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STUDY GUIDE: WORLD WAR I

Sides

World War I involved two coalitions.

***The **Allied Powers** included the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Serbia, Montenegro, and the Russian Empire. Japan joined them in 1914. Italy joined them in 1915. The U.S. joined them in 1917, even after maintaining a policy of neutrality for several years. (Technically, the U.S. called itself the **Associated Power** because it was fighting to protect its own interests, but it was fighting against the Central Powers.)

***The **Central Powers** were comprised of Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria joined them in 1914 and 1915 respectively.

Causes of the War and Important People

1. The *political and economic climate that surfaced once Germany had established itself as a world power* was a major cause of the war. The Chancellor of Germany, **Otto von Bismarck**, didn't want to conquer other nations. He just wanted Germany to remain a major power. He made an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy called the **Triple Alliance**. He also signed a treaty with Russia (headed by **Czar Nicholas II**) that made Russia promise to stay neutral if France and Germany went to war, and promised that Germany would stay neutral if Russia went to war with Austria-Hungary. When his reign ended in 1890, his successor, **William II**, refused to renew the treaty with Russia, so France made a deal with Russia promising that if one of them went to war against Germany, the other would assist. Germany, who had been the most powerful country in Europe since 1871, began competing with Britain and other European countries to acquire land and territories abroad, such as in Africa. They also competed with Britain in terms of building a navy. Britain began to feel threatened, cleared up its disputes with France and Russia and formed the **Triple Entente**.
2. Hostilities and fears were increasing everywhere. There was unrest in the Balkans, too. Some Balkan territories wanted independence from Austria-Hungary. Germany made several threats of war, and countries began to mobilize their armies, which took

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a while since at that time, countries relied on the rails to transport troops and supplies to the trenches where the battles would take place. Therefore, mobilizing an army was almost like telegraphing the country's intention to declare war.

3. The most tangible cause of the war was when *a Serbian nationalist assassinated the Archduke Francis Ferdinand*, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, and his wife, who had been visiting Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Russia felt allegiance to protect the Serbs against Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary wanted to punish Serbia, but was afraid of Russia, so they sought assistance from Germany, who agreed. Austria made outlandish demands on Serbia. Serbia met these demands because Britain and Russia advised them to keep the peace, but Austria wasn't satisfied. Britain tried to intervene, but Austria wouldn't let them, and Germany backed Austria up. On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. All the countries mobilized their armies even though they didn't want to because it was better than leaving themselves unprotected. On August 1, Germany declared war on Russia.

Events Once the War Had Begun

***The Germans implemented the **Schlieffen Plan**, named after their chief of staff **Alfred von Schlieffen**. The two major points of this plan were that Germany would use 90% of its troops to conquer France on the Western Front, and the rest to defend against Russia on the Eastern Front, and it would only take six weeks to force France to submit.

***When Germany declared war on France on August 3, the plan was put into place. At this time, their commander was **General Joseph Jacques Joffre**. Their border with Belgium had no defenses because their relations with that country were good, not hostile.

*****King Albert I** of **Belgium** tried to stay neutral and even tried to refuse Germany's demand for permission to march through it to attack France, but Germany invaded Belgium on August 4th. Britain and other European powers came to Belgium's rescue. Britain gave Germany an ultimatum to withdraw that same night. When they didn't, they went to war with Germany too. They wanted to prevent Germany from becoming even more of a world power, enough that Germany could rival or take over Britain.

***In 1915, the Germans began using submarines to sink British and American ships, and they declared the nearby waters a war zone. They specifically targeted merchant ships transporting war supplies and food, but they also sank the **Lusitania**, a British passenger ship that happened to have 128 American citizens on board. This greatly angered the U.S. In September of 1915, the Germans theoretically stopped unrestricted submarine warfare.

***One important battle in 1915 was the **Dardanelles** campaign. The Allies tried to gain a direct route to supply and arm Russia by battling the Ottoman Empire. Plus, they wanted to get the Balkan territories to join their cause, which would endanger Austria-Hungary, their rival, and Germany's second support. The British attacked the Dardanelles, hoping to surprise the Ottoman army by attacking them unexpectedly by sea, but even though they gained an advantage, they lost three ships in a mine field, and the fleet commander withdrew. When new troops arrived from Britain, France, **Australia**, and New Zealand a month later, the Ottomans were better prepared, and

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terrible casualties ensued. This was Australia's major contribution to the war. (Their forces were referred to as the **ANZAC**.)

***Early in 1916, the Germans attacked **Verdun** in France, hoping the French would use their entire forces in defense. The Russians came to France's rescue for a time, and eventually the French pushed the Germans back, but casualties on both sides were extreme.

***In the middle of this year, Britain tried to help the French at Verdun in the **Battle of the Somme**. The battle was deadlocked for a long time with rising casualties. Eventually the British introduced the tank. Even though the opposition was soon able to start manufacturing tanks, the British had the advantage in technology. Ultimately, historians credit the tanks with breaking the deadlock.

***Also during 1916, the **Battle of Jutland** occurred. It was the only time during the war that two Navies confronted each other in direct combat. Germany caused heavy damage, and then retreated.

***By 1917, both sides tried offensives to gain ground, but losses were extremely heavy on both sides. French soldiers actually felt so hopeless at one point they began to mutiny and commit suicide. Because each army along the western front (which consisted of lines of enemy trenches) was almost equal, each tried to advance by launching offensive artillery fire.

***On January 31, 1917, Germany announced it would begin unrestricted submarine warfare again, which was what forced the U.S. to enter the war. The U.S. warned Germany not to sink its ships, which the British had depended on for food and supplies. Four months later when the warning wasn't heeded, Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for approval to go to war on April 2, 1917. Congress voted to go to war four days later. However, the United States provided more economic assistance than we did troops because our troops weren't trained to fight this type of war.

***The troops we did provide were called the **American Expeditionary Force**. Our troops were led by **General John J. Pershing**.

***Also in 1917, revolutions were ongoing in Russia due to poverty and starvation. The first revolution caused Czar Nicholas II to give up his government. The Bolshevik Revolution left **Lenin** in charge, and Russia withdrew from the war in March of 1918 after signing a treaty with a reluctant Germany. Russia lost its part of Poland, the Ukraine, and the Baltic States to Germany, which was then able to concentrate on its battles on the western front.

***In 1918, Germany launched two final offensives, but they were unsuccessful due to counter-offensives by Britain, France, and the U.S. The first significant battle in which a number of U.S. troops fought was Saint-Mihiel, under General Pershing's personal command.

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Timeline of Events in the War

- June 1914 The Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated.
- July 1914 Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
- Aug. 4, 1914 WWI is said to have begun on this day.
- Aug. 1914 Germany declares war on Russia.
Germany declares war on France.
Great Britain declares war on Germany.
Big Bertha was used against forts at Liege in Belgium. Liege fell.
Austria-Hungary invades Serbia.
France invades Lorraine.
The Battle of Mons is fought.
Japan enters the war on the side of the Allies, hoping to gain Pacific islands, such as the Marshalls and the Marianas, which the Germans owned.
- Sept. 1914 France attacks Germany at Aisne.
- Oct. 1914 The Ottoman Empire joins the Central Powers, hoping to retrieve territory they lost in the Balkan Wars.
- Mar. 1915 The Allies attack the Dardanelles.
- Apr. 1915 The Germans use poison gas at the second battle of Ypres.
- Apr. 1915 Allies land at Gallipoli.
- May 1915 The Lusitania is sunk, killing 128 U.S. citizens.
- May 1915 Italy declares war on Austria-Hungary.
- Feb. 1916 **Conscription** begins in Britain for the first time.
- Feb. 1916 Germany attacks Verdun.
- Mar. 1916 Germany declares war on Portugal.
- May 1916 The Battle of Jutland is waged.
- June 1916 **Hindenburg** becomes chief of the general staff in Germany.
- July 1916 Sommes was the first all-out offensive on the Germans by the British.
- Sept. 1916 British tanks are first used.
- Dec. 1916 Lloyd George becomes prime minister of Britain.
- Jan. 1917 Woodrow Wilson warns Germans against unrestricted submarine warfare, particularly on the U.S.
- Apr. 1917 The U.S. enters the war by declaring war on Germany.
- June 1917 Greece declares war on the Central Powers.
- Oct. 1917 The **Bolshevik Revolution** begins in Russia.
- Jan. 1918 President Wilson shares his **14 Points** for peace plan.
- Mar. 1918 The Germans start their spring offensive.
- Mar. 1918 Russia withdraws from the war.
- Mar. 1918 **Foch** is appointed allied coordinator in France.
- June 1918 U.S. **General John J. Pershing** donates all his U.S. forces in Europe to Foch's command in France.
- Aug. 1918 Amiens Offensive begins.
- Sept. 1918 Saint-Mihiel Offensive begins (led by the U.S.).
- Sept. 1918 Canal du Nord Offensive begins.
- Oct. 1918 In Germany, Max von Baden is appointed chancellor.

Oct. 1918	The Allies capture Hindenburg.
Nov. 1918	Kaiser Wilhelm abdicates in Germany.
Nov. 1918	An Armistice occurs.
Nov. 1918	<u>The New York Times</u> announces the end of the war.
Dec. 1918	Lloyd George is elected in Britain.
Jan. 1919	The Paris Peace Conference is held.
June 1919	The Treaty of Versailles is signed.

Consequences/Treaty of Versailles

Physically and financially, Europe had a lot to repair. The German, Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires collapsed by the end of the war, and the borders were redrawn in the peace process. World War I also made the Bolshevik Revolution possible in Russia, which brought Communism into play in that country.

The Treaty of Versailles occurred in Versailles, France in January of 1919, and it involved diplomats from all the Allied countries, although Britain, Italy, France, and the U.S. had the most input. Britain, led by **Lloyd George**, wanted to eliminate the German naval threat and German expansion overseas. **Georges Clemenceau**, the Premier of France, wanted to protect France from later invasion and make Germany pay reparations for the physical destruction done to the country. American **President Woodrow Wilson** wanted to make sure the peace was just, and future conflicts wouldn't ensue, which is why he tried to convince the other countries to form **The League of Nations**. This proposed federation would enable countries to trade, decrease military armament everywhere, provide help for subjugated people, and lessen the chances of future wars. Unfortunately, at the treaty negotiations, his goal was not achieved. Although he campaigned extensively for American support for his plan, he ultimately died of a stroke before succeeding. He didn't even really achieve the fair peace he had wanted between European powers, which had severely penalized Germany. Also, when they established new nations such as Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, and divided the Ottoman Empire into Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, they created problems that would last for years to come. They also completely ignored the concerns of the Russian Bolsheviks as well as the rights of people in their subsidiary colonial regions.

In the end, Germany lost Alsace and Lorraine to France, and a few other areas to France, Belgium, and Poland. More importantly, the Allied forces, particularly France, were entitled to occupy the Rhineland. Germany was forced to reduce its army and stop all military production or expansion. Germany also had to admit fault for the war and pay reparations. Britain and the U.S. promised to defend France if Germany invaded it. The document was finally signed on June 28, 1919. Ironically, personal conflicts among various senators prevented the treaty from ever being signed, but the U.S. signed a later treaty document in 1921. The U.S. never joined the League of Nations.

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After 15 years, France withdrew from the Rhineland it had been permitted to occupy under the treaty, and Hitler remilitarized it. The French built their **Maginot Line**, which ran from Switzerland to Belgium to protect them from an invasion.

Throughout the world, there were personal and societal consequences of the war. People became less optimistic. Art and literature in the 20s reflected this change in sentiment.

In America, **women** had entered the workforce while the men were abroad. The 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote, was ratified in 1920. Times were tough, inflation was high, and taxes were raised in order to finance involvement in the war. **War bonds** (also known as **liberty bonds**) were sold. The climate of discomfort resulted in anti-war efforts and anti-government sentiment. Organizers such as Socialist Eugene V. Debs and Emma Goldman were jailed during this period. (Emma Goldman was eventually deported.) **The Sedition Act** was passed by Congress in 1918 forbidding anyone to say anything against the government or the war effort or hurt the sales of war bonds or the draft.

When **Hitler** came to power in 1933, he was able to get away with his policies and annexations because people thought Germany had been treated unfairly in the peace Treaty of Versailles. Everyone also wanted to avoid another world-wide conflict at any price, so for a time, the world practiced appeasement.

Interesting Facts

- *****"In Flanders Fields"** by Major John McRae is a poem about the Battle of Ypres.
- ***WWI wasn't referred to as WWI until after WWII. It was called The Great War while it was being waged.
- ***This war involved more countries and caused more destruction than any other war, except WWII. There were over **10,000,000** casualties in World War I.

Fighting

- *****Land** - Most of the battles took place on land, in **trench** warfare.
- *****Air** - This was the first war in which airplanes were used. The Germans launched the first air raids in 1914. Their craft called **Zeppelin** held repeated **air raids** on London over the next several years.
- *****Sea** - Naval ships relayed supplies more often than they actually fought.
- ***The German use of unrestricted submarine warfare and mines, particularly their **U-boats** (or "undersea boats") to wage attacks on merchant ships carrying food and supplies, was a major aspect of this war.

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Weapons

***The **machine gun** came into wider use during the war.

***Other weapons such as **hand grenades, poisonous gas, and tanks** also emerged.

***WWI was the first time **chemical weapons** were used. At the battle of Ypres in 1915, the Germans used **chlorine gas** on the French. As a result, gas masks became standard for soldiers during this war.

***Two years later, the Germans were the first to use **mustard gas**. In 1925, the **Geneva Protocol** banned the use of chemical and bacterial weapons, although the U.S. didn't sign this agreement until 1975.