

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



World War I and the Russian Revolution, 1914–1919

Lesson 2 World War I

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

target something or someone marked for attack

unrestricted having no restrictions or bounds

Content Vocabulary

propaganda ideas spread to influence public opinion for or against a cause

trench warfare fighting from ditches protected by barbed wire, as in World War I

war of attrition a war based on wearing down the other side with constant attacks and heavy losses, such as World War I

total war a war that involved the complete mobilization of resources and people, affecting the lives of all citizens in the warring countries, even those remote from the battlefield

planned economy an economic system directed by government agencies

TAKING NOTES: *Identifying*

ACTIVITY Use a graphic organizer like the one below to identify how alliances shifted during World War I.

	Allied Powers	Central Powers
Pre-war name		
Original Members		
Later additions		

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The war that many thought would be over in a few weeks lasted much longer. World War I resulted in many casualties for both sides. The war widened, and the United States joined the fight in 1917. Governments took control of their economies as fighting continued. They rationed, or limited, food and supplies. They called on civilians to join in and work for the war effort.

1914 to 1915: Illusions and Stalemate

Guiding Question *How did the war on the Eastern Front differ from war on the Western Front?*

Before 1914 many political leaders thought war was not a real possibility because it involved so many political and economic risks. Others thought diplomats could easily prevent war. Both ideas were proven wrong in August 1914. However, the new illusions, or false beliefs, that replaced them were just as foolish.

Propaganda is ideas that are spread to influence public opinion for or against a cause. Government propaganda had spread ideas of hatred toward other countries before the war. In August 1914 European governments urgently asked their citizens to defend their nation against attackers. Most people agreed because the propaganda had convinced them that their own nation's cause was right and just.

A new set of illusions also contributed to the enthusiasm for war. In August 1914 almost everyone believed that the war would end in a few weeks. Almost all European wars since 1815 had ended in a few weeks. Both the soldiers who boarded the trains for the war front in August 1914 and the proud citizens who sent them off to war believed that the warriors would be home by Christmas.

The Western Front

German hopes for a quick end to the war rested on a military risk. The Schlieffen Plan had called for the German army to enter northern France through Belgium. According to the plan, the German forces would go west and would go around Paris. This plan would enable them to surround most of the French army, which would be farther east. However, the Germans were stopped a short distance from Paris at the First Battle of the Marne (September 6–10). French military leaders loaded 2,000 Parisian taxicabs with fresh troops and sent them to the front line, or the place where opposing armies face each other in battle.

The war quickly turned into a stalemate. Neither the Germans nor the French could move each other from the trenches they had dug for shelter. Two lines of trenches soon reached from the English Channel to the frontiers of Switzerland. The Western Front had become stuck in **trench warfare**. Both sides were kept in almost the same positions for four years.

The Eastern Front

The war on the Eastern Front had more movement than the one on the Western Front. However, the number of people who were killed was just as large. The Russian army moved into eastern Germany at the beginning of the war. It was defeated at the Battle of Tannenberg on August 30 and the Battle of Masurian Lakes on September 15. The Russians were no longer a threat to Germany after these losses.

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Lesson 2 World War I, *continued*

Germany's ally Austria-Hungary did not do well at first. The Russians had defeated the Austrians in Galicia, and the Austrians also had been thrown out of Serbia. To make matters worse, the Italians betrayed their German and Austrian allies in the Triple Alliance by attacking Austria in May 1915. Italy then joined France, Great Britain, and Russia. The alliance of the three nations had previously been known as the Triple Entente, but the new group was called the Allied Powers, or Allies.

The Germans had come to help the Austrians by this time. A German-Austrian army defeated the Russian army in Galicia and pushed the Russians far back into their own territory. About 2.5 million Russians had been killed, captured, or wounded. The Russians had almost been eliminated from the war.

Bulgaria joined Germany and Austria-Hungary as an ally in September 1915. These nations were encouraged by their success against Russia, and they attacked and removed Serbia from the war. Their successes in the east allowed the German troops in the west to move back on the offensive, or a position of attack.



Reading Progress Check

Inferring Why did trench warfare develop on the Western Front but not on the Eastern Front?

Trench and Air Warfare

Guiding Question *What made World War I more devastating than any previous wars?*

The trenches dug on the Western Front in 1914 had become complex defense systems by 1916. The Germans and the French each had hundreds of miles of trenches. Barbed wire up to 5 feet (about 1.5 m) high and 30 yards (about 27 m) wide protected the trenches. Places from which soldiers could shoot machine guns and other types of guns were built out of concrete, and they also protected the trenches. The trenches were supported farther back by heavy artillery. Troops lived in holes in the ground. A strip of land known as no-man's-land separated the two sides from each other.

Trench warfare was new and difficult for military leaders. The leaders had been trained to fight wars of movement in which they sought to gain a better position than an opponent. Now their troops were stuck in one position. At times, the leaders would order an attack that would begin with artillery fire. This would flatten the enemy's barbed wire and pound the enemy in that area. This was done to "soften up" the enemy. Then a group of soldiers would climb out of their trenches on the attack with fixed bayonets. (Bayonets are large knives that fit on the end of guns.) The soldiers on the attack hoped to work their way toward the enemy trenches.

However, the attacks rarely worked because the enemy's machine guns could be fired at the men crossing the open fields of no-man's land. In 1916 and 1917, millions of young men died trying to break through the front line and reach the enemy's trenches. In 1916, in just ten months, 700,000 men lost their lives over a few miles of land at Verdun, France. World War I had turned into a **war of attrition**. This means a war based on wearing down, or tiring out, the other side by constant attacks and heavy losses.

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networks

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Airplanes appeared on the battlefield for the first time in history by the end of 1915. Planes were first used to find and study the enemy's position. Soon, planes also began to attack ground **targets**, especially enemy communication centers. Fights for control of the air occurred and increased over time. At first, pilots fired at each other with handheld pistols. Later, machine guns were placed on planes. This made the skies a great deal more dangerous.

The Germans also used their giant airships called zeppelins in warfare. They were used to bomb London and eastern England. These zeppelins caused little damage, but they frightened many people. Zeppelins were filled with hydrogen gas. Germany's enemies soon learned that the zeppelins exploded into huge fires when hit by anti-aircraft guns.



Reading Progress Check

Drawing Conclusions Why did technology make it difficult for armies on the Western Front to mount a successful offensive attack?

A World War

Guiding Question *Why did the war widen to become a world conflict?*

Both sides wanted to gain new allies because of the stalemate on the Western Front. Each side hoped new allies would provide a winning advantage. Each also hoped for a new source of money and war goods.

Widening of the War

Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire were called the Central Powers. Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. Russia, Great Britain, and France were the Allied Powers. They declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The Allies tried to open a Balkan front by landing forces at Gallipoli (guh-LIH-puh-lee), southwest of Constantinople, in April 1915. However, the battle was a terrible failure, and the Allies withdrew, or took their troops out of the area.

The war had truly become a world conflict by 1917. A British officer known as Lawrence of Arabia was stationed in the Middle East. That year he encouraged Arab princes to revolt against their Ottoman rulers. In 1918 British forces from Egypt organized troops from India, Australia, and New Zealand, and they worked to destroy the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.

The Allies also took advantage of Germany's focus on Europe and its lack of naval strength. They seized German colonies in the rest of the world. Japan had been a British ally since 1902, and it seized many German-held islands in the Pacific. Australia seized German New Guinea.

Entry of the United States

At first, the United States tried to remain neutral. However, this became more difficult for the nation to do as the war continued. The immediate cause of the United States's involvement in World War I arose from the naval war between Germany and Great Britain.

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Britain had used its superior navy to set up a blockade of Germany. This meant that British ships stopped ships that wanted to go to Germany. The blockade kept war materials and other goods from reaching Germany by sea. Germany, in turn, set up its own blockade of Britain. It enforced the blockade with the use of **unrestricted** submarine warfare. This meant sinking ships trying to enter Britain without warning by submarines.

German forces sank the British passenger liner *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. About 1,100 civilians died, including over 100 Americans. The United States protested unrestricted submarine warfare. The German government stopped it in September 1915 to avoid making the United States angrier. The Germans and British engaged in direct naval battle only once during World War I. This was the Battle of Jutland on May 31, 1916, in the North Sea, off Denmark. Neither side won a clear victory.

The Germans wanted to end the stalemate in the war by January 1917. German naval officers convinced Emperor William II to use unrestricted submarine warfare again. They felt they could starve the British into surrendering within six months. The emperor was concerned about the United States and its reaction. However, Admiral Holtzendorf assured him that this would not be a problem and that no Americans would land in Europe.

The German naval officers were quite wrong, however. The British were not forced to surrender because of Germany's attempts at blockade. However, the return to unrestricted submarine warfare brought the United States into the war in April 1917. U.S. troops did not arrive in large numbers in Europe until 1918. However, the entry of the United States into the war gave the Allied Powers a psychological, or mental, boost. It also provided a major new source of money and war goods.



Reading Progress Check

Analyzing How did imperialism contribute to the widening of World War I?

The Impact of Total War

Guiding Question *What was the impact of total war?*

As World War I continued on with no sign of stopping, it became a **total war**. This meant a war in which there was a complete mobilization of resources and people. It affected the lives of all citizens in the warring countries, even if they were far from the battlefields. The government rapidly became involved as much on the home front as on the war front in organizing for the war effort.

Increased Government Powers

Most people had expected the war to be short, and they had not thought about long-term wartime needs. The governments then had to respond quickly when the armies did not reach their goals. Many more men and supplies were needed to continue the war. Governments expanded their powers to meet these needs. Countries drafted tens of millions of young men into the military, hoping for a way to victory.

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Wartime governments throughout Europe also expanded their power over their economies. Free-market systems for setting prices were temporarily ended. Governments established price, wage, and rent controls. They also rationed, or limited, the use of food supplies and materials at home. They regulated, or controlled, imports and exports. They took over key transportation systems and industries, which were important in the war effort. The result of all this was that European nations had established **planned economies** to organize all the resources of their nations for the war. Government agencies directed all these parts of the economy.

As a result of the total national mobilization, all citizens, both soldiers and civilians, became involved in the war effort. Political leaders considered all citizens as part of a national army dedicated to victory. Woodrow Wilson, then president of the United States, said that the men and women who worked on farms and in factories were as much a part of the army as soldiers fighting in the war.

Manipulation of Public Opinion

Casualties worsened as the war continued. As a result, the patriotic enthusiasm that had marked the early stages of the war decreased. There were signs that civilian morale was beginning to decline by 1916. However, governments fought back against growing opposition to the war.

Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary were authoritarian governments with unlimited power. They used force to control their populations. Even democratic states expanded their police powers to stop internal disagreement. The British Parliament passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). It allowed the government to arrest protesters as traitors. Newspapers were censored, and sometimes their publication was stopped.

Wartime governments made active use of propaganda to increase enthusiasm for the war. As the war continued and morale decreased, governments were forced to create new ways to motivate, or encourage, people.

Total War and Society

In the fall of 1918, a deadly influenza spread and added to the horrors of World War I. Soldiers returning from the front probably spread it. It became the deadliest epidemic in history. About 50 million people died worldwide.

Total war also had a big effect on European society. World War I created new roles for women. This was because so many men left to fight in the war. As a result, women were asked to take over jobs that had not been available to them before the war. Women even took jobs that had once been considered only for men, such as chimney sweeps, truck drivers, and farm and factory workers. For example, 38 percent of the workers in the Krupp Armaments factory in Germany in 1918 were women.

The place of women in the workforce, however, was not secure. Both men and women seemed to expect that many of the new jobs for women would last for just a short time, that is, just during wartime.

At the end of the war, as men returned home, governments quickly removed women from the jobs they had encouraged them to take during the war. By 1919, there would be 650,000 unemployed women in Great Britain. Wages for the women who were still employed were lowered.

In some countries, however, the role women played in wartime economies had a positive effect on the women's movement for social and political freedom. The biggest gain was the right to vote. Women in Germany, Austria, and the United States got that right immediately after the war. British women over 30 gained the vote in 1918. They also gained the right to be elected as members of Parliament.

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Many upper-class and middle-class women had also gained new freedoms. In growing numbers, young women from these groups took jobs, got their own apartments, and enjoyed a new independence.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining Why did women in some countries receive the right to vote after the war?
