AMERICAN EXPERIENCE “The Great War” Premieres Monday-Wednesday, April 10-12, 2017

Three-Part Series Explores How World War I Forever Changed America and the World

(BOSTON, MA) — Scheduled in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of America’s entry into the war on April 6, 1917, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE “The Great War,” a three-part, six-hour documentary, will premiere Monday, April 10, through Wednesday, April 12, 9:00-11:00 p.m. ET (check local listings) on PBS. Featuring the voices of Campbell Scott, Blythe Danner, Courtney Vance and others, “The Great War” is executive produced by Mark Samels and directed by award-winning filmmakers Stephen Ives, Amanda Pollak and Rob Rapley.

Drawing on the latest scholarship, including unpublished diaries, memoirs and letters, “The Great War” tells the rich and complex story of World War I through the voices of nurses, journalists, aviators and the American troops who came to be known as “doughboys.” The series explores the experiences of African-American and Latino soldiers, suffragists, Native-American “code talkers” and others whose participation in the war to “make the world safe for democracy” has been largely forgotten. “The Great War” also explores how a brilliant PR man bolstered support for the war in a country hesitant to put lives on the line for a foreign conflict; how President Woodrow Wilson steered the nation through almost three years of neutrality, only to reluctantly lead America into the bloodiest conflict the world had ever seen, thereby transforming the United States into a dominant player on the international stage; and how the ardent patriotism and determination to support America’s crusade for liberty abroad led to one of the most oppressive crackdowns on civil liberties at home in American history. It is also a story of little known heroism and sacrifice (including the deadliest battle in American history) that would leave more than 53,000 men dead on the battlefield and more than 60,000 dead from disease. American fatalities would come at a critical time in the war, but they would be dwarfed by a cataclysm of violence that would ultimately claim 15 million lives.

“World War I was the soil from which so many things today really grew, starting with America’s place in the world,” said AMERICAN EXPERIENCE Executive Producer Mark Samels. “Before the war, America was isolated and uninvolved in world affairs. After the war, America stepped onto the world stage, and that continues today with our troops becoming involved in conflicts around the world. The current debate on the balance between national security and civil liberties also began with World War I. The debate over
immigration reached its apex during World War I. The film is not only about what happened 100 years ago, but how what happened then transformed our nation and the world in ways still being felt today.”

The broadcast of “The Great War” will be accompanied by a series of screening events and discussions hosted by universities, museums and public television stations around the country.

“The Great War” will be available on DVD from PBS Distribution and can be purchased at ShopPBS.org. Online viewing begins April 11 at PBS.org.

“The Great War”

Episode One

Written and Directed by Stephen Ives
Produced by Amanda Pollak
Narrated by Oliver Platt
Edited by Jon Neuberger and Merril Stern

Episode Two

Produced and Directed by Amanda Pollak
Written by Stephen Ives
Narrated by Oliver Platt
Edited by Seth Bomse

Episode Three

Written and Directed by Rob Rapley
Narrated by Oliver Platt
Edited by R. A. Fedde

Series Producers Stephen Ives
Amanda Pollak
Original Music by Peter Rundquist
Tom Phillips
Co-Producer Gene Tempest
Archival Producer Lizzy McGlynn
Coordinating Producer Nazenet Habtezghi

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE is a production of WGBH Boston

Senior Producer Susan Bellows
Executive Producer Mark Samels
The Voices of “The Great War”

Edith Wharton  Blythe Danner
Eugene Bullard  Brandon Dirden
Eddie Rickenbacker  Christopher Gorham
Ralph John / Alan Seeger  Josh Hamilton
Mary Borden  Jennifer Andrews Lee
Victor Chapman  Eric Loscheider
John Barkley  Jacob Pitts
Jose de la luz Saenz  Armando Riesco
Richard Harding Davis  Campbell Scott
James Europe  David St. Louis
Noble Sissle  Courtney B. Vance

About AMERICAN EXPERIENCE
For 28 years, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE has been television’s most-watched history series. The series has been hailed as “peerless” (The Wall Street Journal), “the most consistently enriching program on television” (Chicago Tribune) and “a beacon of intelligence and purpose” (Houston Chronicle). On air and online, the series brings to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America’s past and present. Acclaimed by viewers and critics alike, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including 30 Emmy Awards, four duPont-Columbia Awards and 17 George Foster Peabody Awards; the series received an Academy Award® nomination for Best Documentary Feature in 2015 for Last Days in Vietnam. Visit pbs.org/americanexperience and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube to learn more.

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