Name _____ Date _____

World War I and the Home Front: Key Terms from Neutrality to Armistice

Directions: Read the passage about World War I and the home front. Then answer each question.

World War I and the Home Front

A Nation at War, at Home and Abroad

When war broke out in Europe in August 1914, President Woodrow Wilson declared that the United States would follow a policy of neutrality, refusing to take sides in a war between other nations. Neutrality did not mean equal treatment in trade, however. Britain's navy set up a blockade, using warships to cut off Germany's ports, so most American goods could not reach Germany. Meanwhile, American sales to Britain and France soared, and American banks lent the Allies huge sums. By 1917, the United States was neutral in law but bound by trade to one side.

Germany struck back with U-boats, or submarines. In May 1915, a U-boat sank the British passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing nearly 1,200 people, including 128 Americans. Under American pressure, Germany promised in 1916 to stop sinking passenger and merchant ships without warning. In early 1917, Germany broke that promise and began unrestricted submarine warfare, attacking any ship, even a neutral one, in wide war zones around Britain and its allies. Americans then learned of the Zimmermann Telegram, a secret German offer to help Mexico regain Texas, New Mexico and Arizona if it joined a war against the United States, and anger at Germany grew. In April 1917, Congress declared war on Germany.

The army needed millions of men quickly. In May 1917, Congress passed the Selective Service Act, which created conscription, a system that requires men to serve in the military. About 24 million men registered, and about 2.8 million were drafted. To build support at home, Wilson created the Committee on Public Information, led by the journalist George Creel. Its propaganda, information spread to shape public opinion, often in a one-sided way, urged Americans to buy Liberty Bonds, loans that citizens made to the government to pay for the war, and to save food and fuel.

The government also restricted dissent, or open disagreement with its policies. The Espionage Act of 1917 made it a crime to interfere with the draft or to aid the enemy. The Sedition Act of 1918 went further. Sedition means speech or action that urges people to resist or overthrow the government, and the new law made it a crime to criticize the government, the Constitution, the flag or the military in words that officials judged disloyal. Eugene V. Debs, leader of the Socialist Party, was sentenced to ten years in prison for an antiwar speech in 1918. In 1919, the Supreme Court ruled that in wartime the government could punish speech that created an immediate threat, such as leaflets urging drafted men to oppose the draft. In practice, wartime loyalty came to mean not only obeying the law but also keeping quiet about doubts.

The war also changed where Americans lived and worked. Immigration from Europe nearly stopped, and millions of men left their jobs for the military. Northern factories needed workers, and recruiters and Black newspapers urged Black Southerners to come north. Hundreds of thousands moved to cities such as Chicago, Detroit, New York and Philadelphia during the war years, part of the Great Migration, a movement of Black Americans out of the South that lasted for decades. Migrants hoped for better pay and an escape from segregation and lynching, but many found crowded housing, job discrimination and, in some cities, attacks by white mobs. Women also took factory and railroad jobs that men had left, and their war work strengthened the case for women's right to vote.

In 1918, a pandemic, an outbreak of disease that crosses many countries, swept through army camps and cities. The influenza of 1918 took the lives of an estimated 675,000 Americans. Around the world, the death toll was at least 50 million. Disease, especially influenza, killed more American service members than combat did. The fighting ended with an armistice, an agreement to stop fighting, on November 11, 1918. About 116,000 Americans in uniform had died.

1. In the first paragraph, what does neutrality mean?

A. Lending money to both sides in a war in equal amounts
B. Joining whichever side in a war seems most likely to win it
C. Refusing to take sides in a war between other nations
D. Ending a war by signing a peace treaty

2. How does the first paragraph refine, or add to, the meaning of neutrality by the time it reaches 1917?

A. It shows that neutrality required the nation to build a large army and navy at once, well before 1917.
B. It shows that neutrality meant Americans could no longer travel on any ships at all.
C. It shows the United States trading equally with every nation that was at war in Europe.
D. It shows the nation staying out of the fighting while trade and loans tied it to Britain and France.

3. As the passage uses the term, what was unrestricted submarine warfare?

A. Attacking any ship, even a neutral one, in wide war zones
B. Using submarines to rescue sailors from sinking ships
C. Allowing only passenger ships to cross the ocean safely
D. Building as many submarines as a nation wants, with no limit set by any treaty

4. Besides the new submarine attacks, what gave Americans another reason to go to war in early 1917, according to the passage?

A. The Sedition Act, which Congress passed in 1918
B. News of a secret German offer to help Mexico regain land
C. The influenza pandemic that swept through army camps and cities in 1918
D. The Selective Service Act, which Congress passed in May 1917 to raise an army

5. Match each term to the meaning the passage gives it.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ conscription
2. _____ propaganda
3. _____ Liberty Bonds
4. _____ pandemic

Choices for question 5

A. The use of warships to cut off an enemy's ports

B. An outbreak of disease that crosses many countries

C. Loans that citizens made to the government to pay for the war

D. A system that requires men to serve in the military

E. Information spread to shape public opinion, often in a one-sided way

6. Which example from the passage shows the government punishing speech during the war?

A. Recruiters and Black newspapers urged Black Southerners to move north for factory jobs.

B. Germany promised in 1916 to stop sinking ships without warning.

C. About 24 million men registered under the Selective Service Act.

D. Eugene V. Debs was sentenced to ten years in prison for an antiwar speech.

7. By the end of the paragraph on the Espionage and Sedition Acts, how has the passage refined the idea of loyalty in wartime?

A. Loyalty came to mean moving north to take a factory job that a soldier had left.

B. Loyalty came to mean refusing to buy Liberty Bonds.

C. Loyalty came to mean keeping quiet about doubts as well as obeying the law.

D. Loyalty came to mean voting for the Socialist Party.

8. Which two reasons does the passage give for the move of hundreds of thousands of Black Southerners to Northern cities during the war?

☐ A. Migrants hoped to escape segregation and lynching in the South.

☐ B. Northern cities promised them uncrowded housing and an end to job discrimination.

☐ C. Northern factories needed workers after immigration from Europe nearly stopped.

☐ D. The Selective Service Act ordered Black men to report to army camps in the North.

☐ E. The Sedition Act had shut down the Black newspapers of the South.

9. Two more terms from the passage belong in these sentences. Pick each from the word bank.

Word bank

Great Migration • armistice • blockade • conscription • neutrality

The fighting stopped with an _____ on November 11, 1918. The wartime move of Black Southerners to Northern cities was part of the _____, which lasted for decades.

10. According to the passage, what was one effect of the war on women's work?

A. Women were drafted into the army under the Selective Service Act.

B. Women took factory and railroad jobs that men had left.

C. Women were barred from buying Liberty Bonds.

D. Women lost the right to vote in several states.