

EXTRACT 1

During the First World War, a torrent of new phenomena overwhelmed the United States: a wash of public money flooding the economy; a hugely inflated federal government; universal conscription; a system for surveillance of the people; a pervasive suspicion and fear of the foreign and the unorthodox; and then, with the rise of Bolshevism, a threatening alien ideology that seemed to justify the fears. The war experience, though short, was explosive because these phenomena made their impact on a society that was already changing rapidly. Their effects were varied and unpredictable; the sheer diversity of people and opinion in America ensured there would be both damage and pain – but not fixity. All had participated in an experience of such intensity that, whether they knew it or not, their world would never be quite the same again.

Adapted from *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War 1917–1918* by Merion and Susie Harries (Vintage, 1997)

EXTRACT 2

The war destroyed any hope of moderate, neighbourly black integration in the immediate future, along the lines advocated by Booker T. Washington. The stage was set for confrontation. 'Beyond a doubt', said a report for the Military Intelligence Division in August 1919, 'there is a new negro to be reckoned with in our political and social life'. Black radicals such as W.E.B. Du Bois emphasised the savage irony of fighting for democracy abroad only to return to political and economic oppression at home.

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EXTRACT 3

Du Bois and other black leaders had entered the war full of hope that it would provide opportunity for the advance of their race. But though the threatened labour shortage might have worked to improve relations between the races at scattered points in the South, the fact remained that as many as two hundred blacks perished at the hands of mostly Southern mobs in the war era. Violence seemed to rise on an ascending war-borne curve, as lynching parties took 38 black lives in 1917, some 58 in 1918, and more than 70 in 1919. The war had nevertheless begun a demographic shift of the black population, a shift with far-reaching implications. However short of black hopes life in the North fell, it still provided more opportunities for mobility and talent and even political power.

Adapted from *Over There: The First World War and American Society* by David M. Kennedy (Oxford University Press, 1980)

Using your understanding of the historical context assess how convincing the arguments in the extracts are in relation to ...

the impact of WWI