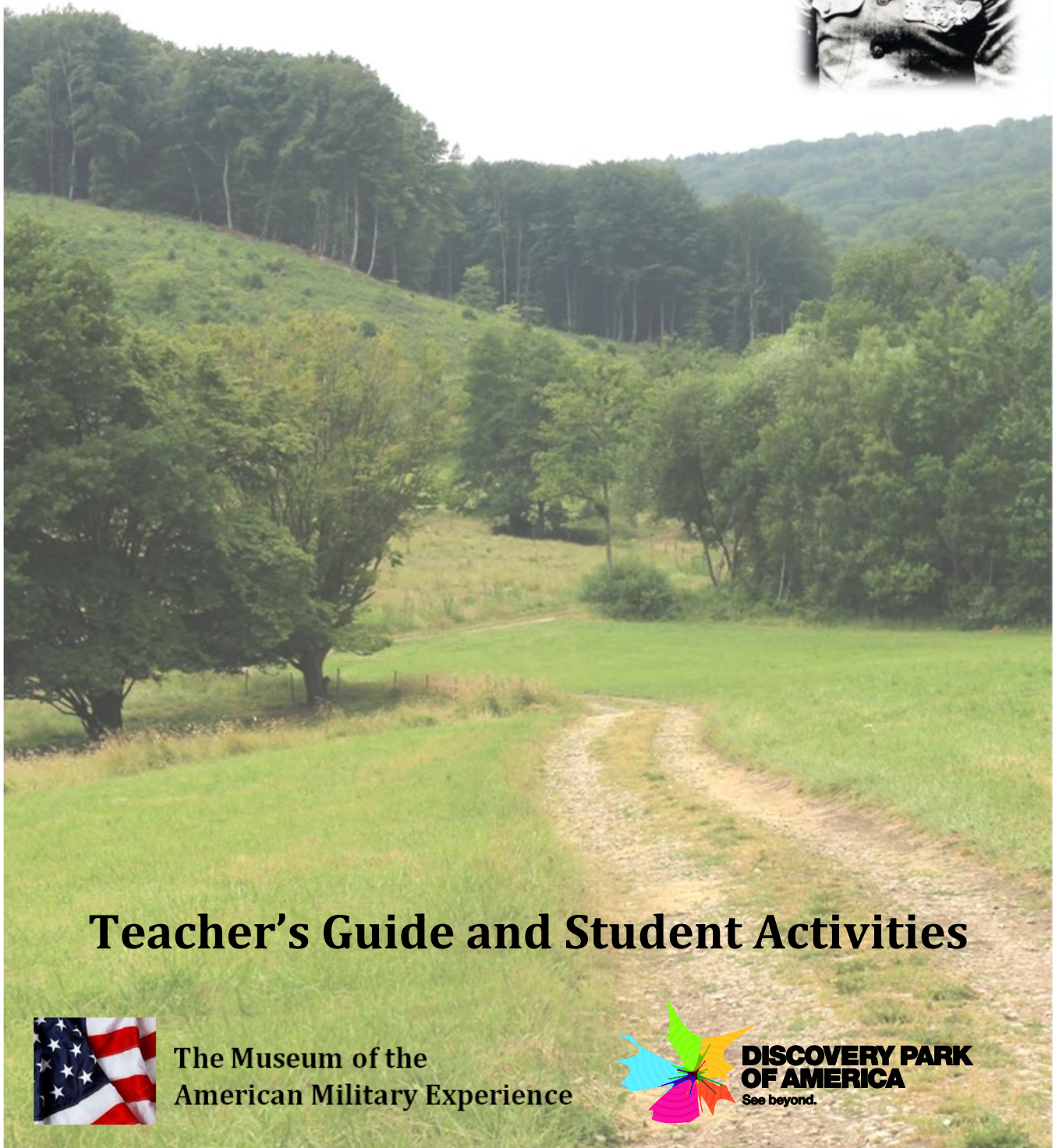


In the footsteps of Sergeant York

An Exhibit



Teacher's Guide and Student Activities



The Museum of the
American Military Experience



**DISCOVERY PARK
OF AMERICA**
See beyond.



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Main Cover Photo by Martin Kane, Discovery Park of America, June 2015



About the Exhibit

Thank you for agreeing to chaperone a group of students on their visit to Discovery Park of America and through the *In the Footsteps of Sergeant York* exhibit.

This exhibit has been developed by American Military Exhibits, a branch of the Museum of the American Military Experience, an organization dedicated to showcasing the experiences of the United States Military from pre-revolution through the conflicts and wars in which we are now engaged. The exhibit was developed hand-in-hand with the members of a 2006 archeological expedition to France. The goal of the expedition was to use the latest in GPS and GIS technology to uncover the history of Alvin York's tremendous experiences.

The exhibit features numerous World War I era artifacts, including objects recovered from the battlefield burial sites of several American soldiers.

After an initial opening in October of 2012 at the Military Branch of the Tennessee State Museum in Nashville, *In the Footsteps of Sergeant York* has travelled to several other locations including the Pink Palace in Memphis, and the Customs House Museum in Clarksville.



Notes for Teachers and Chaperones

Teachers, this guide is designed to help you prepare your students to see the exhibit with background information about World War I, Alvin York's life, and several activity sheets.

To those visiting with students, thank you for agreeing to chaperone a field trip to Discovery Park of America and through the *In the Footsteps of Sergeant York* exhibit.

A field trip is part of a student's educational experience, and we are especially thankful to teachers and parents who join field trips as chaperones. Please remain with your group of students throughout the exhibit and encourage them to pay particular attention to a number of the artifacts and explanations. It is your responsibility to keep the students engaged and behaving properly, and we ask for your help in enforcing our rules. (We expect all adults to follow them as well.)

Please take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the rules for the *In the Footsteps of Alvin York* exhibit.

- No food or drink will be allowed to enter.
- No backpacks are allowed to enter.
- No running inside the exhibit space.
- Flash photography is not allowed
- Artifacts that are displayed behind a rope, ribbon, glass case, or barrier of any kind are not to be touched.
- Students must be chaperoned at all times.

Thank you and we look forward to seeing you during your field trip!

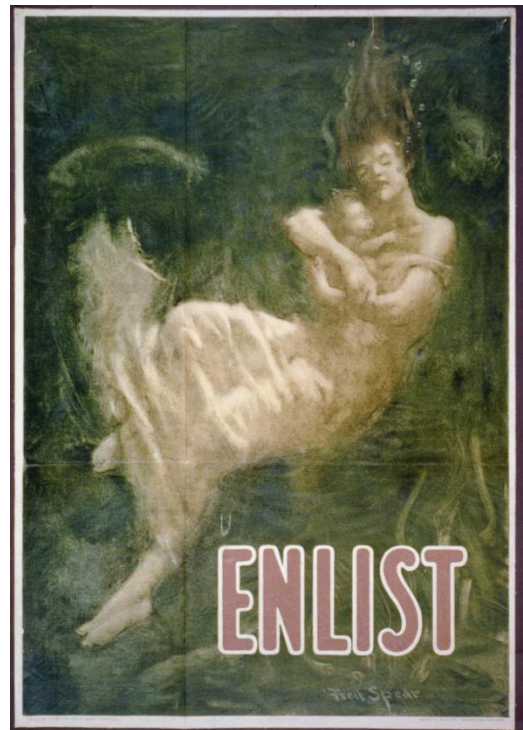


The United States in World War I

World War I began in August of 1914, but the United States did not join the war until 1917. The first three years of the war saw savage fighting and millions of dead and wounded soldiers. Trenches that protected defenders and deadly new weapons like machine guns and poison gas made it almost impossible for one side to successfully attack the other. As a result, the war on the Western Front (where Germany fought Britain and France) quickly became a stalemate; neither side gained or lost a significant amount of territory from 1915 to the beginning of 1918.

Today, the United States is involved in conflicts and disputes all over the world. At the time of World War I, though, the United States tended toward isolationism. The isolationists believed the United States should not get involved in the war. In 1914, most Americans agreed with this position, believing that it was none of our business if Europe's empires wanted to batter each other to pieces. It took a very long time for American opinions to change enough that people supported declaring war on Germany.

A number of incidents early in the war made Americans angry with Germany. The Germans wanted to stop America from selling food, weapons, and other supplies to the British; so they used submarines to blockade British ports. In May of 1915, a German submarine attacked the *RMS Lusitania*, a passenger ship carrying almost 2,000 civilians. One hundred twenty-eight American passengers died when the ship sank. People in the United States were furious, not only because Americans had died, but because warships were not supposed to attack vessels carrying civilian passengers. The Germans claimed they were justified in their attack because the *Lusitania* was secretly carrying ammunition, a fact that has been proven to be true by divers visiting the wreck site. At the time, the war cargo was a closely guarded secret, and the loss of American lives helped sway public opinion in favor of war.



1915 poster featuring a picture of a drowned mother and child from the *Lusitania* to encourage young men to enlist



After the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Germany was more careful about which ships their submarines attacked because they did not want the United States to enter the war. Although many Americans were angry about the *Lusitania*, they still did not feel that they should get involved in Europe’s war. President Woodrow Wilson used the slogan “He Kept Us Out of War” while running for reelection in 1916. The Germans, however, did two things in early 1917 which finally convinced the United States to declare war.

First, in January, the Germans sent a secret telegraph to the government of Mexico. This message, which came to be known as the Zimmerman Telegraph, offered to provide money and weapons to Mexico if it declared war on the United States. Once Germany had defeated Britain and France, the telegraph promised, it would also help Mexico reconquer Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. The United States had won those states in the Mexican-American War during the 1840s. The Zimmerman Telegraph backfired; Mexico was not interested in fighting the United States, and the British intercepted the message and passed it on to the Americans.

Next, the German government gave their submarine captains permission to once again start attacking American ships. Starting on February 1, 1917, German submarines had orders to attack any ship whatsoever that tried to enter a British port. The Germans knew that these attacks would make the United States declare war, but they hoped their blockade could force the British to surrender before American troops could join the fight. Finally, the United States was sufficiently angry with Germany to join World War I, and it did so in April of 1917.



Registering for the draft, June 1917

As Germany suspected, the United States was not ready to join so massive a war immediately. The American army was much smaller than those of Germany, France, or Britain; so it had to quickly draft and train millions of new soldiers. Very few American soldiers actually fought on the Western Front until 1918, but they started to arrive in large numbers in the spring of that year. The influx of fresh troops gave the Entente (Britain, France, and its allies) an advantage that the Germans could not match. For the first time since late 1914, the Germans were pushed out of their trenches and the bloody stalemate was broken.



From August to November of 1918, America and its allies attacked the Germans constantly in a series of huge battles called the Hundred Days Offensive. The German army fought ferociously, but its men were worn out from years of fighting and could not replace its losses. The Germans had expected the inexperienced Americans to make poor soldiers but instead found that American troops attacked with reckless courage. The Germans lost large chunks of territory. By October, they realized that they could not win the war and started negotiating terms for an armistice.

It was in October of 1918, that Alvin York performed his famous deed, capturing 132 German soldiers almost single-handedly. He and his comrades were taking part in a larger battle, helping to capture land between the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River in Northern France. This battle continued until November 11, when the Germans finally surrendered, and World War I ended.

After the war ended, President Wilson played a major role in negotiating the terms of peace. Wilson laid out terms that he thought would be fair to everyone involved, even the countries that had lost. He called these terms the Fourteen Points. If adopted, they would have prevented the kind of secret alliance that brought many countries into the war in the first place, banned naval blockades, and given freedom to several countries. (Before World War I, for instance, Poland was controlled by the Russian Empire.) Britain and France, though, did not like Wilson's easy terms: they had suffered much more than the United States, and they wanted Germany to be punished.

Negotiations for the treaty dragged on into 1919, and American soldiers like Alvin York stayed in France to help keep the peace. When the Treaty of Versailles was finally signed on June 28, 1919, the terms were not as forgiving as President Wilson had wanted. Not only did Germany have to give up all the land it had taken from France, Belgium, and other countries, it also had to pay France and Britain for the damage caused by the war. These reparations left Germany a much poorer country, and were one of the factors that angered Germans in the years leading up to World War II. In the aftermath of World War I, the United States was a much bigger power in the world than it had been before, but most Americans were still opposed to their country being too involved in the rest of the world's business.



In total, over 100,000 American soldiers died, and over 200,000 were wounded in World War I, making it the second-deadliest war in American history, after World War II. These casualties pale compared to those suffered by countries that started fighting in 1914. Britain, France, Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary all suffered more than 1,000,000 deaths and many more wounded in this devastating conflict.



An American cemetery in France – Photo by Martin Kane, Discovery Park of America, June 2015



In this newspaper photograph from 1919, the unit insignia of the 82nd Infantry Division is visible on York's shoulder. The Medal of Honor and Croix de Guerre are visible on his chest.

Biography of Alvin York

Alvin C. York may be the most celebrated American war hero from World War I. His military exploits earned him the Medal of Honor, and his story was made into a Hollywood movie. Outside of his service in the Army, York spent almost his entire life in a remote, rural area of north-central Tennessee.

York was born in a log cabin in Pall Mall, Tennessee, a small farming community in an area known as the Valley of the Three Forks of the Wolf. As a young man, York was a hard worker, but he had a reputation as a troublemaker, drinking heavily and fighting. In 1914, though, a friend of York's was killed in a barroom brawl, and he was convinced that he should change his ways. He went to a revival organized by the small church his mother attended and converted to Christianity.

When the United States joined World War I in 1917, York received notice that he had been drafted; he had to report for training and join the Army. York's church, however, was pacifist, opposed to all forms of violence, especially warfare. He applied for status as a conscientious objector, a person whose religious beliefs forbid him to fight. His church was so small, however, that the United States government did not recognize it. (Members of larger pacifist churches, like the Quakers, were granted conscientious objector status). His application was rejected, and he was told to report for training. Had he chosen to not report, he would have been considered a deserter under military law and would have faced the possibility of execution if convicted.



York obeyed, going to Camp Gordon in Georgia. Unlike many of his fellow draftees, York was familiar with rifles. Hunting was an important source of food in York's rural community; so people who grew up there learned to be skilled marksmen. Although he did everything he was told in training, he still did not want to fight, and the officers in his unit were concerned about losing so skillful a soldier. Two of his officers, Major Buxton and Captain Danforth, cited passages from the Bible about when it was acceptable to fight, and then let York go home for a few days to think. In the end, he concluded that the war was justified and agreed to serve in France.

His unit arrived in France in May of 1918, but they did not see combat until September. From September 12-15, they took part in one of the easiest battles the Americans fought in World War I, attacking an area the Germans were already abandoning. They experienced much fiercer fighting in October when they participated in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

On the morning of October 8, 1918, York's regiment was ordered to capture a railroad west of the small French town of Chatel-Chéhéry. Between them and their objective stood three hills, all occupied by German soldiers with rifles, machine guns, and light artillery. Almost at once, the American attack was pinned down by German fire. Seventeen men from York's company, led by Sergeant Bernard Early, were ordered to outflank the German lines and silence the machine guns.

*York on the hill
where he performed
his heroic deeds,
February 7, 1919.*





York and the others crept through the woods and first encountered a group of German reserves who were eating breakfast before joining the battle. Unarmed and surprised, the reserves surrendered immediately. German soldiers further up the hill realized what had happened, though. They shouted for the prisoners to get down and then opened fire. Six Americans, including Corporal Murray Savage, York's best friend in the unit and Sergeant Early, were killed with three more wounded. York, a Corporal, was the only non-commissioned officer left unharmed, so he took command.

Finding cover in the bushes and firing with great accuracy, York killed 20 or more German soldiers. A group of six charged him with bayonets, and he shot them as he would shoot turkeys: starting at the back and working forward, so those in front did not realize what was happening. Eventually, Lieutenant Vollmer, commander of the German troops, called down to York offering to surrender; Vollmer spoke English, and so the two were able to communicate. As York led the prisoners back to the American lines, Vollmer convinced another group of German soldiers to surrender as well. By the time York got back to his unit, he and his surviving men had 132 German prisoners under their watch.

York was commended for his deed, but did not immediately receive recognition. In fact, he and his comrades continued to fight in the Argonne Forest until November 1, when they were finally relieved by another American unit. His division remained in France after the fighting ended on November 11, 1918. It was not until 1919 that people began to pay attention to his deed; in April, the *Saturday Evening Post* published a story about both his exploits and his qualms about fighting. This article garnered such attention that celebrations were arranged for his return to the United States: a ticker-tape parade in New York and a meeting with Congress in Washington, D.C. Finally, he went back home to Pall Mall, Tennessee, where he married his sweetheart, Gracie, and moved onto the farm that his grateful neighbors had purchased for him.



This 1919 photograph shows York after the war, returning to rural Fentress County, Tennessee.



On December 12, 1919, York received the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest award an American soldier can receive. (He had previously received the Distinguished Service Cross, a slightly less prestigious medal.) Despite these honors and his newfound fame, he chose to stay in Pall Mall. York made it his mission to improve education in the rural region of Tennessee where he had been raised. He turned down various offers to make money off of his celebrity, although he did allow his wartime diary to be published. In 1926, York used the money he had raised to found the York Institute, a high school in Fentress County which still operates today.

In 1939, after resisting for years, York finally agreed to let a Hollywood producer make a film about his life. *Sergeant York* was released in 1941, starring Gary Cooper, one of the era's biggest stars, as the title character. The film deals primarily with York's life in Tennessee and his struggle to decide whether or not to fight in World War I. As it came out just months before Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, *Sergeant York* was widely perceived as pro-war propaganda. The film was highly successful, though, and won Gary Cooper an Oscar for Best Actor.

Later in life, York struggled financially and suffered serious health setbacks. He was bedridden in the final years of his life. He died in 1964, survived by his wife and seven children. Much of his family's farm was sold after his death, and later became Alvin C. York State Park.



*The York Institute, 1967.
(Photograph from the TN
Department of Conservation
Photograph Collection, Record
Group 82, courtesy of the TN
State Library and Archives.)*



Life in Pall Mall, Tennessee

The life that Alvin York lived before World War I was very unlike the lives most of us live today. He spent almost his entire life in a very rural part of Tennessee, Pall Mall (/ˈpæl ˈmæl/ **PAL MAL**). This area had not received even the most basic technological advances by the time York left for World War I. Backwoodsmen like York still practiced subsistence farming (growing only enough food for their own families) and relied on hunting - not for sport, but to provide an essential part of their diet.

At the beginning of the 20th century, new technologies such as cars and electricity were beginning to be used across the United States. These developments arrived in the big cities first, though. In the remote regions of Fentress County, Tennessee, it was possible that no one had access to electricity or running water in 1918. Homes were heated and lit by firelight; communication was by letter or telegraph, and water was well-drawn. Schools were also essentially nonexistent in many rural areas. Alvin York received only a third-grade education, and many in his community were not able to read at all. In many respects, their way of life was closer to how people lived in 1818 than to our modern experience.

When York went off to fight, he saw places far more advanced than Pall Mall. In his diary, he related how amazed he was when he first rode a subway train in New York City. He also encountered inventions like the radio and the telephone, devices which seem old-fashioned to us today but were unheard of at the time in his hometown. These new experiences motivated York to found schools in Fentress County, Tennessee, so that the next generation would be better prepared for the wide world than he had been.

Electricity arrived in Pall Mall in the 1930s and 1940s, thanks to an initiative known as the Tennessee Valley Authority. Started by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the TVA built a series of dams along the Tennessee River. These dams are hydroelectric: they use the power of the river to create electricity. The production of large amounts of power right in Tennessee allowed modern technology to spread to places like Pall Mall. By the time York died in 1964, Pall Mall was still remote and rural, but it was connected to the outside world. Life there resembled more closely the life we know today.



1918 Diary

Imagine that you live in a remote place like Pall Mall at the beginning of the 20th century. Write diary entries describing your life. What sorts of work or chores would you have, and what kinds of challenges would you face? Consider the following questions:

1. What types of modern technologies would not be available to you? How would their absence change the way you do things?
2. What habits or customs would be the same? Which would be different? Would you go to school?
3. How much contact would you have with the outside world? Would you know what things were like in other states? What about in other countries?
4. Think about your hopes and dreams for the future. What would you want out of life? What kind of future would you be likely to have?



Archaeological Adventures

Archaeologists try to learn about the way people lived and acted in the past by looking for clues in the things people left behind when they moved or died. They will very carefully excavate, or dig up, old cities, houses, battlefields, and other sites looking for whatever kinds of objects they can find. For instance, archaeologists might learn how people in the past hunted by studying their arrowheads, how they looked from studying their jewelry or art, and even what they ate from studying the scraps in trash heaps.

In recent years, archaeologists have been exploring the hills and forests outside Chatel-Chéhéry, France, looking for traces of the battlefield where Alvin York fought. They have unearthed many different artifacts, such as bullets, canteens, and helmets. When they found something, the archaeologists used computers to precisely mark where it was located. Then these remains were carefully preserved, and some of them are on display in the exhibit.



An archeologist conducting a magnetic survey to locate artifacts buried beneath the surface.

1. What do you think archaeologists could learn from finding bullets and other military equipment on a battlefield?
2. What kinds of artifacts do you think you could find in the area where you live?
3. What sorts of objects do you think you might leave? What could future archaeologists learn about you and your life?



Example Archaeological Adventures Answers

1. Different armies use different bullets and equipment; so archaeologists can often tell which soldiers stood in which parts of the battlefield. For instance, archaeologists outside Chatel-Chéhéry found German bullets and equipment at the top of a hill and American bullets further down the hill, which gives them an idea of how Alvin York's battle progressed.
2. In many parts of the United States, it is possible to find Native American artifacts, such as stone arrowheads. Different Native American tribes also created different kinds of pottery; so archaeologists can tell which tribe lived in an area based on what types of pottery they find. More recent artifacts could reflect the history of the area. For instance, in rural regions archaeologists might find old-fashioned farming equipment or remains of barns and other farm buildings.
3. Hard objects, like stone or metal, are more likely to last a long time. Things like cloth tend to deteriorate over the years. Archaeologists of the future will be more likely to find possessions made from durable materials.



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Alvin York Word Search

H D W U L F W Y Z U K D E Z H Y J E T G A P Y A U
V U S N V L Q E X C A V A T E Y R K K X H A S X S
L V R M Y Z N Z P K C P V Q G E V R H E N J S A E
G F V H E Z Z A S N X Q P O P F N Z I Q Z C I W R
E X L N R M Y U B G W I L M V M S L D A L E X L G
R D U L B W I F C N G O E S X K A V F R B S N X E
M N S N I O Z Q S W E I Z S G U J H Q G O U O Q A
A H I U E R M E D A L O F H O N O R H O M B G S N
N U T N Y L P S H I G E E B E I T T O N Q M J A T
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K N I U X A A S T Q K M Y Y F L R H R F A I O A K
H S A J S R N W L Y G Q I R C T I V R O R N A L A
W K K R N I C O X D E I W S N O M I P R T E M J X
H F H M T H E O J Z C P P A T R O Q F E I S V E L
X S U R R E N D E R S Z F R Q I L P B S F S G A B
X S B X L G W R C E A N F S T A C X E T A R J A M
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Y X Q Y W E L W H P N E Z A U N V V L I T I T T J
T U F A N G I W W D X K Y X L A L S I B W M I J L
W E D Z F U S I N D Z Q M L Y L L P J N T D I S U
Y F S B Z Y N L F J P L M Q E W M S X P Y K O I I
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Alvin York
Artifact
Germany
Medal of Honor
Surrender

Archaeology
Excavate
Infantry
Pall Mall
Trenches

Argonne Forest
France
Lusitania
Sergeant
World War I

Armistice
Gary Cooper
Machine Guns
Submarines
Woodrow Wilson



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Alvin York Word Search

H	D	W	U	L	F	W	Y	Z	U	K	D	E	Z	H	Y	J	E	T	G	A	P	Y	A	U
V	U	S	N	V	L	Q	E	X	C	A	V	A	T	E	Y	R	K	K	X	H	A	S	X	S
L	V	R	M	Y	Z	N	Z	P	K	C	P	V	Q	G	E	V	R	H	E	N	J	S	A	E
G	F	V	H	E	Z	Z	A	S	N	X	Q	P	O	P	F	N	Z	I	Q	Z	C	I	W	R
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R	D	U	L	B	W	I	F	C	N	G	O	E	S	X	K	A	V	F	R	B	S	N	X	E
M	N	S	N	I	O	Z	Q	S	W	E	I	Z	S	G	U	J	H	Q	G	O	U	O	Q	A
A	H	I	U	E	R	M	E	D	A	L	O	F	H	O	N	O	R	H	O	M	B	G	S	N
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Y	P	A	H	A	D	F	C	D	A	M	A	C	H	I	N	E	G	U	N	S	A	P	Y	O
O	Q	N	X	Y	W	R	O	D	G	R	M	R	L	G	L	F	Y	B	E	S	R	B	P	C
K	N	I	U	X	A	A	S	T	Q	K	M	Y	Y	F	L	R	H	R	F	A	I	O	A	K
H	S	A	J	S	R	N	W	L	Y	G	Q	I	R	C	T	I	V	R	O	R	N	A	L	A
W	K	K	R	N	I	C	O	X	D	E	I	W	S	N	O	M	I	P	R	T	E	M	J	X
H	F	H	M	T	H	E	O	J	Z	C	P	P	A	T	R	O	Q	F	E	I	S	V	E	L
X	S	U	R	R	E	N	D	E	R	S	Z	F	R	Q	I	L	P	B	S	F	S	G	A	B
X	S	B	X	L	G	W	R	C	E	A	N	F	S	T	A	C	X	E	T	A	R	J	A	M
N	Y	Y	K	H	J	Z	O	P	S	I	O	P	U	E	B	L	E	I	R	C	C	A	I	O
Y	X	Q	Y	W	E	L	W	H	P	N	E	Z	A	U	N	V	V	L	I	T	I	T	T	J
T	U	F	A	N	G	I	W	W	D	X	K	Y	X	L	A	L	S	I	B	W	M	I	J	L
W	E	D	Z	F	U	S	I	N	D	Z	Q	M	L	Y	L	L	P	J	N	T	D	I	S	U
Y	F	S	B	Z	Y	N	L	F	J	P	L	M	Q	E	W	M	S	X	P	Y	K	O	I	I
Z	Z	S	W	K	G	W	S	H	S	I	E	P	X	I	G	W	A	C	L	W	O	R	V	M
L	N	H	M	G	M	I	O	S	U	J	U	K	F	D	I	K	O	L	C	V	U	R	Y	M
T	Y	V	G	T	E	D	N	T	R	E	N	C	H	E	S	L	Z	M	L	H	F	W	K	G

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Writing Home

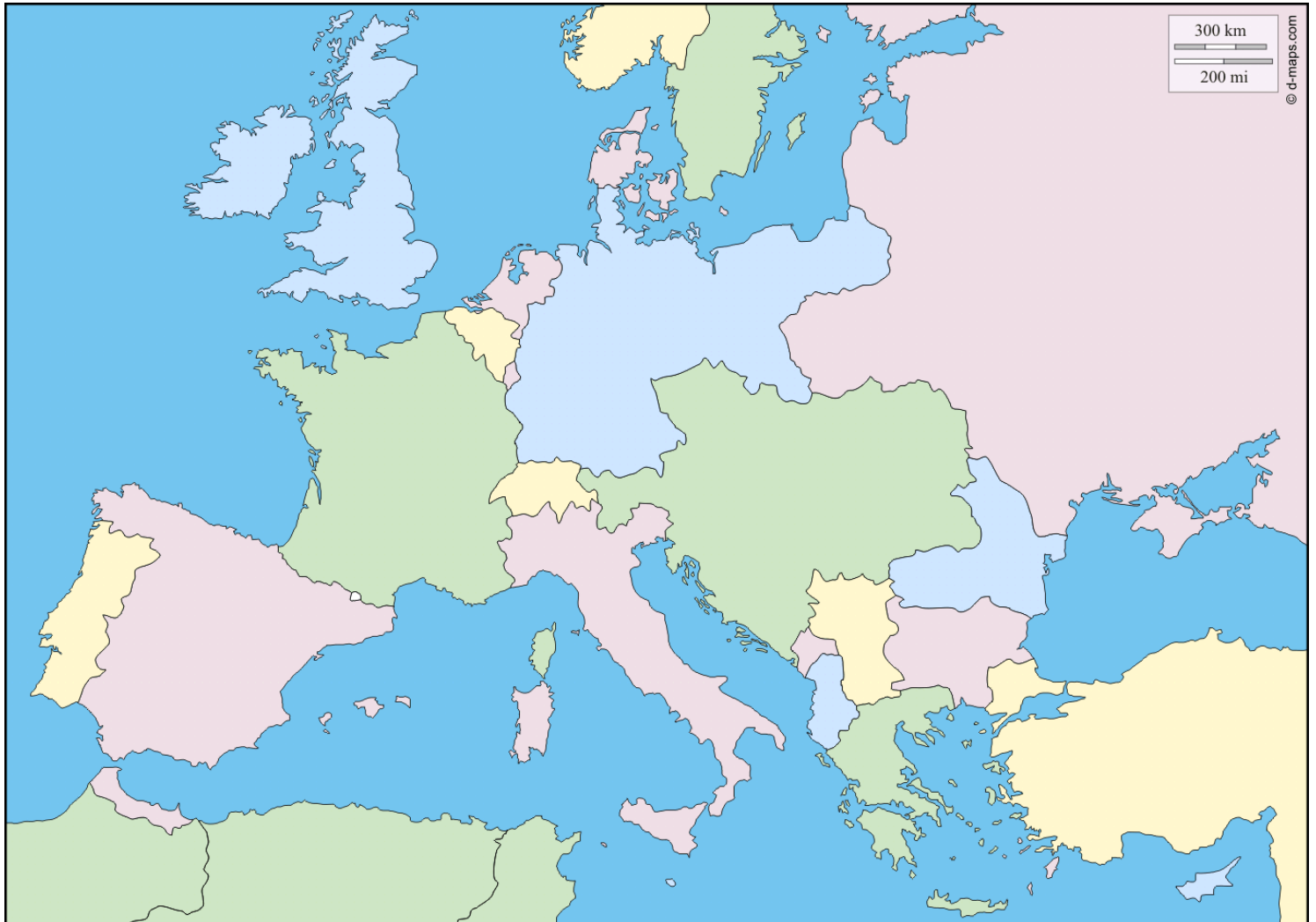
Imagine that you are an American soldier fighting on the Western Front in 1918. Write a letter home to your family describing the experiences you have had in the Army. Consider the following questions:

1. In all likelihood, neither you nor anyone in your family has ever been to Europe. How does France differ from your life in the United States?
2. What are conditions like on the front? How is the food? What do you think of your fellow soldiers?
3. Have you been in combat yet? Did you encounter tough resistance? How did your unit fare? Did you take your objectives?

Be careful; try to describe the places you have been without naming towns or giving any specifics. The Army censored letters, cutting out place names, in case the letters fell into enemy hands.



Map of Europe



Label the Major European Countries in WWI

1. Ottoman Empire
2. United Kingdom
3. Italy
4. Austria-Hungary
5. Belgium
6. Germany
7. France
8. Russia

Which of these countries no longer exist?