

John Joseph Pershing

1860–1948



WHY HE MADE HISTORY John Joseph Pershing was commander of the American Expeditionary Force during World War I.



As you read the biography below, think about how John Joseph Pershing's patriotism helped him serve in the U.S. military.

John Joseph Pershing was born in a small town in Missouri. He chose to make the military his career. Pershing attended the United States Military Academy at West Point and graduated in 1886. After graduation Pershing served as a **cavalry** officer. He led the campaign against the Native American Chief Geronimo and the Apaches. Following this campaign Pershing led army forces in their battle against the Sioux.

During this time Pershing commanded an army regiment of African-American soldiers. Critics gave him the nickname “Black Jack” due to his leadership of the regiment. However, Pershing was confident in his men and adopted the nickname with pride. Later this nickname referred to Pershing's strict discipline with his troops.

Pershing's military career continued during the Spanish-American War, when he was stationed in the Philippines. He received national recognition for his efforts against the **Moros**. In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt made Pershing a brigadier general in the army.

In 1916 Pershing led U.S. Army forces in Mexico against Pancho Villa. The campaign received a lot of attention. Nonetheless, Villa was not captured. The next year Pershing was asked to command the World War I American Expeditionary Force in



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VOCABULARY

cavalry the part of a military force that serves on horseback

Moros Muslims of the southern Philippines

France. Pershing quickly showed his talent for organization. He also demonstrated his ability to create disciplined fighting regiments.

“At this moment there are no other questions but for fighting,” Pershing said. The American Expeditionary Force became an effective fighting force, helping the Allies win the fight against Germany. Pershing did not support the idea of trench warfare, however. He wanted the American forces to move quickly to penetrate the German lines.

At the end of World War I, Pershing returned to the United States. He served as Army Chief of Staff until 1924. Following his death in 1948, he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Name two positions that John Joseph Pershing held during his time with the U.S. military.

2. **Analyze** Do you think John Joseph Pershing’s reputation as a strict commander benefited the U.S. Army? Explain your answer.

ACTIVITY

Write a time line for John Joseph Pershing based on what you have learned from your reading. Choose one event and create a small caption and drawing on your time line that illustrates this event.