

Great Britain in  
World War One

# The Start of War

- On 4<sup>th</sup> June 1914, the Austrian prince Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a Serbian man on a visit to Bosnia.
- By August 1914, this event had led to declarations of war between all the major European countries, which would continue until November 1918.
- Great Britain declared war on Germany on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914 after German soldiers invaded Belgium and France.



# Causes of War



- There were four main causes of war:
  - Militarism
    - Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, European countries were creating new weapons and war technologies and increasing their armies.
    - In particular, Britain and Germany were competing in an “arms race” to create the best weapons and technologies.
  - Alliances
    - As countries in Europe grew stronger, they made alliances to protect themselves and maintain the balance of power.
    - There were two main alliances in Europe – the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria and Italy) and the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia). They agreed that if any of them were attacked, the others would help them.



# Causes of War

- Imperialism
  - Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, France, Britain and Germany had been expanding their empires. By 1914, much of the world was controlled by these three countries.
  - However, Germany still wanted to expand even more, and this was very threatening to France and Britain.
- Nationalism
  - Europe was made up of several big empires, but in 1914 many people wanted their own countries, especially in Eastern Europe, which led to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand.
  - Nationalism also created a feeling of pride and competition among other countries, so they wanted to show that they were the best.





# THE WORLD IN 1914





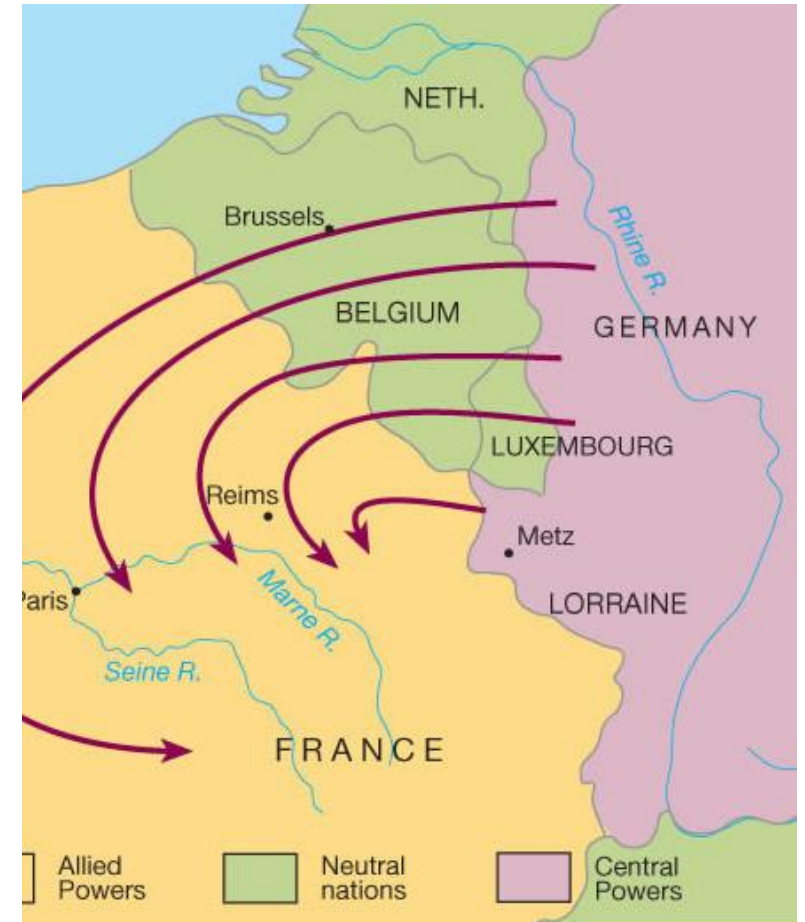
# Stages of War

- The war took place in four stages between 1914-1918.
  - The War of Movement (1914)
  - The War of Positions (1914-1917)
  - The Decisive Year (1917)
  - The 1918 Offensive and the End of War



# The War of Movement: The Schlieffen Plan

- The Schlieffen Plan was Germany's plan to invade France by marching through Belgium.
- They wanted to force France into a decisive battle, defeat them, and then turn around and march east to Russia.
- The plan was a failure for two main reasons:
  - Russia reacted much quicker than Germany expected, and with more soldiers, so Germany had to divide their army on two fronts.
  - The invasion of Belgium and France led Britain to declare war, as they had an alliance.
- The Battle of the Marne in September 1914 stopped the Germans from marching further into France and created the Western Front, where much of the war would be fought from the trenches.



 The Schlieffen Plan

# The War of Positions: Gallipoli

- In 1915, the war was at a stalemate, meaning that neither side was winning.
- In 1915, the Ottoman Empire in Turkey joined the war on the side of the Germans, so the British decided to attack the Turkish in Gallipoli and support the Russians in the east.
- The British also wanted access to the Dardanelles, a waterway in Turkey that would make it easier for British ships to bring soldiers and resources from its Empire.
- The campaign involved soldiers from Australia and New Zealand, which were parts of the British Empire.
- However, the Gallipoli Campaign was a massive failure. Many soldiers were put in the wrong places, and the Turkish soldiers were stronger than expected.
- In all, some 480,000 Allied forces took part in the Gallipoli Campaign, at a cost of more than 250,000 casualties, including some 46,000 dead.





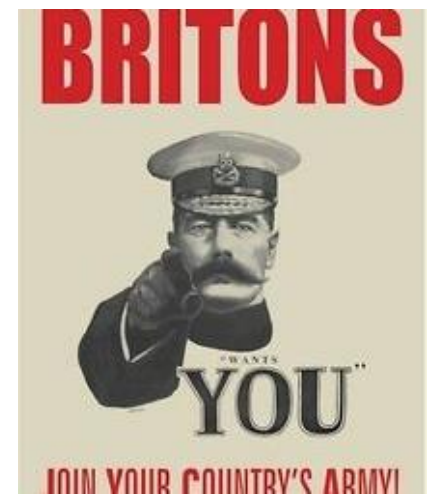
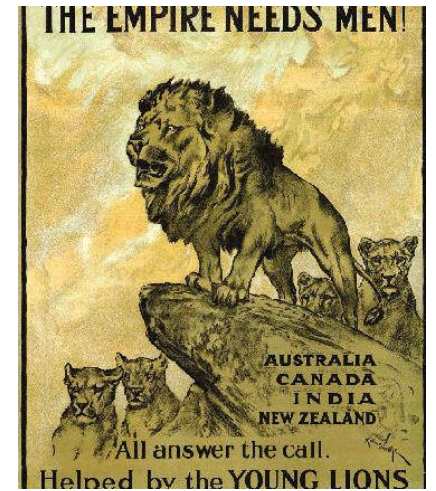
# The War of Positions: Verdun and the Somme

- On the Western Front, France, Britain and Germany began fighting the “war of attrition”, which meant that they tried to attack each other as much as possible until the other side became too tired to continue.
- The Battle of Verdun and the First Battle of the Somme were two important battles that were part of this during 1916.
- Verdun was the longest battle in WW1, fought between February and December 1916.
- The Germans began the attack against the French, and by the end of April the Germans had lost 120,000 men and the French had lost 133,000 men.
- In response to the Battle of Verdun, the British began the Battle of the Somme in July.
- This was meant to help France because the Germans would have to fight two battles at the same time.
- The Battle of the Somme was one of the largest and worst battles of WW1.
- On the first day of fighting, the British army had 19,200 dead and 60,000 lost or wounded. By the end of the battle, 400,000 British soldiers had died.
- It lasted for four months, but didn’t achieve very much for either side.



# The British Army

- In 1914, Lord Kitchener realized that Britain needed a bigger army, and started a campaign to recruit more men.
- At the start of the war, British men were excited to join the war and fight for their country.
- In the first weekend of the war, 100 men an hour (3,000 a day) signed up to join the armed forces, and by the end of 1914 over 1,186,000 men had enlisted.
- Often, men signed up in “pals battalions” with their friends.
- However, after the massive losses during 1916, the British government had to introduce conscription.
- At home, men who refused to fight were given a white feather by people who wanted to shame them for not fighting.
- By the end of the war, nearly  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all men in Britain had been part of the armed forces.



# The Decisive Year

- 1917 was an important year in the course of WW1.
- Germany began “unrestricted submarine warfare”, which meant they would attack any non-German ship they found.
- In March 1917, a revolution began in Russia against the Tsar, which led to the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in December between Russia and Germany.
- In April 1917, the United States of America finally joined the war on the side of Britain and France, after a German submarine sunk a ship, the S.S. Laconia, which had American passengers on it.
- America gave the Allies thousands of new soldiers and supported them with food, weapons, and other important resources which allowed them to keep fighting.





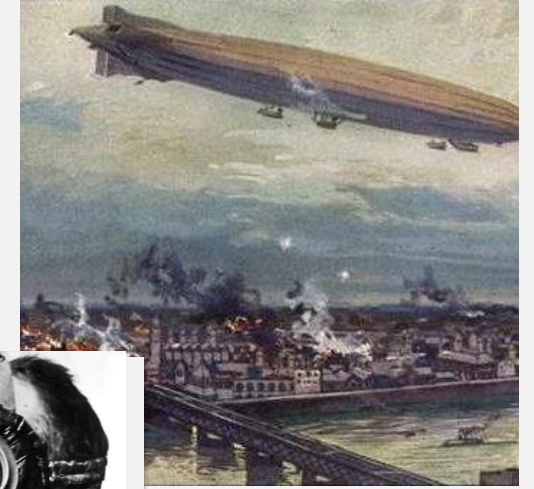
# The End of the War

- In 1918, Germany started the Spring Offensive, a big attack that was meant to end the war. However, the British and French, along with new troops from America, were able to fight back.
- Britain had set up a naval blockade in 1914 to stop resources reaching Germany, and by 1918 many Germans were starving and unhappy, and the German government were scared that there might be a revolution the same as in Russia.
- The German Navy also went on strike, so Germany could not defend itself at sea.
- On 8 August, the Allies began the One Hundred Day Offensive, which was a terrible defeat for Germany.
- In September 1918, the German realised that they could not win the war, and on 11 November they signed the Armistice, agreeing to peace.



# New Technologies

- The new technologies that were used during WW1 made it the worst war the world had ever seen.
  - Submarines could attack ships without being seen, causing massive loss of life and resources.
  - Tanks, first used at the Battle of the Somme, were invented by the British and became important weapons on both sides of the war.
  - Chemical weapons such as mustard gas and chlorine gas were used on a large scale for the first time and could kill thousands of people very quickly and very easily.
  - New weapons and artillery were more efficient, such as machine guns which could fire up to 600 bullets in a minute.
  - Planes and zeppelins were used to drop bombs on the battlefield but also on the civilian population in the UK and Germany, and planes could also be used to spy across enemy lines.
- WW1 is known as a “total war” because it involved normal people at home as well as soldiers on the battlefield.



# Air Raids

- Britain was first attacked by Germany in air raids in 1915.
- It was the first time that war had been fought from the sky, and the country was unprepared.
- The Germans used zeppelins to drop bombs on British cities and cause huge damage.
- Germany also had bomber planes, called Gothas and Giants, which were much better than British aircraft.
- The Royal Air Force was formed in 1918 in response to German superiority in the air, and would be very important in the next war.
- By the end of the war, almost 1,500 British citizens had been killed by the German air raids, and over 3,400 had been injured.





# Questions

1. Why did Britain declare war on Germany?
2. Why did the Schlieffen Plan fail?
3. What was the worst battle of WW1?
4. What two significant events happened in 1917?
5. What was the Spring Offensive?
6. What new technologies were used in WW1?

