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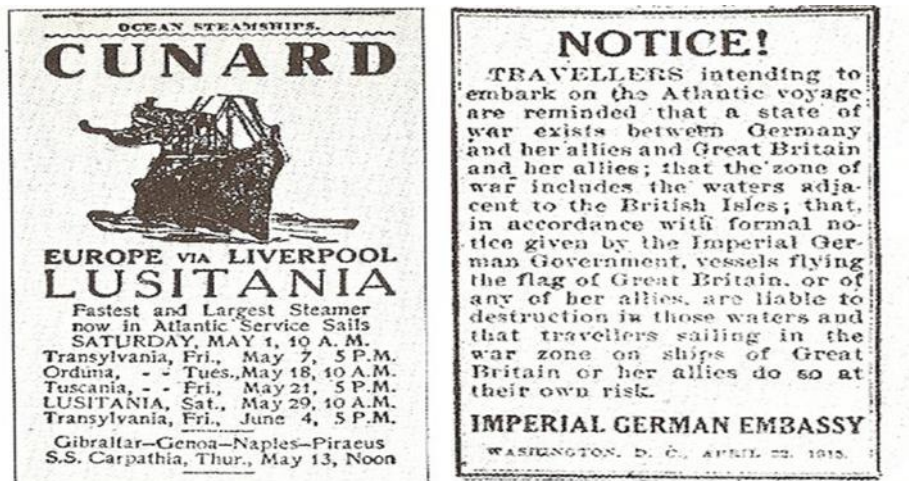
Special Topics of the First World War: The Sinking of the Lusitania, Execution of Edith Cavell, and the Zimmermann Telegram Questions

Use the “Lusitania, Sinking of (1914-1918 Online)” handout to answer these questions

1. To help finance the Lusitania’s construction and operation, Cunard signed an agreement with the British government. In what ways did the British government benefit from this agreement?

2. What did the Germans declare in February 1915? Describe the German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. What effect do you think this might have had on neutral countries like the U.S.?

3. In an effort to avoid controversy if the Lusitania was attacked by a U-boat, the German Embassy in Washington took the precaution of warning transatlantic travelers in the following “Notice!” published in fifty American newspapers. In a number of newspapers, this alert was printed right next to sailing notices for the Lusitania. According to the “Notice!”, why would passengers aboard the Lusitania be sailing “at their own risk”?



4. On May 1, 1915, the Lusitania departed from New York bound for Liverpool, England with 1959 passengers and crew aboard. On May 7, 1915, at 2:10 pm it was 18 kilometers off the southern coast of Ireland when it encountered a U-20 submarine. What happened? How many people were killed?

5. Why did the German government believe that the Lusitania was a legitimate military target? Would you still consider the Lusitania a passenger ship even though it carried this cargo? Why or why not?

6. Following the sinking of the Lusitania, the British capitalized on the tragedy by publishing propaganda posters such as: "Irishmen - avenge the Lusitania. Join an Irish regiment to-day", and "Take Up the Sword of Justice". Although the United States waited until April of 1917 to declare war against Germany, it too displayed the Lusitania on propaganda posters such as "Enlist". What messages do you think these posters are conveying? Are they effective, in your opinion? Explain.



7. Do you think the German government, British government, or Captain Turner deserves the blame for the sinking? Explain.

8. Although the incident did generate anti-German sentiment, it did not immediately cause the United States to enter the war. Instead, the American government issued a letter of protest to Germany while maintaining its policy of neutrality. As a result of pressure from the United States, Germany promised to abandon unrestricted submarine warfare in September 1915. But, this promise was broken in February 1917. If you were president of the United States, would you want to enter the First World War after Americans lost their lives due to the sinking of the Lusitania? Why or why not?

Use the “Cavell, Edith Louisa (1914-1918 Online)” handout to answer these questions

9. Who was Edith Cavell? When and where was she born? What did the occupying German forces in Belgium do to her on October 12, 1915? Why?

10. Cavell was the matron, or supervisor, of the Berkendael Medical Institute – a nurse training school - in the Brussels suburb of Ixelles. How did it become involved in the war effort?

11. On August 23, 1914, the British waged a fierce battle near Mons; a town just thirty-five kilometers south of Brussels. Besides providing medical care as a nurse, Cavell became involved with an underground resistance group of Belgian civilians. What activities did they participate in? What do you think motivated these people to participate in these risky endeavours?

12. On August 5, 1915, after almost a full year of helping allied soldiers escape into Holland, Cavell was arrested and charged with conducting soldiers to the enemy. What happened when she was taken into custody? With the help of the underground resistance network, Cavell succeeded in smuggling approximately how many men out of German-occupied Belgium?

13. The Germans had intended for Cavell’s execution to function as a deterrent to discourage others from aiding the enemy and thus maintain order in occupied Belgium, but their plan backfired. How?

14. In what ways did Germans attempt to justify their decision to execute Edith Cavell? If she had been a man instead, do you think her execution would have generated such protest and outrage around the Allied world? Explain.

15. Following the execution of Edith Cavell, British and American newspapers such as the Illustrated London News and the New York Tribune published stories and drawings relating to the execution. What messages do you think these drawings are conveying? Are they effective, in your opinion? Explain.

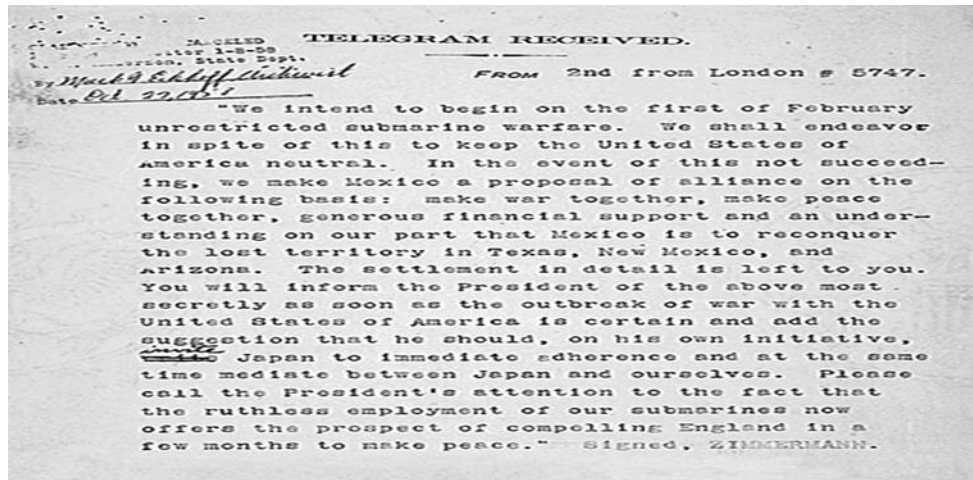


16. What do you think Cavell's legacy is?

Use the "Zimmermann Telegram (1914-1918 Online)" handout to answer these questions

17. Who was Arthur Zimmermann?

18. On January 16, 1917, Arthur Zimmermann sent a secret coded message to the German ambassador to Mexico, Heinrich von Eckardt. Unfortunately for the Germans, British Naval Intelligence officials intercepted and decoded the telegram. What alarming news was contained in the telegram?



19. What does the telegram reveal about Germany's plans regarding submarine warfare? What is Zimmermann prepared to offer Mexico if it goes to war against the United States? Why might Mexico consider such an offer?

20. What other country did the Germans intend to invite to join the alliance?

21. How did Mexican President Venustiano Carranza react to the alliance proposal? Why?

22. Why do you think the Germans made this offer to Mexico?

23. British code-breakers at the office known as "Room 40" decoded Zimmermann's Telegram. Recognizing the effect it would have on U.S. public opinion, they released the message to President Wilson on February 24. On March 1, news of the secret alliance proposal made the front pages of American newspapers across the country. How did the American public react?

24. Following the interception and decoding of the Zimmermann telegram, American newspapers such as The Evening Star (Washington, D.C.) and The Dallas Morning News published stories and drawings relating to the telegram. What messages do you think these drawings are conveying? Are they effective, in your opinion? Explain.

