The Road to War

Trace the pressures and decisions behind U.S. entry into World War I

SS24.US2.1e "Summarize the events and factors that led to the United States entry into World War I."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two earlier pressures that challenged U.S. neutrality, and circle two developments in 1917 that pushed the country toward war. Number Wilson's request and Congress's declaration in the order they happened.

Why the United States Entered World War I

1. In August 1914, war broke out in Europe, and President Woodrow Wilson announced that the United States would remain neutral. Neutrality did not mean isolation. American banks lent heavily to the Allies, and U.S. factories sold them food, weapons, and other supplies. Britain's naval blockade sharply limited American trade with Germany, while German submarines threatened ships crossing the Atlantic. These ties and dangers made it harder for Americans to stay outside the conflict. Yet many citizens opposed joining a European war, and Wilson won reelection in 1916 after campaigning on his record of keeping the country out.

2. Submarine attacks turned that tension into public anger. In May 1915, a German submarine sank the British passenger ship Lusitania, killing 128 Americans. The ship also carried war materials, but the loss of civilian lives alarmed many in the United States. After another passenger ship was attacked in 1916, Germany issued the Sussex pledge, promising to warn merchant ships and protect passengers and crews before sinking them. The pledge eased the crisis for a time, but Germany's leaders believed submarines could cut off supplies to Britain. They accepted the risk of bringing the United States into the war.

3. In January 1917, Germany announced it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare on February 1, attacking ships in a declared war zone without warning. Germany hoped to defeat Britain before U.S. forces could arrive. That same month, Germany sent the Zimmermann Telegram, offering Mexico an alliance if the United States entered the war and promising support for Mexico to recover territory it had lost to the United States. After British officials shared the intercepted message, its publication in March increased American outrage. In April, Wilson asked Congress to declare war, citing Germany's submarine attacks. Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did trade and conditions at sea make U.S. neutrality harder to maintain before 1917?

2. How did the Lusitania sinking and the Sussex pledge change the submarine crisis before 1917?

3. Why did Germany's 1917 submarine decision increase the chance of U.S. entry, despite its earlier pledge?

4. How did the Zimmermann Telegram add to pressure for war, and what final steps brought the United States into the conflict?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label explaining how earlier pressures and two events in 1917 led to U.S. entry. Identify which 1917 event you think made war more likely, defend your choice with a detail from the passage, and end with the government's formal action.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.1e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two earlier pressures that challenged U.S. neutrality, and circle two developments in 1917 that pushed the country toward war. Number Wilson's request and Congress's declaration in the order they happened. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did trade and conditions at sea make U.S. neutrality harder to maintain before 1917?	**American loans and sales tied the United States to the Allies, while Britain's blockade restricted trade with Germany and German submarines threatened Atlantic shipping.**
2	How did the Lusitania sinking and the Sussex pledge change the submarine crisis before 1917?	**The sinking killed 128 Americans and increased public anger. Germany's later pledge to warn ships and protect people aboard eased the crisis temporarily.**
3	Why did Germany's 1917 submarine decision increase the chance of U.S. entry, despite its earlier pledge?	**Germany resumed attacks without warning, abandoning the protection it had promised and putting ships crossing the Atlantic at greater risk.**
4	How did the Zimmermann Telegram add to pressure for war, and what final steps brought the United States into the conflict?	**The published telegram increased outrage because Germany had offered Mexico an alliance against the United States. Wilson asked Congress to declare war, and Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1914, the United States stayed neutral, but trade with the Allies and danger at sea made distance from the war difficult. The Lusitania sinking had already angered Americans. In 1917, Germany resumed attacks on ships without warning, despite its earlier pledge to protect passengers and crews. The published Zimmermann Telegram added outrage by revealing Germany's offer of an alliance to Mexico. I think renewed submarine warfare made war more likely because it directly threatened ships crossing the Atlantic. Wilson asked Congress for war, and Congress declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917.

Accept either the renewed submarine campaign or the published telegram as the student's most influential 1917 event if the choice is supported with passage evidence. The formal action was Congress's declaration of war on Germany.