

Volume I, Chapter 1

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# Putting the Pieces of the Past Together

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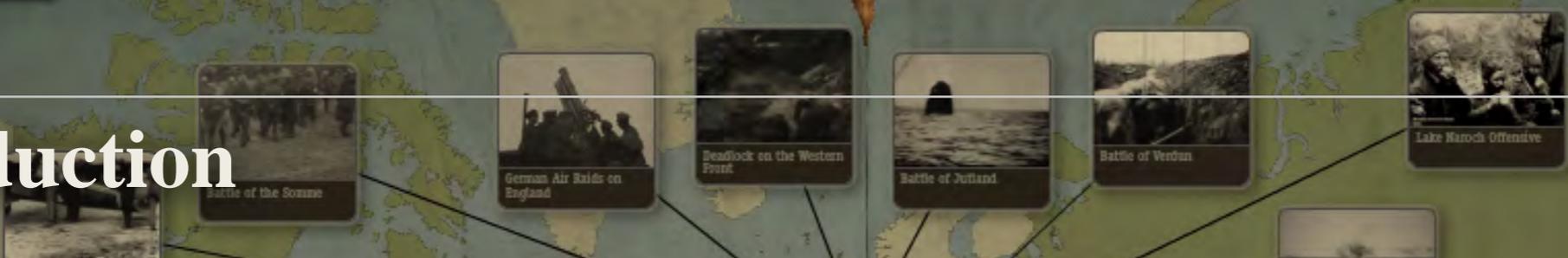
Building the chronology of the Meuse-Argonne

Samantha Shires



Section 1

# Introduction



When I first arrived at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, nestled comfortably into the quiet French countryside, I was overwhelmed at the size and scope of the American memorial. Beautifully landscaped and designed, the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery is the resting place for over 14,000 American soldiers who lost their lives during the Meuse-Argonne offensive in 1918. As I looked around, I saw thousands upon thousands of white marble crosses covering a perfectly manicured lawn. My mind flooded with questions: Who were these men? What was life like for them during the Meuse-Argonne campaign? What role did these men and the Meuse-



*This chapter's author, Samantha Shires, cleans crosses at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery.*

Argonne Offensive play in the larger scope of the war? Where would their personal stories fall in the chronology of the Meuse-Argonne and World War I? What direct impact did the Meuse-Argonne campaign and the brave soldiers, French citizens, and volunteers play in the larger context of World War I? These questions consumed my thoughts then, and they are also the questions that drive this chapter and the activities within it.

As we trudged through the remains of World War I trenches, stared in disbelief at land destroyed by military armaments from over 100 years ago that still displays scars from the blasts, and cleaned row upon row of white marble crosses with faceless names, many of my questions were answered. My questions were

answered as we became more knowledgeable and able to piece together the history of the Meuse-Argonne. As we embraced the Meuse-Argonne campaign and the people involved, we knew their story had to be told. It deserves to be told. It yearns to be told. It must be told. This chapter acts as a piece to the puzzle that is the Meuse-Argonne. By helping students build a chronology of the campaign and its role in World War I, we are able to tell these stories.

Just as the lives of those buried at the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) cemetery have a flow and an order, so does the Meuse-Argonne. This chapter focuses on the chronology of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign and its larger role within the Great War. By tackling the questions that overwhelmed my thoughts when I first arrived at the ABMC cemetery east of the village Romagne-sous-Montfaucon in France, we can take students on a journey to discover the historical significance, perspectives, and role of the Meuse-Argonne in World War I.

## Section 2

# Timeline Reputation

Timelines are a valuable tool in historical pedagogy. They can aid teachers in addressing such concepts as time, continuity, and change. They can be used to point out ideas such as historical significance and perspective. Timelines give teachers a physical representation of causation. As history teachers, we use causation and sequencing to structure our curriculum and to provide a visual representation of past events.

However, timelines have earned a bad reputation among students. Just the mention of the word can spark a wave of eye rolls and heavy sighing, causing a teacher to regret even bringing the topic up. One of the reasons timelines have obtained such a negative reputation is because they have often been used in tedious, mind-numbing situations where students are expected to memorize a specific set of events and people. They have not typically been used in interactive, personal, innovative ways that allows students to engage the content and find connections.

How can educators utilize the power and understandings that timelines can provide while also engaging students? The key is to provide students with interactive timelines, engaging content, and manageable classroom exercises that blend together to

create an authentic learning experience. Timelines are vital in helping students understand historical concepts. Utilizing them to their fullest potential allows students to grapple with ideas of the past and enhance their knowledge and understanding. This chapter provides several strategies for using timelines and ABMC resources to teach World War I.

### Section 3

# ABMC Timelines



ABMC has created several learning resources for teachers to use in their classrooms. Their timelines are just one of the many tools available, but are without a doubt one of the most powerful. As you enter into [The Great War: A Visual History](#), students can watch videos, listen to audio, read primary source documents, study maps, and examine images from a number of different battles, locations, and perspectives.

This chapter focuses primarily on the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and provides you with just a few ideas for using the ABMC timelines and resources in your classroom. The activities range from a scavenger hunt where students look closely at the Meuse-Argonne offensive and its role within World War I, to going back in time and meeting some of the faces of the Meuse-Argonne and learning how their lives during the war can help paint a more vivid and full picture of the past. Finally, students are asked to create their own interactive timeline where they can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of historical concepts such as time, continuity and change, historical perspective, and causation. I also provide other options and resources that could be helpful

when teaching students about chronology and the important place it holds when trying to visualize the past.

YouTube Video - This Day in History



## Section 4

# Scavenger Hunt



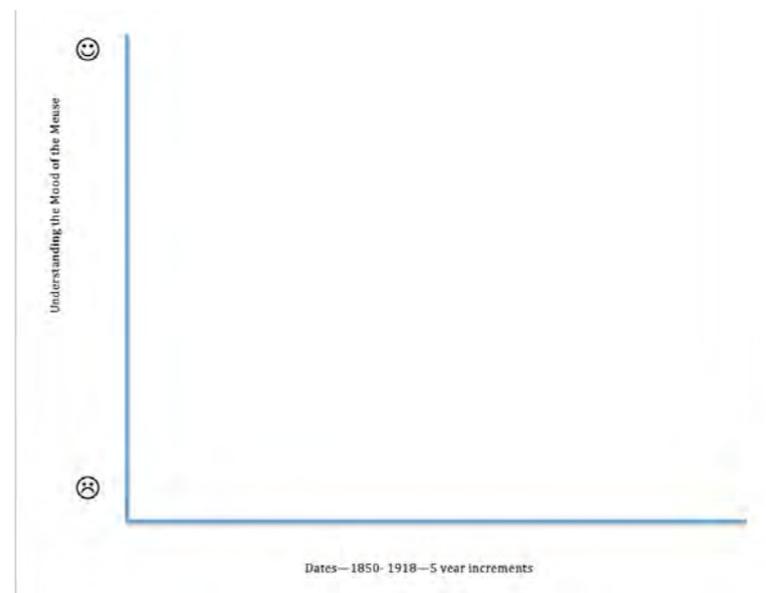
This activity helps students gain a better understanding of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign and its role within World War One. Students use the ABMC World War I timeline to piece together events, people, and ideas and begin building a chronology of the Meuse-Argonne and World War I.

### Activity Directions

In order to understand the size and scope of World War I, as well as the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, engage students in a scavenger hunt that allows them to explore key people, battles, and sites of WWI using the interactive [ABMC World War I timeline](#).

As students move throughout the scavenger hunt, ask them to fill out a mood chart that will record what they feel was a positive or negative for the American Soldiers fighting in the Meuse-Argonne. Students should note time, place, key people, and then of course where on the mood chart they feel that event would fall.

### Mood Chart



Tap or click the preview image to view the document.

## Exploring the ABMC Timeline and the Meuse-Argonne Campaign

1. Direct students to the [ABMC World War I Timeline](#).
2. Once the website loads, ask students to look at the image in the background and answer questions based on what they see, such as: what feeling does the image evoke? What does the image tell you about the content you will discover in the timeline?

3. Instruct students to enter the timeline and answer questions based on first impressions. Questions could be: What do you see/notice? How does this timeline differ from other timelines that you have worked with before? What do you expect to learn from this timeline based on what you see at this moment?
4. Now students are going to see how timelines can physically look different but show the same content. Ask students to go to the bottom left corner of their timeline and click on the “chart” option. Ask them, “What happened?” Students will see their timeline morph and change into a linear timeline. From here, you can ask them about what the two different timelines show and have them compare/contrast timeline structures.
5. Ask students to click on the year 1918 at the bottom of their timeline, and to find the event block titled, “Meuse-Argonne Campaign”. They should read the text provided and watch the short video. Afterwards, have students answer the following questions: What do you know about the Meuse-Argonne Campaign? Who was involved? What do you still need or want to know?

## **Exploring the Meuse-Argonne Campaign in the Broader Context of World War I**

1. Direct students to click on the “Pre-War” tab.
2. Have students read the initial box that comes up. Ask them: what was the main point of that box?

### **Did You Know?**

ABMC has several resources available to educators including two interactive timelines on the World Wars, a PDF version of the ABMC Blue Book, informational videos, a mobile app, and other publications. To access these resources visit the ABMC website’s [Learning Resources section](#).

3. Starting with the beginning of the war, have students move through the events and people of World War I chronicled on the timeline, making their way back to the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and then to the end of the war.
4. Ask students: when did you note the first U.S. involvement in the war? What other people/countries were involved, and why? Of the various people and events you read about, which ones stick out the most in your mind? What about them was memorable?
5. Bring it back to the Meuse-Argonne Campaign by asking students how the events leading up to the campaign and after it helped them understand the context of the offensive. Ask them once again what they still need or want to know in order to assess their current knowledge and understanding.

## Section 5

# Significance, Perspective, and Challenge Cards

All history teachers at some point have been asked, “Why do I need to know this?” Historical significance is one approach to take in fully answering that question for students. Jenny Parsons defines historical significance as “the moral and spiritual aspect of history, which is one of the most pressing reasons for its appeal. Emphasis on debate, discussion, controversy, and moral issues interests many students and makes them accept the relevance of history today” (1998).

If we are going to ask students to look for historical significance, we need to be sure to provide them with the criteria they need to use in selecting people, events, ideas, and changes that have occurred. There are several different models of historical significance; pick the one that fits the needs of your classroom and students.

As students engage in the following activity, they should use one or more of the following models as a guide/reference.

## Christine Counsell’s 5 Rs (2004)

*Remarkable* – at the time it took place, or since then

*Remembered* – people or groups

*Resulting in Change* – caused a shift or consequence

*Revealing* – tells us something about that time, event, and/or person

*Resonant* – there is an effect on the future

## Rob Phillips’s GREAT Model (2002)

Groundbreaking

Remembered

Effects that are far-reaching

Affecting the future

Terrifying

### Geoffrey Partington's Model of Significance (1980)

*Importance* – To the people in the past, living at the time

*Profundity* – How deeply people's lives were/have been affected

*Quantity* – How many lives were/have been affected

*Durability* – For how long people's lives were/have been affected

*Relevance* – Extent to which the event has contributed to an increased or better understanding of present day life.

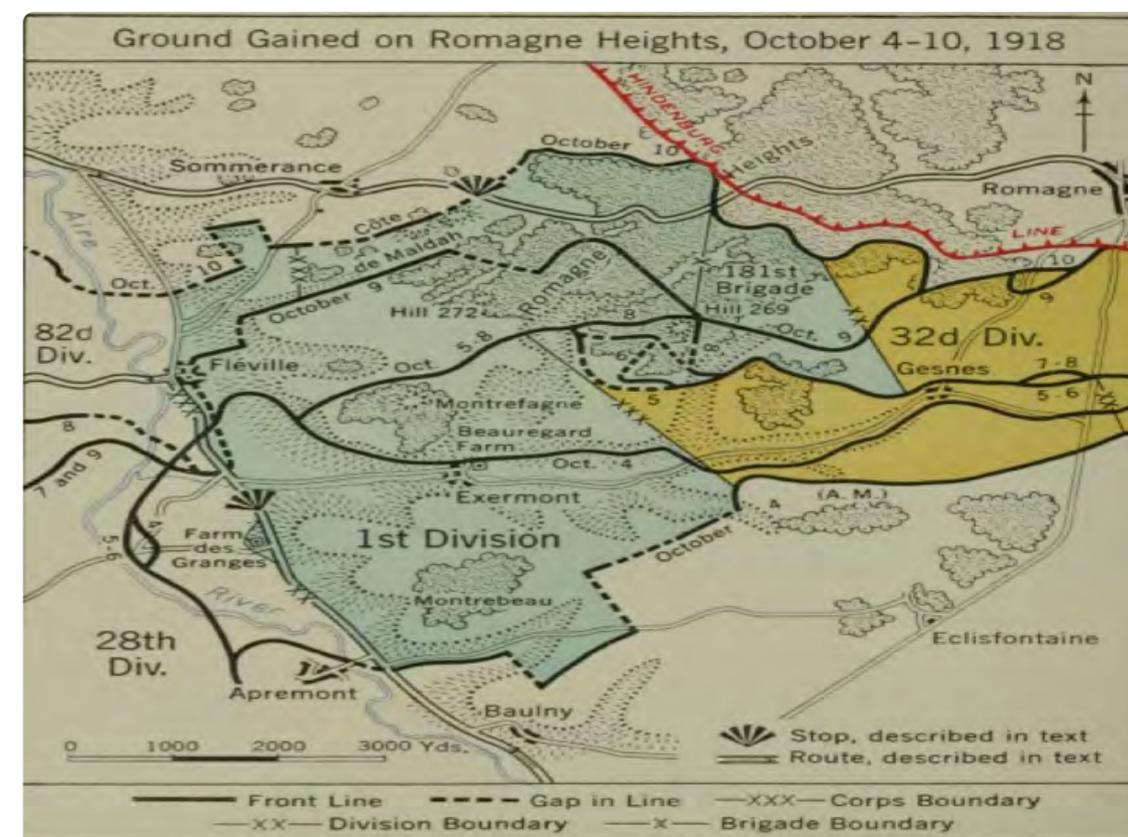
### Activity Directions

This activity gives students the opportunity to grapple with events and people surrounding the Meuse-Argonne Campaign and to make decisions as to their historical importance, look at the event from the perspective of the various countries involved, and challenge their peers and themselves to think critically about the content.

Using images from the *American Armies and Battlefields in Europe*, also known as the Blue Book, students will complete several different tasks, which will help them to piece together a timeline of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

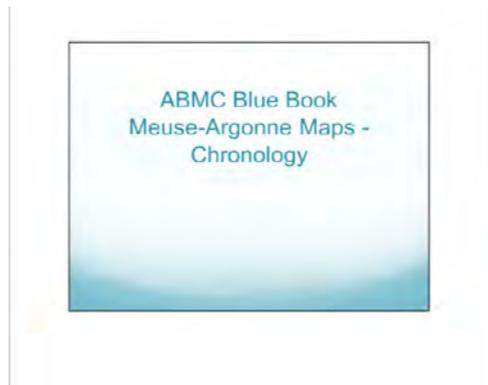
In the galleries provided, you will find images of the Meuse-Argonne. They have been placed in categories of maps, images of the people of the Meuse-Argonne, and monuments and memorials. You can use these together or separately depending on how you want to focus your class and instruction. All of these images are primary sources. Information about each image is provided in the captions, with page references to the ABMC Blue Book for more information. Print out the corresponding PDFs and create cards for students to use and handle in groups.

### ABMC Blue Book Maps



ABMC Blue Book, p. 226

## ABMC Blue Book Maps Challenge Cards



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## ABMC Blue Book Images of the People of the Meuse-Argonne



*A 79th Division Aid station in the Bois de Consenvoye, November 8, 1919. ABMC Blue Book, p. 261.*

## ABMC Blue Book Images of the People of the Meuse-Argonne Challenge Cards



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## ABMC Monuments and Memorials of the Meuse-Argonne



*The Meuse-Argonne American Memorial at Montfaucon the shaft is 180 feet high.*

## ABMC Monuments and Memorials of the Meuse-Argonne Challenge Cards

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### Activity

1. Hand out the challenge cards with the images for students to begin a visual discovery of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.
2. Have the students spread out the challenge cards with the images so that they can clearly see each image in this visual discovery activity.
3. Ask students to just look at and take in the images that they see, and discuss the details/context of the images with their group members. Ask: Who do you see? What do you see? Where do you think this was? What clues help tell the story of the image?
4. Next, have the students place the images in chronological order.
5. In their groups ask students to read the content from each card, and then make connections to other images as they move throughout the discovery. Questions they may want to consider include: Does a place appear more than once? Does a name appear more than once? Do you see an idea or trend in the lives of the people of the Meuse-Argonne? If so, what?
6. Next, using one of the models of significance, ask students to pull out one event/idea that they believe to be the **least** significant from the timeline and then have them justify their decision. Some questions that you may want to ask them are: How has the removal of the event impact the other events in your timeline, if at all? If it doesn't, explain your answer. Does the removal of your event alter the war? **Note:** you could ask students to do the opposite and ask them to pull out an idea/event that they believe to be the most significant.
7. Finally, in order to have students gain a better understanding of historical perspective, select a few images and/or maps where (collectively) more than one perspective/side is shown/present. Ask students: What is perspective? Based on the images you have seen so far, what would be some perspectives of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive? Of World War I?

8. You can assign images to groups such as French natives, German soldiers, American soldiers, females, males, etc. and have each student group focus on one specific perspective. Alternately, have them look at the images as a whole. Questions for students to consider include: How do you think the people in the picture were feeling? Why? What does the image tell you about their story? Based on the image, what do you think their opinion of the Meuse-Argonne Campaign was? If the image could talk, what would it say?

Section 6

# Using ABMC Bluebook Images with SCIM-C to Piece Together the Meuse-Argonne

Being able to interpret primary source documents and images appropriately is essential to students' understanding of events, people, and ideas of the past. If our expectation is for students to build a chronology of some significant historical event, we must first ensure that they know how to read or look critically at primary sources in order to reach an evidence-based conclusion regarding their importance or place within that event.

The SCIM-C strategy is one approach students can take when working with primary sources. There are 5 phases to SCIM-C:

- S**ummarizing
- C**ontextualizing
- I**nferring
- M**onitoring
- C**orroborating

To read more about SCIM-C and its 5 phases, read the article, [“The SCIM-C Strategy: Expert Historians, Historical Inquiry, and Multimedia”](#) (Hicks, Doolittle, and Ewing 2004)

### Activity Directions

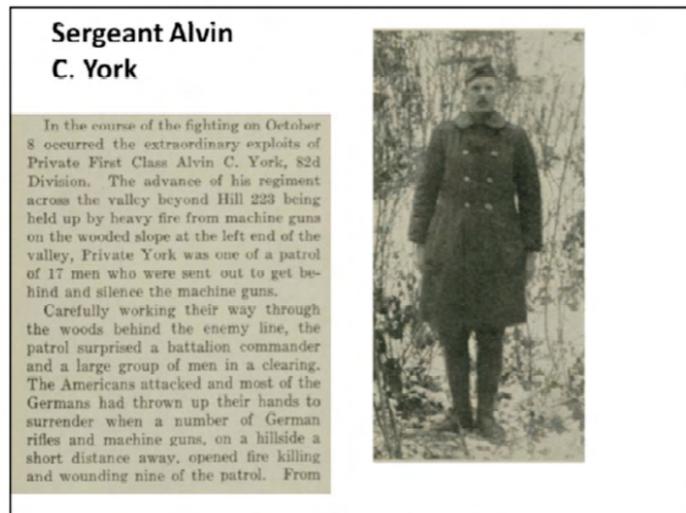
This activity uses primary source images and texts from the ABMC Blue Book in combination with the SCIM-C strategy to build an understanding of the chronology of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, while also focusing on some of the more personal narratives of the war. Students will use the primary sources and SCIM-C strategy to think critically about the sacrifices made by individuals and groups at the Meuse-Argonne, the significance of Meuse-Argonne monuments and memorials, and why the Meuse-Argonne Campaign took place within World War I.

It is important to note that while several examples have been created and are included in this book, teachers should review the ABMC Blue Book and choose images and texts that they feel would appeal their students and focus on the concepts and objectives they address in their classroom.

## Activity

1. Within the materials provided are images and primary sources from the ABMC Blue Book along with supporting text. Select an image and text for students to analyze.

### ABMC Images and SCIM-C to Build



This image, along with the texts provided, can be found on pages 229-230 in the ABMC Blue Book. Use the information here to provide students with information on the actions of one soldier during the Meuse-Argonne offensive and have them complete the SCIM-C chart as they read. Where does his story fall in the chronology of this battle? What does it tell us about the whole of World War One? What is missing that they would like to know? Where can they go to find those answers?

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2. Using the SCIM-C charts provided, instruct students to fill out the chart about what they are seeing/reading. There are several different charts to choose from within the package – so pick the one that suits the needs of your students. Before beginning, review the SCIM-C Questions with students to help them gain a better understanding of how to use SCIM-C and what they should be looking for when filling out information.

## SCIM-C Packet

SCIM-C Model	
Source Type Specific Information Author/Purpose	<b>Summarizing</b> What type of historical document is the source? What specific information, details, and/or perspectives does the source provide? What is the subject, audience, and/or purpose of the source? Who was the author and/or audience of the source?
When/Where Produced Why Produced Contexts of Source Summarizing Context	<b>Contextualizing</b> When and where was the source produced? Why was the source produced? What was happening within the immediate and broader context at the time this source was produced? What summarizing information can place the sources in time, space, and place?
Information Suggested Drawing Interpretations Identifying Perspective Absences/Omissions	<b>Inferring</b> What is suggested by the source? What interpretations may be drawn from the source? What perspectives are indicated in the source? What inferences may be drawn from absences or omissions in the source?
Additional Evidence Clarifying Definitions Checking Significance Process Check	<b>Monitoring</b> What additional evidence beyond the source is necessary? What ideas, images, or terms need further defining from the source? How useful or significant is the source for its intended purpose in answering the historical question? What questions from the previous stages need revisiting in order to analyze the source successfully?
Similarities/Differences Explaining Differences Drawing Conclusions Extending Analysis	<b>Corroborating</b> What similarities and differences between the sources exist? What factors could account for the similarities and differences? What conclusions can be drawn from the accumulated interpretations? What additional information or sources are necessary to answer more fully the guiding historical question?

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3. Once students have analyzed the image and text provided and filled out their SCIM-C chart based on that information, direct them to the ABMC Blue Book pages where they can find additional information on that specific image.
4. As students read and piece together the information, ask them to go back to their SCIM-C chart and add the new information in order to gain a better understanding about the image provided.
5. Once students have completed their SCIM-C charts, engage the class in a discussion about the role of the people, places, events, and/or ideas they have just analyzed. Questions to consider: Who or what is in the image? Where does your image fit into the chronology of the Meuse-Argonne campaign? Where does it fit into the chronology of World War I? What did you

learn about the Meuse-Argonne through analyzing your image?  
What questions would you like to ask about your image and/or  
about the Meuse-Argonne based on what you have learned by  
analyzing your image?

### **Did You Know...**

Americans fought in other regions of the world during World War I? Use the [ABMC Cemeteries and Memorials website](#) to see where other American cemeteries are throughout the world that are associated with World War I and engage students in a conversation about the size and scope of the war.

## Section 7

# End of Unit Activity

The activities provided have asked students to look at the people, places, and events of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, to consider their stories, and to think critically about their significance in order to build a chronology of the Meuse-Argonne campaign and its role in World War I. Students were provided images, texts, and online resources and asked to consider their place within history.

As a final activity, have students demonstrate their understanding of the Meuse-Argonne campaign and its importance by creating their own interactive timeline. Within their timeline, students should include key people, places, ideas, and events of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, as well as address its historical significance by providing information on various monuments, memorials, and events that took place after the war.

Once completed, students' timelines should demonstrate a deep knowledge and understanding of the Meuse-Argonne campaign, the people involved, and the affect it had on the future.

There are several online timeline creation tools available to students to use. Here are the links to some of my personal favorites!

[ChronoZoom](#)

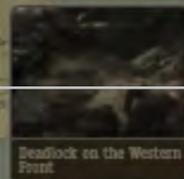
[ReadWriteThink](#)

[TikiToki](#)

[TimeToast](#)

## Section 8

# Conclusion



Helping students understand and appreciate timelines is not always an easy task, but it is one that is necessary in order for students to visualize history and understand many historical concepts. The ABMC resources and various strategies discussed in this chapter can be used when discussing other historical events to continue to build that knowledge.

There was a moment when I was standing at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in France, looking out over a beautifully manicured lawn, vibrant colors of shrubbery, and the welcoming shade of trees lining the roadway leading in; I could not help but think about the contrast of the thousands upon thousands of white crosses staring back at me and all that they represent and the beauty of the place where they dwell.

## Section 9

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