

### Americans at War

Read these passages from biographies and diaries of American men and women fighting in World War 1. After you read each passage, select the "message" that the passage is trying to tell the reader. After you read all the passages, select one and write a letter to the person who wrote it. Tell them you are a student in eighth grade and how their statement made you feel.

#### A) I Have a Rendezvous with Death by Alan Seeger

(The poet was an American who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion. He died at the Battle of Somme.)

I have a rendezvous (meeting) with Death  
At some disputed barricade,  
When Spring comes back with rustling shade  
And apple blossoms fill the air-  
I have a rendezvous with Death  
When spring brings back blue days and fair.

But I've a rendezvous with Death  
At midnight in some flaming town,  
When Spring trips north again this year;  
And I to my pledged word am true,  
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

Message \_\_\_\_\_

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#### B) A Doughboy Describes the Fighting Front

Eugene Kennedy was a 31 year old draftee from New York State. This passage is from his diary.

Thursday, September 12, 1918. Hiked through dark woods. No lights allowed, guided by holding on the pack of the man ahead. Stumbled through underbrush for about half mile into open field where we waited in soaking rain until about 10:00 p.m. We then started on our hike to the St. Michiel front, arriving on the crest of the hill at 1:00 a.m. I saw a sight which I shall never forget. The entire front as far as the eye could reach in either direction was a sheet of flame, while the heavy artillery made the earth quake. The barrage was so intense that for a time we could not make out whether the Americans or the Germans were putting it over. We waded through pools and mud across open lots into a woods on a hill and had to pitch tents in mud. Blankets all wet and soaked to the skin. Having carried full pack from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. without a rest. Despite the cannonading I slept until 8:00 a.m."

Message \_\_\_\_\_

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Sources: The American Reader, ed. by Diane Ravitch; National Treasures, ed. Carol Berkin and Leonard Wood; The Way We Lived, ed. Binder and Reimers, The American Spirit, ed. Bailly and Kennedy.

### **Songs that Helped Win World War I**

Read Over There and The Marines' Hymn. Over There was written by George M. Cohan and was first performed in late 1917. He received a Congressional Medal of Honor for composing it. The Marines' Hymn developed gradually over many years. The entire song was printed by the marine Corps in August, 1918.

#### A) Over There by George M. Cohan

Over there, over there,  
Send the word, send the word over there,  
That the Yanks are coming,  
the Yanks are coming,  
The drums are rum-tumming ev'ry where-

So prepare, say a pray'r,  
Send the word, send the word to beware,  
We'll be over, we're coming over,  
And we won't come back till it's over over there.

#### B) The Marines' Hymn

From the halls of Montezuma  
To the shores of Tripoli;  
We fight our country's battles  
On the land as on the sea;  
First to fight for right and freedom  
And to keep our honor clean;  
We are proud to claim the title  
Of United States Marine.

- 1) What is the "message" of Over There?
- 2) What statement is made in The Marines' Hymn?
- 3) Can you name songs from other American wars?
- 4) In Your Opinion: How could songs help to win a war?

Source: The American Reader, ed. Diane Ravitch.

## **American Troops Fight in France and Turn the Tide of the War**

a) After years of a stalemate in Europe, the addition of U.S. troops helped bring the war to a quick close. Read the timeline. Locate the events on the map of France.

b) In your opinion, why did American troops play such a crucial role in this war?

1918 Timeline:

April 9, 1918: 500 U.S. troops help British on the trench line at Mount Kemmel

May 27, 1918: U.S. troops help France stop German attack near Chateau-Thierry.

June 9, 1918: 27,500 U.S. troops stop German attack at Belleau Wood.

July 18, 1918: 270,000 U.S. troops join first allied advance into German held territory near Chateau-Thierry.

August 8, 1918: 54,000 U.S. troops advance at Somme.

August 19, 1918: Over 100,000 U.S. troops advance at Ypres.

September 12, 1918: 550,000 U.S. troops advance at St. Mihiel. Capture 16,000 German prisoners.

September 26, 1918: Over a million U.S. troops push towards Germany near Sedan. Over 100,000 U.S. troops killed or wounded.

November, 1918: Over 2 million U.S. troops are in Europe.

November 11, 1918: Fighting stops. Armistice (temporary peace) begins.