

Guided Notes (Teacher)

Ever since people first kept written history, war stories have filled books. For Americans, all 20th century wars happened in **foreign** lands. That meant saying goodbye to soldiers and then waiting anxiously for letters, like this one sent from Edward Harris of Armour, South Dakota to his mother.

The 20th century opened with American soldiers and sailors fighting in the Spanish American War overseas. In 1917 President Woodrow Wilson asked **Congress** to send United States troops to join a war raging in Europe since 1914. This was the war Edward Harris fought, along with 32,000 other South Dakota men and women. The war first was called the **Great War**, and later World War One. President Wilson said America's mission was to help secure democracy in Europe.

South Dakotans always joined the military in large numbers, with enlistment especially high on our reservations. American Indian service in World War One helped win a struggle for **citizenship**. In 1919 American Indians veterans who received an honorable military discharge became United States **citizens**. Five years later, all American Indians were made **citizens**.

South Dakotans **loaned** money to the government to pay for wars. They stepped into new jobs, doing work previously done by the departed soldiers. They collected materials needed for war—scrap iron, tin, paper, rags, grease, and more. Even young children helped. Of course, South Dakotans answered the **letters** that came from war zones, helping keep soldiers in good spirits.

The United States' biggest 20th century conflict was **World War Two**. Sixty-five thousand South Dakotans entered military service—joining the Army, National Guard, Marines...Some fought in the air. Army Air Corp bases for training flyers were built at Sioux Falls, Watertown, Mitchell, Pierre, and Rapid City. The one at Rapid City survives today as Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Meanwhile, the United States found it could no longer get material for **life jackets** from the island of Java, because Java was in the war zone. But milkweed seed floss proved a good substitute. **Life jackets** were necessary for sailors and flyers fighting at sea, so South Dakota school children pitched in, helping gather a national total of 14,000 bags of milkweed pods.

South Dakotans **rationed** foods during the war—meaning they could use only certain amounts of sugar, meat, and coffee per week.

The Army built a base for storing **bombs** south of Edgemont. Because the strange structures were shaped like Eskimo homes, the base was named Igloo. Homestake Gold Mine in Lead stopped mining and instead became a factory, turning out parts for grenades and airplanes.

Near Belle Fourche, sugar beet farmers were happy to have the labor German prisoners of war provided. There were about **1,200** prisoners of war in camps across South Dakota during World War Two. In addition to farm work, prisoners helped control Missouri River erosion.

According to an international treaty called the Geneva Convention, signed by the United States and other nations in 1929, **prisoners of war** were to be treated fairly. They were to have the same amount and quality of food as citizens, and free time after their work.

And South Dakota wasn't entirely safe from enemy attack during the war. In 1944 and '45, the **Japanese** military sent six thousand big balloons across the Pacific Ocean toward the United States. The balloons carried bombs and fire-starting devices, but it turned out they weren't very effective weapons.

World War Two was considered a hot war, full of action. After it ended in 1945, the United States entered a long period of **Cold War**, a time of worry and preparation for war, but usually no action against an enemy.

But South Dakotans didn't have to go that far to see a key part of the Cold War. All across western South Dakota, hundreds of **missiles** went into underground silos.

In 1991, five-thousand-six-hundred South Dakotans, plus aircraft from Ellsworth, circled halfway around the globe for action in the **Persian Gulf**. The region would again be a battlefield for Americans early in the 21st century.

From the Spanish-American War...to the Gulf War, much changed in war zones and on the home front. But some things stayed the same—like farewells...joyous returns...hometown signs of support...and eagerly waiting for letters from loved ones far away.