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“A War Was Raging 15 Feet above Our Heads”
Arkansas during the First World War

Social Studies – 6 – 8 (U.S. History, Arkansas History, World History, Civics, etc.);
English Language Arts; Geography

This unit explores World War I in Arkansas through the use of primary and secondary sources. Students will read newspaper articles and pamphlet excerpts to understand the impact that World War I had on Arkansas. A list of various activities related to original primary and secondary resources allows teachers the flexibility to choose parts of this lesson plan to use and adapt as needed.

Essential Question:
How did the United States entering into the First World War affect Arkansas?

Common Core State Standards:
CCRA.R.1, 3, 7; CCRA.W.7, 9; CCRA.SL.1, 2, 4; CCRA.R.1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9; CCRA.W.2, 7, 8, 9; CCRA.SL.1, 3, 4; CCRA.R.1, 4, 7; CCRA.SL.1, 3; CCRA.W.7, 8, 9; CCRA.SL.1, 3; CCRA.R.1, 7, 8; CCRA.W.8; CCRA.SL.2; CCRA.W.1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9

Arkansas Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks:
H.7.AH.7-8.6; Era.4.4.AH.9-12.4; Era.7.1.USH.2; Era.7.1.USH.3; Era7.1.USH.4; Era7.1.USH.5; Era.7.1.USH6; Era7.1.USH7

C3 Alignment:
D2.His.1, 4, 14, 15, 16.6-8; D2.Civ.14.9-12; D2.Geo.4.9-12; D2.His.1, 14.9-12; D2.His.1, 7, 14, 15, 16.9-12; D2.Civ.10.9-12; D2.Geo.2.9-12; D2.His.1, 7, 11.9-12; D2.Civ.13, 14.,9-12; D2.Geo.2.9-12; D2.His.2, 3, 6, 7.9-12; D2.His.9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17.9-12; D2.Civ.11, 13.9-12; D2.His.14.9-12; D1.5.9-12; D2.His.3, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.9-12; D3.1, 3, 4.9-12; D4.1, 2.9-12

Possible literature resources related to the lesson plan: All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque (1929); A Very Long Engagement by Sébastien Japrisot (1994); Fear: A Novel of World War I by Gabriel Chevallier (1930); One of Ours by Willa Cather (1922); Three Soldiers by John Dos Passos (1921); Pictures, 1918 by Jeanette Ingold (1998); The Return of the Soldier by Rebecca West (1916); Goodbye to All of That by Robert Graves (1929); Remembrance by Theresa
Breslin (2002); *Khaki Wings* by Milton Dank (1980); *Private Peaceful* by Michael Morpurgo (2003); *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo (2007).

Arkansas in World War I Vocabulary

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**American Expeditionary Forces** – The name of the American forces fighting in Europe under the command of General John J. Pershing.

**Charles H. Brough** – Twenty-fifth Governor of Arkansas (January 10, 1917 – January 11, 1921). Was governor at the time of the First World War.

**Camp Pike** – Training camp for soldiers in Arkansas. It is in Pulaski County near the present day site of Camp Robinson.

**Herman Davis** – Farmer from Manila in Mississippi County who served in France. He was awarded the *Croix de Guerre* for bravery in combat and was named by General Pershing as one of the most important soldiers to the war effort.

**Eberts Field** – Training ground in Lonoke, Arkansas, for pilots during World War I.

**Fort Logan H. Roots** – Training site in Pulaski County since the late 1800s, which served as a training site during the early stages of the United States’ involvement in the war before Camp Pike was fully constructed.

**Propaganda** – Information used to promote an idea or action. Often can contain false or misleading information to sway opinion about an action or idea.

**Sedition** – Rebellion against the government.

**Selective Service Act of 1917** – Law passed by the United States to establish a draft in order to raise an army for World War I. The law required all men from the age of 18 to 45 to register for the draft.

**Spanish Influenza** – A world-wide pandemic that killed approximately 50 to 100 million people. More soldiers died from the Spanish Flu than from wounds in battle.
State Council of Defense – Organization set up on the state level to compliment the national Council of Defense. Its job was to coordinate the war effort in Arkansas. Among its many duties were to promote war bonds and coordinate food rationing programs. There were Council of Defense organizations on the county and community levels as well.

Woodrow Wilson – President of the United States (1913-1921) at the time of World War I.

Background Information:

When the United States entered into World War I, the war had already been raging in Europe for three long years. So, it was incumbent on the country to ready itself for war quickly. The United States Army established a training camp near Little Rock. Officials named it Camp Pike after the man who explored the southwestern portion of the Louisiana Purchase, General Zebulon Pike. Officials also established an airplane training camp in Lonoke County, Eberts Field, for the training of pilots. Soldiers entering Camp Pike in the spring of 1917 would find that the camp was still under construction. Soldiers often had to sleep outside on cots because construction crews had not yet finished the barracks at Camp Pike.

The United States government passed the Selective Service Act of 1917 on May 18, 1917. The law required all men aged 18 to 45 to register for the draft. Draft officials set June 5, 1917, as the official day for all draft age men to register. Governor Charles Hillman Brough encouraged all local businesses to close for the day to give the day a holiday atmosphere. Towns across Arkansas held patriotic parades and guest speakers extolled the patriotism of those who were registering for the draft. Governor Brough declared in a proclamation that the “day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood, her money and her might for the principles that gave her birth.” By the end of the war, 199,857 Arkansas men registered for the draft.

There was a dark side to the festivities, however. In the nineteenth century, German immigrants flooded into the United States, many fleeing persecution of Catholics in their home country. At the beginning of the war, Arkansas’s German population came under special scrutiny. Rumors about German spies in the United States caused alarm. The United States government ordered Germans who had not been naturalized to register with the state. Those who were not registered were not allowed to go near train tracks or any boat or watercraft. Furthermore, new restrictions prohibited unregistered Germans from going into the city of Little Rock without a permit. Other Arkansans of German descent also came under scrutiny. Little Rock police arrested the editor of the German language newspaper in the city, Staats Zeitung, for possibly publishing pro-German propaganda in his paper and urging draft resistance. Many schools throughout the state eliminated German language programs and removed books about German history and culture from their libraries.
There were also pockets of antiwar sentiment in Arkansas. In Cleburne County, a number of Jehovah’s Witnesses refused to register for the draft. Police went to arrest the men who were gathered near Heber Springs. The draft resisters got into a gun fight with police, leaving one policeman dead and one of the resisters badly wounded. The Jehovah’s Witnesses fled into the countryside as a posse quickly assembled in the county to hunt them. After a week, the standoff ended when the resisters surrendered. A jury only found one of the resisters guilty of second degree murder in the death of the police officer, and the leader of the group was found guilty of involuntary manslaughter.

Armies on both sides of the battlefield used new technologies that had not been seen before in battle. Among the new weapons was the machine gun, capable of shooting 400 to 600 rounds a minute. The use of poison gas, tanks, and airplanes, made this war the most deadly that the world had seen to this point.

Since the United States entered into the war relatively late – the war would be over in a year and a half – there were few American battle casualties from the war. Far more devastating to American soldiers was the spread of the Spanish Influenza epidemic. The Spanish Flu was a worldwide pandemic that is estimated to have killed as many as 100 million people worldwide. American soldiers were not immune from the flu. In fact, far more American soldiers died from the Spanish Flu than were killed in battle. In Arkansas, officials quarantined soldiers training at Camp Pike. Those who had contracted the illness were segregated from other soldiers. All social activities such as dances or social meetings were cancelled for fear that such gatherings would spread the flu throughout the camp.

Arkansas sent 71,862 men to Europe during the war. Out of this group, Arkansas produced a number of war-time heroes. The most famous was Herman Davis of Manila in Mississippi County. Davis entered into the army in March 1918 and was sent to France in October 1918. During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, Davis killed two German machine gunners who had pinned down his unit. His marksmanship allowed his unit to advance safely on the battlefield. For his bravery, the French government awarded him with the Croix de Guerre and the United States government awarded him the Distinctive Service Cross. After the war, General John Pershing, commander of the American forces in France, named Davis in a list of the most important American soldiers in the war. Davis died young in 1923, having developed tuberculosis as a possible result of lung damage he received in a poison gas attack during the war.

To learn more about Arkansas and World War I, read the following Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture articles:
World War I
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2401

Camp Joseph T. Robinson (Camp Pike)
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2262

Eberts Field
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1184

Fort Logan H. Roots
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5807

Cleburne County Draft War
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=3637

German Americans
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2731

Herman Davis
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=48

Oscar Franklin Miller
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5076

Marcellus Holmes Chiles
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5768

John Pruitt
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5776

John McGavock Grider
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=5277

Field Eugene Kindley
http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=1689

Activities

See Activity Packet for activity materials

Activity 1. Analyze World War I era posters and make your own poster
1. Have students look at World War I era propaganda posters. An online collection of posters can be found at [http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/](http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/ww1posters/). Have the students discuss themes in the posters. What are some common things in the posters? What do the posters say about how Americans felt about the war? What kind of themes do the students think are most effective in getting people involved in the war effort?

2. Have students read the pamphlet *How to Put in Patriotic Posters the Stuff that Makes People Stop – Look – Act!* By Matlack Price and Horace Brown.

3. Have students design their own posters based on the guidelines found in the pamphlet and based on themes they have seen in other World War I era posters.

**Activity 2. Analyzing a letter from an Arkansas soldier and creating “Found Poetry”**

1. Have the students read the letter from Lieutenant Paul Remmel printed in the article from the *Arkansas Gazette*, December 14, 1917.

2. Have the students discuss the language that the author uses in the letter. What phrases or passages are most memorable in the text? Does Remmel’s letter give a sense of what life was like for soldiers?

3. Have students create a “Found Poem” from passages in the text. Found poetry is a type of poetry created by taking words, phrases, and sometimes whole passages from other sources and reframing them as poetry by making changes in spacing and lines, or by adding or deleting text, thus imparting new meaning. Talk with the students about “Found Poetry” and give an example (see examples and further information through the Found Poetry with Primary Sources: [http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/poetry/procedure.html](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/poetry/procedure.html)).

**Activity 3. Analyzing a World War I songbook**

1. Have students read the YMCA songbook, *Songs We Like to Sing*.

2. Have the students write a short one or two paragraph essay discussing why he or she thinks the author chose those particular songs. Are there any particular themes that are repeated in each song? Why are those themes emphasized?

**Activity 4. Create a Fakebook page based on primary sources**

1. A Fakebook is a page that looks and acts like a Facebook page, but can be used in the classroom. Students can create a Fakebook page based on a historical figure, entering historical events and experiences as status updates. Templates for a Fakebook can be found online, including [http://www.classools.net/FB/home-page](http://www.classools.net/FB/home-page) and [http://www.classools.net/main_area/fakebook/helpsheet.pdf](http://www.classools.net/main_area/fakebook/helpsheet.pdf).

2. Have students create a Fakebook based on the following letters of J. Harrell Burke.

**Other Resources on the First World War**
World War I lesson plan, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.


Online exhibits from the National World War I Museum and Memorial
https://theworldwar.org/explore/exhibitions/online-exhibitions

Online exhibit about World War I propaganda posters from the Cincinnati Museum Center
https://www.cincymuseum.org/exhibits/world-war-i-propaganda-posters

Online exhibit from the Smithsonian Institution on armed conflicts in American history
http://amhistory.si.edu/militaryhistory/exhibition/flash.html

Teacher resources on World War I from the Public Broadcasting System
http://www.pbs.org/greatwar/resources/lesson.html

A daily updated World War I history website from the *Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom. Site features reprints of World War I era newspaper articles from the *Guardian’s* archives
http://www.theguardian.com/world/firstworldwar

Teacher resources including worksheets and material relating to World War I
http://www.historyonthenet.com/Lessons/worksheets/ww1.htm

British Broadcasting Corporation website featuring teacher resources including worksheets and multimedia materials relating to the 100 year anniversary of the war.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25269805

British Library website featuring timelines, primary sources, and other teaching resources
http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one

World War I lesson plans and other teaching resources from the Library of Congress
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/great-war/

Oxford University website featuring poetry from World War I, features teaching guide primary sources
http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/

Teacher resources from the History Channel
World War I lesson plan, Arkansas State Archives, Little Rock, Arkansas.

http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i

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