First World War (1914-1915)
Introduction

- Nobody thought of a long war when it broke out in summer 1914.
- Drafted soldiers went apparently happy to fight (and, of course, win) a short war...
Introduction

- Reality was very much crueler
- Soldiers and civil population went through a terrible and long war over more than four years
Text: The warmongering atmosphere in Germany before the war

"France is not yet ready for combat. Britain faces interior and colonial difficulties. Russia rejects war, because she fears the revolution within. Are we going to wait for our opponents to be prepared or, rather, should we take advantage of the favourable moment to cause the decision? This is a serious issue to be settled.

The Austrian army is still faithful and useful. Italia is still strongly linked to the Triple Alliance and even if it prefers (...) keep the peace to heal the wounds of the last war, she knows (...) that if Germany is defeated, it will remain hopelessly at the mercy of France and England’s violence and it will lose its independent position in the Mediterranean (…) We can also, in case of war, count on Turkey and Romania (…) We could lead the direction of the European policy through a resolute offensive, and we secure our future.

This does not mean that we should provoke war, but wherever a conflict of interest turns out(...) we should not go back, but solve it by means of war and start it with a resolute offensive, no matter the excuse, because it is not that conflict, but our future what is at stake."

Text analysis
• Read carefully the text and look up every word or term you do not fully understand
• What countries are the possible enemies and allies of Germany in a future war?
• What was the enemies’ situation like?
• What was the allies’ situation like?
• According to this article, what should Germany do in 1914 to lead the European policy? Explain it in detail.
Causes of WW1

- The new international expansionist policy (*Weltpolitik*) undertaken by the German Emperor Wilhelm II in 1890.
- It destabilized the international situation.
Changes in the balance of economic and military might between the powers

German economy caught up with UK’s and Berlin started an ambitious naval rearmament program
Conflicts between powers in Asia and Africa

Some of these conflicts were sorted out (France – GB, Russia – GB)

Some were not and increased tensions (France – Germany)
Causes of WW1

- Germany annexed the French regions of Alsace and Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian war in 1870
- France strongly desired to recover those regions
Causes of WW1

- The rivalry between Russia and Austria-Hungary for the hegemony in the Balkans
- The Turkish Ottoman Empire was not able to control that region anymore
Causes of WW1

- Psychological rivalry between peoples, encouraged by nationalist propaganda campaigns.
- Hatred of the neighbour was more the norm than the exception.
Causes of WW1

- Two new non-European powers: United States and Japan
- Conflict took a global dimension, further away from Europe
Causes of WW1

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The Triple Alliance: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy.

- It was signed in 1882 (Bismarck).
- The German Reich and the Austro-Hungarian Empire constituted the core of this alliance.
Formation of alliances: The Triple Entente

- The Triple Entente made up of Britain, France, and Russia
- It was concluded by 1907.
- German expansionism led to Britain and France to end their colonial differences.
- The rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Russia in the Balkans pushed Russia into the alliance.
International crisis which led to the war

1905 Morocco
- Germany wanted to end French supremacy over Morocco
- 1906 Algeciras Conference: France & Great Britain stuck together against German claims

1908: 1st Balkan Crisis
- Austria-Hungary took control over Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Russia & Serbia protested but are not ready for a war
- Germany backed up Austria-Hungary against Russia and Serbia
International crisis which led to the war
International crisis which led to the war
1911: Morocco

- Crisis of Agadir: Germany claimed Morocco against French control
- France kept its control over Morocco and in exchange Germany received territories in Central Africa
- Secret agreement: France would patrol the Mediterranean Sea while Great Britain would patrol the French coasts in the Atlantic and the North Sea
- Tension between France and Germany increased

1912-13: 2nd Balkan Crisis

- After several local wars, Serbia enlarged its territories with Russia’s support
- Austria-Hungary was worried and annoyed as it was losing its supremacy over the Balkan area.
International crisis which led to the war
International crisis which led to the war
Archduke Franz Ferdinand (successor to the Austria-Hungarian throne) was assassinated in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 by Gavrilo Princip, a member of a Serb terrorist nationalist organisation.

Austria blamed Serbia and issued an ultimatum to allow Austrian forces to investigate the murder in Serbia.
Summer 1914: the final crisis

- **Austria-Hungary issues an ultimatum to Serbia** (its forces will enter the country to investigate the murder)
- **Serbia refuses the ultimatum**
- **Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia. 28 July 1914**
  - **Russia mobilizes its troops to defend Serbia**
  - **Germany (Austria-Hungary’s allie) declares war on Russia**
    - **France (Russia’s allie) declares war on Germany**
      - **Germany invades Belgium to attack France**
      - **Great Britain (France’s allie) declares war on Germany**
1914

The Crime of the Ages—Who Did It?
Summer 1914: the final crisis
Summer 1914: the final crisis
Summer 1914: the final crisis
Causes of WW1

ARMÉE DE TERRE ET ARMÉE DE MER

ORDRE DE MOBILISATION GÉNÉRALE

Par décret du Président de la République, la mobilisation des armées de terre et de mer est ordonnée, ainsi que la réquisition des animaux, voitures et hommes nécessaires au complément de ces armées.

Le premier jour de la mobilisation est le dimanche 2 Août 1914.

Tout Français soumis aux obligations militaires doit, sous peine d'être puni avec toute la rigueur des lois, obéir aux prescriptions du FASCICULE DE MOBILISATION (pages coloriées placées dans son livret).

Sont visés par le présent ordre TOUS LES HOMMES non présents sous les Drapeaux et appartenant :

1° à l'ARMÉE DE TERRE y compris les TROUPES COLONIALES et les hommes des SERVICES AUXILIAIRES ;
2° à l'ARMÉE DE MER y compris les INSCRITS MARITIMES et les ARMURIERS de la MARINE.

Les Autorités civiles et militaires sont responsables de l'exécution du présent décret.

Le Ministre de la Guerre.

Le Ministre de la Marine.
Causes of WW1
Allies and Central Powers in Europe
Allies and Central Powers in the world
WW1 – The main fronts
1914 – War of movements

**Schlieffen Plan**

- German plan which was based on:
  - Rapid attack on France through neutral Belgium
  - After defeating France, German troops could turn about and attack Russia, backward country that would need a long time to mobilize their troops
1914 – War of movements

Battle of Marne, 1914

- Allied troops managed to halt the German advance
- From that moment, armies dug trenches all along a front which extended from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier
- Stalemate in the western front
- Germans did not achieve a decisive victory in the eastern front
1915-1916: The war of attrition

New weapons

- Machine guns
- Grenades
- Gas
- Flame throwers
- Tanks

The stalemate in the western front led to a new sort of warfare: the war of attrition. A military strategy in which a belligerent side attempts to win a war by wearing down its enemy to the point of collapse through continuous losses in personnel and materiel.
1915-1916: The war of attrition

Battle of Verdun, 1915
1915-1916: The war of attrition

Battle of Somme, 1916
1915-1916: The war of attrition

Battle of Passchendaele, 1917
1917: The Turning Point of the War

Sinking of the US ship Lusitania, 1915
Zimmerman telegram was a 1917 diplomatic proposal from the German Empire to Mexico to make war against the United States.

The proposal was intercepted and decoded by British intelligence.

Revelation of the contents outraged American public opinion and helped generate support for the United States declaration of war on Germany in April 1917.
The Daily Missourian
Columbia, Missouri, Friday Evening, April 6, 1917
Number 184

U.S. Officially At War

Wilson Tells Plans for Raising Armies
Approval of Conscription of 50,000 Men in Addition to Regulars.

Age Limit: 18 to 25
Drafting to Be Practical in National Guard of Volunteering Forces.

Winston

The Weather

Guards to Mobilize at Nevada in Week

Capt. Egan of Fourth Missouri Infantry Will Be Called.

17 Recruits Needed

Local Unit Will Probably Take Members from Other Units.

Drafting of Army to Affect Students.

Wilson Signs Resolution

At 1:13 O'clock Today

Four Missouri Representatives Vote "No" When House Passes Act 373 to 50—First War Measures Total $164,000,000—Conscription Plans Call for 2,000,000 Men.

Bulletin

Washington, April 6—The general defensive bill calling for $100,000,000 for national defense purposes and $64,000,000 for war expenses was the first war measure to pass Congress today.

Washington, April 6—War was declared at 1:13 this afternoon. As exactly that time President Wilson signed the joint resolution passed by the House and Senate declaring that a state of war exists between the United States and Germany.

An hour before, the resolution was signed by Vice-President Marshall in the Senate at 12:15.
1917: The Turning Point of the War

February 1917 – The Tsar Nicholas II is dethroned
1917: The Turning Point of the War

November 1917 – The Communists took over power
1917: The Turning Point of the War

March 1918 – Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Russia left the war
1917: The Turning Point of the War

Germany acquired provisionally huge territories in the East
1918: The End of the War

Germany could move troops from east to west → Spring offensive
1918: The End of the War

Massive arrival of American troops in Europe
1918: The End of the War

Germans started retreating
1918: The End of the War

Revolution in Germany – Kaiser abdicated
1918: The End of the War

German representatives signing the armistice – 11 November 1918
The Peace Treaties

The victors: Lloyd George (GB), Orlando (It), Clemenceau (Fr) and Wilson (USA)
The Peace Treaties

No negotiations with the defeated: the *diktat* of Versailles
The Peace Treaties

Different treaties signed by the winners with the defeated:

- Treaty of Versailles with Germany
- Treaty of Saint-Germain with Austria
- Treaty of Trianon with Hungary
- Treaty of Neuilly with Bulgaria
- Treaty of Sevres and later Treaty of Lausanne with Turkey
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Peace Treaties of the First World War

- Treaty of Versailles - 1919 - Germany
- Treaty of Saint Germain - 1919 - Austria
- Treaty of Neuilly - 1919 - Bulgaria
- Treaty of Trianon - 1919 - Hungary
- Treaty of Sevres - 1920 - Germany
- Treaty of Lausanne - 1923 - Turkey
The Treaty of Versailles

Different attitudes of the winners towards Germany:

- **Clemenceau**: the hardest stance ("Germany will pay")
- **Lloyd George and Wilson**, although willing to punish Germany, a more conciliatory attitude
- **Italy** was the weakest winner: Orlando tried to obtain territorial gains in Austria-Hungary but failed and felt disappointed ("We have won the war, but we have lost the peace")
The Treaty of Versailles

War Guilt:
- Germany had to accept the blame of starting the war
- Germans considered this clause as extremely unfair
- As a consequence....

War reparations
- Germany has to pay for the damage caused to the Allies
- A huge amount of money was fixed without any consultation to Germany
The Treaty of Versailles

Territorial losses
The Treaty of Versailles

Military Clauses:

• Drastic limitation of the German navy.

• Dramatic reduction of the Army (only 100,000 troops, prohibition of having tanks, aircraft and heavy artillery).

• Demilitarization of the Rhineland region.

Germany as a criminal just arrested
The Treaty of Saint Germain

The Treaty of Saint Germain, signed with Austria.

- Disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire
- The result of his break up were new states such as Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
- On top of that, several sections of the former empire were annexed by new states such as Poland and Yugoslavia.
The Treaty of Trianon

The Treaty of Trianon, signed with Hungary.

- The worst treated state after the war.
- Large Hungarian minorities (3 million people, equivalent to one third of the Hungarian population total) were left outside of the Hungarian state, living as minorities in Czechoslovakia, Romania (Transylvania) and Yugoslavia.
The Treaty of Sèvres and Laussanne

The Treaty of Sèvres (1920), signed with Turkey, and then fixed in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

- The Treaty of Sevres was extremely hard and led the Turkish national rebellion led by Kemal Ataturk and the war against Greece had occupied large areas of Anatolia.
- After the Turkish victory in the Greek-Turkish war, the Treaty of Lausanne was much more benign, but consecrate the distribution of Turkish possessions in the Middle East between France (Syria, Lebanon) and Britain (Palestine, Iraq, Jordan).
The Treaty of Neuilly, signed with Bulgaria.

- The small Balkan country suffered several territorial losses, in the benefit of Romania, Greece and a brand-new country: Yugoslavia.
- All the defeated countries, like Germany, were forced to pay reparations and to limit the strength of their armies.
The result of the Russian Revolution

The outcome of the Russian revolution: new states in central and eastern Europe. As a result of the Soviet revolution and the collapse of Tsarist Russian Empire, new states were born in Central and Eastern Europe:

• **Poland**, reborn from Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian territories.
• **Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania**, which were former regions of the Russian Empire.
Failed treaties

These treaties rather than solve the problems that had led to the Great War, increased tensions in Europe.

The most important was the German problem. Many Germans began to bide their time to get his revenge against the “diktat”, the “humiliation” of Versailles. (Treaty of Versailles)
Consequences of the war

WWI «changed» the world. Nothing was the same after 1918:

- **Terrible loss of life**: eight million dead, millions wounded people, maimed, widows and orphans, and the **material destruction** suffered especially by Europe.
Consequences of the war

WWI «changed» the world. Nothing was the same after 1918:

- USA became the first world power. Europe started a long decadence
- The mass mobilization of men led to the incorporation of women into work
- Soviet revolution and the spread of a prerevolutionary climate in Europe
- The exacerbated nationalism + fear of a communist revolution → fascist movements