From Card to Camp

How the United States built an army in 1917

USH.C.3.2.B "Identify the Selective Service Act as a means to mobilize armed forces to support allied nations of the Triple Entente during the First World War."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the name of the law that helped build the army, circle the two Triple Entente nations American troops fought beside, and number the phrases about registering, being called by lottery, and fighting in France from 1 to 3.

Building an Army for War

1 In April 1917, the United States entered the First World War. Britain and France, two nations of the Triple Entente, had already fought Germany and its allies for years. Russia was the third original member of the Entente, though it would leave the war in 1918. American leaders wanted troops who could fight alongside the Allied armies, especially on the Western Front in France. Volunteers alone might not supply enough soldiers for a large war. The government needed a way to build an army quickly across the country, not just wait for people to enlist.

2 Congress passed the Selective Service Act in May 1917. It required men of certain ages to register for possible military service. At first, the law covered men ages 21 through 30; Congress later widened the age range. Local boards recorded registrants, and a lottery helped determine who would be called. Registration did not mean every man would become a soldier. Some received exemptions or deferments under the rules. The law gave the federal government a system for drafting men, training them, and expanding the armed forces beyond the number of volunteers. That process is called mobilization.

3 Picture a train leaving a training camp with new American soldiers bound for a port. Their service began with a national decision to turn available people into a fighting force. Many drafted men eventually served in the American Expeditionary Forces in France, where American troops fought beside French and British forces. The United States did not formally become a member of the Triple Entente, but its troops supported those allied nations against Germany. Russia, another original Entente nation, made peace with Germany in 1918. The Selective Service Act was therefore a tool for supplying soldiers, not a treaty promising alliance.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which law helped the United States build an army to support Allied forces, and why was the law needed?

2. How did registration and the lottery help turn civilians into potential soldiers?

3. A student says the Selective Service Act made the United States a formal member of the Triple Entente. What does the passage say the act actually did?

4. How could soldiers drafted under this law support two nations of the Triple Entente?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label connecting a 1917 registration card to a soldier's train ticket to a port. Explain a possible path from registration to service in France, make clear that not every registrant became a soldier, and name the Triple Entente nations the soldier could support.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.3.2.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the name of the law that helped build the army, circle the two Triple Entente nations American troops fought beside, and number the phrases about registering, being called by lottery, and fighting in France from 1 to 3. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which law helped the United States build an army to support Allied forces, and why was the law needed?	**The Selective Service Act helped build the army because volunteers alone might not supply enough soldiers.**
2	How did registration and the lottery help turn civilians into potential soldiers?	**Men registered for possible service, and a lottery helped determine who would be called. Those drafted could then be trained as soldiers.**
3	A student says the Selective Service Act made the United States a formal member of the Triple Entente. What does the passage say the act actually did?	**It provided a system for drafting men and expanding the armed forces. It was not a treaty, and the United States did not formally join the Triple Entente.**
4	How could soldiers drafted under this law support two nations of the Triple Entente?	**They could serve in France and fight beside French and British forces against Germany.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Under the Selective Service Act, a man registered for possible military service. Registration did not guarantee that he would be drafted, since some men received exemptions or deferments. If called, he could train and take a train to a port before sailing to France. There, he could fight beside troops from France and Britain, two nations of the Triple Entente.

Accept responses that identify the act as a way to mobilize soldiers in support of Entente nations, especially France and Britain. Do not accept claims that registration automatically meant service or that the act made the United States a formal Entente member.