

# UNIT 6: WORLD WAR ONE

1. CAUSES OF WAR:
2. PARTICIPANTS AND PHASES
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF WAR: A “TOTAL WAR”
4. CONSEQUENCES
5. THE END OF WAR AND THE PEACE TREATIES.

**INTRODUCTION:** This War was caused by the tension between the European countries and was the first one of its kind, because, at that time, no war had ever had so many deaths, countries included and that amount of different warfare. This is why it is known as “*The Great War*” and the reason why it had a big impact in the economy and society.

## 1.- CAUSES OF WAR

In the beginning of the 20th century there was an **underlying friction** between European countries. Little by little new alliances were formed in the shadows between different countries to protect their interests in case of a breakout of war, which was pretty clear it was imminent. Several crisis, such as the Moroccan or Balkan crisis, were worsening and deteriorating relations. Europe reached a point in which any little action against the other could mean the War, that war everybody had been waiting for.

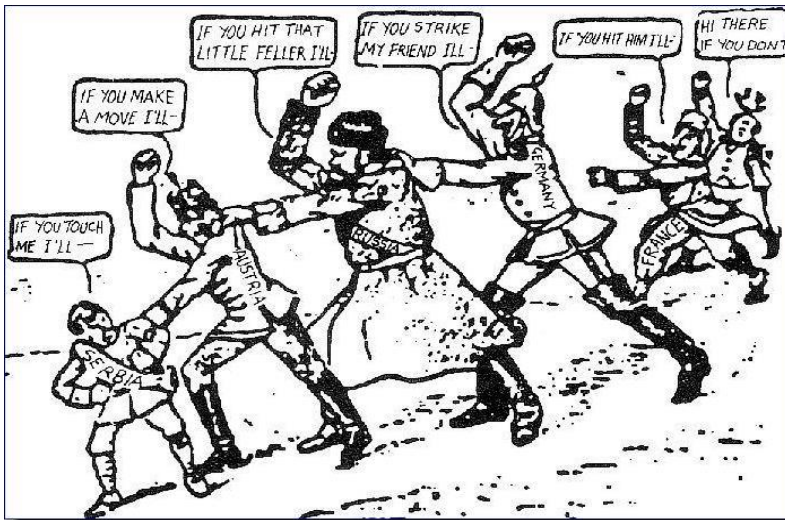
**IMMEDIATE CAUSE:** The 28th June 1914, the Serbian Gavrilo Princip, who belonged to a terrorist organization called “the Black Hand” **killed the heir to the Austrian-Hungarian Empire**, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. It was the spark that started WWI, as it provoked a very sensible relationship between **Serbia** and the **Austrian** Empire, which had had a controversial situation concerning the Balkans before. **Russia** took a step forward and proclaimed its self the protector of Slavs in Europe, Serbia mostly.

**UNDERLYING CAUSES:** The assassination of the Austrian heir wasn't the main reason for a war breaking out, as there were other reasons underlying (summarized in the acronym **MANIA**)

- **Militarism:** there was an “**arms race**” between **Germany** and **France** and the **UK**. Both “blocks” wanted to have military supremacy and made war by building up a strong army and navy. The incident in Agadir (1911), Morocco, showed how close were European powers to war. UK was reluctant to declare war on Germany, but felt strongly threatened by German naval development, which challenged UK superiority in the sea (essential to maintain UK vast empire)
- **Alliance system:** two main blocks that confronted each other were created by European nations: firstly the **Triple Alliance** was created and involved Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy; and then the **Triple Entente** involving France, Russia and the UK. All the powers were getting ready for war. The alliance system explains why the assassination of the Austrian heir could not be just limited to the Balkans, as previous conflicts (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan Wars). Yet, it triggered multiples enchained reactions that put the major European countries in two opposite blocks.
- **Nationalism:** The nationalism of various countries throughout Europe contributed not only to the beginning but the extension of the war in Europe. Each country tried to prove their dominance and power. This increased **aggressiveness** and **revenge** among them.

This was the case between Germany and France (Sedan, 1870) or between Austria and Serbia (pan Slavism, annexation of Bosnia, 1908).

- **Imperialism:** every big country wanted to have the biggest empire in the world by controlling many colonies. This provoked friction in colonies.



- **Assassination of the Austrian heir**, which provoked a response from both the Austrian Empire (sending an ultimatum to Serbia that Serbia could not accept) and from Russia, (who started its mobilization to protect its Slavic ally, Serbia.).

This chart shows the crisis in 1914 summer:

**1914 - the build-up to war**

Date	Event
July 5th	The Austrian government asks the German government if it will support Austria in a war against Russia, if Russia supports Serbia. The Germans say they will support whatever the Austrian government decides to do - the so called 'blank cheque'.
July 23rd	The Austrian government sends the Serbian government an ultimatum.
July 25th	The Serbians accept all the conditions except one - that Austrian police should be allowed into Serbia.
July 28th	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
July 30th	The Russian army is mobilised.
August 1st	Germany declares war on Russia.
August 3rd	Germany declares war on France and, following the Schlieffen Plan, attacks Belgium.
August 4th	Britain keeps the promise made in a treaty of 1839 to defend Belgium, and declares war on Germany.

**Activity 1:** causes of war through texts

**Activity 2:** Role of each country in the outbreak of war

## 2.- PARTICIPANTS AND PHASES

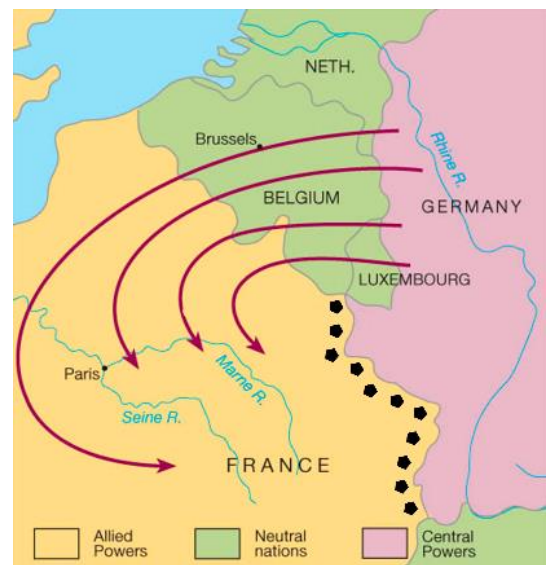
Before the war broke out, there were two main alliances: Triple Entente (France, Britain, Russia) and Triple Alliance (Italy, Germany, Austro-hungarian empire). Italy finally entered the war in May 1915 fighting against its previous allies, Germany and AH.

WWI was mainly divided in 3 phases:

1914	-West: German offensive (Plan Schlieffen); Germans defeated in the Marne -East: Germans defeated Russia (battle of Tannenberg)
1915	-Trench warfare: western front stabilised along 700 km of trenches -Italy joins the Allied powers → new front in the south -Eastern front balanced as Bulgaria joins the central powers and Romania the Entente (Allies)
1916	-battle of Verdun exemplifies the war of attrition, causing 300,000 of deads in both sides with little change in the front line. -battle of the Somme, a Franco-British offensive, where millions of shells were
1917	The submarine warfare forces USA to intervene in April Russian revolution → retreat
1918	Germans were now free in the Eastern front after Russia's withdrew, Germany launched the final offensive against France, almost reached Paris but were defeated in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> battle of the Marne. Central powers began to surrender (Bulgaria, Ottomans, Austria) 9 Nov: Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated, new Rep. of Weimar. 2 days later, new government signed the armistice

### 2.1.-1914: WAR OF MOVEMENT.

-The war starts with **German offensives**. Germany put the **Schlieffen Plan** into practice the 3<sup>rd</sup> august 1914. This plan consisted in attacking **France** through **Belgium** and defeating it in less than 6 weeks, and then turning into **Russia** (“*Breakfast in Paris, dinner in St Petersburg*”). Germany wanted to avoid a two-fronts-war and was confident believing the Russians would need a lot of time to mobilize its army. Actually it took just ten days, so Germany had to fight in both fronts. The Germans were also wrong about Britain, believing that the **British** would not care about the violation of Belgian neutrality, but they did and **declared war on Germany** a day later, 4<sup>th</sup> August.



As a result, the British helped the French army in the western front, stopping the Germans in the **Marne**, 40 miles from Paris. However, the Germans were successful in the eastern front, defeating the Russians in the **Tannenberg** battle.

## 2.2.- 1915-1916: . FROM WAR OF MOVEMENT TO WAR OF POSITION.



As the armies were quite balanced, **700 kilometres of trenches** were established in the Western Front. This meant the beginning of the “**Trench Warfare**“, which was marked by the amount of deaths caused by the machineguns and the barbed wires that protected the trenches from the attackers. The main battles during this period were the bloody **battle of Verdun** (German offensive) and the **battle**

**of the Somme** (French offensive aimed at reducing pressure over Verdun) , both in the Western Front. These battles are good examples of the *war of attrition*, and failed because were unable to take more than some meters from the enemy causing thousands of deaths. It is estimated that in Verdun and the Somme more than 1 million soldiers of both sides lost their lives.

In the **Eastern Front** Germany launched an offensive against Russia and defeated them.

In addition during this period many countries joined the war like **Bulgaria** (revengeful towards Serbia after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Balkan War) or the **Ottoman Empire** to the Central Powers **Italy, Romania** and **Japan** joined the Allies. This change in alliances created a **new front in the South of Europe**.

**2.3.- INTERNATIONALISATION OF WAR.** 1917 was a crucial year, as it meant and the intervention of **USA** in April, as German submarines were sinking British and American boats around the Isles to keep a trade blockade. Additionally, **Russia retreated** as the Revolution broke out in October. Lenin, the new Russian leader, decided to end the war with Germany and signed a treaty in Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) in which Russia ceded part of their territory to the central powers. Meanwhile, both sides had to suffer mutinies and desertions.

## 2.4.- END OF WAR AND ALLIED VICTORY .

Despite the withdrawal of Russia, France was able to resist the last German offensive in the 2<sup>nd</sup> battle of Marne, which caused the progressive surrender of all the countries from the Central Powers .

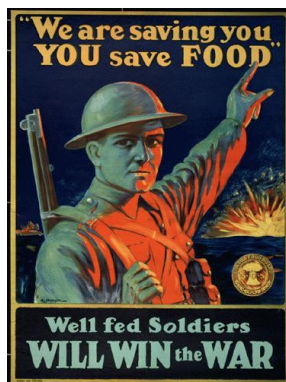
The 9<sup>th</sup> November, the German emperor Wilhelm II abdicated and a Republic is founded ( the Weimar Republic). The new German leaders signed the **armistice the 11<sup>th</sup> of November of 1918**. Different conferences will be hold in Paris with the defeated countries.

**Activity 3** : Complete the activity “What word is defined? IN YOUR NOTEBOOK.

**3.- CHARACTERISTICS OF WWI:** The Great war is considered a “TOTAL WAR” due to many reasons:

By 1915, the war had been consolidated as a total and global war, and the Battle of Ypres settle this term definitely. Germans and British used this battle to try new weapons for the first time such as mustard gas, they destroyed the city and its surroundings making clear that this new war involved citizens as well and they mainly used to create this catastrophe soldiers recruited from the respective empires. To make clear this was a total war we have to keep in mind:

- This is a “world” war as European countries made use of their **colonies** to provide workforce during the war for manufacturing weapons or building trenches, and to recruit soldiers (4 million people mobilized from colonies). Some colonies were also war theatres.
- The creation of **new weapons** made this war pretty modern and more devastating. **Artillery** and machineguns were the kings of the war, but there were more inventions: mortars, flamethrowers, mustard gas, tanks, zeppelins, fighters, bombers, destroyers, submarines...
- **Warfare:** It was the first time that a war was fought on the sky, the sea and the land at the same time. In addition new ways of fighting appeared thanks to the new inventions (airplane, toxic gases...), like the chemical warfare, the psychological warfare, the trench warfare or the already mentioned aerial warfare.
- **Civilians** suffered lot from the war even if being far from the frontline, social effort. They work very hard to keep



the country running with jobs in factories, in France and Germany there was **extreme hunger** among the people, **rationing** was the solution to food shortage. The whole population was focused on war and their **freedoms were suspended** to prevent uprisings and promote patriotism.

- **Economic effort** focused on war. The countries’ economies were mainly focused on war as every factory produced equipment, food was very important to combat hunger, but was first sent to the trenches, no trade with other countries was available, sometimes not even national as no one individually should benefit from what they produce, everything for the country to fight the enemy.
- **Women** gained huge importance: factories, production of food, etc. was full of female workers as men were the ones that went to the frontlines, but they had lower wages. This was the starting point of many women demonstrations and revolutions as soon as the war ended.

- Undermining the enemy's self-confidence was a new "weapon" used by countries in WWI, that's why **propaganda and censorship** became essential. Propaganda was used to praise themselves for what their country was doing, used for recruiting soldiers and workers and to portray the enemy as a devil and loser. **Censorship** was used to prevent media from posting articles, propaganda or whatever against their own government, or from telling the truth to citizens about the war whether they were losing the war or not.



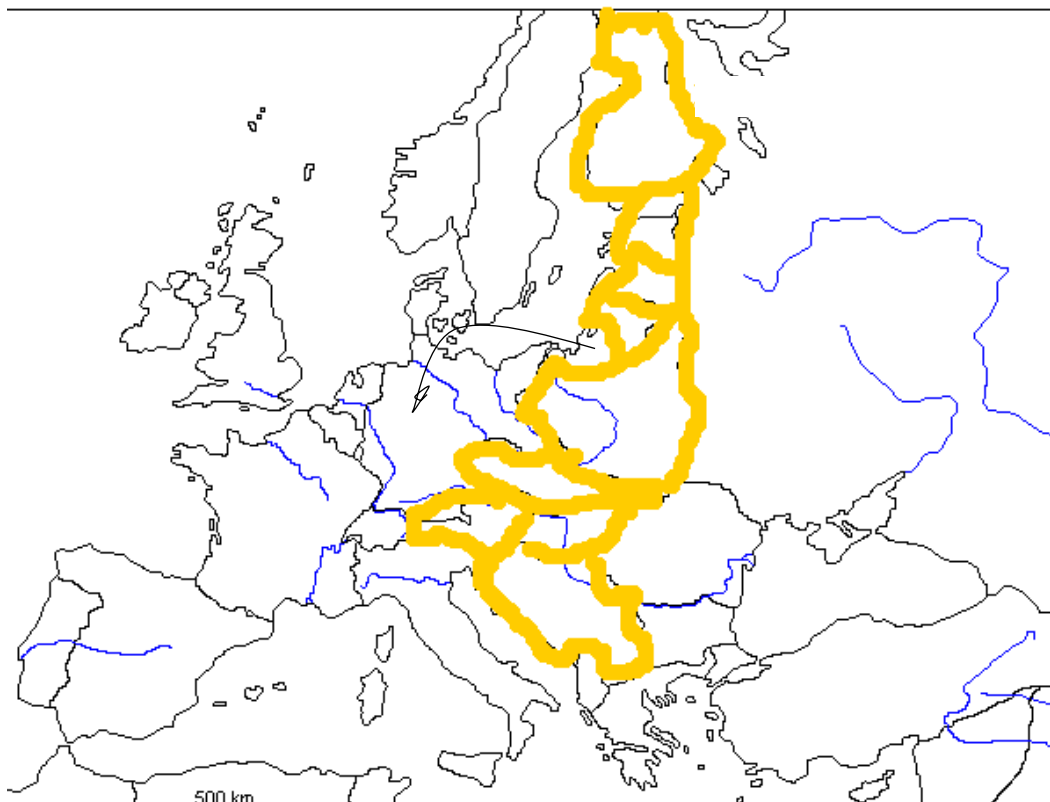
**Activity 4:** Illustrate each of the characteristics of WWI with one source (image, cartoon, text (primary source), graph, map...). The images in the written unit and ppt can not be used.

#### 4.- CONSEQUENCES.

**Demographic consequences:** In the end, after 5 years of terror and hell, the Great War ended with an unsuccessful treaty (in the long run) and horrific numbers. This had been by far the worst war ever in terms of destruction, casualties, etc.

- 10 million dead
- 20 million wounded
- 20-80 million mobilized → 60-70% were killed or injured
- 16 countries involved + colonial empires (this is what made WWI a world war)

**Territorial consequences:** 5 main treaties were signed with the loser countries in different palaces in Paris: Austria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Hungary and Germany, being the latter the most important and signed in Versailles. A **new map of Europe** is created, as the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires disappeared, leading to the **birth of 9 new countries** in Eastern



Europe.( →see map). The Russian Revolution also led to creation of the Soviet Union, formed by different republics with Russia as the most powerful republic.

**Political consequences:** Europe loses its hegemony and it's replaced by USA. Encouraged by the success in Russia, **Communism** will spread out in many European countries, helped by the economic crisis. Besides, an important political result was the creation of the **League of Nations**, which was an international organisation to promote peace and dialogue, based on president **Wilson's 14 points**. Finally, thanks to the importance of women during the war some countries gave them the right to vote.

**Economic** : Europe suffered a period of **economic decline**, affecting both winners (in debt with USA) and defeated countries (forced to pay **war reparations**). **Inflation** became a serious problem in many countries after the war, specially in Germany. In contrast, USA which had entered the war very late, did not suffer destruction the way European countries did. The economic link through the Atlantic ocean became stronger, as the Allied countries had to **pay USA back** for the money they had borrow from Americans during war .

**Activity 5:** Complete the map in the unit and the “Map 1919 activity”

**Activity 6:** Complete the activity about Wilson 14 points

**Activity 7:** What was the *League of Nations*? Research about similarities and differences with the United Nations.

## **5.- THE END OF WAR AND THE PEACE TREATIES**

The Armistice of 11 November 1918 Was great joy. The people of Europe wanted lasting peace and to make Germany pay for the damage and revenge.

The Germans had expected that the peace treaty would be based on President Wilson's Fourteen Points. The six key principles of the Fourteen Points were: setting up a League of Nations, disarmament, self-determination for the people of Europe-the right to rule themselves-, freedom for the colonies , freedom of the seas, free trade.

But the *Big Three*(USA, France, UK) were finally much harsher in the terms of the armistice, which will be the basis for the peace treaties. En FAC de peace treaties were very difficult to achieve because these three countries had different ideas about what about What the terms of the treaties should be.

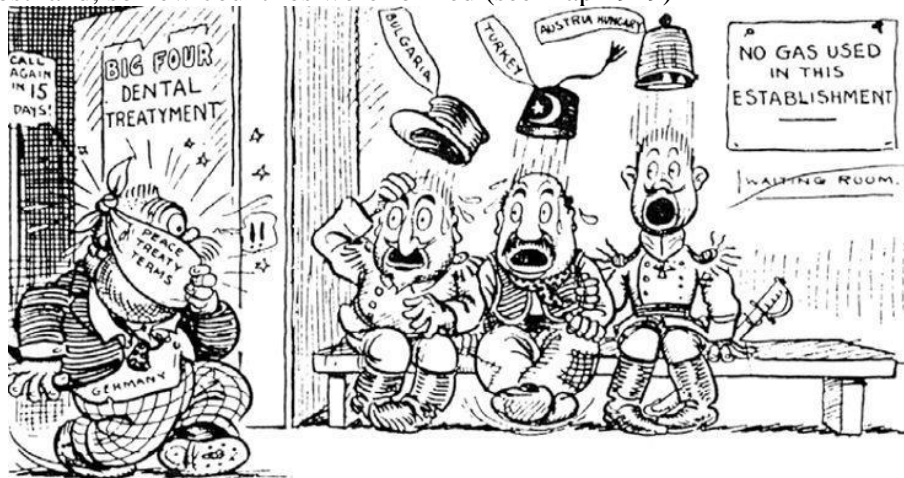
- Wilson wanted to end war by creating League of Nations based on his Fourteen Points; he wanted to ensure Germany was not destroyed; he didn't want to blame Germany for the war (he hated the guilt clause)
- Clemenceau wanted punishment and revenge, the return of Alsace and Lorraine , huge reparations, and didn't want anu League of Nations.
- Lloyd George wanted a fair peace that would leave Germany strong enough to trade, land for Britain's empire and to safeguard Britain's naval supremacy.

The main peace treaties were negotiated in **the Paris Peace Conference** , each defeated country had to sign a specific treaty in different places near Paris..

The most important treaty was the one signed with Germany in the palace of Versailles. The terms of the **Treaty of Versailles** were:

Territorial provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Territorial losses in the West (Alsace/Lorraine returned to France...) and East (lands ceded to Lithuania, Poland)</li> <li>✓ Rhineland demilitarised</li> <li>✓ Saar (industrial region) occupied by French army for 15 years</li> <li>✓ Colonies became mandates (controlled by the League of Nations)</li> </ul>
Economic and financial provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Germany and its allies responsible for causing all loss and damage (War guilt clause) → huge reparations</li> </ul>
Military provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Army limited to 100,000 men</li> <li>✓ No air force, no submarines, no tanks</li> <li>✓ Navy restricted to 6 battleships</li> </ul>
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Germany not allowed to join the League of Nations</li> </ul>

Four other treaties were signed with the countries that helped Germany during the war. The Treaty of Versailles, however, was the template for these treaties, which were drawn up by officials (not the Big Three) and followed the principles of Versailles: they had to disarm, pay reparations, they lost land, so new countries were formed (see map 1919)



The **Treaty of Saint Germain** was signed with Austria , Hungary signed the **Treaty of Trianon** they meant the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Bulgaria signed the **Treaty of Neuilly** and the **Treaty of Sèvres** was

signed with Turkey (the Ottoman empire was dissolved).

**Activities 8 and 9:** Complete the activities about the treaty of Versailles.

**CONCLUSION**

After it was over, World War I was called "the war to end all wars" because it was so destructive that the nations of the world wanted to prevent such slaughter from ever happening again. This prompted prolonged negotiations over proposed solutions like the League of Nations. Unfortunately, rather than end war, the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles drafted mainly by the Big Four (USA, England, France and Italy) , almost destroyed Germany's economy and led to the rise of the Nazi Party in the 1930s, setting the stage for World War II.