

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide

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## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

### Lesson 4 *The War's Impact*

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Why do nations go to war?*

#### Reading HELPDESK

##### Content Vocabulary

**cost of living** the cost of purchasing goods and services essential for survival

**general strike** a strike involving all the workers in a particular geographic location

**deport** to expel an individual from the country

##### Academic Vocabulary

**widespread** widely diffused or prevalent

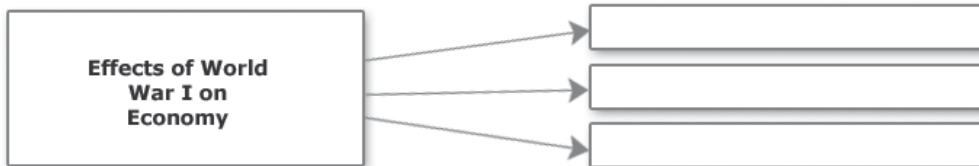
**authorities** those who have control over determining and enforcing what is right or wrong

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

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**TAKING NOTES:** Organizing

**ACTIVITY** Complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the effects of the end of World War I on the U.S. economy.



### IT MATTERS BECAUSE...

*The U.S. win overseas led to problems at home. The end of the wartime economy led to a depression. Fears of communism rose as strikes, riots, and bombings took place.*

## An Economy in Turmoil

**GUIDING QUESTION** Why did many workers take part in strikes after the war?

After the war ended, government agencies ended economic controls. People raced to buy goods that had been rationed during the war. Businesses raised prices they had been forced to keep low. Inflation greatly increased the **cost of living**—the cost of food, clothing, shelter, and other needs. With no more orders for war materials, factories laid off workers. Returning American soldiers found that jobs were scarce.

### Inflation Leads to Strikes

Workers wanted higher wages to keep up with inflation, but companies resisted because inflation was also increasing their other business costs. During the war, union membership had increased greatly. However, business leaders were determined to break the power of the unions. By the end of 1919, more than 3,600 strikes involving more than four million workers had taken place.

**The Seattle General Strike** In Seattle, some 35,000 shipyard workers walked off the job. They wanted higher wages and shorter hours. Other unions in Seattle soon organized a **general strike**—a strike that involves all workers in a community. More than 60,000 people went on strike in the city for five days. The strikers returned to work without making any gains, but their actions worried many Americans. General strikes were a common tactic of Communists and some radical groups in Europe.

**The Boston Police Strike** One of the most famous strikes of 1919 happened in Boston, where roughly 75 percent of the police force walked off the job. Riots and looting forced Governor Calvin Coolidge to call in the National Guard. When the strikers tried to return to work, the police commissioner fired them instead. Coolidge's response earned him **widespread** public support. The Republicans made him their vice-presidential candidate in 1920.

**The Steel Strike** Soon after the police strike, an estimated 350,000 steelworkers went on strike. They wanted higher pay, shorter hours, and recognition of their

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union. U.S. Steel refused to talk to union leaders and set out to break the union. It blamed the strike on foreign radicals and called for loyal Americans to return to work. Meanwhile, the company hired African American and Mexican workers as replacements. Clashes between company guards and strikers were common. In Gary, Indiana, a riot left 18 strikers dead. The strike ended in 1920, setting back the union cause in the steel industry for more than a decade.

### Racial Unrest

Postwar economic problems added to the widespread racial unrest. Many African Americans had moved north during the war to take factory jobs. People began to be laid off and returning soldiers found it hard to find work and housing that they could afford. Many blamed African Americans for taking their jobs. Frustration and racism combined to create violence.

In the summer of 1919, 25 race riots broke out across the nation. The riots began in July. A mob of angry whites burned shops and homes in an African American neighborhood in Longview, Texas. A week later in Washington, D.C., gangs of African Americans and whites fought each other for four days before troops got the riots under control.

The worst violence took place in Chicago. On a hot July day, African Americans went to a whites-only beach. Both sides began throwing stones. As a result, an African American teenager drowned. A full-scale riot broke out. Angry African Americans attacked white neighborhoods. Whites attacked African American neighborhoods. The riot lasted for almost two weeks. It ended when the government sent in National Guard troops. By the time the rioting ended, 38 people had been killed—15 white and 23 black. More than 500 had been injured.

The race riots of 1919 disillusioned some African Americans. They felt their wartime efforts had been for nothing. For others, however, the wartime fight for democracy led them to fight for their rights at home. For the first time, African Americans organized and fought back. The NAACP grew in membership after the war. In 1919 it started a new campaign for a federal law against lynching.

#### PROGRESS CHECK

**Identifying Cause and Effect** Why did the number of strikes increase after the war?

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### The Red Scare

**GUIDING QUESTION** Do you agree or disagree with A. Mitchell Palmer’s work to prevent a “radical” revolution in the United States?

Since the late 1800s, many Americans had blamed immigrants for problems. They thought that immigrants brought socialist and communist ideas into the country. They blamed immigrants for labor unrest and violence. Events in Russia seemed to support fears of a communist revolution. The strikes of 1919 fueled fears that communists, or “reds,” might take power. A nationwide panic known as the Red Scare took hold of the nation. Many people were worried that workers would use strikes to start a revolution.

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*



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### The Palmer Raids

In April the postal service stopped more than 30 packages containing homemade bombs. They were all addressed to important Americans. The next month, a parade in Cleveland protesting the jailing of American Socialist Party leader Eugene Debs turned into a series of riots. Two people were killed and another 40 were hurt. In June eight bombs in eight cities exploded within minutes of one another. These events suggested a nationwide conspiracy.

One of these bombs damaged the home of United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Palmer decided to take action. He created a special division within the Justice Department called the General Intelligence Division. This division later became the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Evidence pointed to no single group. But Palmer’s agents targeted the foreign-born. On November 7, 1919, Palmer ordered a series of raids on offices of the Union of Russian Workers in 12 cities. Less than seven weeks later, a ship left New York for Russia carrying 249 immigrants who had been **deported**, or expelled from the country.

In January 1920, Palmer ordered another series of raids on the headquarters of various radical organizations. Nearly 6,000 people were arrested. Palmer’s raids continued until the spring of 1920. **Authorities** held thousands of suspects. Palmer’s agents often did not pay attention to the civil liberties of suspects. Officers went into homes and offices without search warrants. Some suspects were jailed indefinitely. Some were not allowed to talk to their lawyers. Many of the nearly 600 immigrants who were deported never had a court hearing.

For a while, Palmer was thought of as a national hero. But his raids failed to turn up any real evidence of a conspiracy. But the Red Scare greatly influenced people’s attitudes during the 1920s. The New York state legislature expelled five members of the Socialist Party in January 1920. Within a few months, nearly 30 states had passed sedition laws making it illegal to join groups that supported revolution. Many people linked radicalism with immigrants. Their concerns led to calls to limit immigration.

### The Election of 1920

Economic problems, labor unrest, racial tensions, and the fresh memories of World War I created a general sense of disillusionment in the United States. During the 1920 presidential campaign, Ohio governor James M. Cox ran for president. He and his running mate, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, ran on a platform of progressive ideals. President Wilson tried to get the Democrats to make the campaign a vote on the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations. The Republican candidate, Warren G. Harding, called for a return to “normalcy.” He said that the country needed to return to the days before Progressive Era reforms. Harding won the election by a landslide. Many Americans hoped to put racial, labor, and economic troubles behind them. They hoped to build a more prosperous and stable society.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

**Constructing Arguments** Do you think that the events of 1919 justified Palmer’s actions? Why or why not?

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