

The Sinking of the Lusitania

When the British luxury cruise ship the Lusitania was built in 1907, seven years before World War I began in 1914, it was the largest ship in the world. At 787 feet long, it could carry over three thousand people.

On February 4, 1915, in their attempt to gain control of the shipping lanes around Britain, the Germans threatened to attack Allied ships that came into the area with their "unterseeboots." These were submarines or "undersea boats," which became known as U-boats.

The Allies did not take the German threat seriously, and on the first of May, 1915, the Lusitania left New York on its way to Liverpool, England. As the Lusitania drew near the Irish coast on May 7th, though, U-boat 20 targeted it with a torpedo and struck. The Lusitania immediately started to sink. Twenty minutes later it was lost into the sea, taking the lives of 1,198 people, 128 of which were Americans, with it.

The event did a lot to increase American support for entering the war, and "Remember the Lusitania" was used as both a battle cry and a recruitment slogan. It is a significant event in World War I because it was the American entrance into World War I turned the tides against German and eventually led to the Allies' victory.



1. The Lusitania was a ship belonging to which country?
2. Which country sank the Lusitania?
3. What does the sinking of the Lusitania have to do with American involvement in World War I?