

# How to teach kids about World War I

QUICK FACTS	
<b>Duration:</b>	1914-1918
<b>Allied Powers:</b>	France, Russia, Britain, United States, Italy
<b>Central Powers:</b>	Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria
<b>Root Cause:</b>	Crisis in the Balkans
<b>Significant Effects:</b>	Political restructuring of Europe and widespread economic hardship which led to World War II
<b>Related topics:</b>	Political Systems, Economic Systems, World War II, Great Depression, Military Strategy, Cold War

## SIGNIFICANCE OF WORLD WAR I

Why do 21<sup>st</sup> century historians continue to write books and articles about a war that took place between 1914 and 1918? Why would a student living today need to know about an event, however tragic, that took place several generations ago?

This conflict is important because it involved over fifty nations and most of the world's colonial territories, launched **Communism** in Russia, brought America into European history for the first time, overthrew four empires, produced several new nations in Europe from the wreckage of those empires, and took the lives of over nine million young men from wounds and disease. We need to understand the causes, major events, and effects of this struggle because it set the course for the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bloodiest hundred years in the five thousand years mankind has kept written records of our deeds.

## BACKGROUND: THE PERIOD IN WHICH THE WAR TOOK PLACE

With the exception of the **Crimean War** (1853-56), there had been no general war in Europe between the final defeat of **Napoleon** at **Waterloo** in 1815 and the start of World War I in 1914. Over those 99 years, the steady rise in global trade had brought the Continent an increase in material wealth and, as 1914 approached, there were no issues between the **Great Powers** of Europe serious enough to warrant a war as catastrophically destructive of property and life as that experienced between 1914 and 1918.

In her excellent book about Europe and America in the years before 1914, *The Proud Tower*, historian Barbara Tuchman said that World War I, "lies like a band of scorched earth dividing that time from ours. In wiping out so many lives...destroying beliefs, changing ideas, and leaving incurable wounds of disillusion, it created a physical as well as a psychological gulf between two epochs."

Science, technology, and medicine had been rapidly improving for generations. Hardly a year went by without some exciting new discovery to fill people with hope that life in the future would be materially better than in the past. It appeared as if a plateau was fast approaching in which war and poverty might finally be overcome forever. Then, a disagreement in the **Balkans** between Austria-Hungary and Russia spun out of diplomatic control and the Great Powers savagely attacked each other. The senselessness of the slaughter and destruction that followed shattered the **Enlightenment** idea that scientific progress was elevating mankind to a point where irrational, destructive wars were a thing of the past. It would not be an exaggeration to say that World War I

broke the heart of the Western world. The hope that rational, tolerant thinking had finally overcome thousands of years of violence and superstition was mortally wounded in the mud and barbed wire of the trenches. It would linger through the **Great Depression** and finally die in the gas chambers of **Auschwitz** a generation later.

When the guns finally fell silent in November of 1918, Europe had ceased to be the center of the world. The Continent was financially and psychologically exhausted, and the deaths of an entire generation of young men for no apparent gain had shaken Europe's traditional religious and political structures to their foundations. The royal houses of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire were swept away. In the chaotic aftermath of the war there arose aggressive, **nationalistic, radical** forms of government (Communism in Russia after 1917, **Fascism** in Italy after 1922, and **Nazism** in Germany after 1933) to replace the old **dynasties** that had blundered into war in August of 1914.

For these reasons, World War I was one of the most important events in the last five hundred years, and was certainly the key event in creating the modern Europe we know today. In fact, some historians date the *real* beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (meaning a true break from the political forms and culture of the 1800s) to the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, rather than the calendar year of 1901. During the seventy-five years between 1914 and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 (a period some historians refer to as the “**short 20<sup>th</sup> century**”), Europeans suffered two world wars, the **Holocaust**, the Great Depression, and four decades of a Cold War nuclear standoff between the Soviet Union and the United States. This sustained compression of horror could not help but deeply influence the way Europeans today view politics and the use of military action for political ends.

When Britain's Queen Victoria died in 1901, Europe was wealthy, progressive and generally hopeful about the future. By the time the **Soviet Union** collapsed in 1991, all the oceans and every continent except Antarctica had suffered the effects of war. This avalanche of global destruction was sparked by a single terrorist act in June of 1914, which lasted no more than ten seconds, and left an Austrian Archduke and his wife dead from gunshot wounds. How, then, had the great nations of the Old World maneuvered themselves into a situation in which a terrorist assassination could, within a month, drive them (and their extensive overseas colonies) into a murderous war lasting four years?

## CAUSES OF WORLD WAR I

### *1. Breakup of the Ottoman Empire tempts the Great Powers to intervene in the Balkans*

Throughout history, decaying **empires** have always created chaos because they are magnets for land-hungry nations located nearby. In the late 1800s, and into the early 1900s, the slow breakup of the **Ottoman Empire**, ruled from Turkey, tempted neighboring Austria-Hungary and **Tsarist** Russia to go after pieces of the **Balkans** controlled by the Turks. Ottoman weakness also caused the many ethnic and religious groups living in the Balkans to rebel against harsh Turkish rule. This political instability, combined with murderous ethnic and religious hatreds going back for centuries, made southeastern Europe a powder keg. All that was needed was a spark to set off a deadly confrontation between two of Europe's Great Power alliances: Austria-Hungary (backed by Germany) and Russia (backed by France and Britain). That spark occurred in 1914 in the form of a terrorist act in Bosnia, an Ottoman possession in the Balkans **annexed** by Austria-Hungary in 1908. *(For more information on the Great Power competition for land in the Balkans see item #4 in this section below)*

### *2. Unification of Germany by Otto von Bismarck in 1871 upsets European balance of power*

As the old Ottoman Empire slowly decayed, another young empire was born. For centuries, the German lands in Central Europe had been used by the Great Powers as the Continent's battleground. Then, in 1871, the Prime Minister of **Prussia**, **Otto von Bismarck**, turned a patchwork of German-speaking kingdoms into a unified Imperial Germany, with his king as its **Kaiser**, or emperor. The sudden appearance of a strong, modern state in the middle of Europe completely upset the balance of power between France, Britain, Austria-Hungary, Italy, and Russia. Almost overnight, the **Hohenzollerns**, formerly kings of Prussia, were in a position, as German

emperors, to use the wealth and populations of several German kingdoms (but not Austria) to economically and militarily dominate the European Continent. By 1914, the new **German Empire** possessed a large population of well educated people, thousands of powerful factories, large deposits of coal and iron, and the finest and best-led army in the world. What it did not possess was centuries of experience in foreign relations.

### ***3. Germany's erratic and amateurish foreign policies after Bismarck retires in 1890***

After Otto von Bismarck was forced into retirement in 1890, the inexperienced young Kaiser Wilhelm II set out, with ill-advised comments and counter-productive public gestures, to wreck the careful set of treaties the older man had created. Those diplomatic arrangements had successfully kept Russia and Austria-Hungary from dragging Germany into a war over the Balkans – and prevented France from seeking revenge for the loss of **Alsace-Lorraine** following her defeat by Prussia in 1871.

The Germans convinced themselves that they could diplomatically browbeat the French and Russians without driving them together because the governments of republican France and that of Russia's **autocratic** Tsar Nicholas II were so different. (Britain and France would make that same deadly mistake in 1939 when they assumed that the **ideological** gulf between Nazi Germany and the Communist Soviet Union would prevent Hitler and **Stalin** from signing a **non-aggression pact** that freed Germany to attack Poland.) Kaiser Wilhelm's government refused to renew Bismarck's treaty with Russia because they feared it might upset their only true ally, the doddering empire of Austria-Hungary. The German Emperor himself scared France with constant references to his powerful army and upset his first cousin, Britain's George V, with his announced intention to build a great fleet of battleships to match those of the Royal Navy.

By pushing Russia away, insisting on building a fleet of battleships, and constantly talking about their growing military power, the Germans managed to unite three very powerful empires solely by a fear of what they might do next. By 1914, Imperial Germany had managed to place itself in a position in which, if war did come, it was allied with a weak Austria-Hungary (whose army had not won a war since 1848). It would face the French Empire, the British Empire (the largest in history), and Tsarist Russia (with the largest army on earth). In less than 25 years, the erratic foreign policies of Imperial Germany had completely undone Bismarck's carefully crafted alliances and had received nothing of military or economic value in return.

None of this had to happen. If the leaders of Germany had been able to understand what was not in their national interest – and if their emperor could have restrained his public comments and grandiose diplomatic gestures – World War I might have been prevented. If that conflict could, in fact, have been avoided, many of the causes for World War II would never have existed, and Adolf Hitler might have been no more than a footnote in German history, rather than the single most negatively influential figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***4. Russia and Austria-Hungary compete with one another for territory in the Balkans***

After Prussia defeated Austria-Hungary in a short war in 1866, the Habsburg dynasty in Vienna reacted to the loss of their ancient status as the most powerful German state by turning their attention away from northern Germany and toward the Balkans to the southeast. This put them on a collision course with Tsarist Russia, which for centuries had been pressing south toward the ancient prize of the Tsars: **Constantinople**. With the capture of that great city, the Russians would have a warm water port not blocked by ice during the long winter months. This would also give the Russian navy access to the Straits (Bosporus, Sea of Marmara, and **Dardanelles**) through which the Black Sea passes into the eastern Mediterranean. Fear of that development brought Russia into conflict not only with the Turks, who possessed Constantinople (after 1930 known by its modern name: Istanbul). This also worried the British, French, and Austrians who saw Russian expansion into the Mediterranean as a threat to their trade routes across that great body of water and through the **Suez Canal** in Egypt.

Austria was not the only Great Power to change their foreign policy as a result of an embarrassing military disaster. Their defeat by Japan in 1904-05 had blunted Russia's moves into Asia and caused the largest nation

on earth to press, instead, toward the Balkans, the same real estate Austria-Hungary considered as part of her sphere of influence.

Two empires, still smarting from embarrassing defeats, were on a collision course in the Balkans, and both royal families were determined to fight, if they had to, rather than endure another foreign policy disaster that might threaten their hold on power.

### ***5. Desire to recover lost territories brings France into conflict with Germany***

As a result of her defeat by Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, France had been forced to hand over the provinces of **Alsace-Lorraine**. These two areas became part of the new German Empire declared by Otto von Bismarck at the end of that short war. The French armed forces openly talked of the glorious day in the future when they might defeat the Germans and restore those two provinces to a grateful French nation.

### ***6. Britain reacts to the construction of a large German navy by courting France***

Germany's attempt, in the two decades before 1914, to build a navy similar to that of Britain's helped to move the British toward an informal alliance with their former enemy, the French, instead of what was arguably their more natural ally, Imperial Germany.

Because Britain had a small army suitable for handling colonial uprisings, the island nation was dependent upon its navy to guarantee a steady supply of food and to protect its overseas trade. The British approached the French, seeking some sort of mutual military and diplomatic support against the growing power of the Imperial Germany Navy. Two nations that had repeatedly fought each other since 1066AD were pushed together by a mutual fear of the unpredictable Kaiser, who thought periodically threatening his neighbors was a good approach to foreign policy. It was agreed that the French navy would concentrate in the Mediterranean, while Britain's huge Royal Navy would guard the English Channel and France's Atlantic coast. When World War I was unleashed, Britain entered the fighting not only to honor a treaty to protect Belgium's neutrality, the island nation also felt morally obligated to guard the French coastal ports, which was vulnerable to attack by German warships.

What was the result of the massively expensive German naval building program that transformed Britain from a potential ally of Germany into an enemy? In four years of war, the German fleet fought a single major engagement with the British fleet (it was a tie, with the Germans sinking slightly more British ships than they lost, and both sides claiming victory) at the 1916 Battle of Jutland, before returning to their ports for the remainder of the war. In an ironic twist of fate, on October 29, 1918 a mutiny began among the crews of the German High Seas Fleet which ignited what appeared to be a revolution similar to the one the previous year in Russia. This led directly to the November 9 abdication of the Kaiser, the man who had thrown away an alliance with Britain to build those battleships.

### ***7. Murder of the heir to throne of Austria-Hungary ignites, but did not cause, the war***

The deaths of Austria-Hungary's Archduke **Franz Ferdinand** and his wife, Sophie, in Sarajevo, Bosnia on June 28, 1914 have to be the single most important automobile fatalities in history, but their murders were not the *reason* the Austrians decided to attack and punish the nearby nation of Serbia, they were the *excuse*. This double murder did not cause World War I as is often said; it set in train a series of events that led to the outbreak of World War I a month later.

For years the independent Balkan nation of **Serbia** had been arming and supporting terrorists living inside the neighboring Austria-Hungarian Empire. They hoped to break away portions of it containing large numbers of Serbs in order to create a "Greater Serbia." Emperor **Franz Joseph** had been looking for a way to break the influence of **Serbia** *within* his empire. The death of his heir at the hands of Serbian terrorists provided the perfect excuse to strike Serbia before their interference led to ethnic uprisings inside of Franz Joseph's borders.

### ***8. Austria loses support due to its slow response in launching its revenge attack on Serbia***

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, world opinion was securely on the side of Austria-Hungary. The fact that the Archduke's wife had also been shot to death, leaving three young children without parents, only added to the anger at Serbia, rightly assumed to somehow have been involved in the killings. However, anger is fleeting, and the Austrians dithered for four weeks before declaring war on Serbia, partly because many of their soldiers were on leave helping with the harvest. Each day that passed between the murders and the declaration of war provided the other Great Powers time to think about the *consequences* that such military action might bring to the rest of Europe. Calls began to be heard for a peace conference to prevent the situation from getting out of hand. The Austrians turned to the German Kaiser for support, and he told them to get on with the attack on Serbia while world opinion was still on their side. Worse, he thoughtlessly placed Germany's excellent army squarely behind Austria if war with Russia should break out. Despite this "blank check," the Austrians still hesitated. By the time Austria-Hungary finally got around to attacking Serbia (they were thrown back by the Serbs with heavy losses), World War I had started and the world's attention was focused on the fighting in Belgium and France, far from the scene of the now-forgotten royal murders in the Balkans.

### ***9. Strict mobilization plans hurt diplomatic efforts to prevent the outbreak of war***

Once railroads came into play in the 1800s, railway schedules became vitally important aspects of troop **mobilization** plans. Steam power provided the ability to shift entire armies hundreds of miles by rail in a matter of days. For this reason, the strict timetables associated with military mobilization left the diplomats a dangerously narrow window of opportunity in which to handle any crisis. Worse, if any major power announced even partial mobilization, other governments came under intense pressure from their generals to do the same, or risk losing the war for being too slow to respond.

In 1914, Europe was an armed camp (the armed forces of the major powers were far larger than they needed for defense of their borders) and the crisis in the Balkans led to threats and counter-threats of mobilization by Austria-Hungary, Germany and Russia. After a few days of frantic telegrams between the Kaiser and the Tsar attempting to stop each other's mobilizations (and that of their allies), the Austrians declared war on Serbia and the Russians mobilized their troops. The Germans responded by attacking France through Belgium because the French were allied to Russia and were believed to be able to *mobilize faster* than the Tsar's troops. The British, responding to the violation of Belgian neutrality by German troops, declared war on Germany.

### ***10. The idea that a war might revive patriotism appeals to politicians worried about class conflict inside their countries***

The two generations before 1914 saw a vast increase in the political participation of Europe's working classes. The traditional ruling elites feared the rise of a class that numbered in the tens of millions and who demanded not only better pay and working conditions, but the right to vote. Some European politicians believed (or hoped) that dangerous class divisions within their own nations might be overcome if the entire population would respond to a call to the colors. Business owners and industrialists, frightened by recent strikes among their workers, hoped that patriotism would put an end to class warfare of the type called for by the followers of Karl Marx.

The German Kaiser's government feared the growing power of the **Socialists**. They were the largest political formation in the legislature, they made speeches about doing away with capitalism, and their voting strength grew with every election. The conservative aristocracy (great landowners whose families dominated the officer corps of the armed forces), the middle class (who feared for their property and their savings), and the big industrialists (who feared strikes and loss of profits) supported the idea of going to war. They hoped it might deflect the coming showdown with the growing class of workers in Germany's major urban areas.

Austria-Hungary was less heavily industrialized than Germany, so they worried less about strikes and political agitation among urban workers than did the Kaiser. Their concern was that unrest among the many ethnic

groups might eventually tear the empire apart. They saw an attack on the nearby independent nation of Serbia, which had been agitating among Serbs living within Austria-Hungary to break away and join a “Greater Serbia,” as a way to crush ethnic agitation *within* their borders.

As 1914 approached, the Russian Tsar worried that his dynasty could not survive another disaster like the one experienced in 1905, when his gigantic nation had been defeated on land and at sea by an upstart Japanese Empire. A revolution that same year had shaken Russia to its core and three centuries of Romanov rule nearly came to an end. Nicholas II was personally unpopular with the workers (who wanted better pay and working conditions), peasants (who felt he ignored their poverty and favored the wealthy landowners), the middle class (who thought a republic was needed to help bring about the industrialization that would modernize Russia), and the aristocracy (who feared the Tsar might reduce their privileges by helping the peasants). Therefore, on July 28, when Austria-Hungary declared war on the **Slavic** nation of Serbia, Nicholas II, as the leader of the most powerful of all Slavic nations, came under tremendous religious and ethnic pressures *inside* his country to defend them. On July 30, he finally bowed to the demands of his generals and mobilized his army. On August 1<sup>st</sup>, Germany reacted by declaring war on Russia, France ordered mobilization, and the slide to war became irreversible.

### ***11. The system of military alliances did not cause World War I***

It is often said that the outbreak of war in 1914 was a direct result of the inflexible system of military alliances that had divided Europe into two armed camps for over a generation. There is some truth in this statement, but, in all fairness, it is also true that the web of alliances created among the Great Powers after the fall of Napoleon in 1815 had kept Europe at peace (with the exception of the Crimean War) for 99 years. Therefore, military alliances alone cannot be said to have been the *cause* of World War I. The personalities of Germany’s Wilhelm II and Russia’s Tsar Nicholas II played a critical role in their allowing this particular crisis to spin out of their control. If either of these men had possessed the moral courage to have withstood the demands of their generals for a rush to war mobilization as a way of proving they were good allies to their alliance partners, there is at least a chance that this particular crisis in the Balkans could have been settled without a war that cost the lives of nine million young men.

### ***12. The critically important role of personalities: Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany***

His father, Frederick, had married the eldest daughter of Britain’s Queen Victoria. The young couple planned, when their time on the throne came, to make the German Empire more like Britain’s constitutional monarchy, with the royal family as the focus of loyalty for all subjects and the government to be run on a daily basis by qualified politicians democratically elected by the people. Sadly for Europe, “Fritz,” as the Crown Prince was known, was already dying of throat cancer when he mounted the imperial throne in 1888. His reign ended after only ninety-nine days, leaving his inexperienced 29-year-old son, Wilhelm II, as the new Kaiser.

Wilhelm II had little use for Otto von Bismarck, the man who had created the German Empire. Within two years, the old man was gone. The mercurial young emperor, who thought of himself as a genius in foreign affairs, began the long process of undoing two decades of the careful diplomacy with which Bismarck had kept Germany growing stronger without further conflicts with her neighbors. Within a few years, the Kaiser’s insistence on building a large navy had alienated Britain, and his careless public remarks about the power of his armed forces had driven France and Russia together in a military alliance against him. His greatest foreign policy blunder came when he aligned himself with the weak empire of Austria-Hungary and gave her a “blank check” (unqualified military and diplomatic support) in her dealings with Russia in the Balkans. No head of state should, under any circumstances, allow the decisions of another nation to drag his nation into a serious diplomatic conflict, much less a war in which millions of casualties might result.

### ***13. The critically important role of personalities: Tsar Nicholas II of Russia***

Because of its relative economic backwardness, Russia was ill suited to fight a long modern war with an industrial power like Germany. Sadly, this was not on the mind of Nicholas II when he allowed passion to

overwhelm common sense and agreed to protect Serbia from Austria-Hungary after the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The Russian threat to mobilize their military in defense of Serbia caused the Austrians to ask the German Emperor for help. Not wishing to let down an ally, Wilhelm II warned Tsar Nicholas II that Russian mobilization for war would force Germany to do the same. Clearly, the Tsar should have understood that if Russia (covering eleven time zones) could not defeat Japan (a string of islands) a few years earlier (the **Russo-Japanese War** of 1904-05), taking on the finest army in the world would be an even bigger mistake. Instead, Nicholas, fearing a second foreign policy embarrassment, mobilized his armed forces, Germany followed suit, and the guns began to go off almost by themselves.

In 1917, after a string of military disasters, Nicholas II was forced to give up the throne his Romanov ancestors had possessed since 1613. The following year, the Tsar, his wife, four daughters, and his son would be shot and bayoneted to death in a basement by Communists who had seized power as a direct result of the hunger and chaos his decision to go to war had produced.

#### ***14. The critically important role of personalities: Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary***

His reign was the third longest in European history (1848-1916), and it was filled with tragedy. In 1867, his younger brother, Maximilian, who had been made Emperor of Mexico, was executed by a firing squad. In 1889, his only son killed himself in a scandal that included the death of his girlfriend. His beautiful wife was stabbed to death by an **anarchist** in 1898, and the murder of his nephew (and heir to the throne) in Sarajevo in 1914, set off a chain of events that took his unprepared empire into World War I. When war came so late in his life, this unbroken string of political crises, military disasters, and personal tragedies had left him tired and out of touch. His ministers and generals persuaded him to use the death of his unpopular nephew as an excuse to attack Serbia and end, once and for all, that little nation's interference in the internal affairs of Austria-Hungary. It is possible that the old man did not fully understand the seriousness of the dangers involved in such a course of action.

#### ***15. German violation of Belgian neutrality brings Britain into the war against the Kaiser***

The German generals designed the **Schlieffen Plan** as a way to attack France without having to make a frontal assault on several powerful French forts along their common border. They opted for a rapid sweep into Belgium (which lies above France) before turning south to encircle Paris. They apparently believed Britain would not risk a full scale war with Germany over what they deemed to be a "minor" treaty violation. They certainly did not expect the tiny, outdated Belgian army to make more than a token attempt to slow their progress as they moved across this beautiful little country. The Germans were wrong on both counts.

Britain entered World War I against Germany because they had solemnly agreed, in an 1839 treaty, to protect Belgium from outside invasion. They were determined to prevent any powerful opponent from gaining direct control of the Belgian coastal areas that lay so close to the sea lanes vital to their global trade.

For their part, the tiny Belgian army blew bridges, flooded areas of low-lying land, and sniped at the Germans as they stood, astonished, looking at the sabotaged bridges and roads that thoroughly upset their strict military timetables.

#### ***16. Marxist view: imperial rivalries caused the war and created an opportunity for revolution***

The leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, **Vladimir Lenin**, drew on the writings of **Karl Marx** (1818-1883) and the English economist and critic of imperialism John A. Hobson (1858-1940) for his theory that a worldwide war would result from the fierce competition among Europe's **capitalist** powers for raw materials and new overseas markets for their manufactured goods. The Marxists saw World War I as an opportunity to overthrow the capitalism they blamed for the conflict that was killing millions of workers who had been drafted into uniform. That accomplished, they planned to erect, in place of the democratic governments they thought only served the interests of the rich, Communist governments that would favor the interests of the workers.

## IMPORTANT EVENTS AND BATTLES OF WORLD WAR I

**Tannenberg** (Aug 1914) Using information gleaned from un-coded Russian military radio traffic, the Germans were able to locate and destroy one of the Tsar's huge armies as it moved into eastern Germany without the proper support of other Russian formations. They then used rail and road transport to rapidly redeploy and destroy a second large Russian army, giving Germany one of the most complete victories in military history. This made the military reputation of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg (1847-1934). He would later be elected President of Germany (1925-34) and would appoint Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in January of 1933.

**First Marne** (Sep 1914) Perhaps the most critical battle of the entire war. It ruined the *Schlieffen Plan* by halting the German advance into France along the Marne River, saving Paris, and preventing the quick German victory necessary to carry out the second part of the scheme (a quick redeployment to the east to face the oncoming Russians). In just three weeks, each side suffered in excess of half a million casualties. The French then counterattacked and forced the Germans to retreat from the Marne River to the Aisne, where they would remain entrenched for four years. This initial failure to win a quick victory early in the war guaranteed that the slaughter would go on for four more years – unless the politicians agreed at some point to a cease-fire, which they never did.

**Gallipoli** (Apr 1915-Jan 1916) The British and French hoped to force their way up the Dardanelles, bombard the Turks in Constantinople, get badly needed supplies to the Russians, and knock Turkey (Germany's weakest ally) out of the war. The idea itself was strategically sound, and an Allied success in this effort might have changed the course of the war, but the operation was poorly executed, resulting in 250,000 casualties on each side. Troops from Australia and New Zealand fought with conspicuous courage, but so did the defending Turks. The evacuation was, at least, a masterpiece of planning and execution.

**Verdun** (Feb-Dec 1916) The Germans, frustrated by two years of failure on the Western Front, decided to attack the fortress city of Verdun which they rightly believed the French could not, for morale purposes, afford to surrender. The idea was to bleed France white by drawing huge numbers of their troops into this meat-grinder, thus forcing the exhausted **Allies** to seek an end to the fighting on terms favorable to the **Central Powers**. After eleven months of monumental struggle, the Germans lost 434,000 killed and wounded to France's 542,000 killed and wounded. The Kaiser's troops failed to capture Verdun, and they bled their *own* forces white in the effort.

**Somme** (July-Nov 1916) The British, apparently seeing no lessons to be learned from the fighting around Verdun, decided to mount a massive offensive on this river in the hope of breaking through the German lines and restoring mobility to the fighting. The battle was preceded by five days of a massive artillery barrage so intense, the sound of the shelling could be heard across the English Channel in Britain. Mistakenly thinking the 1,732,000 shells fired onto German positions must have opened a hole in the German lines, as soon as the shelling stopped the British charged across no-man's-land toward the enemy trenches. They were immediately cut to pieces by the machine gun fire of the German troops who had survived in deep bunkers. On the first day of the fighting alone, the British lost 19,000 killed, and 35,000 wounded - the worst day for losses in the history of the British army. And yet, the fighting went on for four months. Nothing of value was won by the Allied assault, other than a strip of mud twenty miles long and six miles across – at a cost of 400,000 killed, wounded, or missing. The French suffered 200,000 casualties and the Germans over 600,000.

**The critical year of 1917** This year saw a Communist Revolution take Russia out of the war and the United States enter the fighting on the side of the Allies, thus bringing America directly into the type of European conflict President Washington had warned against in his famous 1796 **Farewell Address**. Despite their lack of battle experience, the arrival in France of large numbers of fresh, healthy, optimistic American



troops lifted Allied morale. This year also saw the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government made public its support for a homeland for the Jews in Palestine. Much sad and bloody history sprang from that 125-word letter from the British Cabinet to the Zionists (people who supported the reestablishment of the nation of Israel) looking for a safe haven for the Jews.

**Attack on the Hindenburg Line** (Sep-Oct 1918): British success in breaching this series of German defensive lines forced the Kaiser's troops to make a fighting withdrawal all along the front. This, and Communist-inspired revolts behind the lines in several areas of Germany, caused the Kaiser's generals to ask the politicians they had ignored for four years to seek an armistice (not a surrender, but an end to the fighting). By shifting this onerous assignment to democratic political officials and diplomats, and away from the generals who had been running every aspect of Germany's national war effort for nearly four years, the army managed to escape the blame for the military defeat in the minds of the German public. This was the beginning of the *stab-in-the-back* theory that would later help the Nazis come to power in Germany during the Great Depression.

## EFFECTS OF WORLD WAR I

The fighting ended in November of 1918, and the **Treaty of Versailles**, the most famous of several treaties that ended the war, was signed on June 28, 1919 – five years to the day from the murder of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, Bosnia—the event which had sparked the conflict. What were the *effects* of four years of slaughter?

### ***1. Horrific casualties were due to improved weapons and old tactics***

White Europeans, who had used rapid-firing guns to carve out colonial empires in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, made the fatal mistake of turning those weapons on each other. Europeans, who had used railroads to carry fabulous wealth out of the interiors of their colonial possessions, used those same trains to move millions of their own people to their deaths at the front.

The massive casualties during World War I should not have surprised anyone who had looked carefully at the losses during the American Civil War three generations earlier. The 620,000 American deaths and millions of serious wounds (the first modern industrial war - and one in which the American generals used old West Point tactics against much improved weapons) were there for all to see, but they were ignored by Europe's military leaders.

By 1914, the *weapons* had become more lethal (more accurate, longer ranges, and higher rates of fire) since the time of Napoleon a century before, but the battlefield *tactics* (the science of moving soldiers on a battlefield to gain short-term objectives) had not caught up with those changes. Nine million deaths were the unavoidable result of sending, year after year, human wave charges against machine guns and heavy artillery located in strong defensive positions.

In round numbers, here are statistics for those killed, wounded or taken prisoner by the major participants in the fighting. This is an *incomplete* list of the nations taking part in the fighting. Many more nations participated in the war and suffered casualties.

<b>National + colonial troops</b>	<b>Dead</b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>Prisoners/Missing</b>
Russia	2,750,000	4,900,000	2,500,000
Germany	1,600,000	3,800,000	770,000
France	1,400,000	3,000,000	450,000
Austria-Hungary	900,000	3,000,000	440,000
Britain	800,000	2,000,000	65,000
United States	107,000	191,000	5,000
Italy	507,000	960,000	1,360,000

Turkey	435,000	408,000	104,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,449,000</b>	<b>18,259,000</b>	<b>5,694,000</b>

The Allied Powers lost approximately 5,000,000 dead and the Central Powers lost approximately 4,000,000.

## ***2. The war deformed the economies of all nations involved***

The heavy industries of all major nations involved in the war were used to arm and supply millions of soldiers in the field. Farmers, common workers, small business owners, and skilled artisans were drafted into the armed forces and killed off in great numbers. When the fighting stopped, it was financially difficult for Europe's war industries to make the transition from war work to producing goods for peacetime domestic consumption. This economic deformation, combined with the deaths or serious injury of millions of skilled laborers, prevented even the Allied "winners" of World War I from fully recovering economically in the years after 1918. This financial turmoil, when added to the high unemployment among the war veterans, set the stage for the Great Depression that began a decade later.

## ***3. Creditor nations become debtor nations as a result of massive war expenditures***

In 1914, Britain, France, and Germany were financial giants, loaning large amounts of money to other nations and investing heavily overseas. In 1918, after four years of destruction which proved to be as pointless as it was expensive, these three nations had been forced to sell off much of their foreign investments and were borrowing large amounts of money from the United States just to remain afloat.

The French suffered greatly from the destruction wrought during four years of German military occupation in the northern part of their country. Some agricultural areas had their topsoil permanently blown away by the constant shelling, and even today farmers plow up old artillery shells that must be carefully disposed of by the military authorities. Worse, in the years before the war, French foreign investment in Russia was greater than that invested in their colonies, and this was all lost when the Communists came to power in 1917. Lenin and his Bolsheviks simply refused to repay what today would be billions of dollars in loans that had been made to the Tsar's government. There was nothing France could do. This hurt France's economic recovery in the years after 1918, and made them even more eager to write into the Versailles Treaty a clause demanding that Germany pay the costs of World War I.

In what has to be one of the great ironies of modern financial history, *after* World War I banks in the United States invested huge amounts of money in Germany so that the Germans could recover economically. This was done in order to help the Germans earn the money they needed to make their war reparations payments to Britain and France. This, in turn, made it possible for the British and French governments to repay the funds they had borrowed from American banks *during* the war.

When America entered the Great Depression in the early 1930s, those American loans and investments stopped. And a panic swept through the world's financial markets. Politicians, intending to protect their own industries, voted to throw up high protective tariff barriers, but they served only to further reduce world trade by inspiring other nations to do the same. As a result, Europe and Asia were dragged into the economic abyss as well. In this financial chaos and mass unemployment the appeal of Communism and Nazism grew. The first sign that militarism was once again rearing its head came in 1931 when Japan invaded nearby Manchuria, on the Asian mainland. The rest of the world, occupied with the effects of the Great Depression, said little and did nothing. Looking back, we now know that those were the first shots fired in what would become World War II eight years later.

## ***4. War experiences cause widespread loss of respect for traditional authority***

The catastrophe in the trenches between 1914 and 1918 caused Europeans to question traditional political structures that dated back to the **Middle Ages**. Never again would they defer unquestioningly to the judgment of their ruling classes, as they had before 1914. This shattering of traditional ways of thinking and acting had left

millions of Europeans feeling emotionally rudderless. Into this vacuum flowed the radical political ideas of the Far **Left** and the Far **Right**, each claiming to have all the solutions to mankind's problems.

Veterans on both sides realized, from bitter experience, that their military superiors had wasted millions of their young lives in frontal assaults on heavily defended positions because they had not a clue as to how to conduct this new type of war. They also knew that the same politicians who had mishandled the war effort lacked the money to assist them with finding jobs or housing after they returned to civilian life. Many veterans lost their faith in a loving God while in the trenches; many more lost their respect for king and country. War veterans felt they were a part of a "trench-ocracy," and they trusted no one who had not experienced the intense comradeship that only came from sharing those dangers and privations. Many called for a strong leader, heading a single political party, to boldly take hold of society and solve the problems **democracy** seemed incapable of solving. This explains much of the attraction of political parties such as the Communists or Nazis in the years between the world wars. Radical politics promised those young men action and excitement – the one aspect of the war many of the veterans missed as they endured the boredom and frustration of post-war unemployment.

### ***5. Increased centralization of government continued after the war ended***

During World War I, European nations began the process of establishing very strong central control over the private lives of their citizens. This was accepted by nearly everyone to be necessary in order to mobilize the entire nation for war. This concentration of greater power in fewer hands continued during the Great Depression and throughout World War II.

After 1945, many Western European nations elected **socialist** governments that promised to heavily regulate the national economy in order to take care of all citizens from cradle to grave. From vastly increased government regulation to win wars and overcome mass unemployment during the Depression, it was but a step to government regulation for the sake of regulation. Today, few Europeans question the idea that an army of unelected bureaucrats should make decisions involving the smallest details of their daily lives. One has only to look at the vocal outcry among many Americans that the federal government should assume full responsibility for assisting the victims of natural disasters (as well as the sick, the unemployed, unwed mothers, and the elderly). This acceptance of a greatly enlarged role for the central government began under Franklin Roosevelt, increased with Lyndon Johnson's **Great Society** programs in the 1960s, and is firmly established in the United States today, regardless of which party is in power.

### ***6. Women's rights movement gains support due to contributions to war effort***

The casualties among men were so high during World War I, it would have been impossible for any of the major nations involved to have continued fighting for four years had the women not abandoned their traditional roles in the homes and gone to work in the factories. There had been demands by some women to be allowed to vote before the war broke out in 1914, and their significant contributions to the war effort helped gain female suffrage in the years after the war. World War I helped to change traditional European and American gender roles forever.

### ***7. Civilians would ever after be considered legitimate military targets***

Because civilian industrial workers played such a vital role churning out weapons and ammunition for the front, the generals and politicians took it for granted that, should another war come, bombing civilian targets would be absolutely necessary for victory. As a result of this new strategic thinking, fleets of bombing aircraft (flying artillery) were developed that could easily reach the rear areas where the civilians lived and *worked*. For this reason, the ratio of civilian deaths to military deaths would rise significantly during World War II.

### ***8. The birth of Communism as a direct result of World War I***

A radical political party came to power in Russia in 1917 that was dedicated to overthrowing all of the **capitalist** democracies of the world. The leaders of the Soviet Union's Communist Party believed that Russia

was only the first of many nations that would rid themselves of both the capitalist economies and the “false democracies” they believed were merely a front for the middle class property owners who had become rich by exploiting the workers. This seed planted by V. I. Lenin in the middle of World War I would produce Marxist political movements that would later rule a third of the people on earth and control enormous areas of Europe and Asia. The birth of Communism in Russia may have been the single most important long-term result of World War I.

### ***9. The birth of Fascism and Nazism as a direct result of World War I***

Into the political chaos and disillusionment of post-World War I Europe came men whose formative years had been spent killing other men in the trenches. They believed that a strong authoritarian government would be necessary to restore national greatness, and violence would be necessary to ward off a Communist revolution like the one that had recently engulfed Russia. Those men became Fascists in Italy and joined the Nazi Party in Germany.

### ***10. Flawed Versailles Treaty ending the war sets the stage for World War II***

German diplomats were not allowed to take part in the negotiation of this treaty. Germany was forced (upon threat of Allied military invasion and a continuation of the British naval starvation blockade) to agree to reparations payments that were far larger than a hungry, defeated nation could possibly afford to pay. Her armed forces were reduced to a fraction of that required for the security of a major nation facing multiple Communist uprisings inside its territory, and Alsace and Lorraine (taken from the French in 1871) were returned to France. German colonies were forfeited, and the air force and most of her navy was scrapped. Most importantly for the future, land was taken in the east of Germany to recreate part of Poland (Hitler would start World War II in 1939 when he attempted to recapture that 15% of Germany’s former territory). As an added insult that served *no* useful purpose, the treaty stated that Germany was responsible for starting the war. Although this treaty was no worse than the one Germany had temporarily forced on a defeated Russia in 1918, Hitler would later make brilliant use of its unpopularity among all classes of Germans by promising to tear it up once he came to power.

### ***11. New European nations are created from the ruins of old empires***

The winners of World War I set up Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and **Yugoslavia** as separate nations. This was the most extensive redrawing of Europe’s political boundaries since the time of Napoleon, and President Woodrow Wilson, who played a major role in these decisions, hoped it would guarantee perpetual peace.

What was the practical result of Wilson’s idealism? Between 1938 and the invasion of the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, Hitler made Austria a part of Germany, absorbed Czechoslovakia without firing a shot, and conquered the western half of Poland (igniting World War II). He handed the eastern half of Poland to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin as a reward for his noninterference. A few months later, Hitler took Norway, then Denmark, and defeated France, Belgium, and Holland in a matter of weeks. Germany had, by July 1940, gained complete control over all of Western Europe, except Britain, whose army was saved by the Royal Navy after it was driven into the English Channel at Dunkirk. During the years between the two world wars, the Soviet Union had defeated Finland, and taken part of her territory. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania were soon under the control of Moscow as well. How had this happened just a generation after the end of the last conflict?

The answer lay in the *creation of a belt of weak new states around defeated Germany*, as well as taking parts of Russia to create the Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The Kaiser had faced a small number of powerful empires, but Hitler and Stalin had only to contend with individual new nations they could absorb one at a time. This invited the recapture of those lands forfeited at the end of World War I - as soon as Germany and Russia were militarily able to do so. In this sense, World War II was “part two” of World War I.

### ***12. Delayed reaction: the weakening of colonial empires***

World War I destroyed Europe's claim to the supposed cultural superiority that underlay the white man's imperial "right" to rule whole continents overseas. Hundreds of thousands of colonial troops from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific fought bravely and expected, as a reward for their sacrifices, that they would receive greater control over their own territories when the fighting ended. In most cases, this failed to materialize, and unrest in the colonies continued until World War II repeated this drama.

In 1941, the colonial nations had witnessed the Japanese quickly defeat European armies across Asia and the Pacific. The fact that Japan was eventually defeated did not erase the image of large numbers of white troops surrendering to non-white troops earlier in the war. After 1945, **anti-colonialism** inflamed the developing world (with a healthy assist from the Communists) as the Americans offered the newly freed former colonies one economic model (democracy and free market capitalism) and the Soviet Union a very different one (one-party dictatorship with **command economies**). The wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and Africa (some of which are still going on today) are a direct result of Europeans destroying their own global power and influence in two world wars.

### ***13. Influenza pandemic kills millions worldwide***

Referred to as the "Spanish Flu" because it was first reported in Spain in 1918, this deadly strain of viral influenza may have originated among birds raised for food in the vicinity of Fort Riley, Kansas. It was believed to have spread to Europe (and from there to the rest of the world) by troop movements. Unlike other plagues, which tend to carry off the very young and the elderly, this particular form of the flu killed young people in their teens and twenties. Ironically, many of its victims were young veterans who had managed to survive the fighting in the trenches.

Estimates for the total number of dead vary significantly due to incomplete records, but inside the United States it is believed to have killed more Americans than the 600,000 lost on both sides in four years of the Civil War. 25,000,000 people worldwide are believed to have lost their lives to this disease in the first twenty-five weeks (AIDS has taken twenty-five years to approach that level of mortality). The worldwide loss of life during 1918 and 1919 is placed at between 50,000,000 and 100,000,000 – dwarfing the nine million battle deaths between 1914 and 1918. World War I cannot be said to have *caused* this outbreak of the flu. However, the rigors of trench life reduced the physical health of the veterans, and the hunger stalking Europe in the wake of the war negatively affected the health of the civilians. This, in turn, reduced resistance to the disease when it struck. The loss of millions of productive people to death, wounds, and disease between 1914 and 1919 (in what should have been the prime of their lives) contributed to the social and economic chaos that would lead, a decade later, to the Great Depression.

## **TIMELINE**

- |      |  |
|------|--|
| 1815 | The defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo ends centuries of French efforts to dominate the Continent of Europe.   |
| 1815 | Congress of Vienna tries to restore rule of hereditary kings across Europe.  |
| 1856 | Crimean War (Russia v. Britain, France, Sardinia, and Turkey) ends.  |
| 1860 | Abraham Lincoln elected 16 <sup>th</sup> President of the United States.   |
| 1861 | American Civil War begins.   |
| 1864 | Prussia and Austria defeat Denmark over issue of Schleswig-Holstein.   |
| 1865 | American Civil War ends with Northern victory.   |
| 1866 | Prussia defeats Austria; becomes greatest power among German-speaking nations.   |
| 1871 | German-speaking nations, led by Otto von Bismarck, Prime Minister of Prussia, defeat France; French declare a republic.  |
| 1871 | Bismarck unifies German lands with his Prussian king as emperor or "Kaiser." The creation of a strong state in the center of Europe completely upsets the balance of power on the Continent. |
| 1888 | First German Kaiser dies. Emperor Frederick III assumes throne, but dies of throat   |

- cancer after 99 days. Wilhelm II becomes Kaiser at age 29.
- 1890 Wilhelm II forces Bismarck to retire and assumes control of German foreign policy. He reverses twenty years of Bismarck's efforts to maintain peace between the Great Powers of Europe, thereby causing France, Britain, and Russia to move into a defensive alliance against Germany – the very situation Bismarck had labored to avoid.
- 1914 A terrorist act in the Balkans sparks World War I.
- 1915 In exchange for promises of territory, Italy abandons pact with Germany and Austria-Hungary, sides with France, Britain, and Russia, and declares war on Austria-Hungary.
- 1916 Italy declares war on Germany.
- 1917 The Russian Revolution breaks out; Tsar abdicates; Lenin arrives to lead **Bolsheviks**
- 1917 Wilson begins second term in office; United States enters war against Germany
- 1918 In March, Lenin's defeated Bolsheviks sign the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, turning over a third of Russia's population and half of her industry to Germany.
- 1918 On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of November World War I finally ends.
- 1922 Mussolini's Fascists come to power in Italy.
- 1933 Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany.
- 1939 World War II begins with the German invasion of Poland.

## INTERESTING FACTS

### *Trivia*

Famed sharpshooter Annie Oakley (1860-1926) once shot the ashes off a cigarette held by the future Kaiser Wilhelm II. She later joked that if her aim had been less accurate that day she might have been able to prevent World War I.

A rare photograph exists of a crowd in Munich listening to speeches on August 2, 1914, the day after war was declared against Russia. Clearly visible among the faces in the Odeonsplatz is the 25-year-old failed artist who, between 1939 and 1945, would lay waste to Europe from the English Channel to Moscow: Adolf Hitler.

The total length of all the main and secondary trenches used in the 500 miles between the Swiss Alps and the English Channel was approximately 12,000 miles – about half the circumference of the earth, which is 24,901 miles at the equator. These trenches were constructed the first year of the war when foot soldiers realized that machine guns and rapid-firing artillery had made the battlefield itself too lethal for humans. This forced the men to seek protection beneath the earth itself - and made defense superior to attack.

The assassination of Archduke Ferdinand's wife almost did not happen. Because she was not royalty, she was usually barred from accompanying her husband on official visits, but the archduke managed to persuade the court officials to allow her to go with him to Sarajevo because their wedding anniversary would have come while he was there. The couple was shot to death on June 28, 1914. Their anniversary would have been celebrated on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

The tragedy for this family did not end at Sarajevo. In 1938, when Hitler's Germany absorbed Austria into the Third Reich, the three children of Ferdinand and Sophie were arrested and sent for seven years to Dachau concentration camp. All three survived World War II, married, and had children of their own.

During World War I, Germany fought both Britain and Russia. Kaiser Wilhelm II was a first cousin of Britain's George V (the present Queen Elizabeth II's grandfather) and of Empress Alexandra of Russia, the wife of Tsar Nicholas II. Despite the fact that they referred to each other as Willy, Georgie, and Nicky, the grandchildren of Britain's Queen Victoria fought each other for four bloody years.

The American Civil War, not World War I, was the first true modern war because of:

- ideology* (ideas upon which an economic, political, or social system is based)
- unlimited objectives* (no chance for political compromise, only unconditional surrender)
- breach-loading and repeating rifles* (made for a far deadlier battlefield)
- trenches and wire entanglements* (men hid from the deadlier battlefield environment)
- railroads* (armies and supplies could move hundreds of miles in a matter of days)
- armored ships* (the age of wooden battleships ended forever by ironclads)
- telegraph* (civilian leaders could control armies at great distances)
- hot-air balloons* (air reconnaissance decades before the invention of the airplane)
- telescopic sights* (extending the killing range of rifles to hundreds of yards)
- railroad artillery* (enabled massively larger artillery to be moved great distances)
- land mines* (two generations before World War I)
- machine guns* (the Gatling gun made it possible for one man to shoot down scores of opponents)

When Britain's Edward VII died in 1910, royalty from all over Europe flocked to his funeral. London crowds lined the streets to see the king's coffin go by, followed by former president Theodore Roosevelt and forty Imperial Royal Highnesses. The royals included George V (the new king who, four years later, would lead Britain through World War I), Wilhelm II of Germany (who would launch World War I by invading France), the king of Belgium (whose neutrality would be violated by Germany in 1914, thereby bringing Britain and her empire into the war against the Kaiser), and Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary (whose murder in August of 1914 would provide the spark for war). The funeral of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife in Vienna, Austria in 1914 was *not* attended by the other royal families of Europe because his wife was not of royal blood. One can only wonder if the leaders of Germany, Russia, France, and Britain *had* attended – and had the time to calm down and discuss their differences privately– if the terrible war that engulfed all of Europe could somehow have been avoided.

### ***Historical fallacies revealed and corrected***

President Wilson told the American people that the United States must get involved in the fighting in Europe because the cruel Germans were using their terror weapons (submarines) to attack Allied merchant ships on the high seas. He failed to mention the fact that the German embassies had been warning Americans for months not to travel on ships moving through war zones (and that some were carrying ammunition to the Allies). More importantly, at that point in the war German civilians were starving because the British had been using the Royal Navy to blockade German ports. In fact, the starvation blockade was kept in force for months after Germany stopped fighting to make sure their politicians signed the Versailles Treaty.

### ***Falsely attributed quotations***

“Lafayette, we are here.”

This wonderful tribute to the brave young French marquis who assisted America in her struggle to break free of Great Britain during the American Revolution is often credited to General Pershing, who led the American Expeditionary Force to France. The idea that the United States was recognizing the debt it owed France for victory in the American Revolution is valid. French money, weapons, and the French navy proved decisive in gaining the colonies their freedom, but Pershing never said those words. They were spoken by Lt. Colonel Charles E. Stanton, whom Pershing had asked to speak for him at the tomb of Lafayette in Paris on July 4, 1917. Pershing later crediting the words to Stanton, but admitted he wished he had said something “that splendid.”

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** *If the fighting took place mostly in Europe, why is this conflict known as a “world” war?*

**A:** This war was fought between empires as well as individual European nations. In 1914, the British Empire alone spread over twelve million square miles of territory (the United States at that time covered 3,026,789 square miles) and contained nearly half a billion subjects (at a time when world population was about two billion and the United States had 122,775,046 citizens). When George V of “the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Ireland, and of the British Dominions Beyond the Seas, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India” summoned history’s largest empire to war against Germany and Austria-Hungary, his call to arms was answered by Canadians, South Africans, Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, and many other colonial people who fought and died in this conflict far from their homes. France brought subject people from its empire in North Africa. Russia had in its armed forces Asians from as far away as the Pacific coast. In 1917, when the United States joined the Allies, the war became truly global in scope.

**Q:** *When it was obvious that the war could not be completed in a matter of months, and the casualties rose far beyond anything the world had ever seen in previous conflicts, why did the nations involved not negotiate an end to the slaughter?*

**A:** After a series of terrible battles in which nothing was gained, the political leaders on both sides came to believe they *had* to win the war in order to justify, to their own people, their decision to go to war in the first place. They felt they had to take territories away from the losers - and to make them pay the staggering war debts of the winners – to escape at least part of the blame for blundering into this murderous, pointless struggle in the first place. So, the killing went on, year after year.

**Q:** *Will a reunited Germany make a third attempt to dominate Europe?*

**A:** It already has. Today, a reunited Germany is rich, respected and is dominating this new “United States of Europe” called the European Union. Together with France it hopes to offset the power of the United States on the world stage by creating a single continental bloc capable of bringing Europe back to the level of influence it enjoyed before two world wars destroyed their economic and military superiority. Whether the Europeans possess the will required to regain their old position on the world stage, which may require the use of military action outside their borders against terrorists and rogue states, remains to be seen.

**Q:** *Today the West is involved in a worldwide struggle with terrorists. Some Americans wonder why the European nations, who have suffered repeated terrorist attacks in their cities since the 1960s, seem unwilling to use their military to confront the rogue nations overseas which train, fund, and guide the organizations that carry out those operations?*

**A:** It may be that their apparently tepid response (purely defensive measures) to terrorist threats today can be traced directly to the incredible sacrifices those European nations made between 1914 and 1918, only to be forced to repeat those exertions, with far greater loss of life and property, in Hitler’s war between 1939 and 1945. Perhaps the Europeans learned from bitter experience what can befall any nation, however militarily strong, that is too quick to adopt a military solution every time it confronts an international situation it deems unsatisfactory.

## DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Try to imagine what the slaughter of the American Civil War would have been like if the soldiers on both sides had been issued rapid-fire repeating rifles, machine guns, and thousands of huge artillery pieces so large that some had to be moved on railroad tracks – and the commanding officers repeatedly sent their men in mass waves across the battlefields, as Lee did at Gettysburg (Pickett’s Charge). Discuss why, in both the Civil War and World War I, heavy casualties were the result of the failure to adjust battlefield *tactics* (the science of moving soldiers on a battlefield to gain short-term objectives) to the improvements in the range, accuracy, and rate of fire of the weapons used.



2. In 1917, the Germans were desperate to win the war on the Western front before the Americans arrived to join the fight against them. A plan was hatched in April to move radical Marxist V. I. Lenin by train from his exile in Switzerland, across Germany, into Russia. It was hoped that he and his Bolshevik followers would bring about a revolution against the Russian government and, by doing so, end to the fighting on the Eastern front so that Germany could shift hundreds of thousands of troops by train to the Western front. The German plan to plant Communism in Russia worked. How different would the course of world history have been if Communism had *not* been intentionally inserted into Russia in 1917 by the Germans as a war measure?

## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

<b>Allies</b>	France, Russia, Britain and (after 1917) the United States. Italy joined the fight on the Allied side in 1916, but her military contributions were less of a factor in the war than the other Allied nations.
<b>Alsace-Lorraine</b>	Region in northeastern France taken by Germany in 1871, as a result of the Franco-Prussian War. The French vowed to get this province back, and did so in 1919 after defeating Germany in World War I. Lost again to Nazi Germany in 1940, it was returned after France was liberated by the British and Americans in 1944.
<b>anarchy</b>	Political philosophy opposing all forms of coercive government.
<b>annex</b>	To incorporate a territory into a country or empire.
<b>anti-colonialism</b>	Opposition to imperial control of one country or territory by another. This can take the form of political protest in the mother country or in the colony itself, or it can be armed opposition on the part of the native peoples. The Founding Fathers were anti-colonial in their politics and they successfully opposed British rule of the colonies in North America by years of armed struggle.
<b>Auschwitz</b>	The most notorious of a series of Nazi death camps located in southern Poland where between 1,200,000 and 1,500,000 people died from maltreatment or execution in gas chambers. Exact numbers of those killed are not available because the Nazis burned many of the camp's records at the end of the war. The mass production techniques of the Industrial Revolution were used to move people efficiently by rail from the farthest corners of Europe to killing centers like this one, specifically designed to gas to death thousands of people each day and to burn their bodies in the large crematoria.
<b>autocrat</b>	A type of ruler (such as the Tsars before the Russian Revolution or the Communist dictatorship of Joseph Stalin between 1928 and 1953), who has absolute power over the nation or empire.
<b>Balkans</b>	The area of southeastern Europe lying between the Black Sea and the Adriatic. It is strategically located at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. In 1914 it was one of the most religiously, ethnically, and politically unstable regions on earth because for centuries the traditional Ottoman method of maintaining control in the Balkans was to keep the various ethnic and religious groups constantly at each other's throats so

they would be less likely to join forces to overthrow Ottoman rule. (Those hatreds still keep that part of Europe in deadly turmoil today).

In the early 20th century, as the weakness of the Ottoman Empire became obvious, various ethnic and religious groups armed themselves and attempted, with some success, to push the Turks out of the Balkans. The region's constant violence has given rise in modern times to the word "*Balkanize*," which refers to the breakup of a territory into mutually hostile political units.

In his book *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger pointed out the fact that the area running between modern Croatia and Serbia represents the "fault line of European history." To the west lay the lands of the old Western Roman Empire, the Latin alphabet, and the Catholic Church based in Rome. To the east lay the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople, the Cyrillic script, and the Eastern Orthodox Church. In this area live Greeks, Albanian Muslims, Bulgarians, Jews, Turks and the Southern Slavs (Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and Montenegrins).

The lure of land and influence led both Russia and Austria-Hungary to move into the political vacuum left by the slow retreat of the Ottoman Turks from the Balkans. Because the Eastern Orthodox Serbs, one of the major Slavic peoples in the region, did not wish to trade Turkish rule for that of Roman Catholic Austria, a group of Serbian terrorists murdered the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary in June of 1914. The Eastern Orthodox Russians rose to defend Serbia from a war of revenge by Austria-Hungary and Germany responded by backing Austria-Hungary. World War I broke out a month after the terrorist act.

### **Bismarck, Otto von**

(1815-1898) Born into a family of wealthy rural landowners in the northern Germanic kingdom of Prussia, which ran along the coast of the Baltic Sea. He was ambassador to Russia and then to France before becoming, in 1862, the leading servant, or Prime Minister, of King Wilhelm (William) I of Prussia. By fighting three quick and relatively inexpensive wars with neighboring Denmark, Austria, and France, Bismarck managed to join several other German-speaking territories to Prussia to create Imperial Germany - with his own king as Kaiser (emperor). As Chancellor of this new German Empire, he would guide its fortunes until 1890, when conflicts with the new young Kaiser, Wilhelm II, led him to permanently retire from public life.

Otto von Bismarck's creation of a unified Germany in the center of Europe was one of the most important events of the modern era. Despite defeats in two world wars, and the eastern half of the nation becoming a Communist satellite of the Soviet Union from the end of World War II until reunification in 1990, his creation has survived.

### **Bolsheviks**

The political party led by V. I. Lenin that took power in Russia as a result of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Later renamed the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

<b>Capitalism</b>	An economic system in which the means of production and distribution of wealth (mines, machinery, transportation, factories, land) are privately owned, and businesses compete with each other for profits within a market free of excessive government interference. The government serves as a referee to make sure that private businesses act fairly toward the public, and toward one another, so that goods and services can move to where they are needed by responding to prices set by supply and demand.
<b>casualties</b>	The term means the number of members of the armed services lost as a result of being killed, wounded, captured, sick, interned, or missing.
<b>Central Powers</b>	Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and, less importantly, Bulgaria.
<b>Cold War</b>	The period of confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States lasting from the end of World War II until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.
<b>command economies</b>	National economies in which the creation, distribution, and consumption of goods and services are decided in advance, usually by the government, rather than relying on prices (set by the interplay of supply and demand) to signal the public's needs. The Soviet Union had a command economy until it collapsed under the pressure of bureaucrats attempting to set prices for millions of items. Cuba and North Korea retain this type of economy, as well as the poverty and lack of personal freedoms that accompany it.
<b>Communism</b>	A centrally planned economy in which the government owns the means of production and distribution of wealth (mines, machinery, transportation, factories, land) and operates them, in theory, for the benefit of society as a whole. They believe revolutionary violence is unavoidable and all other political parties must be banned in favor of revolutionary party narrowly dedicated to the needs of the working class. See also "Karl Marx."
<b>Constantinople</b>	Great seaport in northwest Turkey lying on both sides of the Bosphorus (a 20-mile strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara). Today called Istanbul.
<b>Crimean War</b>	(1853-1856) The Crimean Peninsula lies on the north side of the Black Sea. This war was fought between Russia and a coalition of Britain, France, Ottoman Turkey and Sardinia over Russia's attempt to expand southward toward Constantinople in search of a warm water port. Britain and France, fearing such a conquest might later endanger their holdings in the Mediterranean, sided with Turkey to stop the Russian advance. In 1854, an ill-advised British cavalry attack was made that inspired Tennyson's famous poem " <i>The Charge of the Light Brigade.</i> "
<b>Dardanelles</b>	Forty mile strait joining the Sea of Marmara at Constantinople (modern Istanbul) to the Aegean Sea.
<b>democracy</b>	A type of government with limited powers and more than one political party. The people hold the ruling power, either directly or through elected representatives.

**dynasties**

Royal families whose members rule a nation or an empire for successive generations.

**Empire/imperialism**

Generally speaking, a government, under a single ruler (usually, but not always, an emperor or empress), that maintains control, through military or economic power, over lands and populations that are distinct from the mother country. The major nations involved in World War I were empires (note that even the United States could be ranked as an empire because it had won control of Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico from Spain in the brief Spanish-American War of 1898).

**Enlightenment**

Also known as the Age of Reason. This was a period of European intellectual history, centered in the mid-1700s, in which there was widespread hope among the educated middle classes that scientific discoveries, coupled with better educational opportunities, could produce material progress for all mankind. Reason, they thought, would replace superstition, and governments more responsive to the needs of the people would replace traditional concepts of hereditary kingship that favored only royalty and the landed aristocracy.

**Eurasia**

The enormous landmass consisting of Europe and Asia.

**Farewell Address of 1796**

An open letter from outgoing President George Washington to the people of the United States warning against forming political parties with narrow agendas, sectional politics that would divide the nation by region, and becoming ensnared in Europe's constant dynastic wars. The first warning was ignored immediately and the second, had it been heeded, might have avoided the Civil War. The third bit of advice was bedrock foreign policy until 1917, when America took the Allied side in World War I.

**Fascism**

Fascism is an extreme Right-wing ideology (belief system) that opposes both democracy and communism. It emphasizes romantic action and violence and is anti-liberal. The characteristics of Fascism are: nationalism (love of one's own nation above all others); glorification of the government; hostility to individualism, freedom of expression, and democratic ideas; hatred of certain minorities; belief that the individual is less important than the nation; the cult of the charismatic leader (Italy's Mussolini, Germany's Hitler, Spain's Franco) with unlimited powers over the citizens; belief in the destiny of the race (Germany), or of the nation's people (Italy); love of military uniforms and symbolism; belief in strict discipline and political indoctrination of young people; belief that the struggle with other nations is necessary to remain strong ("survival of the fittest" on a national scale); and the organization of ordinary citizens into groups, by profession, to be regulated for the benefit of the nation as a whole. Unlike Communism, private property and profit-seeking are allowed (although strictly regulated), unless they conflict with the needs of the government. The state would set prices and regulate the economy by bringing together labor leaders, top corporate management, and government representatives to set policy. Fascism tends to be supported by the middle class who feared for their property and by religious individuals disturbed by atheism of the Communists.

<b>Franz Ferdinand</b>	(1863-1914) Nephew of Emperor Franz Joseph, and heir to the Habsburg throne of Austria-Hungary. His murder was the spark that set Europe on the road to World War I.
<b>Franz Joseph</b>	(1830-1916) Emperor of Austria-Hungary from 1848 until the third year of World War I. By dying before the end of the war, Franz Joseph was spared having to watch the division of his empire into a series of weak states: Austria, Czechoslovakia, a significantly reduced Hungary, Yugoslavia, and the territories given to Poland and Romania (these would later be dominated by Nazi Germany or absorbed, one by one, by Hitler in the years leading up to World War II). Death also spared him having to witness the fall of his ancient dynasty, the Habsburgs, who had ruled large areas of Europe since the Middle Ages.
<b>genocide</b>	The intentional, systematic killing of an entire national or ethnic group, such as occurred in World War I when the Turks killed or starved to death hundreds of thousands of Christian Armenians, or during World War II when the Nazis murdered millions of Jews for the crime of being Jewish.
<b>German Empire</b>	The creation of Otto von Bismarck in 1871, when he proclaimed his own King of Prussia to be Kaiser (emperor) of several German-speaking kingdoms. (Austria would continue to be ruled by the Habsburg dynasty until their fall at the end of World War I). It ended with the abdication of Wilhelm II in 1918.
<b>Great Depression</b>	Period of greatly reduced employment and social chaos in capitalist nations between 1929 and the coming of World War II in 1939.
<b>Great Powers</b>	The European Great Powers in 1914 were Britain, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia.
<b>Great Society</b>	Overall title for President Lyndon Johnson's programs, launched in 1964, to promote civil rights among blacks and to reduce poverty among America's lower classes through various income redistribution programs.
<b>Hohenzollerns</b>	The royal family of Prussia, who became emperors of Germany after its unification by Bismarck in 1871.
<b>Holocaust</b>	The systematic murder of millions of Jews by the Nazis during World War II, ending centuries of Jewish life in Europe. This is the most thoroughly documented mass murder in history because the Germans kept careful records of these killings, and their own documents were used against them in the war crimes trials after 1945.
<b>ideology</b>	A set of beliefs upon which a political, economic, or social system is based.
<b>Industrial Revolution</b>	This radical change in the way mankind created wealth started in Britain around 1750, with the coming of steam power which replaced wind, water, and animal muscle. The mass production techniques in factories soon replaced individual items that had been made for centuries by craftsmen.

<b>Kaiser</b>	The German word for “Caesar.” Title used by German emperors from 1871 to 1918. The emperor of Russian was known as Tsar or Czar, which also means “Caesar.”
<b>Left (political)</b>	Designation stems from the seating arrangement in the French National Assembly of 1789, at the beginning of the French Revolution. The radicals were seated to the <i>left</i> of the presiding officer and the more conservative members sat on his <i>right</i> . In the <i>center</i> were the moderate legislators. Today, the more liberal groups in a nation's legislature (Democrats in the United States or the Labour Party in Britain) are referred to as being on the <i>Left</i> . Generally speaking, parties on the political Left favor equality of result over equality of opportunity, and emphasize wealth redistribution (through progressive taxes) over wealth creation to protect the less successful members of society. On the Far (extreme) Left are the Communists, who denounce elections and negotiations between political parties as horse-trading, and insist upon obedience of all citizens to a single party. They reject the idea of compromise, the rule of law rather than of men, and the peaceful transfer of power between parties following elections.
<b>Lenin, Vladimir I.</b>	(1870-1924) Radical Marxist leader of the Bolshevik Party that seized power in Russia during the Russian Revolution of 1917. His embalmed body is still on display in Moscow.
<b>Marx, Karl</b>	(1818-1883) The “Father of Communism.” With Friedrich Engels, he wrote the <i>Communist Manifesto</i> of 1848, one of the most influential political documents of all time (the “Magna Carta” for a workers’ revolution to overthrow capitalism and create a classless society), and <i>Das Kapital</i> (an in-depth analysis of the workings of capitalism). V. I. Lenin used Marx’s ideas as an intellectual foundation upon which to create Communism in Russia after 1917.
<b>Middle Ages</b>	It represents the centuries between the end of the Classical world (imperial Rome ended 476AD) and the beginning of the Modern World (the Renaissance that began in Italy in the 1400s and the Reformation sparked by Martin Luther’s protests against the Catholic Church in 1517).
<b>Militarism</b>	The glorification of the military or of warlike attitudes among civilian government officials. The policy of using a nation’s military as a threat in place of peaceful negotiations with other nations. President Wilson, when urging Americans to get involved in World War I, pressed for the defeat Prussian (German) militarism as a way to make the world safe for democracy.
<b>mobilization</b>	Military term for the organization of men, weapons, and supplies so they can be efficiently transported to the battlefield. Modern armies require ammunition and other supplies to be moved from factories behind the lines to the scene of the fighting hundreds of miles away. In 1914, the weight of the supplies, and the distances to be moved, required the use of railroads – and railroads required very detailed and specific timetables that were hard to change once the decision has been made to mobilize the

nation's armed forces. To the Great Powers of 1914, mobilizing one's armed forces was almost the same as declaring war.

**Napoleon**

French emperor who came to power in the chaos following the French Revolution. Finally defeated at Battle of Waterloo in 1815.

**nationalism**

The love of one's own country over all others. It is more than patriotism, because it suggests identification with national rather than regional political units.

**Nazism**

"Nazi" is an acronym, in German, for Hitler's *National Socialist German Workers Party*. It struggled for power in Germany during the 1920s and came to power legally in January of 1933 when President von Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor. The Nazis ruled Germany until 1945.

**non-aggression pact**

A treaty in which two countries agree not to go to war with one another. Hitler and the Stalin put aside their mutual hatreds in August of 1939 to sign such an agreement, freeing Germany to attack Poland without worrying about interference from the Soviet Union. For his part, Stalin received the eastern half of Poland and the right to absorb Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. The invasion of Poland on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939 launched World War II.

**Ottoman Empire**

At its height during the 1500s, the Ottoman Empire stretched from the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea in the east to Budapest, Hungary in the north and Algiers in North Africa in the west. In 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, and from that great city Muslim armies advanced into Europe by way of the Balkans. Vienna, Austria barely escaped capture in 1529. During the 1700s and 1800s the decaying empire fought against Russian moves to gain a warm water port by capturing Constantinople and the Straits that lead from there into the Mediterranean. During World War I, the Turks sided with the Germans and were defeated. A Turkish republic was proclaimed in 1922.

**pandemic**

An outbreak of infectious disease that spread over a large area.

**Prussia**

A powerful kingdom in what would later become Germany in 1871. At its height, it stretched from west of the Rhine River to Poland and Russia in the east. Frederick the Great (1712-1786), used his army to double the size of Prussia, making the kingdom a Great Power. Bismarck used Prussia as a core around which to unify other German kingdoms into a much larger Imperial Germany (it would constitute 3/5 of Germany), which lasted from 1871 until the end of World War I.

**radical**

Not moderate. One who favors fundamental or extreme changes in politics or religion. The opposite of being politically or religiously moderate.

**Right (political)**

Designation stems from the seating arrangement in the French National Assembly of 1789, at the beginning of the French Revolution. The radicals were seated to the *left* of the presiding officer and the more conservative members sat on his *right*. In the *center* were the moderate legislators. Today, the more conservative groups in a nation's legislature (Republicans

in the United States or the Conservative Party in Britain) are referred to as being on the *Right*. Generally speaking, parties on the political Right favor equality of opportunity over equality of result, and emphasize wealth creation over wealth redistribution. They support lower taxes so as to protect the gains made by the entrepreneurial members of society. On the Far (extreme) Right, were Hitler's Nazi Party in Germany, and the Fascists in Mussolini's Italy and in Franco's Spain. These parties insisted upon respect for the dictator and his single political party, which coordinated the entire economy (private ownership of businesses was allowed, but under strict government direction) in order to ready the nation for wars of conquest – or to prevent a Communist revolt within their borders.

**rogue nations**

Many of the world's governing classes mistreat their own citizens, but "rogue nations" are those whose conduct threatens *other* nations in ways that could draw them into a conflict. Serbia's decision to arm the terrorists who attacked Austrian officials in neighboring Bosnia qualified Serbia as a "rogue nation," although the term itself came into use years later.

**Romanov**

Royal family of Russia from 1613 until Nicholas II, his wife and children were shot and bayoneted to death by the Communists in 1918.

**Russian Revolution**

Contrary to Communist propaganda, the Communists did not overthrow the Tsar in 1917; they overthrew the democratically elected government that took power *after* the Tsar abdicated the throne. The Bolsheviks renamed themselves Communists, and immediately moved to ban all other political parties, end personal freedoms, and sought to spread their revolution around the world.

**Russo-Japanese War**

Fought between Russia and Imperial Japan over parts of the decaying Chinese Empire. The Russians occupied Manchuria in 1900 and planned to take over Korea, a Chinese vassal state. Japan had recently established commercial relations with Korea and also wished to annex the 600 mile long peninsula. In 1904 the Japanese began hostilities with a surprise attack on the Russian naval base at Port Arthur, in Manchuria. The Russians were later defeated on land, and in 1905 their Baltic Fleet was virtually wiped out in a naval battle at Tsushima. This embarrassing defeat of the world's largest nation by Japan led to the 1905 Revolution in Russia, which nearly toppled the Romanov dynasty.

**Scandinavia**

Norway, Sweden, Denmark and (sometimes) Iceland.

***Schlieffen Plan***

A plan devised so that Germany could fight a war on two fronts. Germany is located in Central Europe, with France and Britain to the west and Russia to the east. The plan called for using most of the German army in a lightning strike at France, by way of Belgium (to avoid a string of French defensive forts) and a quick encirclement of Paris. That accomplished, the Germans planned to immediately transfer the bulk of those troops by rail to the east to meet the advancing Russians, whom they assumed would be slower than the French to mobilize their armed forces. In 1914, this plan failed because the Russians mobilized faster than the Germans thought possible and the Belgian army blew bridges and sabotaged roads in order



to slow the German advance through their country. As a result of this unexpected Belgian resistance, and the shifting of extra troops to the east to meet the rapidly approaching Russians, the German assault on France was weakened just enough to grind to a halt along the Marne River a few miles short of Paris.

**Serbia**

It was an independent Slavic nation in southeastern Europe when World War I began in 1914, and was later made a part of Yugoslavia. It is an independent nation today.

**short 20<sup>th</sup> century**

History is fluid and does not fit neatly into units of one hundred years. For this reason, the period between the beginning of the French Revolution (1789) and the beginning of World War I (1914) is sometimes referred to as the “long 19<sup>th</sup> century.” The period between the beginning of World War I and the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe (1989) is sometimes referred to as “the short 20<sup>th</sup> century.” In this sense, World War I can be seen as the critically important event that ended one epoch and began another.

**Slavic**

Refers to Slavic-speaking Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Czechs, Poles, and Slovaks of east, southeast or central Europe.

**Socialists**

Socialists desire a centrally planned economy in which the government owns or controls the most important means of production and distribution of wealth (mines, machinery, transportation, factories, land) and operates them for the benefit of society as a whole. They share many of the goals of the Communists, but wish to reach this type of economy by slow, legal evolution, not by revolutionary violence, and by working with other political parties. They certainly do not support the destruction of the upper and middle classes, as do the Communists.

**Soviet Union**

A “soviet” is a government council, and the correct name after 1924 was Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, a collection of fifteen “republics” of varying size (Russia was by far the largest unit) encompassing over 8,600,000 square miles of territory from the Black Sea to the Arctic Ocean and from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea and ruled from Moscow. When it collapsed in 1991, nearly all of the territory captured by Russia since Tsar Peter the Great (1672-1725) began to shake free of Moscow’s centralized control. The Soviet Union was a Third World nation with a first class military. It collapsed from within due to a poorly functioning economy, the vast expenditures lavished on a military far larger than it needed for national defense, and the costs of maintaining large armed forces in satellite nations in Eastern Europe in order to keep in place Communist governments loyal to Moscow. No other empire in world history lost that much territory without losing a war.

***Stab-in-the-back theory***

The idea, put forth by those German generals seeking to avoid responsibility for the defeat of their country in World War I, that their armed forces had not really lost the 1914-18 war. They pointed to the fact that Germany had already defeated Russia, and the Italians had been forced to retreat. They were in possession of Belgium and a third of

France when the shooting stopped in 1918. This theory claimed that Jews, Communists (there were Communist uprisings across Germany in the last months of the war and beyond), and certain Socialist-Democrat politicians had committed treason by hampering the war effort. This lie had the effect of greatly reducing public support among common people for the constitutional democracy that replaced the Kaiser in the years between the world wars. Anger over this supposed treason, when added to the unfair terms of the Versailles Treaty that ended the war, played a role in helping the Nazis to come to power legally in 1933. The accusation that Jews were somehow involved in this treason may explain part of the twisted thinking behind the Holocaust during World War II.

**Stalin, Joseph**

Brutal dictator of the Soviet Union between 1928 and his death in 1953. Millions of Russians died during those years from manmade famines, maltreatment in slave labor camps, and from outright executions by his secret police.

**Suez Canal**

Hundred mile long ship canal through Egypt linking the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. It reduced the distance from Britain around Africa to India by 4,000 miles, and was a major commercial waterway since it opened in 1869.

**Tsar**

The emperor of Russian was known as Tsar, which means “Caesar.” It is sometimes spelled “Czar.”

**Versailles, Treaty of**

Fatally flawed peace treaty following World War I.

**Waterloo**

Site in modern Belgium where French Emperor Napoleon was defeated in 1815 by British and Prussian (German) armies, ending centuries of French attempts to dominate Europe militarily.

**Wilhelm II**

(1859-1941) Son of the eldest daughter of Britain’s Queen Victoria and the Crown Prince of Imperial Germany. He was Kaiser of Germany from 1888 to 1918, and died in exile in Holland in 1941.

**World War II**

The greatest military conflict in human history. It was started by Adolf Hitler when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 and ended in Europe on May of 1945 when Germany surrendered to the Allies (America, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union). The fighting in the Pacific in August following the dropping of the atomic bomb on Japan. The turning point was reached when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in the summer of 1941, but failed to win a quick victory. As the German armies ground to a halt at the gates of Moscow, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, bringing the United States into the fighting, and guaranteeing the defeat of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

**Yugoslavia**

Kingdom created by the victorious Allies after World War I composed of Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

## SUGGESTED READING

### The Proud Tower

by Barbara Tuchman

Random House Ballantine Publishing Group, New York. 1962. ISBN: 0-345-40501-3

### The Guns of August

by Barbara Tuchman

Bantam Books, New York. 1962. ISBN: 0-553-25401-4

### Bismarck: The Man and the Statesman

by A. J. P. Taylor

Vintage Books, New York. 1955. ISBN: 394-70387-1

### Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War

by Robert K. Massie

Ballantine Books, New York. 1991. ISBN: 0-345-37556-4

### On a Field of Red: the Communist International and the Coming of World War II

by Anthony Cave Brown and Charles B. MacDonald

G. P. Putnam's Son, New York. 1981. ISBN: 0-399-12542-6

### Diplomacy

by Henry Kissinger

Simon & Schuster, New York. 1994. ISBN: 0-671-65991-x

### The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror and Repression

by Courtois, Werth, Panne, Paczkowski, Bartosek, and Margolin

Harvard University Press. 1999. ISBN: 0-674-07608-7

## PRACTICE TEST WITH ANSWER SHEET

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

## TEST: World War I

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1. World War I was fought between 1914 and 19\_\_\_\_\_.
2. What year did the United States finally get involved in World War I? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What year did the Russian Revolution occur? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the name of the man who led the Russian Revolution?  
(a) John Lennon (b) Vladimir Ilyich Lenin
5. When the United States entered World War I, we sided with which set

of nations and helped them win the war?

- (a) Germany and Austria-Hungary (b) Britain, France and Russia

6. If Adolf Hitler can be said to have been responsible for starting World War II, which political figure can be said to have been most responsible for starting World War I?

- (a) Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany (b) King George V of Britain

7. How many men died in the World War I?

- (a) 90,000 (b) 900,000 (c) 9,000,000

8. What nation fell to Communism during World War I?

- (a) Germany (b) Russia (c) China

9. What happened to the Romanov royal family of Russia as a result of World War I?

- (a) They were forced to leave the country (b) They were murdered in a basement

10. What happened to the Emperor of Germany as a result of World War I?

- (a) He was murdered  
(b) He was forced to abdicate (lose) his throne and leave the country

11. What happened to the royal family of Austria-Hungary as a result of World War I?

- (a) They kept the throne and their possessions  
(b) They lost the throne and their possessions

12. What happened to Britain and France after World War I ended?

- (a) They enjoyed prosperity until the coming of World War II  
(b) They were nearly broke as a result of the costs of fighting the war

13. What happened to the United States after World War I ended?

- (a) We enjoyed peace and prosperity until the coming of the Great Depression in 1929  
(b) We were nearly broke as a result of the costs of fighting the war

14. In 1914, the heir to the throne of \_\_\_\_\_ was shot, along with his wife, by a Serbian terrorist. This double murder was the spark that set off World War I.

- (a) Germany (b) Serbia (c) Austria-Hungary

15. There was no military or diplomatic issue important enough to have sucked Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Russia, Britain and, finally, the United States into World War I. That war was totally unnecessary.

- (a) True (b) False

16. What was Germany's great plan to win World War I quickly?

- (a) Defeat Austria-Hungary before turning to fight Russia  
(b) Defeat France before turning to fight Russia  
(c) Defeat Britain before turning to fight Russia

17. What nation got into World War I late and turned the tide against Germany?

- (a) Austria-Hungary (b) Russia (c) United States

18. In August of 1914, on the day Germany declared war, a photograph was taken of a crowd listening to the announcement. In that crowd we can see the face of the man who would start the next world war a generation later. Who was he?

- (a) Mussolini (b) Bismarck (c) Hitler

19. In 1914, as the great nations of Europe marched off to fight each other, their leaders thought the war would be \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) long, bloody, and expensive (b) short and without excessive casualties
20. When World War I finally ground to a halt, it had been \_\_\_\_\_.
- (a) long, bloody, and expensive (b) short and without excessive casualties
21. Which was not a result of World War I
- (a) The Communist Revolution in Russia  
(b) The rise of the United States to world power  
(c) Europe's monarchies were made more powerful
22. What new invention helped break through the Germany and Austria-Hungary lines in World War I?
- (a) tank (b) artillery (c) machine gun
23. Some World War I artillery pieces were so large they had to be mounted on railroad cars.
- (a) True (b) False
24. What weapon in World War I was actually invented, but rarely used, during the American Civil War?
- (a) airplanes (b) machine gun (c) tanks
25. Who was president of the United States during World War I?
- (a) Franklin Roosevelt (b) Woodrow Wilson (c) Teddy Roosevelt
26. General \_\_\_\_\_ commanded the American army in France during World War I.
- (a) Eisenhower (b) Patton (c) Pershing
27. In Europe there was 99 years of peace between the defeat of Napoleon at \_\_\_\_\_ in 1815 to the start of World War I in 1914.
- 

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