



## National World War I Museum

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### **The National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial Overview**

The primary focus of the National World War I Museum is to honor the memory and sacrifices of all those who served their country and defended liberty during World War I. Additionally, the Museum puts into context the consequences of World War I and how they impact the world we live in today.

#### **Overall Museum Environment**

Visitors enter the new museum via a long ramp that leads them below ground and into the museum entrance hall. Patrons experience a psychological transition from their daily lives and have the opportunity to focus on the gravity and scope of the war. Inside the museum, they cross over the Paul Sunderland glass bridge from the lobby to the main exhibit hall, and have one last view of the Tower through skylights. On the glass bridge, visitors pass over a field of 9,000 red poppies, each representing 1,000 combatant fatalities.

#### **Portrait Wall**

On the outer wall of the new museum, a Portrait Wall portrays the personal sacrifices of those who served in World War I. An interactive video portrait gallery enables guests to explore databases to learn more about these people. The Portrait Wall is a living archive — constantly expanding to contain new material.

#### **World at War, The Orientation Theater**

The Orientation Theater provides visitors an overview of the war and its historical context – its origins and significance as the seminal geopolitical event of the 20th century. It shows how the world's most powerful societies and colonial dependents mobilized in a global catastrophe that shaped the world we know today. Archival photographs and historical footage from the Museum's collection are prominently displayed. Comfortable seating for 60 individuals through a 12-minute video provides relevant background for all the museum's galleries.

#### **Prologue**

The Prologue Gallery gives a deeper idea of what the world was like before the war and the undercurrents that were preconditions for the war in 1914. This is a place to contemplate the sense of

optimism and progress, European culture at its pinnacle of achievement, while also gaining insights into the economic and political forces pushing Europe towards conflict. The contrast with what follows presents a stark reversal of fortune — from relative peace and prosperity to the catastrophe of industrialized war.

### **Chronology of the War**

The Chronology of the War covers the origins of the conflict and its year-by-year escalation up to the armistice and the Peace Conference in Paris in 1919. A multi-layered timeline — with images, graphics and small objects — presenting the interwoven strands of the story: the military and diplomatic action as it unfolds and the domestic, social and cultural impacts of the war. The narrative is carried through eyewitness testimonies of people from different nations — from military personnel, civilians, politicians, diplomats — to keep before the visitor the individual and diverse experiences of war.

### **Immersion Galleries**

The Immersion Galleries are dramatic installations of key large-scale objects from the collection, in settings that allude to the physical and emotional landscapes of the war. They portray key situations drawn from the chronology and give visitors a deeper understanding of the war's dynamics by focusing on themes that cut across the entire narrative. Each tableau is augmented with immersive video and audio to bring people into direct contact with sets of original evidence, the first-person accounts connected with objects that were used in the war.

### **Interactive Study Stations**

Two Interactive Study Stations are located in the inner circle. Visitors can sit down and explore World War I in more detail. The variety of programming can address different learning styles, using simulations, databases, and decision-making scenarios that pose the question: “What would you do?” A key component of these activities will be the presentation of situations as people saw them at the time — outcomes unknown, consequences unforeseen, addressing the central questions: how, when, and why nations go to war.

### **Study Collections**

Along the central path, large glass cases will showcase the breadth and variety of the museum collection. Organized thematically, these showcases complement the chronology and the immersive encounters and will add a rich complexity to the exhibit program. Comparisons are made from a variety of nations, underscoring again the global nature of the war.

### **Horizon Theater: America's Entry into the War and the 20th Century**

This spectacular program shows America at the point of decision, on the threshold of war, and gives visitors an opportunity to experience what that meant at the time. A dramatic wide-screen theater presents guests with the question, “Should America enter the war?” This presentation is integrated with a Field Tableau, a full-scale depiction of “No Man's Land” and what Americans going to war were to face. The presentation balances positive outcomes of the war with the “Pandora's Box” of forces and negative consequences that were unleashed.

### **America at War**

The second half of the exhibition takes guests from the United States' entry into the war in 1917 through the November 1918 armistice and continuing on through the peace negotiations at Versailles

in 1919 (and the decision to build the Liberty Memorial). The western structure of the exhibition mirrors that of the eastern side, but now the contents focus on another of the great strengths of the collection, the American materials, both military and civilian. This is an inspiring story that documents the American war effort, the home-front, and the achievements of the American Expeditionary Forces and their role in saving the Allies from defeat. It takes visitors up to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, where values of American democracy and peace, as articulated by President Wilson, established America's commitment and good will and the beginnings of its role as a world leader.

### **Epilogue**

An Epilogue exhibit looks at the war through a selection of notable excerpts and reflections on the meaning of war and peace. This is a companion space to the prologue exhibit on the other side of the hall. There is also an exhibit on the building of the Liberty Memorial, a symbol of hope that endures today.

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