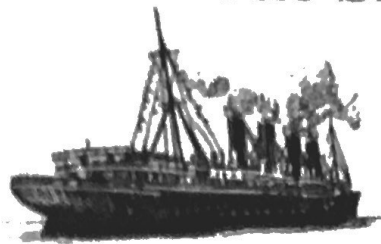


## The Sinking of the *Lusitania*



Shortly after World War I began, the British blockaded German seaports in an attempt to prevent war supplies from reaching the Central Powers. The British reasoned that if Germany and its allies did not receive the necessary supplies, they would grow weak and would have to stop fighting.

While carrying out its plan, the British navy stopped all ships from entering Germany. British sailors removed anything they thought would contribute to Germany's war effort, including food and machinery. At the same time, they destroyed most of the German merchant fleet.

Germany retaliated in February 1915 by declaring the waters surrounding the British Isles a "war zone." They warned that any merchant ship that ventured into the zone was in danger of being sunk. The United States issued a vigorous protest to Germany and warned of the consequences if an American vessel was attacked.

A few months later an incident occurred that turned American opinion against Germany and later helped bring the United States into the war. On May 7, 1915, the British liner *Lusitania* was traveling from New York to England when it was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine off the coast of Ireland. Of the nearly 1200 passengers who drowned, 128 were Americans. President Woodrow Wilson was outraged, and there was strong support in the United States for a declaration of war. This declaration was avoided when Germany announced it would cease attacking neutral or passenger ships. Germany kept this promise for nearly two years.

*Determine whether the statements below are true or false. Write T or F in each blank.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The purpose of the British blockade was to render Germany and its allies incapable of continuing the war.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The war zone declared by Germany in response to the British blockade included the entire coast of western Europe.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ The *Lusitania* was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of Ireland.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Most of the passengers on the *Lusitania* were Americans.
5. Before the *Lusitania* sailed from New York on May 1, 1915, Americans were warned by the German embassy not to sail on any ship bound for England. The warning appeared in numerous newspapers. Furthermore, the *Lusitania* was carrying military supplies, a fact at first denied by the British but later proven to be true. In your opinion, was Germany justified in sinking the ship? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Should the German submarine have surfaced and allowed the crew and passengers aboard the *Lusitania* to leave the ship before it was torpedoed? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_