

# ACTIVITY FIVE: THE COLONIES & RACIAL MINORITIES

## TEACHER DEBRIFING SHEET

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why were the colonies so important to their empires during World War I?
2. In what ways did inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities contribute to the war effort?
3. Describe how inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities were treated during World War I.
4. What are some of the arguments for and against the inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities participating in World War I?
5. What are the costs of war and the price of peace?

### TASK:

Create a demonstration in which inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities demonstrate for or against their participation in World War I. Demonstrators must represent multiple perspectives, and the demonstration must include at least one voice that disagrees with the majority of demonstrators.

### TASK EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Demonstration must be clearly for or against the World War I participation of inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities, and demonstrators must justify (explain) their beliefs.
- Demonstration makes use of three or more of the following: posters/placards/signs, speeches, conflict, slogans, and/or flyers (pamphlets).
- Group accurately incorporates at least five pieces of World War I historical information (events, geography, data, people, etc.) into demonstration.
- Demonstration includes at least one voice that disagrees with the majority of demonstrators, and the majority of demonstrators must include at least two different World War I perspectives (racial minorities, inhabitants of the British colonies, inhabitants of the French colonies, inhabitants of the German colonies, British, French, German, etc.)
- Demonstration includes discussion of the costs of war and the price of peace.

### EXTENSION QUESTIONS:

1. Compare and contrast the experiences of the average citizens of the colonies with those of government officials and leaders in the colonies.
2. If you lived in the colonies at the time of World War I, would you have joined the war effort? Why or why not?
3. Describe the economic contributions the colonies made to the war effort.
4. What benefits might a citizen of the colonies have gained as a result of participation in the war?
5. Which visual from your Resource Cards is most memorable and why?
6. Compare and contrast the experiences of the Allied Powers' colonies (France and Britain) with those of the Central Powers' colonies (Germany).
7. In what ways did nationalism play out in the colonies during World War I?
8. Describe some of the challenges colonial troops faced at the battlefield.
9. Compare and contrast the two Nigerian perspectives from your Resource Cards.
10. How effective was the propaganda targeting the citizens of the colonies?

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### ACTIVITY CARD



Read the CONTEXT-SETTING CARD. Then use the information on your RESOURCE CARDS to talk about the DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.



Examine the TASK and complete the project to meet all of the EVALUATION CRITERIA.

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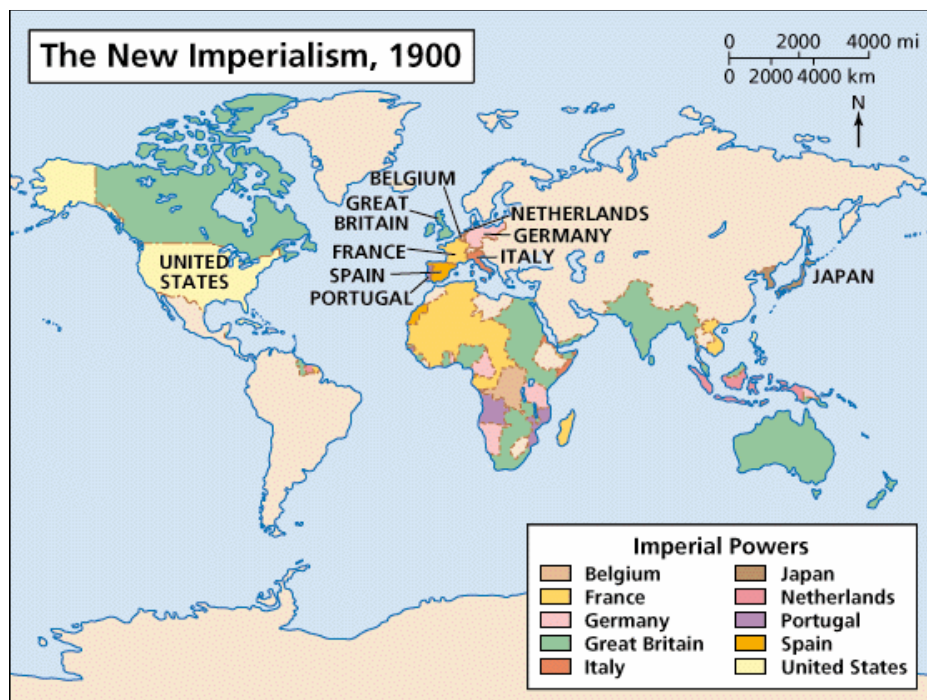
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### CONTEXT-SETTING CARD

At the time of World War I, many of the countries involved in the war had large colonial empires. Some of these empires, like that of Great Britain, were vast (large) and spanned several continents. Others, like that of Germany, were smaller and limited to a few regions of the world. No matter the size of the empire, the inhabitants of the colonies were profoundly (deeply) affected by the war being fought by their mother countries.

The imperial powers had always looked to their colonies as a source of labor (workers) to fuel their empires, and wartime was no exception. The inhabitants of the colonies were expected to do their part for the war effort. The colonies were expected to continue to provide the raw materials they always had, although now these raw materials were going towards new sources: war industries and feeding and fueling the soldiers at the fronts. The colonies were also expected to provide recruits for the armies of the imperial powers, as can be seen in the British recruitment poster at right. These colonial soldiers made important contributions to the war effort, fighting both in Europe and defending the colonies at home. Many colonial soldiers won medals for their bravery during the war.

Bringing colonial troops into the fight often brought racial issues to the surface. Many of the imperial powers struggled with how to incorporate colonial troops, the majority of whom were blacks, into their majority white militaries. Discrimination was a widespread problem, affecting not only the colonial troops but also racial minorities living in both the colonies and the imperial countries.



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### RESOURCE CARD 1 (OF 4) Contributions Made By British Colonies

At the time of World War I, Great Britain's empire was larger in both area and population than that of any other European country's empire, and included territories on the following continents: Africa, Asia, Australia, North America, and South America. Britain's colonies contributed to the war effort in a variety of ways.

#### Australia & New Zealand



More than 5 million volunteers made up the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) forces, noted for their participation in the Gallipoli campaign.

*Australian Prime Minister, August 1914:*

Our duty is quite clear—to gird up our loins [prepare for the worst] and remember that we are Britons.

#### British West Indies

Selected economic contributions of the British West Indies (territories in Latin America and the Caribbean):

- Aircraft: 9
- Ambulances for the Red Cross: 11
- Sugar, rum, cocoa, rice, oranges, limes
- Support of the troops: £31,000
- War funds and charity: £2,000,000

#### Nigeria (Africa)

*A Nigerian tells of how he was conscripted (forced to join the military):*

We came back one night from our yam farm. The chief called us and handed us over to a government messenger. I didn't know where we were going, but the chief and the messenger said that the white man had sent for us and we must go. After three days we reached the white man's compound. Plenty of others had arrived from other villages far away. And the white man wrote our names in a book. And tied a brass numbered ticket around our necks and gave each man a blanket and food. Then he told us we were going to the Great War to help the king's soldiers who were preventing the Germans coming to our country and burning it. We left and marched far into the bush [wilderness]. The government police led the way and allowed no man to stop behind.

*Dr. Obasa, founder of the People's Union party, speaking at a meeting of chiefs in Lagos, 1914:*

Our kith and kin [friends and family] have gone to fight in our stead, and it is only right that we should give them all the support necessary... Ingratitude is the greatest reproach [reprimand] that could be flung at a native, and I therefore urge upon all to contribute their quota [share] to this national fund so that it might not be said we are ungrateful to the British Government for many benefits conferred [given].

#### India

India contributed over one million soldiers on Britain's behalf in nearly every theater of war. Indian soldiers won over 12,000 medals for their bravery.



Indian troops fight on the Western Front, 1916.

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### RESOURCE CARD 2 (OF 4) Contributions Made By French Colonies

At the time of World War I, the French empire included territories in Africa, Asia, North America, and South America. However, the majority of the French colonies were located in Africa. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers from the French African colonies joined the war effort. The vast majority of them fought in Europe, like the African soldiers in the photographs below, many of whom fought alongside white soldiers. Those not involved in the war in Europe were involved in the Allied campaigns against the German colonies in Africa. While many Africans living in the French colonies joined the military on a volunteer basis, the French did extend their policy of conscription (required military service) to the colonies. This policy resulted in several African uprisings throughout the colonies.



North African soldiers near the Western Front



West African (Senegalese) soldiers near the Western Front, 1917.

*A white French soldier describes the experience of black French colonial troops from the tropics:*

Our black troops were really pitiful. Collar pulled up, chechia [brimless, cylindrical caps] pulled down over their ears, the Senegalis [from Senegal, in French West Africa] shivered, huddled around the fires, and snuggled together in a clump like kids. Nothing worked. The troops from Martinique [a French island in the Caribbean] also froze, muffled up in their scarves. Before they were seen playing prisoner's base, at leap-frog, and other teenaged games, which made them look like exotic high-schoolers. But now they don't have the same taste for fighting in the cold. Many black soldiers fall ill or go lame. Shouldn't we both wonder that more haven't fallen and admire the endurance of these poor men who suffer much more than whites...

Blaise Diagne, a Senegalese government official, was in charge of military recruitment in French West Africa during World War I. He enlisted over 100,000 men in exchange for promises from the French government of benefits for soldiers (including things like tax exemptions, French citizenship rights, and monetary allowances for soldiers' families) and improved social services (hospitals, schools, etc.) in French West Africa.

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### RESOURCE CARD 3 (OF 4) Contributions Made by German Colonies

Although Germany's colonial empire was not as large as the empires of its two main rivals (Great Britain and France), Germany did have colonies in both Africa and Asia. The Allied Powers made the capture of the German colonies one of their first priorities in the war. Most of Germany's colonies fell very quickly into Allied hands – those in Africa to the French and the British, and those in Asia to the Japanese. One exception was German East Africa. German General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, with a force of 3,000 German soldiers and 11,000 Askaris (native African soldiers) under his command, was able to successfully defend German East Africa from the British until the end of the war, when he was forced to surrender. The Askaris under von Lettow-Vorbeck's command were noted for their loyalty; not a single one deserted during the entire course of the war, and after the war they were given pensions (retirement pay) by the German government.

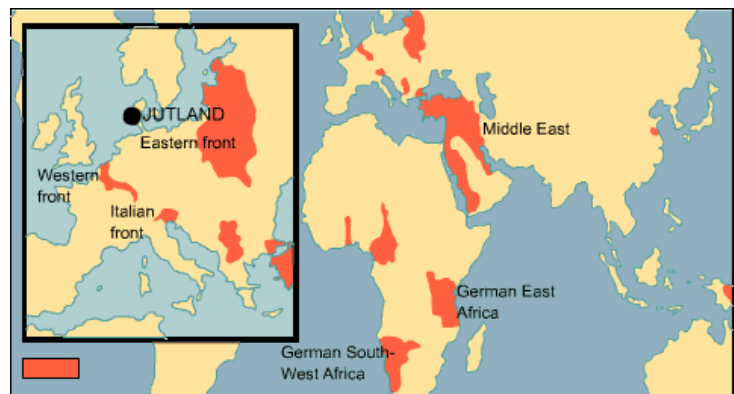
Development of the German Colonies (1896-1912)

As this chart shows, the colonies were a rapidly growing part of Germany's economy. The loss of raw materials and labor (workers) that accompanied the loss of colonies had a serious impact on Germany.

	1896	1904	1912
Railways	40 kilometers	479 kilometers	3867 kilometers
Imports	21 million	46.5 million	142.7 million
Exports	11.5 million	24.7 million	120.9 million
Total trade	32.5 million	71.2 million	263.3 million
Plantation area under cultivation	11,000 acres	43,000 acres	140,000 acres
Capital of trading companies	62 million	185 million	505 million



Askaris (native African troops) in German East Africa training for battle before World War I.



Map of the various fronts during World War I, including the African fronts, all of which were German colonies.

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### RESOURCE CARD 4 (OF 4)

#### WWI Attitudes Towards the Colonies and Racial Minorities



Propaganda poster encouraging participation in the Canadian Patriotic Fund, which helped to finance the war. Canada (part of the British Empire) had a majority white population.



French poster: "African Army and Colonial Troops Day." Black soldiers are shown fighting alongside white soldiers.



German mocking postcard from 1914, "England's last hope," showing caricatures of colonial troops.

#### British Attitudes Towards Blacks in the Military

*The British Manual for Military Law (1914) stated that "a Negro or any person of color" had to be classified as an alien, and specified how aliens could enlist in the military:*

Any person who is for the time being an alien may...be enlisted in His Majesty's regular forces... However, ...the number of aliens serving together at any one time in any corps of the regular forces shall not exceed [be greater than] the proportion of one alien to every fifty British subjects.

*British Field Marshal Douglas Haig, in an official order of 1917 regarding the majority black British West Indies Regiment (which included soldiers from British territories in the Caribbean and Latin America):*

This work has been very arduous [difficult] and has been carried out almost continuously under shell-fire. In spite of casualties, the men have always shown themselves willing and cheerful workers, and the assistance they have rendered [given] has been very much appreciated by the units to which they have been attached and for whom they have been working. The physique of the men is exceptional, their discipline excellent and their morale high.

## ACTIVITY FIVE: THE COLONIES & RACIAL MINORITIES

### INDIVIDUAL REPORT

Should the inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities have participated in World War I? Why or why not?

#### **Evaluation Criteria:**

- Response must state whether or not the inhabitants of the colonies and racial minorities should have participated in World War I.
- Response must include at least three reasons for your answer, each of which must be supported by specific historical evidence (geography, events, data, people, etc.).
- Response must include information from multiple points of view (racial minorities, inhabitants of the British colonies, inhabitants of the French colonies, inhabitants of the German colonies, British, French, German, etc.).
- Response includes discussion of the costs of war and the price of peace.