

# World war i - the battle at belleau wood research papers examples

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World War I, also known as the Great War, spanned from 1914-1918. It was also the first major contest of arms fought by large, centrally organized nation-states, which was centered in Europe, since the dawn of Industrial Revolution. It all started on one faithful day of June 28, 1914 when the Austrian archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were shot by a Serbian assassin in Sarajevo. The armies present in the field are 12 million Russians, 11 million Germans, nearly 8 million Austro-Hungarians, more than 8 million Frenchmen and a same number of Britons, 5 million Italians, almost 3 million Turks and 4 million Americans. The World War I was also named as the first "total war" for it did not only deployed a large number of armies in the field but also presented the modernity happening during that time. This is shown in the use of sophisticated transportation systems for astounding speed and the use of lethal weapons such as machine guns and poison gas. The introduction of the use of airplanes and submarines for war was also seen in this war.

At the outbreak of World War I, the United States had nothing to do it. Aside from that the war is centered in Europe, the United States is trying to avoid the conflict brought about by the war which brought about massive destruction and high casualty rates. They were trying to pursue the policy of non-intervention. But on May 7, 1915, a German U-boat sank the British liner RMS Lusitania, a passenger ship, which led to casualties. Among the casualties were 128 Americans. This led to an anti-German feeling among many Americans. The US President that time, President Woodrow Wilson, sworn that America will not fight but demanded to put a stop on the attacks of passenger ships. The Germans abided to this demand but Wilson failed to

try to reconcile a settlement between both parties. Wilson also repeatedly specified that the United States will not tolerate unrestricted submarine warfare which is in accordance to the violation of international law.

On January 1917, the Germans continued the unrestricted submarine warfare. With this, they realized that they would be entering the American territory and violating the international law making them an enemy of the United States. With this scenario, the German Foreign Minister recruited Mexico, using a Zimmermann telegram, to be their ally against the United States. In return for their alliance, the Germany will finance the war of Mexico in recovering their previous territories such as Texas, New Mexico and Arizona from the US.

The United Kingdom intercepted a message from Germany to Mexico regarding the alliance that was about to unfold. They presented it to the US embassy and apparently led its way to President Wilson then he presented it to the public. This message was seen as an act of war by the Americans. With this, he argued that the war was important to the US and that they should have a voice in the peace conference. The United States should partake in this war for that he believes that winning this war will eliminate future wars brought about by militarism. On the 6th day of April, 1917, the US congressed declared a war against Germany after the incidence of the sinking of seven US merchant ships and the publication of the Zimmermann telegram from Germany.

Beforehand, the United States had a small army but after the declaration of war against Germany. They started drafting people in the army which numbered to 2. 8 million men after the Selective Service Act was passed in

the Congress. By June 26, the American 1st Division and 5th Marine Regiment land in France. During the span of September to October, the remaining 2nd Division were sent to France. The US Congress also gave US citizenship to Puerto Ricans when they were drafted to join in World War I through the Jones Act. With this numbers at hand, the United States began sending 10, 000 new recruited soldiers to France every day by the summer 1918. Since then, the Americans associated themselves in the World War I which was centered in Europe. The first troop of American who arrived in France in June 1917 was commanded by General John J. Pershing. Although they arrived in mid-1917, the troops were not deployed into the battle in large number until the early 1918.

The 2nd Division of the American troops who arrived in France was soldiers and marines in names only. Most of them were youths who were a year less before they have to be recruited by their local offices for their responsibility to their country, patriotism. Unlike the 1st Division who were all army—regiments from Pennsylvania and Texas, the 2nd Division were hastily put together from garrisons at home and abroad and those who volunteered themselves to be sent overseas to fight the war. This division was practically was lacking of army training and is not equipped to fight in France yet. With this instance and a shortage of shipping to be used to transport this unit to France, the War Development plans were changed. The army also lacks rifles, ammunition, automatic weapons, artillery, horses, trucks and other necessary equipment needed for the war. Their navy was small with a few ships thus their merchant marine was less effective but there is a need to deploy every single available fighting unit to win a war to end all future wars.

Given these circumstances, the first to be forced aside were the marines. The marines, in tradition and in law, represent only a fraction of the United States' military strength. They are about a few thousand in number before the declaration of war against Germany. But after the declaration, their number sprouted to 18, 000 because President Wilson used emergency powers to increase their number by increasing their ranks where only 693 were officers. With this number, at least two infantry of Marine Regiment can be hastily organized. These two regiments were the 5th and 6th Marine regiments. The 5th Marine Regiment was transferred to control the War Department while the 6th Marine Regiment began assembling at Quantico, Virginia, the new marine base.

At the start of the year 1918, the 2nd Division recruits began their real training for war. They worked equally hard as new units arrived daily. These new arrivals had to start their training immediately to cope out with the training of those who came ahead of them. They trained until mid-March. The World War I has reached a crisis point for both the British and French. As the war reaches its fourth year, the deadlock of this war was about to be broken. The British offensive attacks in 1917 was a failure leaving the French Army tired and on the verge of a revolt. Due to this, by the late 1917, the British and French armies forbid any significant offensive act or attack in 1918 until the American troops can aid to their need in terms of war force. They focused mainly on the defensive until the American troops finished their training. The end of their training will signify the start of the offensive attacks with the French army in order to defeat the Germans.

The Germans also believed that the intervention of the American manpower

and contribution to the war production will greatly affect the result of the war. With this in mind, the German began a black propaganda against the American. The campaign focused on belittling the fighting competencies of the American army. They used the newspaper as the media for the black propaganda. The newspapers characterized the Americans as degenerates and hesitant rookies. One newspaper also wrote that their army looks down on the American army and that they are not even worthy to be considered as their enemies.

While the 2nd Division started their real war training, a lot of things happened. The Imperial Russia collapsed. This event gave the German the opportunity to strike a decisive blow on the Western Front before the Americans can have a strategy with its allies. German General Ludendorff and his staff began planning the Operation " Michael". This operation was designed to break the defensive front of the British/French army by bypassing the enemies' strongpoints and attacking the enemies' rear side to spread confusion. This was done by emphasizing close coordination of artillery and rapid movement of the units. 7

The German " Michael" offensive started from March 2 to April 4. In this event, the Germans attacked the Belgium at the Battle of St. Quentin on March 21 while the British went to their aid under their treaty obligations. After two days, the German broke through their defenses causing the British to fall back. Then the Battle of Bapaume followed on March 24 forcing the British to fall back further. The battles continued while the Germans make its move to defeat its enemies. On the 28th of May, the Battle of Cantigny occurred. It was the first sustained American offensive of the war. With the

aid of the Frenchmen, they captured the village and held the ground against repeated counterattacks. Then on the 4th of June, a defensive battle against the Germans followed. The Battle of Chateau-Thierry was a defensive battle fought by a French colonial division with the assistance of the American 7th Machine Gun Division. They defeated the Germans who were attempting to cross the Marne river.

The 26 day battle began On June 1, when the 2nd Division troops joined along the defensive line north of the village of Lucy-le-Bocage. When the Marine Corps were advised to retreat, Marine Captain Lloyd Williams replied, "Retreat. Hell! We just got here!". It was centered on Lucy-le-Bocage. With this, the 5th Marines were deployed to the west while the 6th Marines were to the east. Most of the units deployed do not have machine guns as their support.

On June 2, the German frontline reached Belleau Wood. Then after a day, the 237th Division of the German Units occupied Belleau Wood. On the 4th day, the German attack against the American failed. The reason for such failure was the incoordination between the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines Unit around Les Mares Farm and 1st Battalion 5th Marines Unit near Champillon. The German attacks were focused only against the farm, not taking advantage of the gap between their units. This was the known as the high water mark for the German offensive since it was the closest the Germans ever got to Paris which was 50 miles away.

With the knowledge that the Germans only occupied a corner in the Wood, the French XXI Corps commander ordered the 2nd Division troops, more specifically the 4th Marine Brigade, to recapture Belleau Wood. But in reality,

the German Army had occupied the entire wood, turning it into their stronghold.

On the 6th day, the Attack on Hill 412 took place. This was known as the most catastrophic day in Marine Corps up until now since two assaults happened that day. At 0500, the 1st battalion, 5th Marine Regiment attacked the west of Belleau Wood. This attack strengthened the frontline supporting the assault on the wooded area. Twelve hours later, the battalions of the 5th and 6th Marine Regiment assaulted the woods from the south and west. They attempted to capture Bouresches on the east side of the wood. The uncoordinated attacks of this two units led them struggling in the fight, having the worst single day's casualties of 1087 men killed or wounded. On the 9th day, an order was issued to the Marine Corps to attack the following morning. The units moved into position later that night. The attacks continued for days with terrible losses. On the 25th day, the major 14 hour bombardment started at 0300 leading the clearance of the remaining possible. Then the Marines and the Army machine gunners participate in the assault and on the last day, the US Marine Corps seized Belleau Wood. The battle was ferocious and costly. The American Marines attacked into the wood six times, with only a hand-to-hand combat before the Germans finally withdrew from the area. There are over 9, 000 casualties from the American Marines. Thus, making it one of the bloodiest battles the Americans would fight. Edwards This was the shout out to both the allies in the war that the United States was on the Western Front to Front to fight. Also, it showed the US Marine Corps determination and dedication opposed to that of the black propaganda that was released in the newspapers by the Germans.



The Battle of Belleau Wood was the most important part in the World War I where the participation of the marines were recognized. The battle was won even though they have a limited strategic plan. After this battle, the marines were considered as a formidable fighting force and boost the morale of the soldiers.

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