Prelude (2:00 Pre-show)
As visitors step onto the overlook platform in the Horizon Theater, they encounter a bleak atmosphere. Peering beyond the platform, they discover a vast scene, dimly visible in cold, gray pre-dawn light. Faint shapes and silhouettes of a wasteland suggest the violent and explosive scenes that have churned the land; ripped ancient trees into charred, splintered stakes; obliterated life—human and animal; and left great gashes in the earth and in the lives of people who have survived the fury of massive slaughter only to face another day of warfare in the trenches of World War I.

The visitor has stepped into a moment-in-time on an eerily cold, damp morning on the Western Front, deep into the story of the War. Details of the physical scene are muted in the hazy, monochromatic light. Slowly moving, mottled lighting suggests a low-lying, stagnant fog creeping across the scene. Altogether, the environment evokes the unnatural realm of a terrible dream—an uneasy setting for the story. This expansive war-torn landscape stretches into the darkness to the visitor's left and right, and seems to continue into the distance directly before the visitor.

A series of simple quotations—remembrances from the time—are projected onto the front wall, which rises up out of the muck of the land, seeming to blend into a distant horizon.

Not a trace of a trench left...one can see nothing for smoke, fire, and spouting earth. We sink down, dazed, upon the tortured earth. A new day breaks, more horrible than the last...

Men die of mud, as they die from bullets, but more horribly. Mud is where men sink and—what is worse—where their soul sinks. Mud hides the stripes of rank; there are only poor suffering beasts. Hell is not fire...hell is mud.

We always felt the shakes in the ground even a mile away...Timbers would be loosened and many men buried in their dugouts and shelters while they were sleeping.

We were knee deep and in some places waist deep in mud and icy water, which clogged a large number of rifles and rendered them useless. Men had their boots and even their clothes pulled off by the mud. The trenches become veritable death traps.

We got annihilated. There was nobody left. I was the only bomber left out of the whole company.

The audio environment contributes to the mood of the scene. A faint, chilling wind periodically sweeps the landscape. The barely audible, distant sound of heavy machinery on the move—preparing for the next onslaught—drones on. Occasionally, the low-frequency percussion of a distant isolated explosion rolls across the landscape.

Pre-show lighting on the overlook begins to dim, and faint, suspended tones—the first hints of an emerging soundtrack—fade up, setting the tone for the story.
Over There (3:30)

Slowly dissolving up on the screen—hovering over the breaking dawn—is a series of isolated scenes that fade in and out independently. These apparitions suspended over the horizon, suggest the conditions of life in war-torn Europe by 1917—on the battlefield and off.

Piles of rubble remain where a town used to be. Families trudge along deeply rutted roads, struggling toward the possibility of refuge. Military caravans move artillery, supplies, and soldiers across the landscape. Cities seethe with unrest and dissidence, while the surviving royalty of Europe struggle to maintain the order of earlier times.

We are confronted by the face of hunger and exhaustion at every turn.

The narrator begins—quietly and in short, simple sentences that set the stage.

Narrator
It started as a war between the world's great imperial powers.

Little over a month, but tens of thousands of lives later, the Allies—Great Britain, France, and Russia—have fought Germany to a stalemate on the Western Front. Germany's plan—to defeat France in a quick knockout blow, then turn its military might against Russia—has failed.

The war of rapid movement is over. On both sides, there is but one choice if the armies are to continue fighting.

French General Ferdinand Foch (v/o)
It is absolutely essential not to retreat; therefore the men must in wherever they find themselves and hold onto the ground they now occupy.

Narrator
The trench war on the Western Front begins.
Projected fog, smoke, explosions, battle scenes
Battle scarred landscape
No man's land
Smoldering horizon

Wide shots that place the trenches in context
Soldiers march towards front
Artillery caravan
Troops in trenches, firing
Scenes of destruction
Abandoned equipment
Wounded soldiers

Shift to extreme close-ups of faces, eyes:
Soldiers
Non-Combatants
Children
Refugees

Devastated landscape shrouded in smoke and haze
Stripped trees
Rubble
Artillery explosions
Continue scenes that play off the devastated landscape portrayed in the tableau

Imagery that underscores the grind of the stalemate
Evidence of casualties
Tattered troops

The tableau—up to this point lying eerily quiet before the visitor—now explodes with lighting and the sounds of battle. Lighting on the tableau evokes dramatic, violent action.

For a moment the sounds and imagery engulf the entire theater space. Lighting reveals distinct features of the tableau, and it is clear that we are witnessing the result of trench warfare on the Western front. The sounds of battle subside into the distance, but continue under the narrator.

Both armies dig in. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers, reinforce by wave after wave—millions—of new recruits and ever-growing artillery forces—battle along a 475-mile front from the English Channel to the Swiss Alps.

Looking down into the abyss of a field—once fertile, green, and productive—we now see that it is churned, scarred, burned, and muddy...pitted and gouged by incessant assault...marked by pools of acidic, dark, and murky waters and splintered trees barely recognizable as such. We see great gashes in the land, and machinery of war half sunk into the mud.

Behind the tableau, faintly visible on the screen are extreme close-ups of the eyes of soldiers, refugees, children, and others reflecting the millions affected by the War.

Narrator
For more than two years, the Western Front scarcely changes in length or geographical trace.

British General Henry Wilson (v/o)
We took five trenches last night but we have been put out of fou of them, chiefly by bombs....We lost some 1,500 [men] I'm afric that the movement was good, but the expense was great...

Narrator
Small gains take days of non-stop onslaught and cost hundreds of thousands of lives. In three years, a third of the soldiers on both sides perish. Neither side can gain a clear advantage.
The tableau settles into a more subtle but dramatically lighted foreground as the story picks up momentum, intensity, and a sense of growing desperation.

Though stalemate on the Western Front, the conflict has spread quickly to other continents with economic and political ties, and throughout the vast colonial holdings of the European empires.

The projection screen has become more active, supporting the evolving story with stills and archival footage that shift dramatically from Western Front to Eastern Front, and from continent to continent, reaching across increasingly expansive territory to establish the sweep and desperate arc of the story.

German U-Boats torpedo merchant and passenger ships in neutral waters without warning. This ‘unrestricted’ submarine warfare expands the conflict onto the high seas.

With the sinking of the Lusitania in May 1915, and the loss of American lives, the U.S. threatens to break diplomatic ties with Germany, a threat that helps halt Germany’s submarine rampage.

Still, by the end of that year, the war already called ‘the Great War’ is now truly a world war.

Sound effects and imagery evoke dramatic scenes of combat and the devastating effects of war upon people and property. We witness the wearine the anxiety, the filth, the grind, punctuated by the roar and fog of battle. Explosions move into the distance as narration and first person accounts move the story forward.

By 1917, the Allies’ horizons have darkened. Russia—a crucial member of the alliance against Germany and Austria-Hungary—is racked with political upheaval. Russia’s ability to sustain a war effort is waning.

Germany, desperate for a breakthrough, can now concentrate troops on the Western Front.

Farms in Allied countries have had a weak harvest. Food is short. Sensing that the tide is turning, the German war council considers a gamble: reinstating submarine attacks on civilian merchant ships supplying the Allies.
It's a race against time, but the Germans believe they can starve the Allies into surrender before Germany itself is strangled by Britain's on-going naval blockade.

They calculate the risk of drawing America into the war.

**German Admiral Eduard von Cappelle (v/o)**

... from a military point of view, America is nothing ... almost no Americans will volunteer for war service ... America has already produced as much ammunition as she is able to produce ... America's entrance is nothing...

**Lt. Coningsby Dawson (v/o)**

I read in today's paper that the U.S.A. threatens to come over here and help us. The very thought of the possibility fills me with joy... would redeem her in the world's eye. There's a cleansing wind blowing for the nations that have died.

Over the past several seconds, lighting on the tableau has receded into deep red hues.

**Over Here (3:00)**

Against the sobering imagery of World War I as it plays out across continents we begin hearing in the distance the upbeat sound of a gramophone recording of a popular American tune of the era. As the music grows louder, in striking contrast with war imagery, the entire theater fades to black.

**Narrator**

To Americans, the war has always been "over there."
That is clearly changing.
But neither is the war quite "over here."

Out of the void, for the first time in the show, a large sweep of the projection screen is filled with a single panoramic image—the skyline of New York during this same period. The tone being set—in stark contrast to the story of the unfolding war—is one of optimism, energy, and possibility.

As the story shifts to this side of the Atlantic, the projection area is used free and dramatically to paint the multi-dimensional picture of America, a picture full of contradictions as the country moves toward involvement in the War.

American horizons emerge in sharp contrast to those in Europe; both physically and socially.
In contrast to war-weary Europe, American life during this same period pulses with energy, and for many, optimism. War production for the Allies has spurred the growth of the nation's industrial economy.

*Scenes evoke a young, vibrant, largely agrarian America with its budding industries and growing cities, social problems (such as child labor and urban squalor) and social reformers.*

As barons of industry seize opportunities in steel, oil, lumber, ar coal, social reformers push to change the conditions spawned by the growth of industrial cities. In fields and factories, from suffragettes to civil rights activists, most Americans are preoccupied with their own destinies, and the majority sees no reason to fight Europe's war.

While President Wilson makes efforts to broker peace in Europe, he tells Americans it is not their war, and most agree.

**Narrator**

But the war has already touched many Americans. Tensions are rising...

*Imagery and sounds begin to rise in intensity, reflecting the diversity of voice in America, and the heated debate within the country over the war in Europe and whether or not the U.S. should mobilize its military.*

The U.S. is a country of immigrants—10 million are from German and Austria-Hungary. A large Irish- and prosperous German-American population backs these forces.

Millions of others back the Allies—Great Britain, France and Rus
Some Americans see the war as a class struggle, the folly of emperors at the expense of common people.

For a few, war is a business decision—a golden opportunity to supply the warriors... while staying clear of the war.

As the debate intensifies, President Wilson narrowly wins re-election in 1916 under the slogan, “He kept us out of the war.”

But in the early months of 1917, few Americans can deny that whether the U.S. joins it or not, is just over the horizon.

Panoramic projections now take us to sea and images of submarine attacks on civilian ships and merchant vessels. We see massive explosions and billowing black smoke and hear personal descriptions of ships going down.

Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare resumes and begins to take its toll.

**Floyd Gibbons** (v/o 31 yr. old Chicago Tribune reporter)

*At 10:30 p.m., there was a muffled noise. Five sharp blasts—the signal to abandon... 'Lower away!' someone gave the order and started downward [with a jerk toward the seemingly hungry, rising and falling swells...]*

*Then [the Laconia] slid silently down and out of sight...*

*Images back on American soil emerge through the smoke...*

*We hear the voices of dissent and in support of war, one voice overlapping the next as the story builds momentum...*

**Austin Hoy** (v/o Chicago machinery company executive)

*My beloved mother and sister have been foully murdered on the high seas. I call upon my government to preserve its citizens' self-respect and save others of my countrymen...*

**Harold Studley Grey** (v/o)

*For my part I am a conscientious objector from the word go. The may shoot me if they like, but they won't make me fight...*
We intend to begin on the first of February unrestricted submarine warfare. In spite of this to keep the United States neutral. In the event of this not succeeding, we propose making Mexico a proposal of alliance.
Sen. George Norris (v/o Nebraska-D)  
War would benefit only the class of people who will be made prosperous...who have already made millions [of dollars, and who will make hundreds of millions more...]

Helen Losanich Frothingham (v/o Red Cross delegate to the U.S)  
I must tell you something of the extraordinary change in this country... Apathy, indifference and ignorance are fast disappearing [under the impact of these great patriotic gatherings and demonstrations...]

Arthur Bullard (v/o)  
The war is upon us and we all – individually in the privacy of our own hearts, collectively as a nation – must decide what we are going to do about it...

Sounds of the debate quickly recede into the distance as tension mounts and giant headlines point across the screen announcing the stunning contents of the “Zimmermann telegram”

Narrator  
Germany has long been at work on American soil through acts of industrial sabotage and attempts to bribe politicians. Now, news breaks that German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann has secretly offered to finance Mexico in a war against the United States. More threatening, Germany urges Mexico to persuade Japan to join the fight

President Woodrow Wilson (v/o)  
...Gentlemen of Congress...the present German submarine warfare...[against commerce is a war against mankind...it is a war against all nations...I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government]

Narrator  
Within weeks, President Wilson asks Congress to declare war or Germany.

(Wilson continuing)  
to be in fact nothing less than war against the United States...

Scenery now shifts to panoramic collages that evoke both the American mobilization and the total effort of the on-going war.

At this moment in time, it is not clear whether America's decision has come in time to save the Allies...whether Germany's gamble on unrestricted submarine warfare will pay off...whether some yet unforeseen event will change the outcome of the war.
**The Moment (1:30)**

Distant strains of "Over There" mix with the sound of crowds cheering and imagery of enthusiastic recruits in training, sweethearts waving goodbye and beaming soldiers pulling out of port. In stark contrast, dramatic pools of light on the tableau fade up on the ghastly reality of the front.

As the hopeful images projected on the screen drift into slow motion and fade back into the cold light of an emerging dawn, pools of light on the tableau slowly dissolve into video projected directly onto various features of the tableau, foreshadowing American soldiers on the Western front. These images continue as the narrator offers a few, final questions for reflection...

**Narrator**

The war will change America, leaving in its wake a broader expression of freedom, a new era in the politics of women and minorities. What will this mean to a world America hoped to make safe for democracy?

The war will thrust America onto the global stage. No matter who wins, can America retreat again into isolationism?

The war will transform America’s industrial and military might. If the Allies prevail, how will America use its postwar power?

There is one certainty—America’s horizon has changed.

*The soundtrack opens briefly, as upbeat imagery on the screen continues in stark contradiction to the devastation foreshadowed by tableau projections of Americans in combat.*

Global war has collapsed all horizons into one; beyond this moment in 1917 lies the future of the world.

*Video projections on the tableau disappear into the stark lighting of the show’s opening scenes. Features of the tableau now recede into hints, outlines, and silhouettes as the narrator offers a final thought to lead visitors out of the theater... A simple quotation, reflecting upon this moment in time, dissolves up on the screen, suspended over the cold and ravages landscape... We’ve come full-circle as visitors on the overlook exit the theater, and those arriving for the next show prepare to enter.*