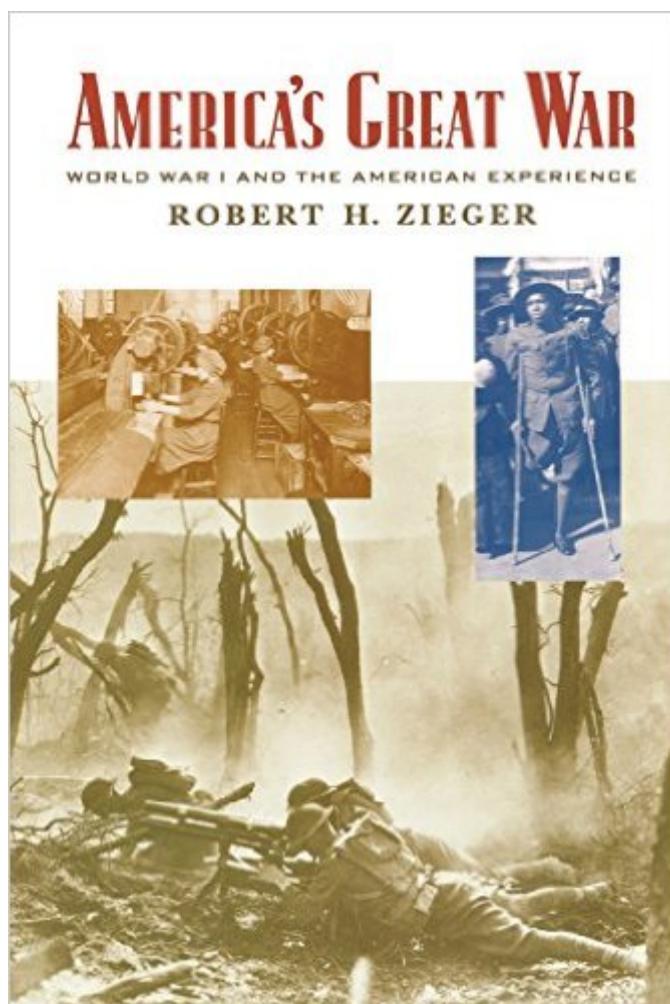


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America's Great War: World War I And The American Experience (Critical Issues In American History)



Synopsis

Recent bestsellers by Niall Ferguson and John Keegan have created tremendous popular interest in World War I. In America's Great War prominent historian Robert H. Zieger examines the causes, prosecution, and legacy of this bloody conflict from a frequently overlooked perspective, that of American involvement. This is the first book to illuminate both America's dramatic influence on the war and the war's considerable impact upon our nation. Zieger's engaging narrative provides vivid descriptions of the famous battles and diplomatic maneuvering, while also chronicling America's rise to prominence within the postwar world. On the domestic front, Zieger details how the war forever altered American politics and society by creating the National Security State, generating powerful new instruments of social control, bringing about innovative labor and social welfare programs, and redefining civil liberties and race relations. America's Great War promises to become the definitive history of America and World War I.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you are the serious reader, historian or educator looking for the political context of WWI, then grab this book. You will read about the Wilsonian politics of non intervention and his arrogant moral & ethical justification of our participation with an ultimate goal of a new world order. There is lengthy discussion of labor strife, discrimination of minorities and propaganda at home. The economics of war in a changing world according to Keynes is also given some attention. Unschooled readers will be interested in reading about the Alien & Sedition Act, and how the U.S. government responded

through law enforcement. Here, J. Edgar Hoover is introduced as the director of the precursor of the FBI. The last chapter contains an excellent list of political questions to be answered by historians like who is to blame for the failure of the Treaty of Versailles

Definitely, if you're looking for an easy, leisurely read, this is NOT what you want. This I had to read for my upper-level history class in college and it's definitely more up that avenue. However, if you want something a bit more scholarly that truly analyzes what a historian would look at, this is what you want. There are sections analyzing race, class, gender, progressivism, and much more. So it just depends on what you like! I will say that this did a really great job of analyzing the Treaty of Versailles.

This book was written to educate a general audience. The 'Foreword' says Woodrow Wilson's advice of self-determination, universal human rights, and an international organization to prevent future wars failed. But this merely shows Wilson's flawed thinking. Class and sectional differences make politics, and competitive trade leads to war. If one country seeks more colonies or hegemony it can only do so by attacking the countries with colonies or hegemony. There's no secret there. Wilson was a skilled rhetorician but talk cannot resolve economic rivalry when one country refuses to hand over its long-held powers. Once America began to supply the Allies for money they soon needed to guarantee an Allied victory (p.viii). The 'Chronology' fails to list the San Francisco Preparedness Day bombing in 1916, or the German Revolts in November 1918. The 'Introduction' says the Great War enhanced the "national security" government with new laws and powers to control and limit the thinking of people. These powers led to the end of political renewal (third parties) and the fossilization of the two-party system, more firmly controlled by corporations (p.3). The origins of the National Security State was based on "domestic corporate hegemony" (p.18). The American economy in 1914 had the worst depression since the 1890s, and prosperity resulted from sales to Europe (p.11). Britain placed minefields to bottle up the German fleets in the Baltic and North Seas. But submarines could evade minefields and sink British battle cruisers. Vulnerable U-boats learned they could only win by attacking without warning (p.13). The crisis of the Lusitania sinking was the German answer to the British blockade (p.23). Germany agreed to abandon unannounced attacks on merchant shipping; and began to produce more U-boats (p.25)! The Great War turned America from a debtor to a creditor nation, and began to sell and invest in colonial countries (p.31). The "preparedness" movement attempted to increase the power of the wealthy over wage earners (pp.33-34). Zieger wonders why Wilson asked for war in 1917 and not earlier

(p.54)? At this time America would get the benefits of an Allied victory at the lowest cost. The Wilson administration chose borrowing rather than taxation to finance the war (p.75). This caused inflation (p.76). The income tax became the main source of funds (p.77). Chapter 3 discusses the stories that were created to sell "the war to end war" to a fractious nation. The armed forces provided a test laboratory for experiments in social control (p.90). America kept its army independent and not as replacement troops for failed Allied military strategy (p.93). American troops won the war in July 1918 (p.98). French medical services were much worse (p.108). "Shell shock" was a new disease (p.110). US Navy destroyers attacked submarines and protected troopships (p.113). Chapter 5 tells about domestic events during the war, the effects on class, race, and gender (p.151). Chapter 6 covers the postwar peace conferences. Wilson's personal outlook is described (p.155). It was "idealistic" and ignored the realities of the world (p.156). Foreign markets would solve the problem of the economy (p.157)! The Armistice allowed the German government to put down revolts (p.161). There were other political considerations. The Fourteen Points was a response to the Bolshevik publication of secret treaties (p.163). Were Wilson's actions the result of pride and arrogance (p.167)? The defeat of Germany was followed by conflicting Allied policies (pp.171-175). Chapter 7 tells of the events in Postwar America. The Bolshevik Revolution had effects in America, even without the economic turmoil. Illegal violence occurred (p.197). The Sedition Act nullified parts of the Bill of Rights. How could the high-minded Wilson government be so repressive (p.198)? This chapter has the history that is usually censored from popular literature (p.208). Henry Cabot Lodge explained his view of Wilson (p.217). The critics of Article 10 were correct, then or now (pp.220-221). Wilson's physical problems caused the rejection of the Treaty (p.224). When the United States joined the United Nations in 1945 it followed the spirit of the Lodge reservations. Chapter 8 has a final look at the questions (p.229).

I have continued to find good books on American involvement in WWI . . . this one is good, but not great.

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