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Compare and Contrast

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America in the World Wars.

The time for war is never right in any occasion. No one can truly be prepared or predict the outcome of a war. Both World War I and World War II are a huge part of the world’s history and America’s since it helped them become a global power. However, it seems that America was indecisive about entering both world wars when their allies needed them. In addition, America entered each war after it had already begun. They wanted to make sure they could follow their policy of isolationism as much as possible. However, when the safety of the U.S was threatened, America was quick to declare war. Each World War was essential and played a huge role in the United States, however, many differences are seen in how America plays their role in each war from beginning to end.

World War I began in 1914 in Europe. To be more Precise, it began in Austria due to the outrageous death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. His death caused the huge outbreak for war which involved the Central powers- Austria, Germany and Italy- and the Allied Powers- Britain, France and Russia. After war was declared in Europe, President Woodrow Wilson decided to continue the policy of neutrality and isolation. Many Americans were certainly happy about the decision. However, despite their policy of isolationism, The United States continued to trade with many countries in the war.

With a year to spare before World War I was destined to end, America declares war on Germany on April 2, 1917. “There was no one exact reason for the U.S to declare war but many that led President Wilson to make the ultimate decision, including the Zimmerman telegram in which Germany promised to help Mexico get back California if they joined the war with Germany against the U.S. and Germany’s decision to resume unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917.” In addition, the United States’ alliance with Britain also contributed to becoming involved in the war.

America’s involvement in the war was mostly economical. They helped contribute weapons, goods and money to the allied powers. The United States didn’t actually send any troops to Europe until the spring of 1918. In addition, World War I made the national government much powerful than it had ever been. “In May of 1917, congress passed the selective service act which required 24 million men to register for the draft and eventually increased the size of the army from 120,000 to 5 million. The government also commandeered control of much of the economy to get the country ready to fight, creating new agencies to regulate industry, transportation, labor relations, and agriculture.”

Many Americans had opinions for the war. Most were not in favor of it. In 1917, Wilson created the Committee on Public Information to help create positive view for America’s involvement in the war. “They created many forms of propaganda to gain support for the war including pamphlets, posters, movies and speeches that were conducted at schools.” Despite the effort to accumulate support, a plethora of citizens were still opposed of the war. This created a decline in civil liberties. “The Espionage Act of 1917 prohibited spying, interfering with the draft and ‘false statements’ that might impede military success.” Also, the Sedition Act of 1918 made it a crime to criticize the war or the government.

World War I ended in 1918 when Germany surrendered. All powers had peacefully decided to stop the war until a full agreement for amity was made. A conference was held in France and the allied powers signed the Treaty of Versailles which officially ended the war. The United States did not sign the treaty. They did not want to be a part of the United Nations, which was created in the treaty. The U.S believed it would cause them many problems overseas. The treaty was established to diminish the German Army. However, little did the Allies know that is would provoke another world war.

World War II began in 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. Unlike World War I which was a war to conserve democracy, World War II was a war for world dominance. Germany and Japan also known as the Axis powers were invading many countries in Europe and Asia. Britain, France, and Russia, known as the allied powers, declared war on the axis powers and thus began another World War. Like before, America wanted to stay out of the war. However, it did see the Nazi power as a threat and aided the British with weapons and goods. They also stopped trade with Japan, which would cause tension between the two countries.

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.” America had a huge reason to go to war. President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked congress to declare war on Japan the next day. The day after, Germany declared war on the United States officially making it a World War.

During this war, America was actually more involved in battle than it was in World War I. Many American troops fought in the pacific helping defeat many Japanese fleets. “The U.S protected Australia from the Japanese during the Coral Sea battle and had a victory at the Midway Island with the strategy of island hopping.” There were also troops fighting in Europe. Many troops fought in battles in Italy and even helped the British fight during the invasion of Normandy.

In addition, during this war, the United States Government became even more powerful than it was during World War I. “Federal agencies like the War Production Board and the Office of price administration took unprecedented control of the American Economy. In addition, there was food rations and supplies and industries were completely taken over and the government even fixed wages, rents, prices and especially production quotas.” The war also contributed to the American economy. “There was much war production which helped the U.S Gross National Product from 91 billion to 214 billion during the war.”

World War II contributed so many opportunities for minority groups in the nation. Due to the increase in war production, man women had jobs in the industry. “Many were given jobs as welders, electricians, and riveters in defense plants, which had previously been jobs for men.” In addition, many opportunities for African Americans, Mexicans, and American Indians emerged since they were allowed to serve in the military. During this time, the civil right movement was also initiated.

Lastly, America made the decision to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, cities in Japan, as a way to make Japan surrender. Once Germany and Japan surrendered, numerous of treaties were made between each country to bring back peace. This time, the United States did sign and even decided to become a part of the United Nations.

Although the United States was involved in both world wars, they were more politically involved during World War II. Due to the bombing at Pearl Harbor, the U.S felt more reason to fight in the war. There was more support and encouragement to go to war from American Citizens. In addition, the government and economy increased further than in World War I. However, both wars are important parts of American History and helped shape the U.S become a global power. War is inevitable, which can be seen when America was led into both world wars. However, they remained powerful and were able to bring victory and peace, along with their allies, to the world each time.

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