Elsie Rodriguez

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Compare and Contrast Essay

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America in the World Wars

World War I and World War II are an important part of America’s history since they caused the U.S. to become a global power and become economically stable afterwards. Before the start of each, America had chosen to stay safe behind its borders and avoid the turmoil that was going on in the world. The country was indecisive about entering both world wars when its allies needed them. It desired no harm for its people and hoped to protect its homeland like a mother bear guarding its bear cub from danger. It didn’t enter each war until after it had already begun. America only declared war when it knew that the safety of its homeland was threatened. Although America decided to abide by the policy of isolationism in both wars, many differences are seen between the parallelisms of America’s involvement in each war.

During World War I, America’s idea of committing to the policy of isolationism meant trading with both sides of the war. It wanted to be seen as a neutral country; therefore it continued to trade with Britain and Germany. With hope that the U.S. would enter the war, Britain interrupted trade between America and Germany many times. However, despite Britain’s illegal acts, President Woodrow Wilson remained firm in his decision to remain strictly neutral. Nevertheless, America was pulled into war later on.

There was no sole reason as to why America entered World War I, but many. Britain’s interruption in American trade caused Germany to become angry and resume unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917. This enraged the United States because its submarines were uncontrollably sinking as a result. In addition The Zimmerman telegram was also a key factor as to why America joined the war. In the telegram, Germany promised to help Mexico get back California if they joined the war with Germany against the US. President Woodrow Wilson and Congress, “with only six senators and 50 representatives who opposed”, felt that America’s safety was at stake; The United States officially entered the war on April 2, 1917, as an allied power (“U.S. enters World War I”).

America was involved in the war for only 19 months. Plus, America’s contribution was mostly economical. It sold weapons and goods and lent money to many of the allied powers. “Britain alone was spending $75 million per week on U.S. arms and supplies, both for itself and for its allies (Green, America in World War I).” The United States didn’t send any troops to Europe until the spring of 1918. First it had to pass a draft to increase its army. In a couple of months America’s army had millions of men and young boys ready to fight. American soldiers only fought in the battlefields of France and Western Europe (Green, America in World War I). They had to use the strategy of trench warfare. For many, it was a torment and a nightmare to have to stay rolled up like a ball at the frontline.

America helped achieve victory in Europe against the central powers in 1918. However, America refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles due to unstable policies that congress did not approve. It did not want to become a member of the United Nations. Although President Wilson tried to convince Congress to pass the treaty, they refused because they didn’t want the country to be involved in future foreign conflicts. Ultimately, they decided to sign a separate peace treaty with Germany in 1921 (“Treaty of Versailles”)

After World War I, The United States was quick to return to its policy of isolationism. Then in 1939, America had to make a decision about staying isolationist when World War II broke out. Germany allied with axis powers Italy and Japan to become a dominant power and invade many countries in both Europe and Asia. Although America did remain true to its statement of isolationism, it was not a neutral country. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and congress knew that the axis powers were a threat to the United States and passed many laws that restricted aid and trade with them. However, America did assist Britain and other allied powers by selling them goods and weapons (Green. “World War II”). In addition, The U.S ended trade with Japan which caused horrible consequences.

Unlike World War I, America had a sole reason for leaving its own secure domicile and entering the war. On December 7, 1941 Japan bombed and destroyed America’s naval base in Hawaii. “187 aircrafts were destroyed, 18 naval bases were damaged or destroyed and more than 2000 American Servicemen were killed (Green. ‘World War II’).” The U.S declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941. Germany then declared war on the United States four days later. The United States was officially at war as an allied power… again.

However, The United States was more involved in combat than it had been in World War I. American Troops fought in battlefields near the pacific islands, North Africa, and other parts of Europe. During World War II, the United States also allowed minority groups such as women, African Americans and Mexicans to be a part of the U.S military. Most importantly, the United States was considered a nuclear power (Green. ‘World War II.’). The nation created a plethora of nuclear weapons and atomic bombs. President Truman ordered to have two atomic bombs dropped in Japan. Although America was helping aid the allied powers, it was mostly at war with Japan because of the event at Pearl Harbor.

America ended the war with Japan after the U.S dropped the atomic bombs. Germany had already surrendered to the allied powers four months prior. After the axis powers had fallen, the allied powers proceeded to creating treaties and post war decisions. This time, The United States consented in signing the many agreements to install peace. In addition, it accepted to become a part of the United Nations which it had previously rejected (Green. ‘World War II’). This demonstrated that it was ready to abandon its policy of isolationism to become a world power.

Even though there is definite parallelism in America’s role during each war, there are clear distinctions on how it chose to involve itself throughout them. The U.S felt especially threatened during WWII because of how dominant the axis powers portrayed themselves. Therefore, it was more politically involved. Not only did it create a firm attitude before entering the war, but due to the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the U.S felt more reason to fight in the war and crush Japan for its unforgiving action. In addition, it did not run back to hide behind its policy of isolationism. America became confident enough to portray itself as a political global hero. Today, the United States continues to protect its homeland, just like it did during the world wars.

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