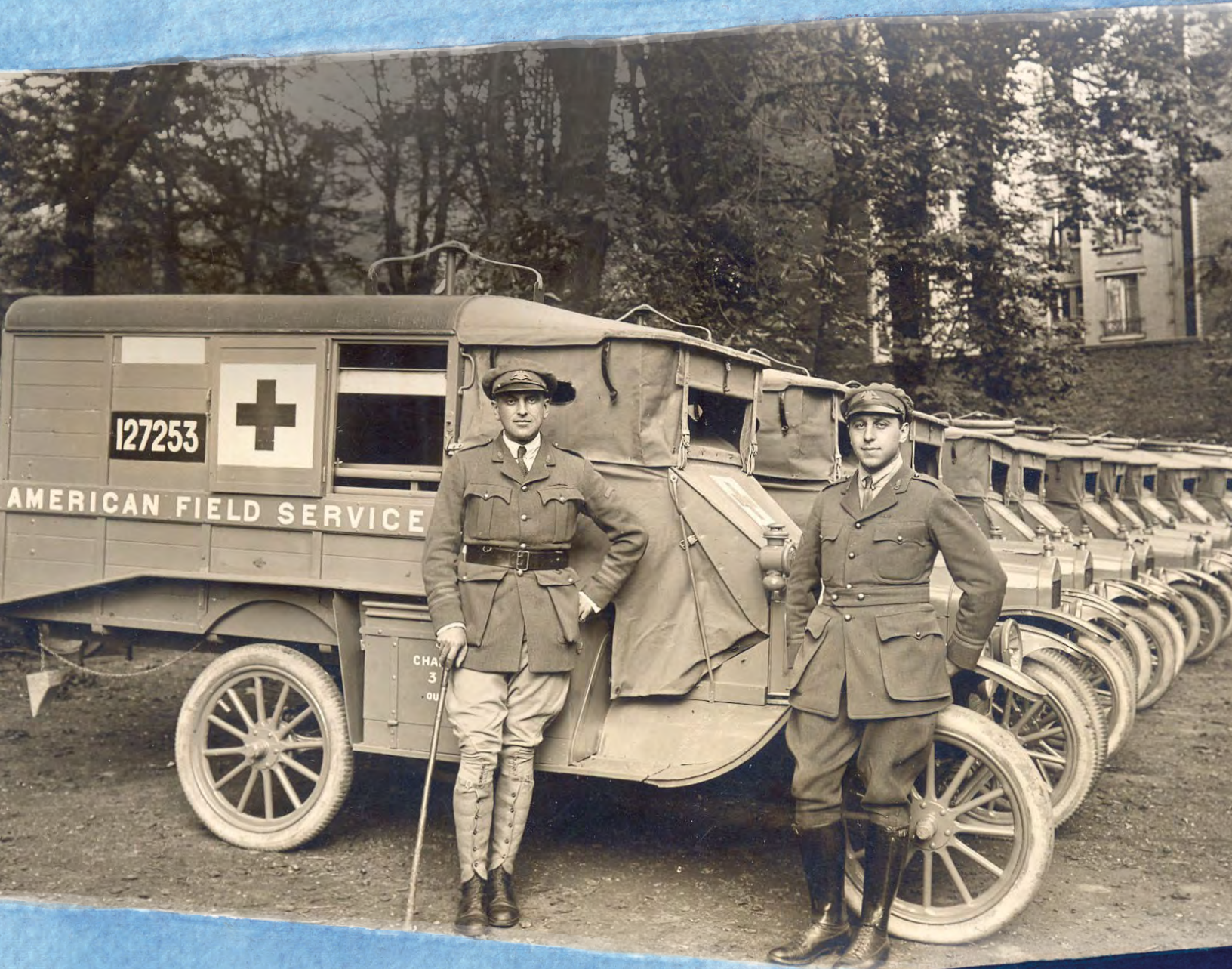




THE Volunteers

Americans Join World War I, 1914-1919

CURRICULUM





Connecting lives. Sharing cultures.

Dear Educator,

Welcome to ***The Volunteers: Americans Join World War I, 1914-1919 Curriculum!***

Please join us in celebrating the release of this unique and relevant curriculum about U.S. American volunteers in World War I and how volunteerism is a key component of global competence and active citizenship education today. These free, Common Core and UNESCO Global Learning-aligned secondary school lesson plans explore the motivations behind why people volunteer. They also examine characteristics of humanitarian organizations, and encourage young people to consider volunteering today.

AFS Intercultural Programs created this curriculum in part to commemorate the 100 year history of AFS, founded in 1915 as a volunteer U.S. American ambulance corps serving alongside the French military during the period of U.S. neutrality. Today, AFS Intercultural Programs is a non-profit, intercultural learning and student exchange organization dedicated to creating active global citizens in today's world.

The curriculum was created by AFS Intercultural Programs, together with a distinguished Curriculum Development Committee of historians, educators, and archivists. The lesson plans were developed in partnership with the National World War I Museum and Memorial and the curriculum specialists at Primary Source, a non-profit resource center dedicated to advancing global education. We are honored to have received endorsement for the project from the United States World War I Centennial Commission.

We would like to thank the AFS volunteers, staff, educators, and many others who have supported the development of this curriculum and whose daily work advances the AFS mission. We encourage secondary school teachers around the world to adapt these lesson plans to fit their classroom needs- lessons can be applied in many different national contexts. The curriculum is meant to help students learn more about the volunteer efforts of young people during World War I, and inspire them to become active global citizens today.

Warm regards,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Vincenzo Morlini'.

Vincenzo Morlini
President and CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Melissa Liles'.

Melissa Liles
Chief Education Officer



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nicole Milano'.

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**PRIMARY
SOURCE**

Global learning matters.

Cover Photograph

AFS Founder and Inspector General A. Piatt Andrew and Assistant Inspector General Stephen Galatti at the AFS headquarters in Paris, France in 1917.

Photograph by H.C. Ellis. Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.

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AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS



AFS Intercultural Programs began as the American Ambulance Field Service (later known as the American Field Service or AFS), a voluntary ambulance and *camion* (truck) organization which emerged soon after the outbreak of World War I under the leadership of A. Piatt Andrew, a former director of the U.S. Mint. In April 1915 Andrew negotiated an agreement with the French military to have units of American ambulance drivers serve closer to the front lines of battle. The 2,500 AFS volunteers participated in every major French battle, carrying supplies and more than 500,000 casualties.

After the war ended, the AFS volunteers established an AFS Association to coordinate reunions and to administer the AFS Fellowships for French Universities program. The AFS Fellowships program ultimately funded 222 students to travel to and from France for advanced graduate study by the time it was discontinued in 1952.

AFS was reactivated at the start of World War II by Stephen Galatti, who had been an AFS ambulance driver and Assistant Inspector General during World War I. By the end of the war, 2,196 volunteers served in France, North Africa, the Middle East, Italy, Germany, India, and Burma, carrying more than 700,000 casualties.

In 1946 AFS volunteers from both World Wars assembled in New York City to discuss the future of the organization. Under the leadership of Galatti, they launched a secondary school student exchange program that they hoped would maintain and strengthen the international friendships they fostered during their wartime humanitarian work. The first AFS secondary school students arrived in the U.S. in 1947 on a scholarship program. In 1950 the Americans Abroad (AA) Summer Program was initiated, allowing U.S. American high school students to go abroad through AFS, and by 1957 AA students



had the option to spend several months abroad during the fall and attend foreign schools. In 1971, the AFS Multinational Program began, allowing students to travel to and from countries other than the United States. The AFS Programs continued to diversify over the years by adding community service projects and teacher exchange programs, and the number of participating countries rose steadily.

In February 1984 the Workshop on Intercultural Learning Content and Quality Standards affirmed AFS's commitment to intercultural learning and formally defined its Educational Goals. These 16 Educational Goals continue to define the educational approach, guide ongoing practices, and set AFS apart as a unique educational program.

Research efforts focusing on achieving a deeper understanding of the impact of exchange programs continued in the 21st century, from the cutting-edge Assessment of the Impact of the AFS Study Abroad

Experience study in 2005, to the AFS Long Term Impact Study in 2006. Building on these research results, the AFS Intercultural Link Learning Program launched in 2011. The purpose of this multi-step training and assessment program is to enable volunteers and staff worldwide to better support AFS students, families, and schools in the learning process.

Today, AFS is a global community of more than 50 partner organizations that support intercultural learning and promote active global citizenship education, primarily through exchange programs. AFS is dedicated to building an inclusive community of global citizens determined to build bridges among cultures as it moves into its second century.

Visit www.afs.org to learn more!

Photographs
(page 2) AFS ambulance drivers in Paris, France in 1917. Photograph by O. King.
(page 3) Participants of the 100 Years Young! AFS Youth Workshop & Symposium held in Paris, France in 2014. Photograph by Incorp Agency/Guillaume Deperrois.
Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.

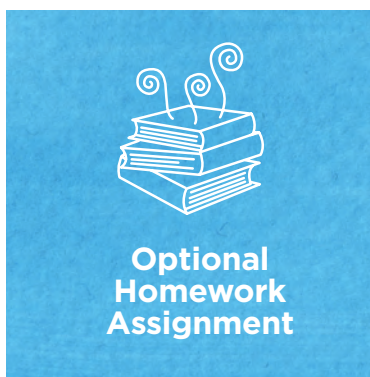
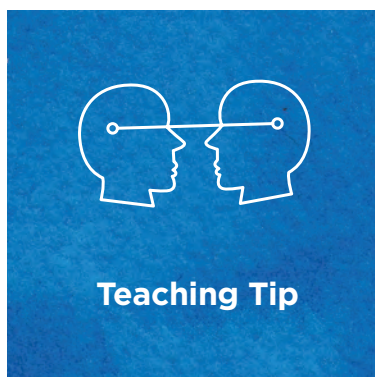
ABOUT THE CURRICULUM

Twenty-two lesson plans are made available through the following six topics:

- 1| U.S. American Volunteers in World War I, 1914-1917
- 2| U.S. American Women's Volunteerism and Suffrage in World War I
- 3| Diversity and Debate on the U.S. Home Front During the "European War"
- 4| Lost Generation Artists and Writers as World War I Volunteers
- 5| Humanitarian International Relief: A Legacy of Great War Volunteerism
- 6| Young People, Volunteerism, and Global Citizenship: From World War I to the Present

Within each topic you will encounter and work with the following components:

- An **Overview** containing **Essential Questions** that frame the issues behind the topic; **Objectives** for student learning; **United States** and **International Curriculum Standards** for measuring **Assessment**; and estimated **Time** and necessary **Materials** needed to complete the lesson plans in each topic.
- A **Background Essay** written by a specialist and providing insight and context for the lesson plans. The essay can be read by both students and educators.
- **Instructions** for each lesson plan, including an **Activator** that elicits students' prior knowledge and serves to engage students in an underlying theme or question, helping to bridge between past and present and demonstrating the global learning implications of the historical material at hand; the **Lesson** or **Lessons**, which include handouts, questions for reflection and discussion, and tasks for students to complete using a wide array of unique primary sources; and an **Extension Activity** that engages students in global citizenship education, and complements, deepens, or extends learning of the historical topic, including through immersion in research tasks or presentations that can be adapted to the needs of your class or those of individual students.
- **Attachments** which can be used as lesson plan handouts. Additionally, each topic directs you to a curated collection of maps, articles, websites, books, and videos to support and enrich your teaching, found in the Resources section of the **Teacher Toolkit** at thevolunteers.afs.org/resources.
- Color-coded **Tips**, which will help to enhance your teaching experience, adapt activities to the global classroom, and provide optional, related homework assignments for students:





TOPIC 1

U.S. AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS IN WORLD WAR I, 1914-1917

What does it mean to be a “volunteer”? How did U.S. American volunteers engage in the European war zone before the arrival of the United States military overseas in 1917? In these lesson plans, designed for secondary school classrooms, students will learn about the critical role of U.S. American volunteers in World War I and how volunteer organizations shaped the way the war was experienced by thousands. They will examine brief biographies of individual volunteers, considering the broad historical factors and the particular life experiences that motivated men and women to serve prior to the arrival of the United States military overseas in 1917. They will utilize primary sources (photographs and wartime letters) to gain a first-hand perspective on the volunteer experience.

The topic is divided into four interrelated lesson plans that could be taught independently or as a whole depending upon grade level, instructional objectives, and time:

1. Activator, *Why Do People Volunteer?*
2. Lesson I, *Deciding to Volunteer During World War I: A Primary Source Analysis.*
3. Lesson II, *Learning the Diverse Life Stories of World War I Volunteers Through Mini-Biographies.*
4. Extension Activity, *Exploring an Archival Letter Collection.*

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Photograph
Loading an American Field Service ambulance in France. Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What constitutes volunteer service and why do people do it?
2. What factors led U.S. Americans to volunteer before their nation's declaration of war in 1917?
3. What types of volunteer roles or activities were available for U.S. citizens before their nation entered the war in 1917, and who was able to volunteer?

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will understand the concept of "volunteerism."
2. Students will be able to describe the role of U.S. volunteers in World War I before U.S. entry into the war in 1917.
3. Students will be able to draw inferences about the experience of war volunteering from primary source documents.
4. Students will be able to compare and contrast the motivations, goals, life experiences, and cultural, political, and social backgrounds of U.S. Americans who volunteered overseas before U.S. entry into the war in 1917; students will place their service in historical context.

STANDARDS: UNITED STATES

National Center for History in the Schools, National History Standards

U.S. Era 7 - The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

- Standard 2A: The student understands how the American role in the world changed in the early 20th century.
- Standard 2C: The student understands the impact at home and abroad of the United States' involvement in World War I.

World Era 8

- Standard 2B: The student understands the global scope, outcome, and human costs of the war.

Historical Thinking Standards

- Standard 3: The student compares and contrasts differing sets of ideas.
- Standard 4: The student is able to interrogate historical data and support historical interpretations with evidence.

Common Core Standards: Literacy in History/Social Science, Science, and Technical Subjects, Grades 6-12

- R1: The student reads closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cites specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- R6: The student assesses how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

- W9: The student draws evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

STANDARDS: INTERNATIONAL

Educators outside the United States should consult their own national standards for comparable content and skills.

UNSECO Global Citizenship Education: Topics and Objectives

Topic: Issues affecting interaction and connectedness of communities at local, national, and global levels

Learning objective: Students assess the root causes of major local, national, and global issues and the interconnectedness of local, national, and global factors.

- How history, geography, politics, economics, religion, technology, media, or other factors influence current global issues (freedom of expression, status of women, refugees, migrants, legacies of colonialism, slavery, ethnic and religious minorities, environmental degradation)
- How decisions made globally or in one part of the world can affect current and future well-being of people and the environment elsewhere

Topic: Actions that can be taken individually & collectively

Learning objective: Students examine how individuals and groups have taken action on issues of local, national, and global importance and get engaged in responses to local, national, and global issues.

- Anticipating and analyzing the consequences of actions
- Identifying benefits, opportunities, and impact of civic engagement

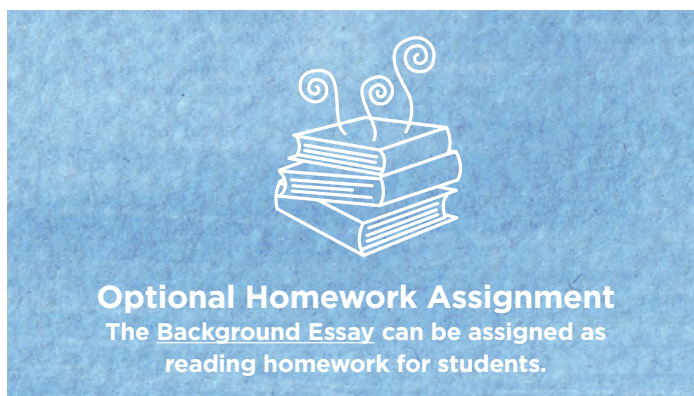
Topic: Getting engaged and taking action

Learning objective: Students develop skills for active engagement and take action to promote the common good.

- Ways to engage in addressing an issue of global importance in the community
- Proactively engaging in local, national, and global initiatives
- Developing and applying necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes supported by universal values and principles of human rights
- Volunteering and service-learning opportunities

ASSESSMENT

Components for assessment include full-class discussions, graphic organizer for biography activity, role play participation, diary entry (optional homework assignment), and an interpretive label for an exhibit of letters.

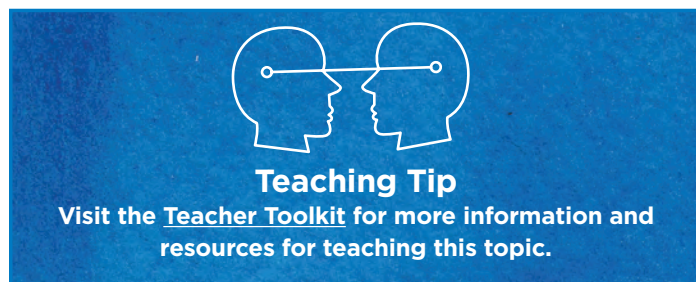


TIME

Three to four 50-minute class periods.

MATERIALS

- Whiteboard, blackboard, or a Smart Board and computer for the Activator
- Attachments for the Lesson
- Computer lab or laptops for the Extension Activity



BACKGROUND ESSAY

U.S. American Volunteers in World War I, 1914–1917

By: PD Dr. Axel Jansen

When war broke out in Europe in August 1914, few Americans expected their country to abandon its traditional aloofness from European affairs. Even as late as 1916, it was not inevitable that the United States (U.S.) would enter the war. The U.S. had never fought a war abroad in Europe and until Germany declared unconditional submarine warfare in January 1917, few expected U.S. President Woodrow Wilson would ever take this step.

At a time when their country remained neutral, tens of thousands of Americans decided to volunteer for what was referred to as the “European War” as relief administrators, doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, soldiers, and pilots. They volunteered for a variety of reasons ranging from a desire for adventure, for helping others, and for becoming part of an event of global significance.

During the period of U.S. neutrality from August 1914 through March 1917, most American volunteers aided the Allies. Great Britain attracted the largest number of volunteers, with tens of thousands of Americans serving in the British infantry or flying corps. Before the U.S. government insisted on a name change in November 1916, all-American battalions in the Canadian Expeditionary Forces were known as the “American Legion.” They comprised Americans who lived in Canada, or had crossed the border after the outbreak of war, sometimes traveling north thousands of miles to volunteer for military service.

While most Americans joined British units before 1917, nearly 6,000 American volunteers served on behalf of France. In August 1914, the American Ambulance

Hospital in the prosperous Paris suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine became the hub for American activity in France. The hospital attracted American nurses, who offered to work without pay, and medical teams led by physicians such as surgeon Harvey Cushing, head of Harvard University’s Medical Unit in 1915. Groups dispatched by American universities brought the latest medical technology to treat the wounded. American business leaders in Paris also founded the American Relief Clearing House for France and her Allies (ARCH). During the period of U.S. neutrality and with the aid of the French government and private American support, ARCH provided transportation of relief goods from New York to Paris free of charge to the sender. Another relief organization was the American Fund for French Wounded (AFFW), founded by wealthy U.S. women with close ties to Paris in early 1915. AFFW members in France gathered clothing and other goods sent to them by its more than 150 American committees. Volunteer drivers delivered these goods to hospitals around France.

Nothing came to symbolize transatlantic volunteerism to the American public as boldly as driving an ambulance along the front in France. Organizations such as the American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance Corps (AVMAC) and the American Ambulance Field Service (later known as the American Field Service or AFS) attracted Americans eager for a challenging experience. Many ambulance drivers were recruited from universities such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. In a letter to the parents of a student who considered joining an ambulance service in France, Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell noted, “They get an experience, an insight into a great historic struggle,

which can hardly fail to be of great value throughout their lives.” Lowell’s comment reflected the privileged background of most volunteers who could afford to serve in France. Drivers for AVMAC, preferably of the “gentleman-clubman type,” had to pay their way to New York City and on to Paris, and cover costs for uniforms, blankets, and helmets. The AFS also usually required candidates to pay for travel and equipment. This was essential, one AFS official argued, “if the volunteer spirit were to be kept alive.”

Having spent time near the front as ambulance drivers or on the front as soldiers, some American volunteers became restless and joined what seemed to them an even more exciting and dangerous service as pilots, either in the British army and navy or in the French army. More than 180 Americans became pilots in the French army, some of them in an all-American unit initially known as the Lafayette Escadrille. Some flyers were veterans of the French Foreign Legion, among them Eugene Bullard, an African American expatriate who was living in France when war broke out in 1914 and took up arms for an adopted homeland he had embraced for its relative racial egalitarianism.

While ambulance drivers as well as soldiers proudly supported France and her allies, American volunteers distributing relief to civilians in occupied Belgium and northern France had to carefully preserve a stance of neutrality as they maneuvered between the Allies and the Central Powers to aid civilians. Taking advantage of U.S. neutrality to operate its own fleet of ships and cross the blockades of belligerent powers, the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB) acted as what one commentator approvingly called a “piratical state organized for benevolence.” With former mining engineer and business executive Herbert Hoover at its

helm, the CRB financed its massive operations mainly through loans provided by the Allies. One hundred thirty-nine volunteers distributed relief in occupied areas while German officers watched their every step so as to prevent them from speaking to civilians. By the war’s end, the CRB had distributed 5.7 million tons of food to 9.5 million civilian victims in occupied Belgium and northern France.

Once the U.S. decided to enter the war in April 1917, the nature of volunteerism changed. Some volunteers of the neutrality days were ambivalent because they lost what they now considered an exclusive status as an American “avant-garde” abroad. However, many Americans decided to make use of new opportunities and joined the American Red Cross (ARC), the American Library Association, and many other organizations to volunteer at home and abroad. The ARC, representing patriotic dedication to the country like no other organization outside the army, became the largest volunteer organization in America.

While the number of volunteers during the neutrality period is relatively small when compared to the number of Americans who volunteered after April 1917, a closer look at the motives of individuals to join the war and relief efforts sheds light on an important watershed in U.S. history. By the early 20th century, the United States had become an economic powerhouse but it retained a policy of political detachment from Europe. During the period of U.S. neutrality, American volunteers abroad strengthened informal ties with France and her allies and challenged their country’s neutrality. Even though some of them were ambivalent about American entry into the war, they in fact helped promote and legitimize its international engagement.

INSTRUCTIONS

Activator

Why Do People Volunteer?

1. Ask students for single words or phrases they equate with the word “volunteer.” Collect their responses using the board or a Web tool such as [Wordle](#) or [Padlet](#). Discuss their responses using these prompts:

- What ideas, beliefs, or feelings do students associate with the word “volunteer”?
- Based on this discussion, help students to develop a common definition or concept of “volunteering” expressed in their own words. (The definition generally includes these components: work or service done by free choice, performed for the benefit of others and with minimal compensation.

For more information, including the major types of volunteer service, its benefits, and the human rights values behind it, see these documents: [“Definitions of Volunteering: Volunteering England Information Sheet”](#); [United Nations Volunteers, “State of the World’s Volunteerism Report.”](#)

2. Invite students to ask themselves the following questions, then share answers with a partner:

- When is a time that you volunteered? (If a student cannot find an example with prompting, ask

him or her to answer when or where would you like to volunteer?)

- What motivated you to volunteer (or would motivate you to do so)?

Compare answers in the full group. How similar or different were students’ motives for volunteer service? What patterns do they discern? Move students toward critical thinking if needed: Do individuals ever volunteer out of self-interest—for example, to enhance a resume or college application? Do they think volunteering is beneficial to society even if it is not entirely altruistic?



Teaching Tip

Help students search for videos with volunteer testimonials. See for example the TED Talk of Mark Bezos, [“A Life Lesson from a Volunteer Fire Fighter,”](#) the [YouTube channel for Global Youth Service Day](#), or the [“Volunteer Voices”](#) feature of the [United Nations Volunteers](#).

Photograph

Repairing ambulances at the American Field Service headquarters in Paris, France. Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.



Lesson 1

Deciding to Volunteer During World War I: A Primary Source Analysis

In this activity, students analyze Alan Seeger’s decision to volunteer with the French Foreign Legion by examining a primary source document, a letter Seeger wrote to his mother. Seeger was a graduate of Harvard College and a poet. He died in combat in July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. The activity will move students into thinking about World War I volunteerism as an individual choice; it will also help them practice the skills of sourcing and analyzing documents in preparation for the Extension Activity later.

1. Remind students that before the U.S. declared war on the Central Powers in April 1917, the U.S. was a neutral nation. Some American men volunteered nonetheless to enter military organizations between 1914 and 1917 and fight for other national armies.

Ask students to speculate on these questions:

- What are some reasons a young person might voluntarily enlist to fight in a foreign war?
- What are some obstacles that might hold a person back from taking that step?
- If this was your decision to make, consider how you would share the news with your parent or family. How do you think they would react?

2. Distribute to each student a copy of Alan Seeger’s letter to his mother explaining his decision to enlist in the French Foreign Legion. (See lesson attachment: [Alan Seeger, Letter of September 5, 1914.](#)) As stu-

dents read the letter, ask them to identify all the stated reasons that Seeger gives his mother to explain his enlistment. Also ask them to identify any unstated reasons or motives they are able to infer. Discuss as a group. Finally, help your students think about this letter as a source. How much insight do they gain from reading a highly personal first-hand account such as this? Do we know everything we need to know about Seeger’s enlistment from this letter? Does the letter have any limitations as a source? And how representative do they feel Seeger’s enlistment story was?



Teaching Tip

Students can also read or listen to Alan Seeger’s most famous poem, “Rendezvous” (typically referred to as “I Have a Rendezvous with Death,” published posthumously in 1917.) This was a favorite of United States President John F. Kennedy and can be found [here](#). For background on Seeger’s life, see this [History Channel feature](#) or read this [biographical note](#) provided by Emory University in the United States.



Lesson II

Learning the Diverse Life Stories of World War I Volunteers Through Mini-Biographies

U.S. Americans volunteered for the war effort in World War I before the U.S. entered the war as a combatant nation. These volunteers came from a range of backgrounds (i.e., gender, race, region, education, religious orientation, professional affiliation, socioeconomic status, etc.). Once in Europe, volunteers engaged in a wide array of service roles from combat and military support to medical care and humanitarian relief. In this activity, students read a “volunteer biography” about one of five featured volunteers, and pool information with their classmates to create a diverse picture of World War I volunteers as a group.

1. After reviewing historical background about U.S. neutrality and the role played by U.S. volunteers during the neutrality period, divide students into five groups, with each group responsible for analyzing the story of one of five World War I volunteers. Give group members the worksheet “Group Analysis of a Volunteer Biography” and the biography for their assigned individual. Explain that each student will serve as an expert on this individual in a jigsaw discussion (and/or portray the individual in a role play). (See lesson attachments: [Worksheet: Group Analysis of a Volunteer Biography](#) and [Volunteer Biographies 1-5](#).)

2. Have students read and annotate the short biography on their own using questions from the worksheet for guidance. Provide vocabulary support where necessary. Remind students to observe the photographs as well as the text. Next ask students to work with their group members to reach agreement in answering the worksheet questions about the volunteer’s motives, background, values, and service using their notes. If group members have diverse opinions on any of the questions, they can make note of that.



Optional Homework Assignment
Students could write a diary entry from the perspective of one of the featured volunteers, describing a workday or experience based on inferences from the biographies they read.

Photograph
An American nurse and doctor examining a French soldier at the American Ambulance Hospital.
Courtesy of the American Hospital of Paris.

3. Re-divide students into a “jigsaw”: each table should have at least one expert about each of the five World War I volunteers featured in the activity. It is acceptable to have more than one expert per table.

For the role play: American volunteers have been invited to a dinner party in Paris hosted by the wealthy and accomplished Mrs. Edith Wharton, a renowned author, philanthropist, and war volunteer. Responding to a series of question cards drawn from the pile on each table, the guests will answer these questions in turn (See lesson attachment: [Role Play Question Sheet: U.S. American War Volunteers.](#)):

- Tell us about your upbringing and early career: What is your background?
- What factors led you to volunteer for service in the European war?
- What are your opinions about the war and U.S. neutrality during your service?

- What kind of work does your organization do?
- What made you select the type of service that you chose to do? If you worked in more than one type of service, what made you change?
- Do you feel you benefitted by performing war service? Give a reason for your response.
- Do you feel others benefitted from your service? Give a reason for your response.

4. Conclude with a full group discussion: what are the most important compare/contrast points between the volunteers’ stories? Could any person volunteer for these types of voluntary service? What might limit a person’s participation? How representative are these stories of World War I? Finally, how do students feel that the volunteers’ service may have changed when neutrality ended and the U.S. entered the war?

FEATURED WORLD WAR I VOLUNTEERS	
Francis Paton Kendall	Harvard University student; served as an ambulance driver with the American field Service in the Balkans and France.
Ellen Newbold La Motte	nurse, public health official, women’s rights advocate, and author; served as a volunteer nurse at the American Ambulance Hospital in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France.
Eugene Bullard	professional boxer and civil rights advocate; served as a volunteer soldier with the French Foreign Legion and as a military pilot with the Franco-American Flying Corps.
Frank Angell	psychologist and university professor; served as a humanitarian investigator for the Commission for Relief in Belgium.
James Rogers McConnell	recent college graduate; served as an ambulance driver with the American Field Service in France and as a military pilot with the Lafayette Escadrille.



Extension Activity

Be the Historian: Exploring an Archival Letter Collection

Building on their practice in an earlier activity—analyzing a single letter by Alan Seeger in order to answer a focused question—students can explore a letter collection in a more open-ended activity that enables them to develop their own hypotheses about the overall experience of being a volunteer in World War I.

The World War I letters of Luther Nelson give a remarkable picture of the day-to-day life of a World War I U.S. American volunteer who served overseas during the period of U.S. neutrality. Nelson volunteered as an ambulance driver with the Paris Section of the American Ambulance Hospital in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France in 1916, and later joined the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps serving near the front lines in Verdun. Nelson wrote letters full of honesty, curiosity, cultural biases, affection for family, and observations of war. Digitized by the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs, the unpublished letters are presented with transcriptions, making them ideal for students to practice archival research. You can find the collection [here](#).

1. Use the information on the collection page to provide students with basic biographical information about Luther Nelson. Alternatively, have students read the biography in full.



Global Classroom Tip

You can identify an archival collection from your state, region, town, or country by approaching an archivist, local historical society, or museum educator in your own community. These individuals can help identify collections that are interesting, legible, and appropriate for the theme and age group. You can also browse online collections that contain digitized letters, including searching the website for your national archives.

If your country did not participate in World War I, you can identify another type of volunteer based on the interests of your students (humanitarian, medical, etc.) or within the framework of your historical curriculum. After identifying an appropriate collection, be sure to provide biographical details for your students, and context of their service.

Photograph
A Norton-Harjes ambulance beside a make-shift hospital in Verdun in December of 1916.
Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.

2. Help students to browse the letter collection and select their own letter to analyze. Alternatively, you can pre-select a set of interesting letters to copy and distribute to the class.

Students may use some of these questions for guidance:

- Who is the letter recipient, and what is his/her relationship to the writer (if you can tell)? Do you see ways in which the letter's style and content could relate to/reflect the nature of this relationship, or vice versa?
- What topics did Nelson write about in this letter? How did he seem to feel about them? Is there anything you feel he avoided or sidestepped in his account?
- What details of the letter writer's style, tone, or word choice tell you something possibly important about Nelson as a person or a volunteer? What inferences can you draw about his personality or values from the letter you examined?

- A letter is an artifact and high-resolution digitization here allows us to see an excellent approximation of the original. What details do you notice about the letter's physical features? What can we learn about war volunteering from these details?
- What is one meaningful detail about the experiences of a World War I volunteer or soldier that this letter teaches you?

3. To share their insights, the class could create an exhibit about the wartime letters of Luther Nelson. Each student could write the interpretive "label" to accompany his/her selected letter. The label (two to three sentences in length) points out the most interesting features of the letter and summarizes its significance for understanding U.S. Americans' experience of service in World War I prior to the arrival of the U.S. military overseas. Conduct a gallery walk so students can learn from their classmates' work. Lead a follow-up discussion of themes and findings.

ATTACHMENTS

The following pages contain printable attachments meant for classroom distribution. In some cases, multiple copies should be printed. Pages should be printed single-sided. Please consult the directions provided under the Activator, Lesson I, Lesson II, and the Extension Activity for more information.

ALAN SEEGER, LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 5, 1914

2me Regiment Étranger
Caserne Pérignon
Toulouse, France

5.9.14

Dear Mother:

I have already written to father about my enlisting. I don't see any object in concealing the fact from you. A number of motives impelled me, by far the greater part being idealistic. I had nothing immediate in prospect. At a time when the destiny of humanity is in the hands of soldiers I felt that anything else a man could do would be less than being a soldier, and it has always been my purpose so far as possible to seek the intensest forms of emotional experience. I could not very well refuse this conscientiously, so I have thrown in my fortunes with those of the side where my heart lies. I was extremely happy therefore the day when in one of the halls of the old Hotel des Invalides at Paris they found me fit and enrolled me in the second regiment of the Legion Etrangère. My engagement is for the duration of the war.

They sent us first to Rouen. We marched through Paris, down the Avenue de l'Opera to the Gare St. Lazare, amid crowds who cheered us enthusiastically. Each nationality of volunteers marched behind its flag. The men raised their hats as we passed, and the little midinettes threw us flowers from the windows. At Rouen the same reception. The week in the charming old town was wonderful. The cathedral is one of the most beautiful in France. The streets were very animated, teeming with soldiers, both French and English. One could always find men just back from the front; they would stand telling their stories on the street corners encircled with little crowds of listeners.

...

I will keep you informed of my movements. I do not think you have much reason to worry about me; our drilling at least will keep us away from the front for some weeks to come. I hope to see you at Fairlea next summer.

Lots of love to all,
Alan



Photograph
Alan Seeger in his French Foreign Legion uniform.
Courtesy of Richard McErlan.

WORKSHEET: GROUP ANALYSIS OF A VOLUNTEER BIOGRAPHY

VOLUNTEER NAME:

QUESTIONS:

CATEGORIES OF SERVICE:

Medical Care & Support
(nurse/doctor/ambulance driver)

Military Service
(soldier / pilot)

Humanitarian Relief
(work on behalf of civilians)

Briefly describe this individual's volunteer service in World War I and assign it a category of service (to the left.) if the individual had more than one volunteer role in the war, check boxes for all types of service he/she did, and describe each one below.

What do you see as the two to three most important factors that motivated this volunteer's service? Why do you think this individual volunteered for the war at a time before his/her nation had declared war?

What resources, skills, or prior life experience did this volunteer bring to his/her service in World War I? At what age did this volunteer begin service?

What did this individual stand to gain from his/her volunteer service in World War I?

Volunteer Biography #1

FRANCIS PATON KENDALL (1895 – 1982)



Francis Paton Kendall (known as “Paton”) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to a family that owned a local manufacturing firm. Paton entered Harvard University in 1914. He was always an adventurous individual, and in his first summer of college he sailed up to Newfoundland to work with a famous missionary doctor in the Arctic. The following summer he worked in Colorado as a cowboy, breaking in horses and camping.

After returning to Harvard in the fall of 1916, Paton attended a recruitment lecture and film given by the American Ambulance Field Service (later known as the American Field Service or AFS). The AFS was a volunteer ambulance corps founded by an American, A. Piatt Andrew, in Paris in April 1915 to support the French military effort. AFS volunteers were considered noncombatants, though they performed often-dangerous work evacuating casualties in their ambulances under combat conditions.

Paton convinced his parents to let him volunteer as an ambulance driver with AFS at age 21, and quickly left his studies to enter service overseas. Paton’s grandson later recalled that his grandfather regarded volunteer service with AFS as “a chance to avoid studying and to see something of the world, as well as to do something for his fellow man.” After arriving in France, Paton learned how to maintain and repair his Ford Model T ambulance, in addition to visiting some of the famous sites in Paris.

In late November 1916, Paton signed up to join a newly formed AFS unit that would be sent to the Balkan Front, where ambulances and volunteers were in short supply. Anticipating that his parents would worry about this serving in a more distant and unfamiliar zone of the war, he wrote his father that “All men are our



brothers, regardless of race, creed, or color. These brothers of ours have just asked for another section to help carry their wounded to hospitals near Salonica. ... In your letter you say you are glad and proud of me for being able to relieve the suffering and, in many cases, save the lives of the noble French boys. Won't you go one better, Father, and be proud of me for going where the need was greatest?" Paton spent days and nights driving back and forth with wounded men in the Balkans, helping individuals from both sides of the conflict. Sometimes he drove several hundred miles in a single day.

In 1917 Paton returned to France, and arranged for his brother, Dana, to join his unit. Paton and Dana drove ambulances in the war zone near Verdun, France, a very dangerous area of the war. They endured shellings and aerial bombardment while carrying wounded men in their ambulances. The brothers lost their closest friend from the ambulance service when he was killed in an aerial attack. Dana was also wounded.

Several months after the United States declared war on the Central Powers in April 1917, the ambulance units of AFS were transferred to the control of the U.S. Army. Paton, who had already served for over a year, opted to return home to the United States and to his girlfriend, whom he later married. After the war, Paton trained and became an airline pilot in the new commercial airline industry. Paton's grandson later said that serving with the AFS "remained the defining moment" of Paton's and Dana's lives.

Sources

Timothy Kendall, "Two Brothers: Stories from the Front Lines of World War I" speech, Cape Ann Museum of Gloucester (typescript), 30 June 1912. *Courtesy of Timothy Kendall.*

Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs. www.afs.org/archives.

Photographs

Francis Paton Kendall standing in front of AFS ambulances in 1917. *Courtesy of the Kendall family.*

AFS volunteers repair an ambulance on the side of the road in Albania in 1917. *Courtesy of the Archives of the American Field Service and AFS Intercultural Programs.*



Volunteer Biography #2

ELLEN NEWBOLD LA MOTTE (1873-1961)

Ellen La Motte was born in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1873. When her family lost their money in a financial downturn, Ellen was sent to live with very wealthy cousins, the du Pont family of Wilmington, Delaware. There she was raised and later educated in a private boarding school for girls.

In this period, professional nursing was a new career path that offered employment and independence for many women. Despite her family's objections, La Motte enrolled in the Johns Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses, graduating in 1902. La Motte supported herself in various nursing positions in Europe and the United States over the next decade. She developed a specialty in tuberculosis care and returned to the city where she had trained to supervise a tuberculosis unit for the Baltimore Health Department.

During these years she was also active in the growing campaign for women's suffrage, writing articles and giving speeches that advocated women's right to vote. Professional women in the suffrage movement sought respect for their contributions to society and a voice in the political realm.

In November 1914, soon after war broke out in Europe, La Motte moved to Paris. Looking to use her nursing expertise in service, she worked for some months for the American Ambulance Hospital, a French military hospital staffed and funded by American volunteers. La Motte, however, was disappointed to be far from the fighting and critical of what she regarded as inefficient and wasteful practices at the hospital. She soon left.

La Motte socialized with other well-to-do American women living in Paris, including modernist writer Gertrude Stein and philanthropist Mary Borden. In 1915, Mary Borden founded a mobile surgical hospital, funded through her own inheritance, and donated it for service to the French military. La Motte quickly joined this unit, working alongside Borden as a military nurse in the Belgian war zone.



Caring for the wounded, La Motte became deeply troubled by the harm she witnessed to soldiers and civilians alike. “Much ugliness is churned up in the wake of mighty, moving forces, and this is *The Backwash of War*. Many little lives foam up in this backwash, loosened by the sweeping current ... One catches a glimpse of them—often weak, hideous or repellent. There can be no war without this backwash.” In 1916, she published a book of semi-fictionalized sketches, *The Backwash of War*, based on her observations. After the United States entered the war, the United States government censored La Motte’s book, fearing it might lower public support and morale on the home front.

La Motte left France and her volunteer service in July 1916. In the following years she traveled in Asia where her attention turned to another public health crisis, the opium trade and opium addiction. She became an international authority and spokesperson in this field. Later she retired to Washington, D.C. La Motte’s book of World War I sketches was republished in the 1930s when state violence and military conflict were again on the rise globally.

Sources
Lea Williams. “La Motte, Ellen Newbold.” American National Biography Online. <http://www.anb.org/articles/13/13-02684.html>
Margaret R. Higonnet, editor. *Nurses at the Front: Writing the Wounds of the Great War*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001.

Photographs
Ellen LaMotte, circa 1902. *Courtesy of the Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives of The Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions*.
An American nurse assisting patients at the American Ambulance Hospital. *Courtesy of the American Hospital of Paris*.

Volunteer Biography #3

EUGENE BULLARD (1895-1961)



Eugene Bullard was born in the small city of Columbus, Georgia, in 1895, the seventh child in a close-knit working-class African American family. Bullard's father William had been born a slave; he could trace his family roots back to the French-speaking slave colony of Martinique. Bullard's mother died when he was small but his father kept his family of young children together, supporting them by manual labor. Bullard received a few years of schooling in a segregated primary school where he learned to read.

The near-lynching of his father, a strong and well-liked man in the community, was a traumatic event in Bullard's childhood. Throughout his life, Bullard expressed deep hatred for the racial taunts and violence of white society, especially as he experienced them in the Jim Crow southern United States of the early 20th century. Restlessness and a desire for greater freedom led him to run away from home. For several years he lived as a child vagabond, staying for a time with various families, black and white, and supporting himself with different kinds of work.

In 1912, still a teenager, Bullard embarked on a larger adventure, stowing away on a ship bound for Europe. The ship deposited him in Aberdeen, Scotland. The resourceful and outgoing teenager soon found a circle of friends and employment on the edges of urban life, first in an amusement park and later in the city's vaudeville theaters. Through friends, he learned to box and developed a career in the sport.

A series of boxing matches brought him to Paris in 1913, and at last Bullard found a place that he could consider home. The French did not practice racial segregation, and Bullard experienced in Paris a sense of freedom and



belonging. After his adopted country entered the war, Bullard made the decision to volunteer for military service. On his birthday in October 1914, he enlisted with the French Foreign Legion, a military wing of the French Army composed of non-French volunteers. His unit, the 170th Infantry, fought at the front where casualties were very high. Bullard described in this way the strong sense of camaraderie that developed in the unit's ranks: "We were just a big family of fifty-four different nationalities, and we kept growing more diverse as the men were shot down. We all loved each other and lived and died for each other as men should." Bullard was wounded in the Battle of Verdun. The French government awarded him the Croix de Guerre, a medal for courage in battle.

After recovering from his wounds in a French military hospital, Bullard decided to embrace a new challenge: he would train as a combat pilot, becoming the first African American to do so. In November 1916 he commenced the rigorous training program for fighter pilots. Upon completion he was accepted as a volunteer pilot with the Franco-American Flying Corps—a group of American pilots flying for the French Air Service. Airborne warfare was new in World War I and extremely dangerous. Bullard flew 20 combat missions and survived a forced landing under attack. Bullard was conscious of the racial barriers he was challenging. He later wrote that, on his first combat mission, he felt "the eyes of the world were watching me. ... I had to do or die and I didn't want to die."

When the United States entered the war as a combatant nation, responsibility for the air combat unit was handed to the U.S. military. Seeking to transfer, Bullard was rejected by his own government, which refused to allow African Americans any role in the United States Air Service.

After the war, Bullard settled in Paris and worked as the manager of a jazz club; eventually he opened his own club, named L'Escadrille for an American volunteer air unit serving alongside the French during the war. In World War II he accepted a spy mission for the French government. When Germany invaded France, he and his family were forced to leave the country. He lived his later years in Harlem, New York City.

Sources

"Eugene Bullard," Blackpast.org, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/bullard-eugene-jacques-1894-1961>.
Craig Lloyd, *Eugene Bullard, Black Expatriate in Jazz-Age Paris* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

Photographs

Eugene Bullard in his French Foreign Legion uniform.
Courtesy of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

French Foreign Legionnaires charging across a field.
Courtesy of Dennis Gordon.

Volunteer Biography #4

FRANK ANGELL (1857-1939)



Frank Angell was born in Scituate, Rhode Island, in 1857 to a large, locally prominent family of farmers, public officials, newspaper editors, and academics. Education and public service were important legacies of his family. Angell attended private schools, and earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Vermont, where his uncle had previously served as university president.

After graduating, Angell worked for two years in Washington, D.C. teaching English to the families of Chinese diplomats, and then for seven years as a teacher of high school physics.

In 1887, Angell traveled to Leipzig, Germany, where he intended to pursue graduate study in physics. German universities in the late 19th century, considered among the world's best, were valued for their innovative ideas and rigorous methods. Many young American men with academic interests, and some American women, chose to study in Germany. In Leipzig, Angell encountered the new field of experimental psychology and quickly changed his focus. Earning a Ph.D. in psychology in 1891, he returned to the United States.

Angell was hired by Stanford University as professor of psychology in 1892. The administration welcomed Angell to build a laboratory for experimental psychology and to serve as department chair for the newly established university. For decades, Angell was a popular teacher of undergraduate psychology courses. He was also a strong proponent of university athletics as a source of health and well-being for young people.

In 1915, when war raged in Europe, Angell accepted an invitation to serve under Herbert Hoover and the Commission for Relief in Belgium as a research investigator of humanitarian efforts. The Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB) was an international humanitarian relief organization founded in 1914 by Americans living in

London. International actors cooperating to address the needs of civilians in a war zone was a bold new concept, one that required skillful diplomacy as well as logistics and organization. The Belgian people were under German military occupation, and aiding them on a mass scale required a degree of cooperation with German officials as well as the circumvention of a British blockade of Belgium. Hoover anticipated the importance of collaborating with a network of relief programs organized by Belgian civilians, the National Committee for Relief and Food (in English). Needing to learn more about this group and how it functioned, Hoover sent Angell into occupied Belgium to investigate.

Angell traveled in Belgium for eight months on a leave of absence from Stanford, often working alone but sometimes accompanied by other American volunteers. He was deeply impressed by what he found—both the suffering of the civilian population and the effective means by which Belgians set out to address problems under the most trying circumstances. Angell gathered his findings in a report titled *The Belgians Under the German Occupation*. He

highlighted several urgent issues including widespread unemployment, the absence of fresh milk supplies for young children, and long-term undernourishment, which weakened bodies and created vulnerability to disease. Echoing language and attitudes of his era, Angell told a reporter for the Stanford Daily newspaper, “They are great people—the Belgians; no race could have been more deserving of this greatest of all charities.”

Angell returned to Stanford in September 1916 and resumed his teaching duties. He also lectured at fundraising events for war relief in the years that followed. He retired from the faculty in 1922, but remained active in university affairs for his later life.

Sources

“Dr. Frank Angell Returns from Belgium,” *The Stanford Daily*, September 25, 1916, Memorial Resolution for Frank Angell, Stanford University Faculty, <http://historicalsociety.stanford.edu/pdfmem/AngellF.pdf>

Photographs

Frank Angell. *Commission for Relief in Belgium Records, Box 634, Folder NN*.
Courtesy of the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford University.

School children eating food provided through the Commission for Relief in Belgium.
Commission for Relief in Belgium Records, Box 627, Photo 379.
Courtesy of the Hoover Institution Library & Archives, Stanford University.



Volunteer Biography #5

JAMES ROGERS MCCONNELL (1887-1917)



James Rogers McConnell was born in Chicago, Illinois, the son of a prominent judge, in 1887. The family later moved to North Carolina. McConnell attended private schools throughout his childhood and went to college at the University of Virginia. He attended law school briefly and then worked in several business ventures back home in North Carolina.

A family friend described McConnell's "adventurous spirit," which led him to volunteer in 1915 for the American Ambulance Field Service, a volunteer ambulance corps newly founded by Americans in Paris that same year (later called the American Field Service or AFS). As an ambulance driver, McConnell gathered injured men from the battlefield and brought them for treatment to military field hospitals. After bravely serving for a year, he earned the distinguished Croix de Guerre medal from the French government for courage under fire.

Increasingly passionate about defending France, however, McConnell had begun to consider leaving the noncombatant ambulance service to enlist as a volunteer with the French military. The newly created Lafayette Escadrille provided him the opportunity to do so.

The Lafayette Escadrille was a group of American pilots serving with the French Air Service (Aéronautique Militaire) prior to the entry of the United States into the war. Authorized by the French government in the spring of 1916, the group was named in honor of the Marquise de Lafayette, considered by many to be a French hero who helped win

the war for the American colonists during the American Revolution. The pilots wore fur-lined uniforms to keep them warm in the fragile planes, often going out on two-hour patrols.

Thirty-eight Americans served in the Lafayette Escadrille, many of whom became famous on the home front for their dangerous volunteer service. McConnell wrote a book about his experiences during the war titled *Flying for France*; it helped Americans at home understand the kind of service they were doing overseas on the side of France and built support for the U.S. to enter the war.

Volunteering as a military pilot for France allowed McConnell to take sides in what he saw as a righteous cause. It also gave him the privilege of learning to fly. As he wrote about flying for the French Air Service in his book, “it was the beginning of a new existence, the entry

into an unknown world. ... For us all it contained unlimited possibilities for initiative and service to France.”

Casualties in this type of volunteer service skyrocketed during the war, as air-to-air combat increased. McConnell’s plane was shot down on March 19, 1917, during aerial combat with two German planes. McConnell was killed just weeks before his government joined the Allied cause in Europe as a combatant nation.

Sources

James R. McConnell, *Flying for France* (NY: Grosset & Dunlap Publishers, 1918 edition).

“Lafayette Escadrille in Memoriam,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 24, 1918, 11.

Dennis Gordon, *Lafayette Escadrille Pilot Biographies* (Missoula, MT: The Doughboy Historical Society, 1991).

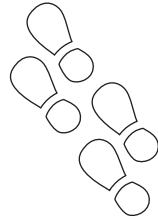
Photographs

James R. McConnell with his plane. *Courtesy of Ronald Poteat.*

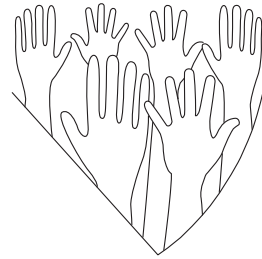
A Lafayette Escadrille pilot testing a machine gun prior to flight in Verdun, France, July 1916. *Courtesy of the Virginia Military Institute Archives.*



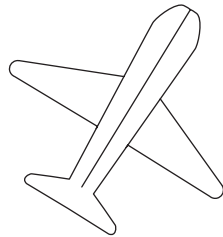
ROLE PLAY QUESTION SHEET: U.S. AMERICAN WAR VOLUNTEERS



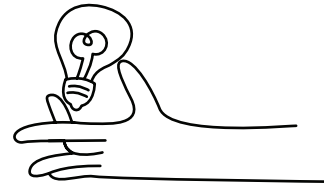
1. Tell us about your upbringing and early career: What is your background?



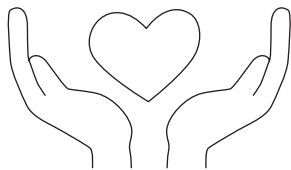
2. What factors led you to volunteer for service in the European war?



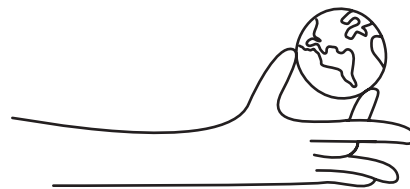
3. What are your opinions about the war and U.S. neutrality during your service?



4. What kind of work does your organization do? What made you select the type of service that you chose to do? If you worked in more than one type of service, what made you change?



5. Do you feel **you** benefitted by performing war service? Give a reason for your response.



6. Do you feel **others** benefitted from your service? Give a reason for your response.

