Questions for Discussion and
Suggestions for Further Reading

I. WHY FIGHT? / Introduction by Michael S. Neiberg

1. Alan Seeger was an American who volunteered to fight for France in 1914. How does his view of the war compare with the one presented by President Wilson in 1917?

2. Why did Americans fight in World War I? How do their reasons for going to war compare with those of the Americans who have fought in more recent conflicts?

3. What reasons did the Socialists give for opposing the war in 1917? How do their criticisms compare with those directed at American foreign policy today?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


Jennifer D. Keene, World War I: The American Soldier Experience (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011)


II. THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR / Introduction by Edward G. Lengel

1. How can language be used to describe modern combat to those who have never experienced it?

2. What place do traditional concepts of courage and strength have on a battlefield where even the bravest and most skilled soldiers are vulnerable to sudden, random, and unseen forces of destruction?

3. War is defined by violence, and yet much of the experience of war takes place away from scenes of violence, in moments of anticipation, recollection, or simply waiting. How do the selections portray/evoke these moments?
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Suggestions for further reading:


III. RACE AND WORLD WAR I / Introduction by Chad Williams

1. How did W.E.B. Du Bois see the role of black Americans in fighting for democracy in “Close Ranks”? When he wrote “Returning Soldiers” less than a year later, how had his vision changed?

2. How does the military of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries compare with the army of 1917–19 in regards to race? What impact has the desegregation of the armed forces had on American society as a whole?

3. What does Charles Isum’s story tell us about the US army in 1919? What were the senior officers in his division afraid of, and how would their leadership be judged in today’s US military?

Suggestions for further reading:


IV. AMERICAN WOMEN AT WAR / Introduction by Jennifer D. Keene

1. What are we to make of the varied experiences related in the selections? Is there a “women’s experience of war”?

2. How much has changed since World War I in the roles that women play during times of national conflict? Is their support as essential on the home front as it was in World War I?

3. Does war act as a transformative force in women’s lives?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


Jennifer D. Keene, _World War I: The American Soldier Experience_ (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011)


V. THE HOME FRONT: SELLING UNITY, SUPPRESSING DISSENT / Introduction by Chad Williams

1. How did Justice Holmes defend the value of free speech? Do you find his arguments persuasive?

2. Are there legitimate political and moral limits to wartime dissent in a democratic society?

3. How do the efforts of the Wilson administration to win support for World War I compare with the attempts of more recent administrations to rally public opinion in wartime?

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:


Celia Malone Kingsbury, _For Home and Country: World War I Propaganda on the Home Front_ (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010)

**VI. AMERICA ON THE WORLD STAGE / Introduction by Michael S. Neiberg**

1. Should the United States try to promote democracy internationally?

2. Can the United States best serve its interests and preserve peace by acting through international organizations, or by maintaining its national sovereignty and the freedom to act unilaterally?

3. Was Wilson foolish or wise in trying to build an international order that did not rest upon the balance of power? Is it possible to have an international system that does not ultimately depend upon the use of force?

**SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:**


**VII. AT HOME/COMING HOME: THE TOLL OF WAR / Introduction by Jennifer D. Keene**

1. Was the Great War a just and noble cause for the Americans who fought in it? Were America’s interests best served by fighting in World War I?

2. Did the use of conscription in World War I result in a more fair sharing of the burdens and sacrifice of war than the all-volunteer force of today?

3. How has the experience of returning from war changed in the last hundred years? What has remained the same?
SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

