



SERVICE AND SACRIFICE

Quentin Roosevelt's Ultimate Sacrifice

Recommended Grade Levels: 9-12

Course/Content Area: Social Studies; American History

Authored by: The National World War I Museum and Memorial

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why did Quentin Roosevelt's death come to represent U.S. notions of service and sacrifice during WWI?
- What does an analysis of primary documents reveal about Quentin Roosevelt and the impact of his death on the nation?

SUMMARY: This lesson asks to students to interpret multiple primary source excerpts and connect them to larger WWI themes.

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT: See Standards Alignment Appendix B

TIME NEEDED: One 50 minute period with homework assignment

OBJECTIVES: *Students will:*

- analyze excerpts of primary documents, photographs and artifacts.
- synthesize information and respond to implied themes in a written essay.

INTERDISCIPLINARY: History, Language Arts

THEMES & CONNECTIONS: Students examine the call to duty of American men and women during WWI. Analysis of primary documents provides the opportunity for students to explore the effect of sacrifice on soldiers, comrades, and family members.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Primary source documents – found in Appendix A of this lesson. This can be printed or you can load it onto a common drive for students to access electronically.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Former U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt was a great supporter of American involvement in the Great War. While serving, his son Quentin was killed in action in 1918. His death had a profound effect on fellow soldiers, the nation, and especially his father. Primary documents and artifacts provide evidence of the realities of war.

LESSON

DIRECTIONS:

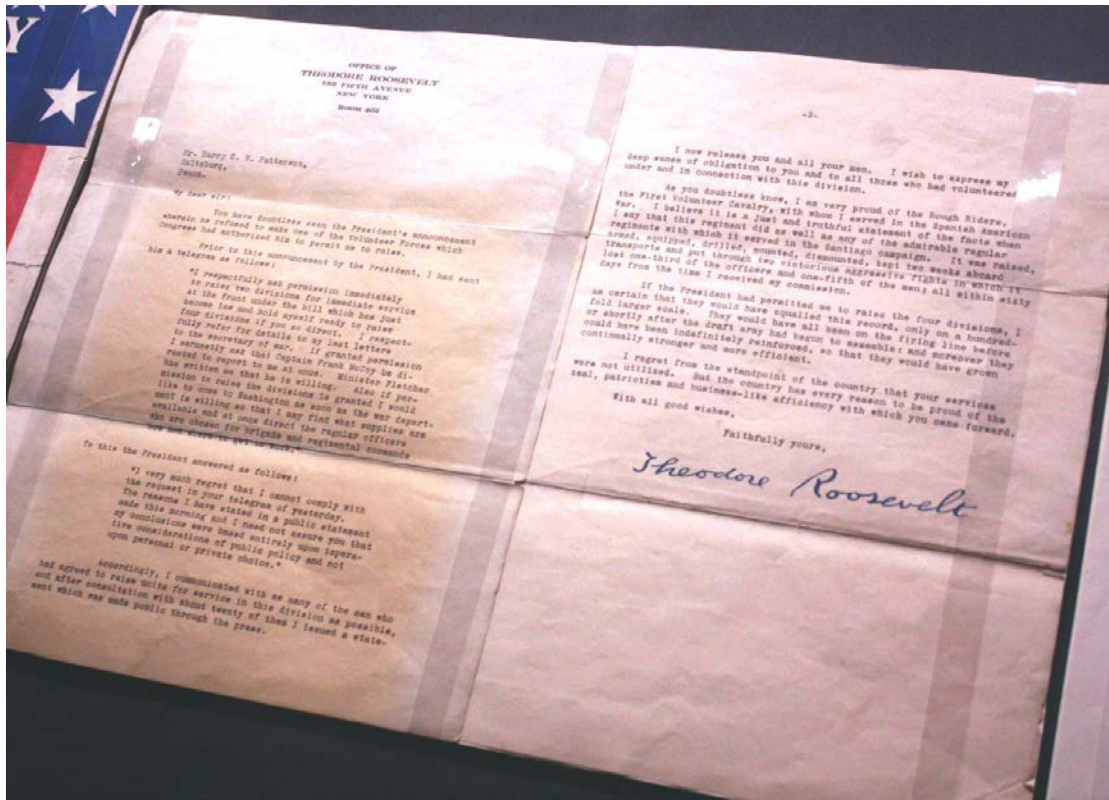
1. Students will read the Service and Sacrifice document packet.
2. Students will respond to questions about the primary documents contained in their reading.
3. As a class, students will discuss their analysis of primary sources.
4. Students will discuss how the documents relate to modern ideas of service and sacrifice.
5. An essay synthesizing information gleaned from primary sources will be assigned as homework.

Appendix A:

Service and Sacrifice

Review the following document. Use the provided questions to analyze the included primary sources. When you have finished, consider the major themes presented by the story of Theodore Roosevelt and his son Quentin. Use your answers to questions and themes as a guide to construct an essay about service and sacrifice in WWI.

As the United States entered WWI in the spring of 1917, former president Theodore Roosevelt stood ready to defend the nation with military force. In a series of letters and telegrams sent to President Wilson and Secretary of War, Newton Baker, Roosevelt expressed his desire to prepare a group of volunteers for battle. His services were declined. In the letter below, Roosevelt addressed the men he'd pre-assembled for duty.



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¹ Theodore Roosevelt, "25 May 1917 Letter" (Kansas City, MO: National World War I Museum and Memorial).

Text:

Letter sent to each of various men who had done work in personally raising units for the proposed divisions which were finally authorized by Congress:

Office of Theodore Roosevelt
758 Fifth Avenue
New York
Room 402

Mr. Harry C.W. Patterson,
Saltsburg,
Penna.

May 25, 1917

My dear Sir:

You have doubtless seen the President's announcement wherein he refused to make use of the Volunteer Forces which Congress had authorized him to permit me to raise.

Prior to this announcement by the President, I had sent him a telegram as follows:

"I respectfully ask permission immediately to raise two divisions for immediate service at the front under the bill which has just become law, and hold myself ready to raise four divisions, if you so direct. I respectfully refer for details to my last letters to the Secretary of War. If granted permission, I earnestly ask that Captain Frank McCoy be directed to report to me at once. Minister Fletcher has written me that he is willing. Also if permission to raise the divisions is granted, I would like to come to Washington as soon as the War Department is willing, so that I may find what supplies are available, and at once direct the regular officers who are chosen for brigade and regimental commands how and where to get to work."

To this the President answered as follows:

"I very much regret that I cannot comply with the request in your telegram of yesterday. The reasons I have stated in a public statement made this morning, and I need not assure you that my conclusions were based entirely upon imperative considerations of public policy and not upon personal or private choice."

Accordingly, I communicated with as many of the men who had agreed to raise units for service in this division as possible, and after consultation with about twenty of them I issued the statement which is herewith appended.

I now release you and all your men. I wish to express my deep sense of obligation to you and to all those who had volunteered under and in connection with this division. As you doubtless know, I am very proud of the Rough Riders, the First Volunteer Cavalry, with whom I served in the Spanish-American War. I believe it is a just and truthful statement of the facts when I say that this regiment did as well as any of the admirable regular regiments with which it served in the Santiago campaign. It was raised, armed, equipped, drilled, mounted, dismounted, kept two weeks aboard transports and put through two victorious aggressive fights in which it lost one-third of the officers and one-fifth of the men; all within sixty days from the time I received my commission.

If the President had permitted me to raise the four divisions, I am certain that they would have equalled the record, only on a hundredfold larger scale. They would have all been on the firing line before or shortly after the draft army had begun to assemble, and moreover they could have been indefinitely reinforced, so that they would have grown continually stronger and more efficient. I regret from the standpoint of the country that your services were not utilized. But the country has every reason to be proud of the zeal, patriotism and businesslike efficiency with which you came forward.

With all good wishes,
Faithfully yours,
Theodore Roosevelt

- To whom is this letter addressed?
- Look at the letter's date. What does this indicate about Roosevelt's plan to assemble troops?
- What opinion does Roosevelt have of the men who received this letter? Why do you believe this is the case?
- What can you determine about Roosevelt's sense of duty to the United States after reading this letter? What expectations do you think he had of his fellow citizens in regards to the war?

Quentin Roosevelt, one of Theodore and Edith Roosevelt's five children, became part of the air-service during the war. In a letter dated January 15, 1918, he wrote:

There's one good thing about going to the front — I shall be so busy worrying about the safety of my own neck that I shan't have time to worry about the way the war is going.

I only hope I'll get up there soon — it seems such a solution for all sorts of difficulties. You get clear of all the little worries and jealousies that fill up life behind the lines, and you have only the big eventuality to face, — all the others arrange for themselves if you are fighting. And then, I feel I

owe it to the family — to father, and especially to Arch and Ted [Quentin's brothers] who are out there already and facing the dangers of it, to get out myself.²

- How does Quentin feel about fighting in the war?
- Why did he feel this way about active duty?
- Why do you think Quentin Roosevelt became a WWI soldier?

Roosevelt was shot down on July 14, 1918. German troops buried him with a full military honors ceremony. Kermit Roosevelt, Quentin's brother, reported:

Two days after Quentin fell the following German communique was intercepted by our wireless:

“On July fourteen seven of our chasing planes were attacked by a superior number of American planes north of Dormans. After a stubborn fight, one of the pilots – Lieutenant Roosevelt, -- who had shown conspicuous bravery during the fight by attacking again and again without regard to danger, was shot in the head by his more experienced opponent and fell at Chamery.”³

Captain James E. Gee of the 110th Infantry observed the burial:

The funeral certainly was elaborate. I was told afterward by Germans that they paid Lieut. Roosevelt such honor not only because he was a gallant aviator, who died fighting bravely against odds, but because he was the son of Colonel Roosevelt, whom they esteemed as one of the greatest Americans.⁴

Fellow soldiers loved and respected Roosevelt. Eddie Rickenbacker, known as the United States most successful flying Ace, wrote:

Quentin Roosevelt's death was a sad blow to the whole group. As President Roosevelt's son he had rather a difficult task to fit himself in with the democratic style of living which is necessary in the intimate life of an aviation camp. Everyone who met him for the first time expected him to have the airs and superciliousness of a spoiled boy. This notion was quickly lost after the first glimpse one had of Quentin. Gay, hearty and absolutely square in everything he said or did, Quentin Roosevelt was one of the most popular fellows in the group. We loved him purely for his own natural self.

He was reckless to such a degree that his commanding officers had to caution him repeatedly about the senselessness of his lack of caution. His

² Kermit Roosevelt and Quentin Roosevelt, *Quentin Roosevelt: A Sketch with Letters* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 95-96.

³ Kermit Roosevelt, 172.

⁴ Kermit Roosevelt, 176.

bravery was so notorious that we all knew he would either achieve some great spectacular success or be killed in the attempt. Even the pilots in his own flight would beg him to conserve himself and wait for a fair opportunity for a victory. But Quentin would merely laugh away all serious advice.⁵

- Are there indications that Roosevelt died a heroic death?
- What do the details of his burial indicate?
- How was Quentin Roosevelt perceived by his fellow soldiers? By his foes?
- The idea of bravery is mentioned in all three of these statements. Compare these descriptions. Do they match your own ideas about bravery?

WWI gravesites were typically marked with simple wooden crosses. Often, a flier's plane wreckage was found at burial sites. One of the first Americans who discovered Roosevelt's grave noted:

"Following the custom that sprang up in the heroic soil of the air-service, the broken propeller- blades and bent and scarred wheels of the plane were marking his resting-place. Nearby lay the shattered remains of the air plane, with the seventy -six "wound stripes" which Quentin had painted on it, still to be seen."⁶

Roosevelt's gravesite became a sort of shrine. Hundreds of soldiers made pilgrimages to visit his final resting place. It was observed that:

"Paths have been worn to the grave from half dozen different points – worn by American soldiers, who are still walking sometimes five and six miles just to see the spot and pay reverence to the young American who to serve his country entered the most dangerous branch of the service."⁷

Any artifact related to Roosevelt, especially his death, became highly coveted. Pieces of his plane were taken away as souvenirs by visitors.⁸

⁵ Edward J. Rickenbacker, *Fighting the Flying Circus* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1919), 193.

⁶ Rickenbacker, 176.

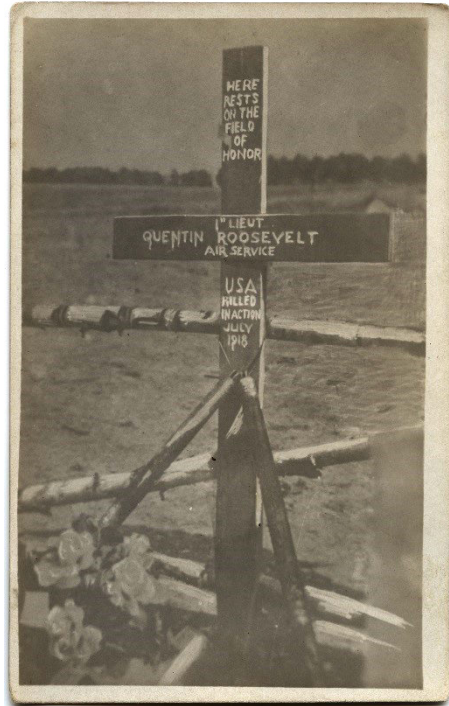
⁷ Rickenbacker, 184.

⁸ Steven Trout, *On the Battlefield of Memory: The First World War and American Remembrance, 1919-1941* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010), 221-224.

Men of the 168th Aero Squadron salvaged Roosevelt's plane. This cane was carved from the airplane's propeller. It was brought to the United States from France by Sergeant Ralph Stalmok.



- What was the significance of Roosevelt's grave? What motivated soldiers to visit?
- Why do you think his death resonated so profoundly with troops?
- Why were souvenirs important to WWI soldiers?
- Why did Sgt. Stalmok return to the United States with the cane pictured above?



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The first Americans to discover Roosevelt's grave erected a marker with Roosevelt's name and identification as a member of the "Air Service U.S.A."¹⁰



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⁹ "Grave of Quentin Roosevelt postcard, 1996.31.42" (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

¹⁰ Trout, 224.

¹¹ "Officers Inspecting the grave of Quentin Roosevelt photo, 1979.34.17" (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

Roosevelt's former prep school classmates added decoration. Later, the French embellished the marker and added a small fence to protect the gravesite from souvenir hunters.¹²

- Compare these two photographs of Quentin Roosevelt's gravesite.
- How can you tell that the first photograph of the gravesite was taken earlier?
- Based on the second photograph of the gravesite, what can you ascertain about French feelings towards American soldiers?
- What do the photos tell you about the significance of Roosevelt's death?

Quentin's death profoundly affected his father. In a letter dated August 14, 1918, Roosevelt told a friend, "But at times it seems almost more than I can bear to have my sons face dreadful danger while I sit at home in the ease and comfort of safety. It is a terrible thing that death should come to the young. But it is even more terrible, of course, if the young fear to face death in a great crisis for a great cause."¹³

On September 17, 1918, the *New York Times* published an editorial written by Theodore Roosevelt. The paper wrote, "...although no name is mentioned, it is apparent that the basis of the editorial was the supreme sacrifice of Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt of the American Section."¹⁴ "The Great Adventure" was a eulogy for his son.

In America today all our people are summoned
to service and sacrifice. Pride is the portion
only of those who know bitter sorrow
or the foreboding of bitter sorrow. But all
of us who give service, and stand ready for
sacrifice are the torch-bearers. We run with
the torches until we fall, content if we can
then pass them to the hands of other runners.
The torches whose flame is brightest are borne by
the gallant men at the front and by the gallant
women whose husbands and lovers, whose sons
and brothers are at the front.
These men are high of soul as they face their fate
on the shell-shattered earth or in the skies

above or in the waters beneath; and no less

This is the conclusion of
Theodore Roosevelt's essay,
"The Great Adventure."

¹² Trout, 224.

¹³ Theodore Roosevelt to John Burroughs, 14 August 1918,
<http://www.shapell.org/manuscript.aspx?theodore-roosevelt-family-ravaged-by-wwi>.

¹⁴ "Great Adventure' Roosevelt's Topic," *New York Times*, September 17, 1918,
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30E1FFD3E5511738DDDAE0994D1405B888DF1D3>.

high of soul are the women with torn hearts
and shining eyes, the girls whose boy lovers
have been struck down in their golden morning,
and the mothers and wives to whom word has
been brought that henceforth they must walk
in the shadow.
These are the torch-bearers; these are they
who have dared the Great Adventure.¹⁵

- This writing is considered Roosevelt’s eulogy for his son, Quentin. How does he express his feelings of loss?
- Who are the torch-bearers? How does Roosevelt feel about them?
- Why does Roosevelt specifically address women in this essay?
- What is “the Great Adventure”?

The Liberty Memorial, a national memorial honoring those that served in WWI, opened in Kansas City, Missouri in 1926. A frieze, or low relief sculpture, was added in 1935. The Kansas City architecture firm Wight and Wight, along with New York sculptor Edmond Amateis, designed this frieze as a contrast of war and peace.¹⁶ Adorning the length of the 148-foot long frieze is the inscription, “These have dared bear the torches of sacrifice and service. Their bodies return to dust but their work liveth forevermore. Let us strive on to do all which may achieve, and cherish, a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.” The first sentence of this message is adapted from Roosevelt’s “Great Adventure” essay.¹⁷



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- Why did the frieze’s designers choose Roosevelt’s words to adorn their depiction of war and peace?

¹⁵ “Great Adventure”

¹⁶ The Liberty Memorial Association, *Perpetuating the Ideal*, 1950, 25.

¹⁷ J.E. McPherson, *The Story of the Great Frieze* (Kansas City, MO: Liberty Memorial Association, 1935).

¹⁸ Edmond Amateis, *Great Frieze*, 1935. Limestone. National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

Appendix B:

Standards Alignment

Common Core Standards for Reading Informational Text for students in grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Common Core English Language Arts Standards for History/Social Studies for students in grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.5: Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

National Standards for English Language Arts (Developed by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).)

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

The National Standards for History are presented by The National Center for History in the Schools

U.S. History:

NSS-USH.5-12.7 Era 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)

The student in grades 5-12:

Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I.

World History:

NSS-WH.5-12.8 Era 8: A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945

The student in grades 5-12:

Understands the causes and global consequences of World War I.

Bibliography:

Amateis, Edmond. *Great Frieze*, 1935. Limestone. National WWI Museum and Memorial, Kansas City, MO.

"Comfort and safety letter." Theodore Roosevelt to John Burroughs. August 14, 1918. In Shapell.org. <http://www.shapell.org/manuscript/theodore-roosevelt-family-ravaged-by-wwi>.

"Grave of Quentin Roosevelt postcard, 1996.31.42" (Kansas City, MO: National WWI Museum and Memorial).

"'Great Adventure' Roosevelt's Topic," *New York Times*, September 17, 1918, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F30E1FFD3E5511738DDDAE0994D1405B888DF1D3>.

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Rickenbacker, Edward J. *Fighting the flying circus*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1919.

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Trout, Steven, *On the battlefield of memory: the first world war and American remembrance, 1919-1941*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2010.

"Wooden cane made from the propeller of Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt's plane" (Kansas City, MO: National World War I Museum and Memorial).