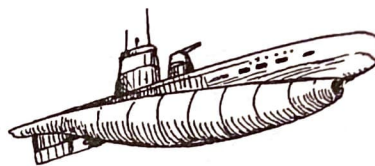


U-Boats



On February 1, 1917, Germany announced a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. An order went out to all German submarines to sink any vessel on sight. The order included neutral and passenger ships as well as ships of war.

Although the German navy was strong, it could not compete in numbers with the powerful British navy. To offset this imbalance, the Germans had built a large number of U-boats, or submarines. *U-boat* was short for *unterseeboot*, or “undersea boat.” The Germans hoped the U-boats would enable them to sink enough Allied ships to turn the war in their favor.

Unrestricted submarine warfare ended Germany’s compliance with “cruiser rules.” According to cruiser rules, before a submarine could sink a ship, it had to surface and allow the passengers to leave the ship. The Germans followed this rule for almost two years after the *Lusitania* was torpedoed. However, they discontinued the policy when the British began to disguise warships as merchant vessels and blasted a number of U-boats out of the water. (The Germans resorted to the same deception and sank Allied merchant ships in record numbers.)

The Germans had hoped their U-boats would end the war before the United States had a chance to enter on the side of the Allies. However, this did not happen. Allied ships traveling in convoys (groups of merchant ships escorted by warships) succeeded in getting necessary supplies to the battlefield. Some of these ships were equipped with depth charges, drums of explosives that blew up at a certain depth. The depth charges destroyed many U-boats and helped bring the submarine threat to an end.

Solve the following math word problems to gain a better understanding of the destruction caused by German U-boats.

1. From February 1, 1917, until the end of the war, a period of about 21 months, German U-boats sank almost 3000 Allied and neutral ships.

This was an average of _____ ships a month. (Round your answer.)

2. More than 5000 Allied and neutral ships fell prey to German U-boats throughout the course of the war.

_____ percent of these losses occurred after February 1, 1917.

Answer the following questions.

3. What were “cruiser rules”?

4. Why did Germany work so hard to gain control of the seas?
