

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



World War I and the Russian Revolution, 1914–1919

Lesson 1 World War I Begins

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why do politics often lead to war? How can technology impact war?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

military relating to the armed forces or to soldiers, arms, or war

complex having many intricate parts

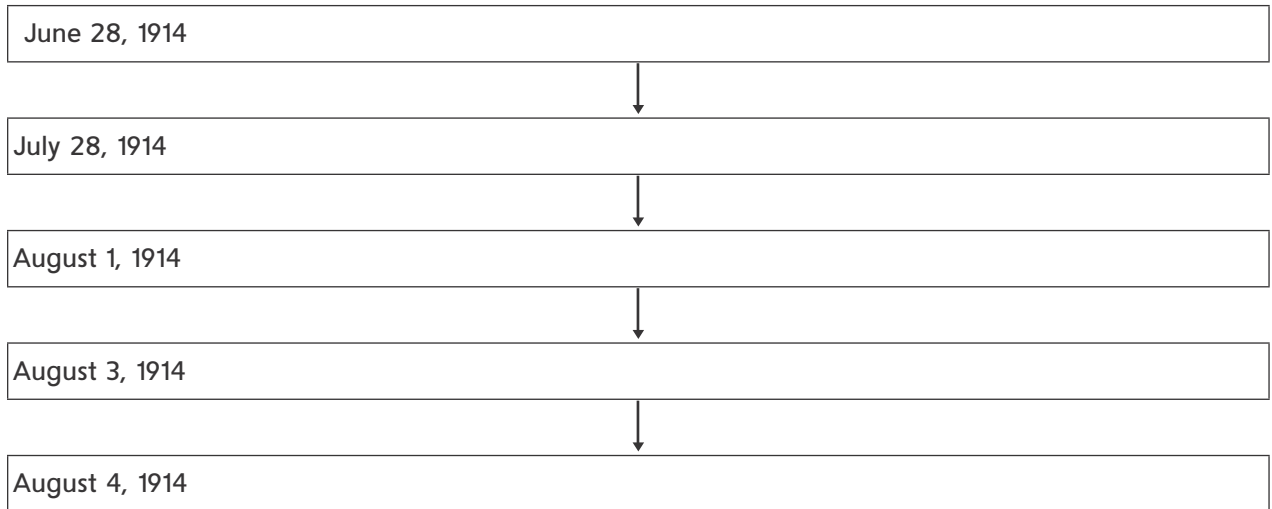
Content Vocabulary

conscription military draft

mobilization the process of assembling troops and supplies and making them ready for war

TAKING NOTES: *Sequencing*

ACTIVITY Use a sequence chain like the one below to list the events leading up to World War I.



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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

European countries formed alliances, or partnerships, and increased the sizes of their armies during the early twentieth century. This prepared the way for a global, or worldwide, war. All that the countries needed was a good reason to call out their troops and send them to war. A crisis in the Balkans in the summer of 1914 led directly to the conflict. A Serbian terrorist killed Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife, and World War I soon followed.

Causes of the War

Guiding Question *What factors contributed to the start of World War I?*

Nineteenth-century liberals believed that Europe should be organized into nation-states. Then the states would work together and create a peaceful Europe. However, the liberals were very wrong.

Nationalism, Imperialism, Militarism, and Alliances

A system of nation-states emerged in Europe in the last half of the nineteenth century. The system led to competition among nation-states, not cooperation. No European nation-state wanted to be controlled by another. Each state was guided by its own self-interests and success. Most leaders thought that war was an acceptable way to preserve the power of their nation-states. These attitudes, or ways of thinking, made war a real possibility.

The growth of imperialism in the last half of the nineteenth century also played a role in the coming of war. Countries competed for lands in other parts of the world, especially in Africa. This led to conflict, and it increased the rivalries among European states.

Nationalism and imperialism had another serious result. Some groups had not become nations in Europe. Slavic minorities in the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian Empire still dreamed of their own nation-states. The Irish in the British Empire also wanted their own state, and the Poles in the Russian Empire wanted the same thing.

Industrialization offered new ways to build ships. Iron, steel, and chemicals were used in new more powerful weapons. Armies and navies grew after 1900, and this also increased tensions in Europe. It was clear that a war would be very destructive because of the new kinds of weapons and because of the large number of weapons.

Most Western countries had **conscription**. This is a **military** draft, or a process in which people are selected for military duty and required to serve. The draft was a regular practice before 1914. European armies doubled in size between 1890 and 1914. The Russian army was the largest, with 1.3 million soldiers. The French and German armies were not far behind, with 900,000 men in each. The British, Italian, and Austro-Hungarian armies each numbered between 250,000 and 500,000 soldiers.

Militarism is the very active preparation for war. The focus on militarism was growing in Europe. The influence of military leaders grew as armies grew. Military leaders made big and **complex** plans for quickly gathering and preparing millions of soldiers and large amounts of supplies for war.

Military leaders feared that any changes in their plans would cause chaos, or confusion, in the armed forces. They insisted that their plans could not be changed. As a result, European political leaders did not have many choices. In 1914 they had to make decisions for military reasons, instead of for political reasons.

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Nations created a system of alliances. This system increased the dangers of militarism. Europe's great powers were divided into two alliances. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed the Triple Alliance in 1882. France, Great Britain, and Russia created the Triple Entente in 1907.

Several crises tested these alliances in the early twentieth century. The crises in the Balkans between 1908 and 1913, where the Slavic people wanted their own nation-state, were especially troublesome. These events left European states angry at each other. Some were unhappy with the outcomes of the events. For example, Russia had been forced to accept Austria-Hungary's inclusion of Balkan areas into its empire, and it looked weak as a result. By 1914, the major European states believed that their allies were important to them. They were willing to use war to preserve both their power and the power of their allies.

Internal Dissent

National goals were not the only source of internal dissent, or opposition, at the beginning of the 1900s. Socialist labor movements grew more powerful. The Socialists wanted to use strikes to reach their goals, and some even wanted to use violence.

Some conservative leaders were worried about the increase in labor problems and in class division. They feared that European nations were close to revolution. They wanted to stop internal disorder and protest against the existing ruling system. This desire to stop internal problems and to put the focus on a common enemy may have encouraged some leaders to head into war in 1914.



Reading Progress Check

Analyzing How might internal dissent in European states have led to World War I?

The Outbreak of War

Guiding Question *How did the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand spark the outbreak of war?*

Nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and alliances may all have helped to start World War I. The desire to stop internal conflicts also played a role. However, the decisions that European leaders made in response to a crisis in the Balkans directly led to the conflict.

Assassination in Sarajevo and Responses

By 1914 Serbia wanted to create a large, independent Slavic state in the Balkans, and Russia supported that goal. Austria-Hungary had its own Slavic minorities, and as a result, it wanted to prevent Serbia's goal. Austria-Hungary feared it might lose some of its Slavic areas, and its power would be weakened.

Archduke Francis Ferdinand was the heir to the Hapsburg throne of Austria-Hungary. He and his wife Sophia visited the city of Sarajevo (SAR·uh·YAY·voh) in Bosnia in the Austro-Hungarian empire on June 28, 1914. A group of conspirators waited there in the streets.

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A 19-year-old Bosnian Serb named Gavrilo Princip was in that group. Princip was a member of a Serbian terrorist organization called the Black Hand. Its members wanted Bosnia to be free of Austria-Hungary and to become part of a large Serbian kingdom. An assassination attempt earlier that morning by one of the conspirators had failed. However, later that day, Princip succeeded in shooting and killing both the archduke and his wife.

The Austro-Hungarian government did not know if the Serbian government had been directly involved in the archduke's assassination. However, it did not care. Austrian leaders wanted to attack Serbia, but they feared Russia would intervene to help Serbia. As a result, they asked their German allies for help. Emperor William II of Germany promised Austria-Hungary full support if war broke out with Russia. Austria-Hungary finally declared war on Serbia on July 28.

Russia was determined to support Serbia. Czar Nicholas II ordered the mobilization of part of the Russian army against Austria-Hungary on July 28. **Mobilization** is the process of gathering troops and supplies for war. It was considered an act of war in 1914.

Leaders of the Russian army told the czar that they could not mobilize just part of the army. Their plan was based on a war against both Germany and Austria-Hungary. The army leaders claimed that mobilizing against only Austria-Hungary would create problems. So the czar ordered full mobilization of the Russian army on July 29. He knew that Germany would consider this order an act of war.

The Conflict Broadens

Germany reacted quickly. The German government warned Russia that it must stop its mobilization within 12 hours. Russia ignored this warning, and Germany declared war on Russia on August 1.

The Germans had a military plan, just as the Russians did. General Alfred von Schlieffen (SHLEE•fuhn) helped create the plan, and so it was known as the Schlieffen Plan. The plan called for a two-front war with France and Russia. This was decided because France and Russia had formed a military alliance in 1894.

Under the Schlieffen Plan, Germany would start a small military action against Russia while most of the German army would quickly attack France. This meant invading France by moving quickly along the coast through Belgium. After France was defeated, the Germans would move to the east to fight against Russia.

Under the Schlieffen Plan, Germany could not mobilize its troops against only Russia. The plan called for action against both France and Russia. Therefore, Germany declared war on France on August 3. It issued an ultimatum, or final demand, to Belgium at about the same time. Germany demanded that German troops be allowed to pass through Belgian territory. Belgium, however, was a neutral nation, which was not involved in the conflict.

On August 4, Great Britain declared war on Germany. The official reason for the war was that Germany had violated Belgian neutrality. In fact, Britain was allied with France and Russia, and it was worried about keeping its own power in the world. Britain would be in a bad position if Germany and Austria-Hungary won the war. If that happened, Britain would be without any allies. As a result of this series of events, all the great powers of Europe were at war by August 4.

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Reading Progress Check

Interpreting What roles did the assassination of Francis Ferdinand and the existence of prior military plans play in leading quickly to the outbreak of World War I?
