

World War I “The Great War” (WWI)

Tensions in Europe European countries had long competed with each other for colonies, trade, and territory. By the early 1900s, **nationalism** was complicating these rivalries. Austria-Hungary had built an empire by taking over smaller countries in the part of eastern Europe known as the Balkans. Nationalism inspired in the Balkan people a burning desire to be independent of Austrian rule.

In this tense atmosphere, European leaders looked for safety in **militarism**, a policy of glorifying military power and military ideas and values. When Germany built up its navy to challenge Britain’s fleet, Britain constructed more battleships. As Germany’s army grew, France built up its own army.

European countries also looked for safety in alliances. In secret treaties, Germany and Austria-Hungary agreed to help each other in case of attack. Britain, Russia, and France made similar agreements. Europe was dividing into armed camps.

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife are shown here shortly before they were assassinated by a Serbian nationalist. The assassination triggered World War I.



Assassination Leads to War An outburst of nationalism lit the fuse of war. On June 28, 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was visiting the city of Sarajevo in the province of Bosnia. Many Bosnians were Serbs who wanted to be part of nearby Serbia. A Serbian nationalist jumped out of a crowd and fatally shot the archduke and his wife.

Outraged, Austria-Hungary accused Serbia of having a hand in the assassinations and pressured Serbia to give up most of its independence. When the Serbs refused, Austria-Hungary declared war. The Russians stepped in to defend the Serbs. The Germans came to the aid of Austria-Hungary by declaring war on Russia. Russia’s ally, France, began to prepare for war.

Eventually, more than a dozen countries took sides in the “Great War.” (Decades later, people called the conflict World War I.) Austria-Hungary and Germany headed the Central Powers. France, Russia, and Britain led the Allied Powers.

Like most Americans, President Woodrow Wilson wanted to stay out of the war. Declaring that the United States would remain neutral, Wilson begged citizens to be “impartial in thought as well as deed.”

27.7 A New Kind of Warfare

By September 1914, six million soldiers were on the march across Europe. On Germany's Eastern Front, German troops fought Russians. On the Western Front, German forces advanced quickly before being stopped by French and British troops at the Marne River, about 40 miles outside Paris.

With neither army able to advance, both sides dug long, narrow ditches called *trenches* to protect their soldiers. A new kind of warfare was beginning.

Trench Warfare For the next three years, the war in the west was fought from two parallel lines of trenches. Men ate, slept, fought, and died in these miserable ditches. Eventually, the lines of trenches stretched for 600 miles across France.

Each side protected its front trench with barbed wire and booby traps. Between the opposing trenches lay a deadly "no-man's land." Attacking soldiers came under intense fire from the men in the trenches. Thousands upon thousands of soldiers died trying to advance their line of trenches a few yards.

The trenches were wretched places, infested with rats, lice, and disease. "We are not leading the life of men at all," wrote an American who had volunteered to fight with the British forces, "but that of animals, living in holes in the ground, and only showing outside to fight and to feed."



During World War I, a new kind of war called *trench warfare* began. Hundreds of miles of trenches, like this trench for British soldiers, provided protection for infantrymen and allowed supplies and reinforcements to be safely delivered to the front.

New Weapons New weapons added to the horror of trench warfare. "We never got anywhere near the Germans," one English corporal remembered. "The machine-guns were just mowing the top of the trenches." These new machine guns fired hundreds of bullets a minute. By the end of 1914, the French had lost 300,000 men. Germany lost more than 130,000 soldiers in a single battle.

The next spring, a green cloud floated over the Allied lines. Soldiers gasped and died, their throats and noses burning. The Germans had invented poison gas. Soon both sides were using chemical weapons.

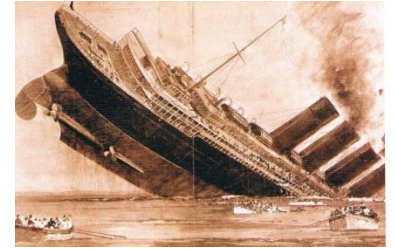
The armies' new technology and strategies were effective for defense, but not for decisive attack. At one point, the British tried for six months to



Germany Sinks the *Lusitania* The German embassy in the United States placed newspaper ads warning passengers not to sail to Britain, and specifically not to take the *Lusitania*, a British luxury liner. On May 7, 1915, six days after leaving New York, the *Lusitania* neared the coast of Ireland. Suddenly a ship's lookout shouted, "Torpedo coming on the star-board side!" Within moments, the ship exploded and quickly sank, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans.

Americans were outraged. One newspaper called the German attack "wholesale murder." When President Wilson protested, Germany said that the *Lusitania* had been carrying arms. Still, Germany apologized and offered to pay for damages. Hoping to keep the United States out of the war, Germany also promised not to attack merchant and passenger ships without warning in the future.

Protected by this promise, U.S. manufacturers increased their trade with the Allies. Trade with Allied countries swelled to \$3.2 billion in 1916, while trade with the Central Powers dropped to \$1 million. Americans weren't fighting in the war, but they had definitely taken sides.

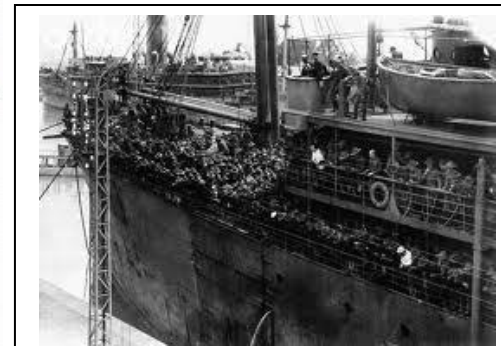


America Enters the War The Germans soon risked war with the United States again. Even though U-boats were sinking 50 to 100 British merchant ships per month, enough were getting through to keep the Allies going. Desperate to prevent an Allied victory, the Germans decided to cut off British supplies before their own ran out. In February 1917, Germany resumed sinking merchant ships from other countries without warning.

In March, U-boats torpedoed three U.S. merchant ships, killing many Americans. In fact, these ships had been carrying weapons to the Allies. The Germans knew that this attack might bring the United States into the war, but they hoped to win before America was ready to fight.

It was a fatal mistake. Addressing a special session of Congress, Wilson urged a declaration of war. America would fight alongside the Allies, he said, not just to protect neutral shipping, but because "the world must be made safe for democracy."

Congress greeted Wilson's speech with applause. Later, Wilson reflected, "My message today was a message of death for our young men. How strange it seems to applaud that."



Woman working in factory as men went to war.

Americans Prepare to Fight On April 6, 1917, Congress declared war. The Allies rejoiced, hoping for American supplies—and soldiers. Allied ships were sinking faster than they could be replaced. To get U.S. supplies delivered safely, convoys of American warships started escorting cargo vessels, protecting them from attack. American destroyers also helped the British navy assault U-boats. These strategies dramatically reduced shipping losses.

When the United States entered the war, it had only 200,000 soldiers, and most of those had limited training. Congress quickly authorized a national draft. Soon, 3 million men were drafted. Another 2 million volunteered.



Fighting and Winning American troops who sailed overseas were called the American Expeditionary Force (AEF). As they began arriving in Europe in June 1917, AEF soldiers soon learned from the Allies about trench warfare. The American commander, General John J. Pershing, hated these terrible conditions for soldiers. He also realized that trench warfare wasn't winning the war. He worked on a plan for driving the Germans out of the trenches and forcing them to retreat into open country.

Meanwhile, Russia had dropped out of the war. With millions of soldiers dead and starvation spreading across the country, Russians had revolted against their ruler, the czar. Russia's new government made peace with the Germans. This enabled Germany to bring soldiers back from the east, swelling their western forces to 3,500,000 men.

The German forces rushed to capture Paris before large numbers of Americans could arrive from overseas. They pushed quickly through the village of Chateau-Thierry and a nearby forest called Belleau Wood. They were within 50 miles of Paris when Americans reinforced the exhausted French. Gradually, American machine guns and artillery enabled the Allies to push the Germans back.

By the summer of 1918, more than a million Americans were in Europe. Pershing set his Allied offensive into motion. His plan took advantage of several offensive capabilities that had been developed during the war. Tanks could advance through trenches. Airplanes could deliver machine-gun fire and drop bombs. Carefully coordinating huge numbers of soldiers, tanks, airplanes, and artillery, the Allies forced the weakened Germans back to their own border.

To avoid the invasion of their own country, German leaders agreed to an armistice, or cease-fire. On November 11, 1918, for the first time in four years, the guns were silenced.

The costs of the war horrified the world. More than 9 million people had died. Entering the war late, the United States lost 116,000 lives. Throughout the warring nations, people mourned the loss of so many of their young men.

The Treaty of Versailles On January 18, 1919, delegates from dozens of countries assembled at a gorgeous French palace outside Paris called Versailles. In addition to Wilson, three Allied leaders dominated the treaty talks. They were David Lloyd George of England, Georges Clemenceau of France, and Vittorio Orlando of Italy.

The German representatives were not allowed to speak. This was a clue to the Allies' anger and their determination to punish Germany and remove it as a future threat. They created a treaty that forced Germany to disband almost all of its armed forces, give up its colonies, and surrender territory in Europe. In addition, they called on Germany to pay **reparations**, or money to make up for damages and war deaths. The amount of these reparations was later set at \$33 billion.

President Wilson opposed such harsh treatment of Germany. However, he eventually accepted the Allied leaders' demands for punishment in order to win their support for his Fourteen Points.

The Allies rejected some of Wilson's points, including freedom of the seas. But the peace conference did create new national boundaries in



Hitler quote after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, "It cannot be that two million Germans should have fallen in vain...No, we do not pardon, we demand----revenge!"

Link to WWI PhotoStory

<http://www.slideshare.net/maggiesalgado/causes-of-world-war-i-11337746>