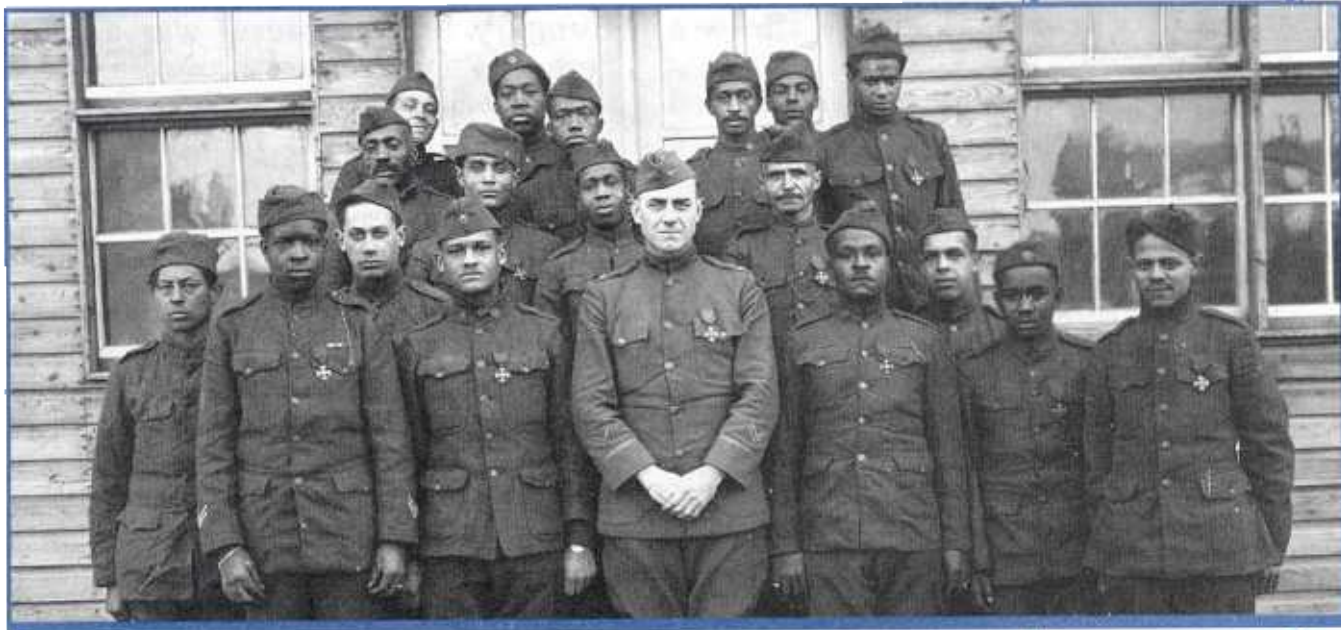


# THE UNITED STATES FIGHTS WORLD WAR I. (1914—1918)

*What part did the United States  
play in World War I?*

## CHAPTER 10



The 369th Regiment, a segregated unit, won the highest French military medal in World War I. Not until the 1950s, did the U.S. military become desegregated.

### Looking at Key Terms

- Allies • Central Powers

### Looking at Key Words

- **alliance:** a group of countries that work together
- **neutrality:** not taking sides in a war
- **submarine warfare:** using submarines to sink ships bringing supplies to the enemy
- **draftee:** a person inducted into military service

## S T U D Y

As you read the chapter, list the warring nations on each side. Describe why each country joined the war.

## H I N T

In September 1918, U.S. Army Private Marcelino Serna (SER-nah) found himself on a battlefield in France. From his trench, the young Mexican American could see the German lines. From time to time, a helmeted head would pop up. Then shots were fired in his direction.

Serna waited for the right moment to shoot back. He squeezed his trigger. That instant an enemy bullet hit his cheek. He did not let the wound stop him. He pumped more bullets toward the enemy trench. Then he threw a hand grenade.

Twenty-four German soldiers climbed out of the trench. Their arms were raised in surrender. Serna marched his captives to his unit's headquarters. For his brave action, Serna received the Distinguished Service Cross. It is one of the army's highest awards. He also received a Purple Heart for being wounded. By the end of the war, he earned another Purple Heart and a medal from the French government. Private Serna was one of almost 4 million Americans who served with honor in the armed forces in World War I.

## 1 The United States Goes to War.

*Why did the United States take part in World War I?*

In the summer of 1914, war broke out in Europe. The war lasted more than four years. Most of the fighting took place in Europe. But there also was fighting in all parts of the world. So it was called the "World War." Later, after a second, similar war had broken out, the 1914 war was called "World War I."

**The roots of the war** The largest nations of Europe had formed **alliances** that divided them into two camps. An

alliance is a group of countries that work together. In one alliance, the main members were France, Great Britain, and Russia. The members of the other were Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary was an empire that ruled much of Central Europe.

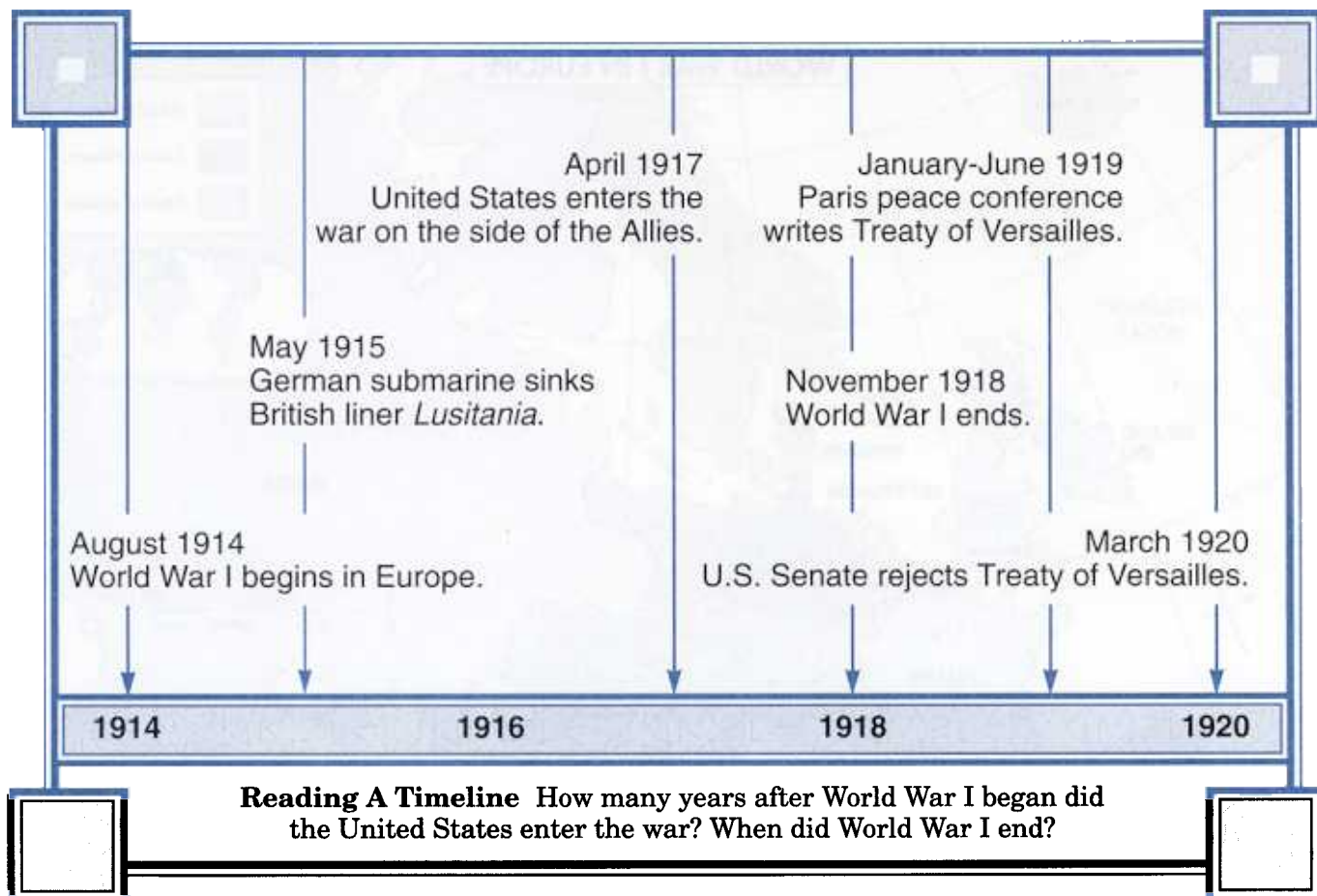
A murder in June 1914 led to the war. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot while visiting the town of Sarajevo (sah-rah-HAY-voh). The archduke was next in line to be emperor of Austria-Hungary. The murderer was a young Serb who opposed Austrian rule of Serb territory. Serbia was an ally of Russia.

Austria-Hungary demanded that Serbia be punished. They were strongly backed by their ally Germany. When Serbia refused to meet all the demands, Austria-Hungary declared war.

**Tangled alliances** Now the European system of alliances led other countries to war. Russia started to help Serbia. So Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, it also declared war on France, Russia's ally. Then Germany's armies invaded Belgium to get at France. So Great Britain, which was friendly with France and Belgium, declared war on Germany. In a few days, almost all of Europe was at war.

The two sides in the war were called the **Allies** and the **Central Powers**. The Central Powers were Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Ottoman Empire (Turkey) and Bulgaria joined the Central Powers later. The Allies at first were France, Great Britain, Russia, Belgium, and Serbia. As the war went on, they were joined by several other countries, including Italy and Japan. In 1917, the United States joined the Allies. A number of Latin American countries also joined the Allies.

**The U.S. Stays Out** At first, the United States tried to stay out of the



war. For more than two years, it succeeded. When the war broke out, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed U.S. **neutrality**. That meant that the United States would not take sides in the war. Nor would it offer help to either side. It did allow U.S. companies to sell their products to countries at war. These products included weapons. The Allies bought far more from the United States than the Central Powers did.

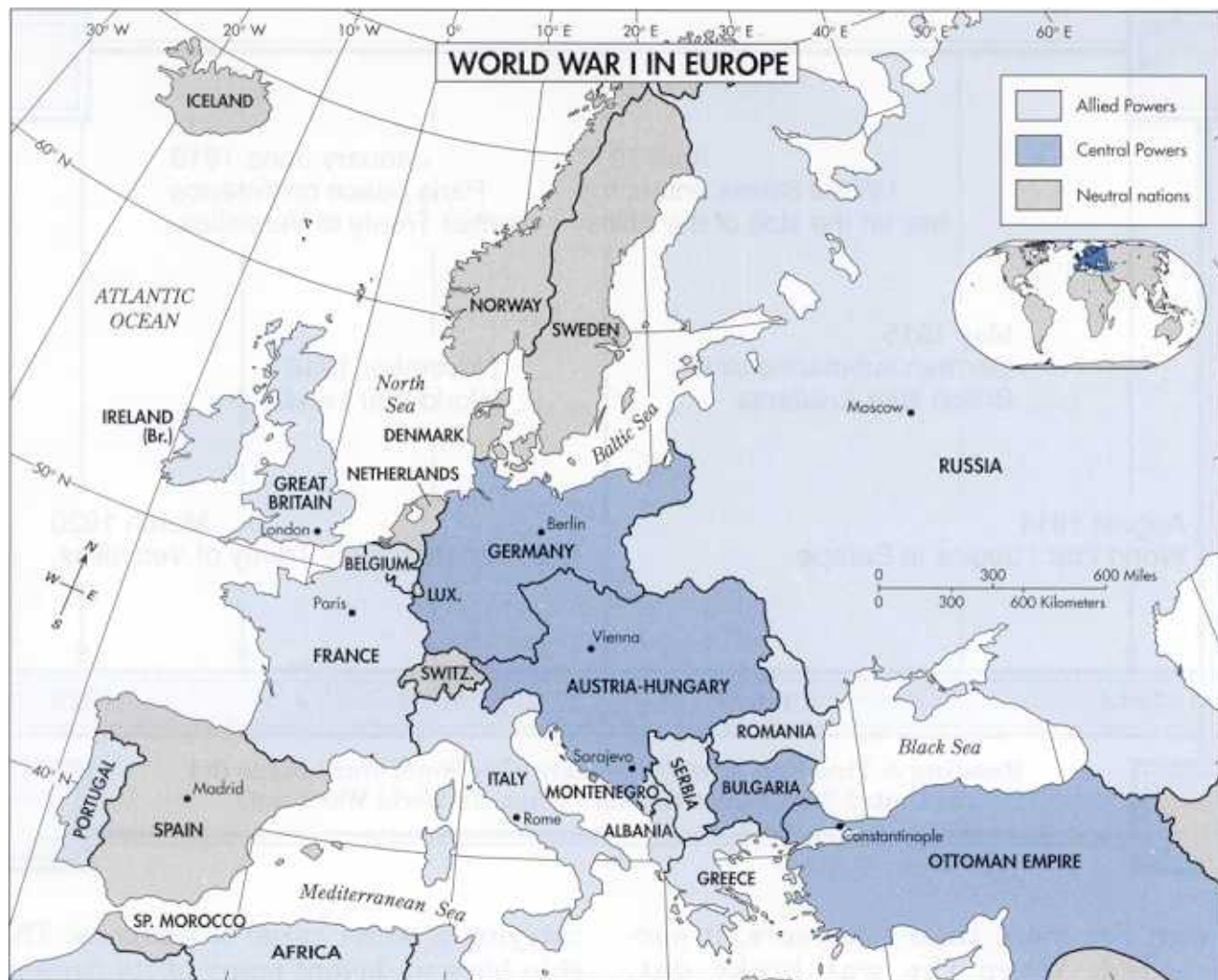
Germany used **submarine warfare** to keep U.S. supplies from reaching Great Britain and France. Submarine warfare meant that German submarines attacked and sank cargo ships.

In some of these attacks, many American lives were lost. The attack that caused the largest loss of life was the sinking of the British ocean liner *Lusitania* in 1915. The *Lusitania* was

carrying a secret cargo of weapons. The ship blew up before many of its passengers got into lifeboats. Among the dead were 128 U.S. citizens.

**No longer neutral** In February 1917, German submarine attacks became more fierce. In the next two months, a number of U.S. ships were sunk. Anti-German feeling built up rapidly. Then Germany made things worse. It suggested to the Mexican government that the two countries join in a war against the United States. Mexico said no. But President Wilson would take no more from Germany. He asked Congress to declare war.

On April 6, 1917, Congress declared war on Germany. Among those voting against the war was Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana. She had



**Reading a Map.** This map shows the nations of Europe during World War I. Which nations were Allied Powers? Which ones were Central Powers? What countries were neutral? Which side had more countries, the Allies or the Central Powers?

been the first woman to serve in Congress. But she was not reelected.

In 1941, she returned to Congress. Later that year, Congress again voted to declare war. Her vote was the single no. Jeannette Rankin was the only person to vote against both world wars.

## 2 All Americans Help in the War Effort.

*How did the United States raise an army?*

Soon after war was declared, Congress passed the Selective Service Act. This act required all men between the ages of 21 and 30 to register for military service. The first draft took place in early June 1917.

About 2.2 million men became **draftees**. A draftee is a person who must go into military service. In addition, many others volunteered for the army, the navy, and the Marine Corps.

1. What nations made up the Allies and the Central Powers?
2. What German actions caused the United States to declare war?

By the time the war ended, the total number of Americans in military service was about 4 million.

**African Americans in the service**  
Americans of all groups served in World War I. Yet they were not all treated in the same way. African Americans, in particular, received unequal treatment. The Marine Corps barred them from service. The navy took them only as cooks, kitchen helpers, and boiler-room workers. Only the army used them as fighting men. It did not use as many as it could have.

The U.S. Army trained more than 370,000 African American soldiers for combat. Yet three out of four spent their time in the army in labor units. They hauled supplies. They built roads. They also set up fortifications. About 100,000, however, did see combat. They served in all-African American units led mostly by white officers. Only 1,400 African Americans became officers. None reached above the rank of colonel.

**Latinos and Native Americans in WW I** There were also large numbers of Latinos in the U.S. Army. When the war began, enough Puerto Rican men enlisted to form their own unit. Later, 235,000 Puerto Rican men registered for the draft. About 18,000 of these were called up for service.

Mexican Americans faced other problems during World War I. First, many U.S. citizens doubted the loyalty of Mexican Americans. This happened partly because Germany had tried to make Mexico its ally in the war. People forgot that Mexico had rejected the Germans. Anti-Mexican feelings also arose from Pancho Villa's raid on New Mexico. (See page 77.)

Yet thousands of young Mexican American men decided to serve their

country. The percentage who volunteered was greater than that of any other ethnic group in the nation.

The armed services did not quite know what to do with their Latino volunteers. Many could not speak or write English fluently. Therefore, they did not finish their military training. They remained at the training centers. Some went to the front in Europe.

Most Native Americans were not U.S. citizens in 1917–1918. So they were not subject to the draft. Even so, many volunteered for service.

1. What roles did African Americans fill in the military services in World War I?
2. What problem did many Latinos face in the U.S. Army?

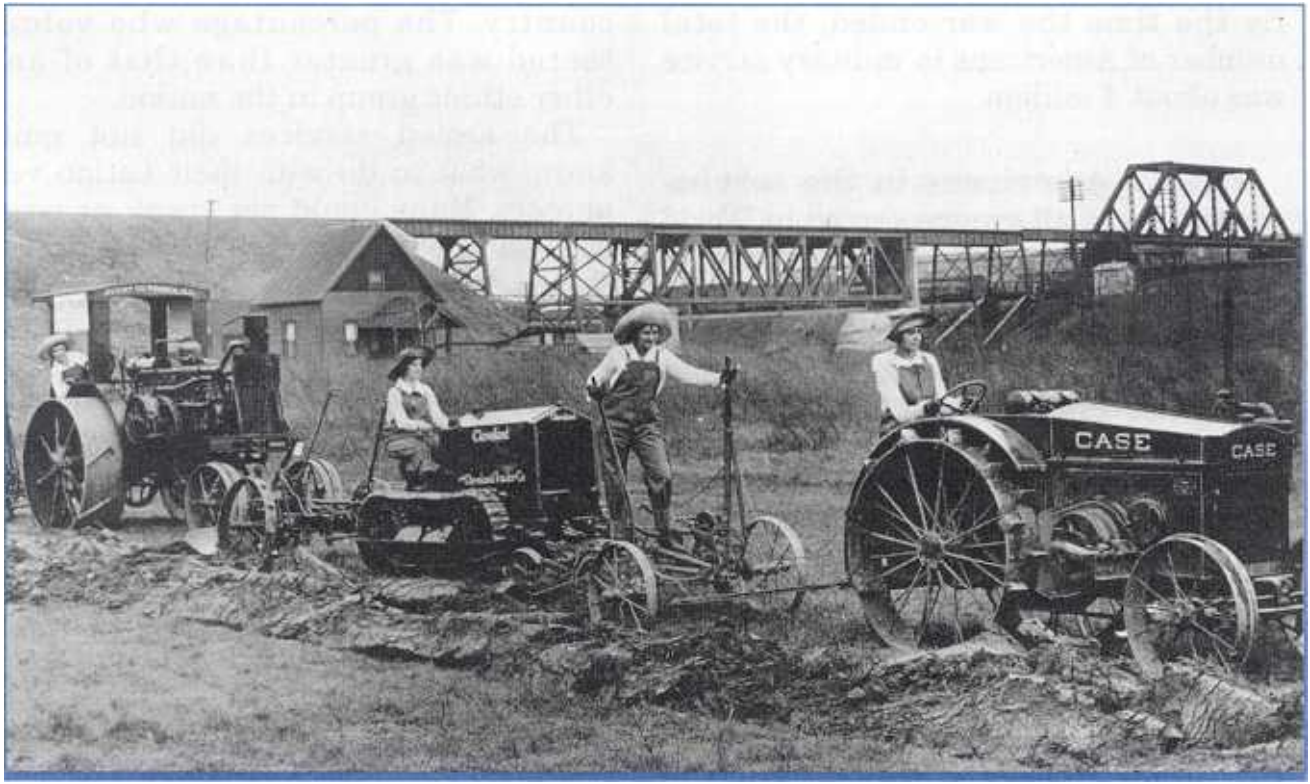
### 3 Americans See Action at Home and Abroad.

*How did the U.S. people contribute to the war effort on the home front and in Europe?*

“It is not an army that we must shape and train for war,” said President Wilson. “It is a nation.” In April, 1917, the United States was not prepared to fight. Within a year, it was ready.

**Building a war machine** It was not easy to turn the U.S. economy into a war machine. Yet it was done quickly. Congress gave President Wilson the right to take over entire industries. He could also claim supplies of food and any other goods. He could control prices. Wilson gave these powers to special boards.

The results were amazing. Besides guns and tanks, the United States sent to France entire railroads and entire



During World War I, these young women worked on a farm, guiding tractors. Since many men served in the war, women were needed to take over the men's jobs. Better jobs gave women a strong sense of independence.

hospitals. In the first year of the war, more than 30 million pairs of shoes and 131 million stockings were sent to Europe. By 1918, the United States was exporting three times as much food as it had before the war.

**On the home front** To achieve these results, new sources of labor had to be found. Nearly four million workers had gone into military service. They had to be replaced.

In the factories and mills of the Northeast and Midwest, many of the jobs were taken by African Americans. They had just arrived from the South. Times were very hard for Southern farm workers just then. African Americans learned that the factories of Chicago, Detroit, and other cities paid good

wages. Many took advantage of the chance. Entire families moved north.

At the same time, thousands of Mexicans moved from Mexico to the U.S. Southwest. They knew that the war created new opportunities in the United States. Mexican immigrants worked in the cotton fields of Arizona. They picked sugar-beets on farms in California and Colorado. They also worked in the copper mines of New Mexico. They built railroad lines throughout the U.S. west.

The war opened new opportunities for women. Women worked in steel mills and weapons factories. They worked as lawyers and doctors for the government.

Most of the new opportunities lasted only until the end of the war. Women, African Americans and other groups

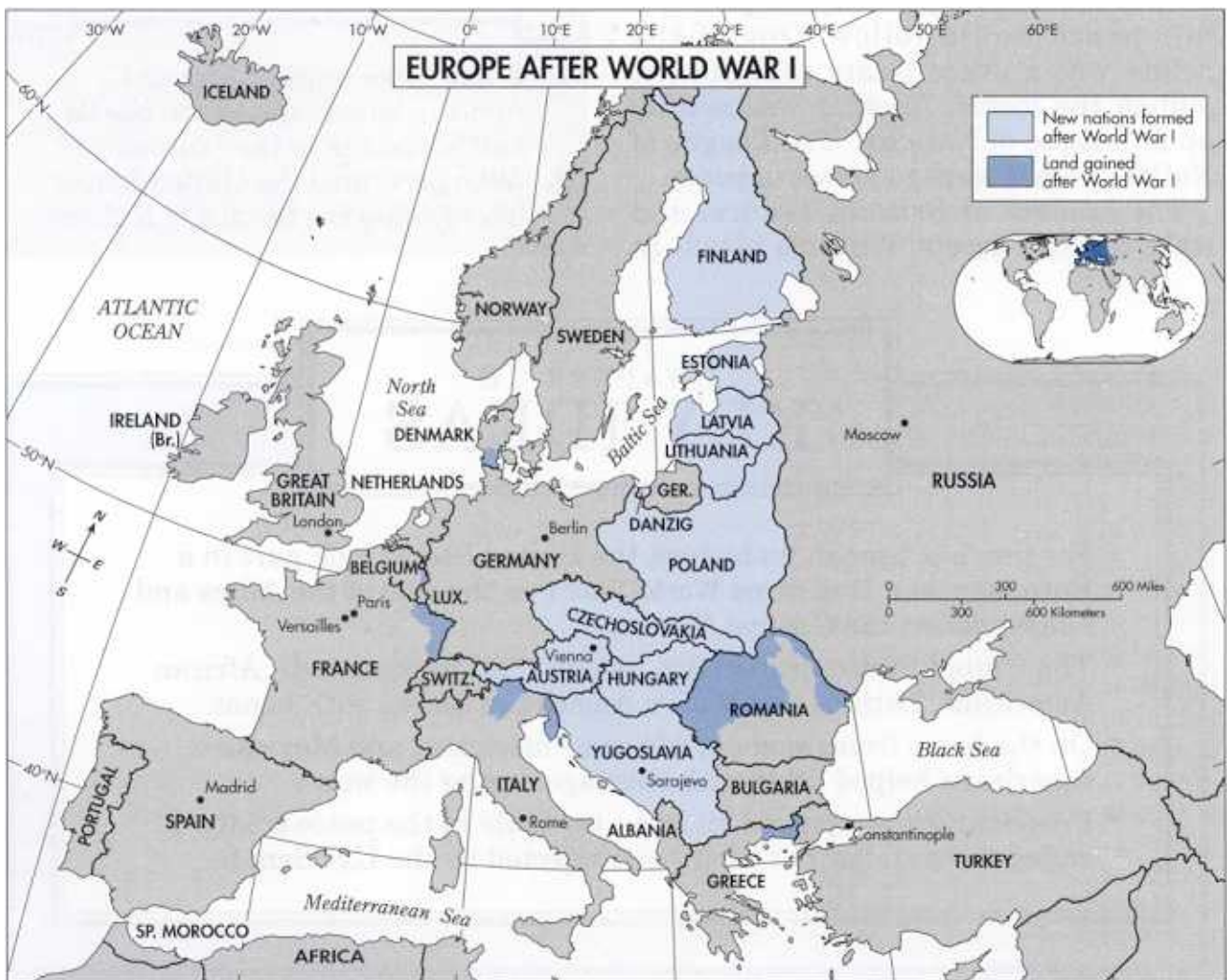
were thrown out of work once the soldiers returned.

**Action in Europe** Meanwhile, a war was being fought in Europe. The United States entered the war in April 1917, on the side of Great Britain and France. During 1917, the main U.S. contribution to the war was at sea. The U.S. navy started chasing German submarines. In about a year and a half, more than half of Germany's submarines were destroyed. When the United States began sending large num-

bers of troops in 1918, not one troopship was sunk by submarines.

In July 1918, the German army began a new attack in France. The Germans hoped to knock out the British and French armies once and for all. They nearly succeeded. However, 275,000 U.S. troops arrived just in time. This was the first large group of American soldiers in Europe. They helped to turn the tide of the war at the battle of Château-Thierry (shah-TOH tee-REE). German generals later said they knew then that they

**Reading a Map.** What is the subject of this map? Which new nations were formed after World War I? What countries gained land? How does this map differ from the map at the beginning of the chapter?



were beaten. However, the war went on for four more months.

Together the Allies pushed the German armies almost entirely out of France and Belgium. The German government asked for peace talks. On November 11, 1918, the fighting ended.

In Europe, Americans helped win the war. A number of women served as nurses with the Red Cross. African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans fought with courage. Many won medals for their bravery, from both the U.S. and the French governments. In some cases, entire units were decorated.

**Wilson's Fourteen Points** Earlier in 1918, Wilson had listed **Fourteen Points** that peace would be based on. If all the countries agreed to the points, a fair peace would follow. One of the points was a peace treaty that did not punish the losers. Another was setting up a "League of Nations." The League of Nations would work to preserve peace.

The leaders of Britain, France, and Italy did not accept Wilson's ideas. In

the treaty of Versailles (vehr-SYE), they forced harsh conditions on the defeated Germans. The Allies would regret this in a few years. However, the treaty did include plans for setting up the League of Nations.

When Wilson brought the treaty home to the United States, he met a new source of opposition. A group of senators did not think that the United States should become involved in the League of Nations. The Senate refused to approve the treaty. That meant that the United States would not be a member of the League. Wilson, meanwhile, had suffered a bad stroke. He finished his term of office as a defeated and ill man.

1. What opportunities brought African Americans to the North and Mexicans to the Southwest?
2. Who prevented the United States from joining the League of Nations?

## CHAPTER 10 KEY IDEAS

- For the first time in its history, the United States took part in a European war. It entered World War I on the side of the Allies and helped defeat the Central Powers.
- The United States drafted Americans of all backgrounds. African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans served with honor.
- On the home front, women, African Americans, and Mexican Americans helped fill the job shortage during the war.
- President Wilson played an important role in the peace treaty. It ended the war, but the treaty was rejected by the U.S. Senate.