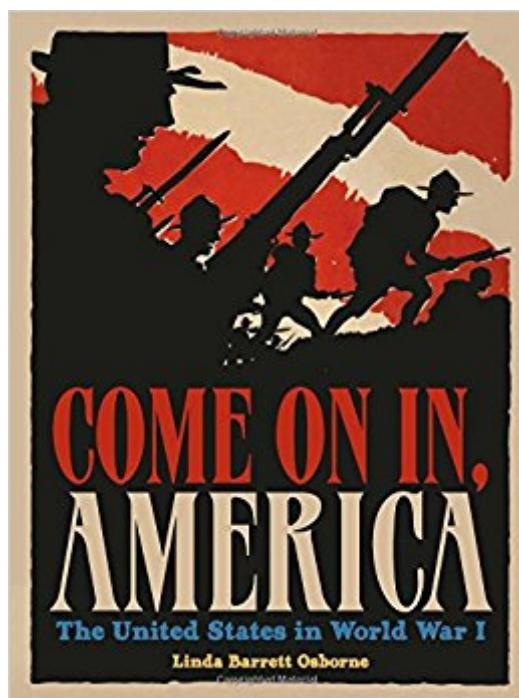


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Come On In, America: The United States In World War I



Synopsis

On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and joined World War I. German submarine attacks on American ships in March 1917 were the overt motive for declaring war, but the underlying reasons were far more complex. Even after the United States officially joined, Americans were divided on whether they should be a part of it. Americans were told they were fighting a war for democracy, but with racial segregation rampant in the United States, new laws against dissent and espionage being passed, and bankers and industrial leaders gaining increased influence and power, what did democracy mean? *Come On In, America* explores not only how and why the United States joined World War I, but also the events "at home and overseas" that changed the course of American history.

Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 17 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

"A wide-ranging exploration of World War I and how it changed the United States forever." (Kirkus) "Osborne effectively juxtaposes issues such as censorship, propaganda, prejudice, discrimination, and violence that arose in the United States against the democratic ideals for which U.S. troops went to war...an informative book that is worthy of shelf space in all high school history collections." (School Library Journal) "This book tells the story of the Great War, but, more centrally, offers a lesson in how the U.S. redefined itself both globally and at home." (Booklist)

Linda Barrett Osborne is the author of *Traveling the Freedom Road, Miles to Go for Freedom*, and *This Land Is Our Land*. She was a senior writer-editor in the Library of Congress Publishing Office for fifteen years. Osborne lives in Washington, D.C.

Come On In, America: The United States in World War I, by Linda Barrett Osborne, is a wide-ranging, clear and concise examination of the United States' entry into WWI and how that entry changed the war, as well as a clear-eyed look at how the US's involvement also changed the country itself. Aimed at young adults, it's an excellent book for its target audience thanks to the clarity of its language and organization and a liberal use of images and photographs. It would also make an excellent introduction for adults, offering up a nice framework for more in-depth exploration. Osborne begins with a chronological introduction into the war's beginnings and the slow move of the US from neutral to leaning to one side to fully involved, and then later chapters focus on particular aspects of the war, such as the innovations in weaponry, the role and treatment of African-American soldiers (both abroad during the war and on their return), the use of propaganda, the impact on women (their direct role in warfare, effect on their work, on the right to vote), and the short and long-term legacy of the war. Osborne hits all the expected highlights (sinking of the Lusitania for instance), but really excels at what will probably be unfamiliar to most students, such as her excellent depiction of how our government used propaganda, something often taught as being done by the other side. She's also not afraid to point to some of the warts on the side of the "good guys," noting for instance that the war study courses for young students tended to ignore the fact that Britain and France had huge colonial empires in Africa and Asia, something directly contrary to President Wilson's stated goal of governments that truly represented their people. Less substantive, but no less informative and also nicely entertaining, she digs into the tiny details of how sauerkraut became "liberty cabbage" and German measles turned into "liberty measles." The segment on African-American soldiers doesn't simply observe that they served, which puts a nice gloss on things, but more precisely (and painfully) points out that only 20 percent did so in combat, while most perhaps because of the fear of arming them . . . were placed in labor battalions [where they] built roads, dug trenches . . . Osborne also follows these men home from being treated well in France back to the often harshly racist and segregated US. She also does a nice job of placing this in context, expanding discussion to include the Great Migration of African-Americans from the South to the

North in the early part of the 21st Century. Come On In, America would be a great addition to any home, as it wonderfully covers an important time period in American history in a fashion well suited for young readers. Even better, it should be on every school's library shelves.

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