

1 War Breaks Out in Europe

MAIN IDEA

After World War I broke out, the United States eventually joined the Allied side.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

This was the first time that the United States was involved in a European conflict.

TERMS & NAMES

militarism

Central Powers

Allies

trench warfare

U-boat

Woodrow Wilson

neutrality

Zimmermann

telegram

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

While the United States was forming its own empire, European nations were competing to expand their empires. Rivalry poisoned relationships among these nations. In the spring of 1914, tensions were running high in Europe. President Woodrow Wilson sent Colonel Edward M. House, his trusted advisor, to study the situation.

House gave the president a troubling report. He compared Europe to an open keg of gunpowder. "It only requires a spark," he said, "to set the whole thing off." Soon the spark ignited. On June 28, 1914, a young Serbian man shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The archduke was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. One month later, Austria declared war on Serbia. One by one, the nations of Europe chose sides and the Great War, later called World War I, began.



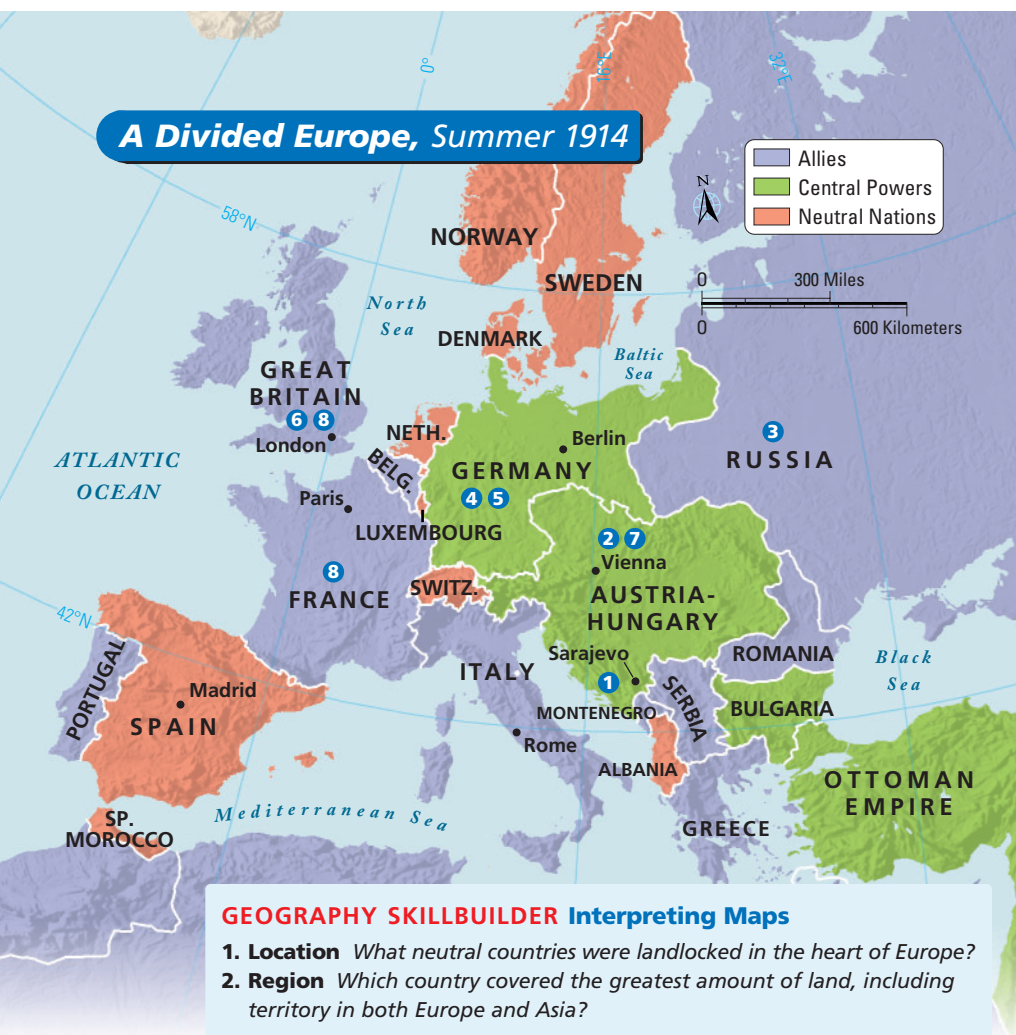
Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife are murdered at Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.

Causes of World War I

A single action, the assassination of the archduke, started World War I. But the conflict had many underlying causes.

1. **Imperialism.** Britain, France, Germany, and Italy competed for colonies in Africa and Asia. Because it had fewer colonies than Britain and France, Germany felt it deserved more colonies to provide it with resources and buy its goods.
2. **Nationalism.** Europeans were very nationalistic, meaning that they had strong feelings of pride, loyalty, and protectiveness toward their own countries. They wanted to prove their nations were the best. They placed their countries' interests above all other concerns. In addition, some ethnic groups hoped to form their own separate nations and were willing to fight for such a cause.
3. **Militarism.** The belief that a nation needs a large military force is militarism. In the decades before the war, the major powers built up their armies and navies.

A Divided Europe, Summer 1914



STEPS TO WORLD WAR I

- 1 **June 28** Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated.
- 2 **July 28** Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
- 3 **July 30** Russia (Serbia's ally) mobilizes armed forces.
- 4 **August 1** Germany (Austria-Hungary's ally) declares war on Russia.
- 5 **August 3** Germany declares war on France (Russia's ally); prepares to invade Belgium.
- 6 **August 4** Britain, having pledged to protect Belgium, declares war on Germany.
- 7 **August 6** Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia.
- 8 **August 12** France and Britain declare war on Austria-Hungary.

GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

1. **Location** What neutral countries were landlocked in the heart of Europe?
2. **Region** Which country covered the greatest amount of land, including territory in both Europe and Asia?

4. **Alliances** In 1914, a tangled network of competing alliances bound European nations together. An attack on one nation forced all its allies to come to its aid. Any small conflict could become a larger war.

European nations had divided into two opposing alliances. The **Central Powers** were made up of Austria-Hungary, Germany, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria. They faced the Allied Powers, or **Allies**, consisting of Serbia, Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy, and seven other countries.

Stalemate in the Trenches

When the war began in August, most people on both sides assumed it would be over within a few months. With France as its goal, the German army invaded Belgium on August 4, 1914. Despite stiff resistance, the Germans fought their way west into France. They reached the Marne River about 40 miles from Paris. There the French, supported by the British, rallied and prepared to fight back. The First Battle of the Marne, in September 1914, stopped the German advance.

Instead of one side quickly defeating the other, the two sides stayed stuck in the mud for more than three years. The soldiers were fighting a new kind of battle, **trench warfare**. Troops huddled at the bottom of rat-infested trenches. They fired artillery and machine guns at each other. Lines of trenches stretched across France from the English Channel to the border with Switzerland. (See pages 282–283 for an

Background

The Ottoman Empire included modern-day Turkey and Syria.

ReadingHistory

A. Reading a Map On the map on page 286, find the site of the first Battle of the Marne.

Vocabulary

trench: a long, deep ditch dug for protection

illustration of the trenches.) For more than three years, the battle lines remained almost unchanged. Neither side could win a clear victory.

In the trenches, soldiers faced the constant threat of sniper fire. Artillery shelling turned the area between the two opposing armies into a “no man’s land” too dangerous to occupy. When soldiers left their trenches to attack enemy lines, they rushed into a hail of bullets and clouds of poison gas.

When battles did take place, they cost many thousands of lives, often without gaining an inch for either side. The Battle of the Somme (SAHM), between July and November 1916, resulted in more than 1.2 million casualties. British dead or wounded numbered over 400,000. German losses totaled over 600,000, and French nearly 200,000. Despite this, the Allies gained only about seven miles.

ReadingHistory

B. Reading a Map

Find the site of the Battle of the Somme on the map on page 286.

A War of New Technology

New technology raised the death toll. The tank, a British invention, smashed through barbed wire, crossed trenches, and cleared paths through no man’s land. Soldiers also had machine guns that fired 600 bullets a minute. Poison gas, used by both sides, burned and blinded soldiers.

World War I was the first major conflict in which airplanes were used in combat. By 1917, fighter planes fought each other far above the clouds. Manfred von Richthofen, known as the Red Baron, was Germany’s top ace. An ace was an aviator who had downed five or more enemy aircraft. Von Richthofen shot down over 80 enemy planes.

At sea, the Germans used submarines, which they called **U-boats**, to block trade. They were equipped with both guns and torpedoes. German U-boats sank over 11 million tons of Allied shipping.

Background

U-boat was short for “undersea boat.”

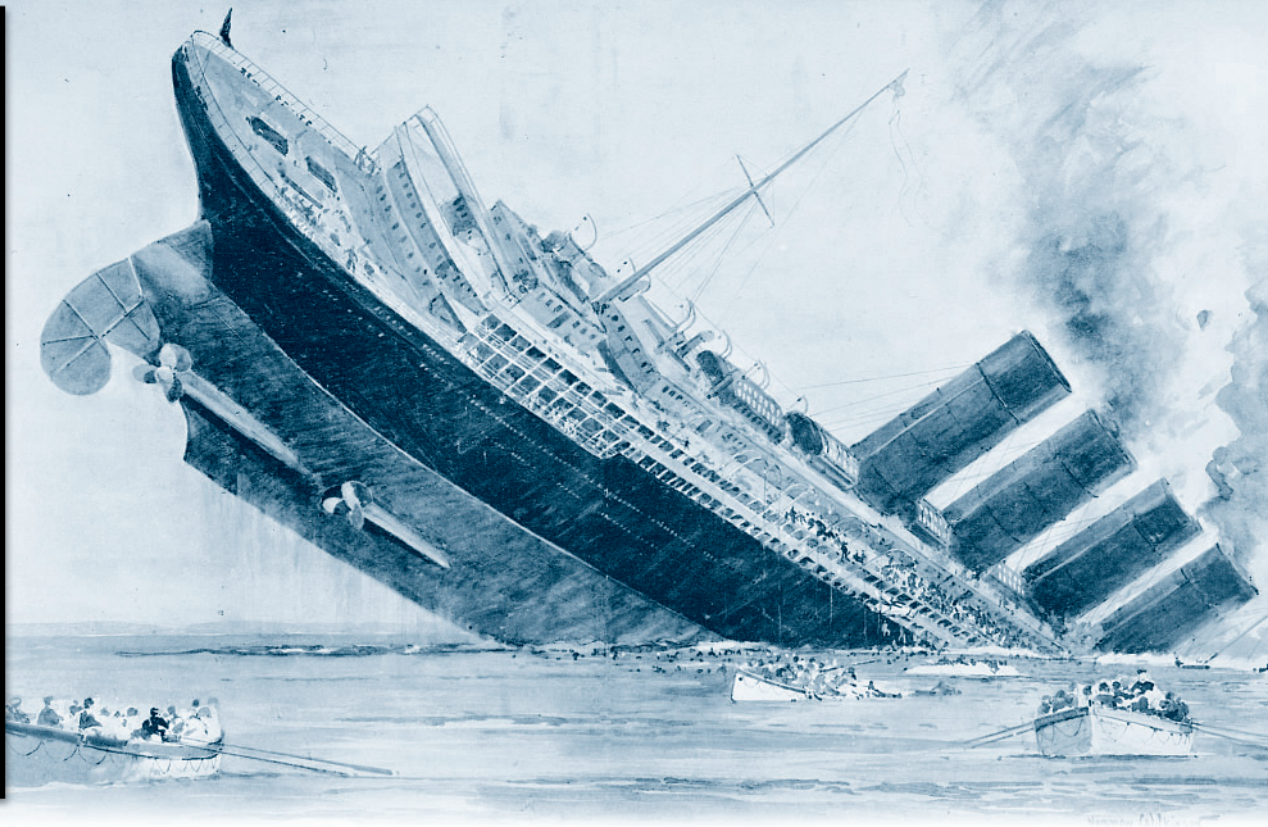
New Technology of War

First used effectively during World War I, these new weapons caused high casualties.

Airplane

Machine Gun

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The British liner
Lusitania is sunk off
the Irish coast by a
German submarine
on May 7, 1915.

America's Path to War

When the war started in 1914, President **Woodrow Wilson** announced a policy of **neutrality**, refusing to take sides in the war. A popular song, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier," expressed the antiwar sentiment of many Americans.

Over time, however, German attacks shifted public opinion to the Allied cause. In the fall of 1914, Britain set up a naval blockade of German ports, seizing all goods bound for Germany. In response, German submarines sank all Allied merchant ships they found off the British coast. In May 1915, a German U-boat torpedoed the British passenger ship *Lusitania*, killing 1,198 people, including 128 Americans. The sinking turned many Americans against Germany.

But President Wilson kept the United States neutral. He demanded that the German government halt unrestricted submarine warfare, and it agreed. In the election of 1916, the Democratic Party's campaign slogan, "He kept us out of war," appealed to voters. Wilson won reelection.

Desperate to defeat Britain, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare at the end of January 1917. Its military leaders knew this action would bring the United States into the war. However, they hoped to win the war before the Americans arrived.

The next month, another blow to German-American relations came from the **Zimmermann telegram**. The telegram was discovered by the British, who passed it on to the Americans. In it, Arthur Zimmermann, the German foreign minister, told the German ambassador in Mexico to propose that Mexico join the Germans. In exchange, Germany would help Mexico get back its "lost" territories of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. Americans were furious.

ReadingHistory

C. Making

Inferences Why did the sinking of the *Lusitania* turn Americans against Germany?

In March, German submarines sank three American ships. President Wilson asked for a declaration of war.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The world must be made safe for democracy. . . . We desire no conquest. . . . We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made . . . secure.

Woodrow Wilson, message to Congress, April 2, 1917

“The world must be made safe for democracy.”

Woodrow Wilson

Six senators and 50 representatives, including the first woman in Congress, Jeannette Rankin of Montana, voted against going to war. But the majority shared the president’s commitment to join the Allies.

Revolution in Russia

Events in Russia made U.S. entry into the war more urgent for the Allies. By early 1915, the huge Russian army had been outfought by a smaller German army led by better-trained officers. In August 1915, Czar Nicholas II insisted on taking control of the troops himself. His poor leadership was blamed for more deaths. By 1917, food shortages led to riots, and soaring inflation led to strikes by angry workers in Russia.

In March 1917, Czar Nicholas II was forced to step down. A temporary government continued the unpopular war until November. In that month the Bolsheviks, a communist group led by Vladimir Ilich Lenin, took power. Communism is a political system in which the government owns key parts of the economy, and there is no private property.

Because the war had devastated Russia, Lenin at once began peace talks with Germany. In March 1918, Russia withdrew from the war by signing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. German troops could now turn from Russia to the Western front. The Allies urged American troops to come quickly, as you will read in the next section.

ReadingHistory

D. Analyzing

Causes What led Russia to pull out of the war?

Section 1 Assessment

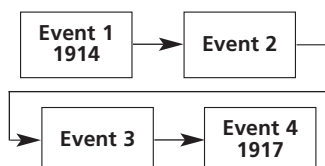
1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- militarism
- Central Powers
- Allies
- trench warfare
- U-boat
- Woodrow Wilson
- neutrality
- Zimmermann telegram

2. Taking Notes

Write at least four events that brought the United States into World War I.



Which of these events was most important? Why?

3. Main Ideas

- What were the long-term causes of World War I?
- Why were Americans divided over the issue of remaining neutral?
- Why was Russia’s withdrawal from the war in 1917 a blow to Allies?

4. Critical Thinking

Analyzing Causes How did imperialism, nationalism, and militarism work to reinforce each other?

THINK ABOUT

- the goals of each
- how nationalism might encourage military buildup
- how nationalism contributed to the race for colonies

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

SCIENCE

ART

Research one of the new weapons of World War I. Explain how it works using a **model**, or draw an illustrated **diagram** of a defense against the weapon.