

U.S. Attempts to Remain Neutral

- Most Americans saw no reason for U.S. involvement in this European war
 - Was no threat to U.S.
 - Most favored allies but not strongly enough to help
 - German invasion of neutral Belgium viewed negatively – especially slaughter of civilians
 - Very quickly – war was a stalemate
 - Trench warfare
 - Many new weapons inc. gas, tanks, flame throwers
 - Was a war of horrors and mass death
 - Germans used submarines to break British blockade
 - Soon they set up a blockade, shooting at any ship
 - Unrestricted submarine warfare
 - Angered the international community
 - May 7, 1915 sinking of Lusitania caused outrage
 - 1,198 dead (128 Americans)
 - Germans claimed ship was carrying weapons
 - It was – but intl. law said passenger ships must be warned before firing on them
 - Germans actually placed ads in NY Times warning of possible attack on Lusitania
- U.S. protested strongly against German sub warfare
 - Germans agreed not to sink more liners w/out warning
 - Soon broke pledge – torpedoed French vessel Sussex
 - 80 Americans killed
 - U.S. threatened to stop diplomatic relations w/ Germany
 - "Sussex Pledge" by Germans said they would stop attacking ships if the British stopped food blockade against Germany



- If GB did not lift blockade
 - more unrest. sub warfare
- President Wilson tried hard to stay out of war but realized that U.S. had to prepare in case of war
 - Improvements in army & navy
 - Wilson ran for re-election on fact that he kept the U.S. out of the war
 - But also pointed out that he was keeping the military prepared for a fight
 - Also ran on his progressive legislation record
 - Wilson wins a close 1916 election
- After re-election, Wilson tried to mediate the war
 - Called for "Peace without victory" meaning neither side would impose harsh terms on the other
 - Germans chose to continue attempts to knock out British w/ submarines
 - Broke Sussex Pledge – U.S. said they would break off diplomatic relations w/ Germany if they did
 - U.S. closer to war
 - Interception of Zimmerman note and sinking of unarmed U.S. ships the last straws
 - Zimmerman note from German foreign secretary to German diplomat in Mexico
 - Suggested alliance between Ger. & Mex.
 - Mex. would attack U.S. – Ger. would help Mex. get back territory lost to U.S.
 - Clearly a threat to U.S.
- April 2, 1917 – Wilson calls for war with Germany
 - War declared April 6, 1917

