

## LESSON 2

## World War I

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

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

## READING HELPDESK

## Academic Vocabulary

- target
- unrestricted

## Content Vocabulary

- propaganda
- trench warfare
- war of attrition
- total war
- planned economies

## TAKING NOTES

## Key Ideas and Details

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

World War I Alliances

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

## IT MATTERS BECAUSE

*The war that many thought would be over in a few weeks lasted far longer, resulting in many casualties on both sides. The war widened, and the United States entered the fray in 1917. As World War I escalated, governments took control of their economies, rationing food and supplies and calling on civilians to work and make sacrifices for the war effort.*

## 1914 to 1915: Illusions and Stalemate

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did the war on the Eastern Front differ from war on the Western Front?*

Before 1914 many political leaders believed war to be impractical because it involved so many political and economic risks. Others believed that diplomats could easily prevent war. In August 1914 both ideas were shattered. However, the new illusions that replaced them soon proved to be equally foolish.

Government **propaganda**—ideas that are spread to influence public opinion for or against a cause—had stirred national hatreds before the war. Now, in August 1914, the urgent pleas of European governments for defense against aggressors fell on receptive ears in every nation that was at war. Most people seemed genuinely convinced that their nation's cause was just.

A new set of illusions also fed the enthusiasm for war. In August 1914 almost everyone believed that the war would be over in a few weeks. After all, almost all European wars since 1815 had, in fact, ended in a matter of weeks. The soldiers who boarded the trains for the war front in August 1914 and the jubilant citizens who saw them off believed that the warriors would be home by Christmas.

## The Western Front

German hopes for a quick end to the war rested on a military gamble. The Schlieffen Plan called for the German army to make a vast encircling movement through Belgium into northern France. According to the plan, the German forces would sweep around

Paris. This would enable them to surround most of the French army. However, the German advance was halted a short distance from Paris at the First Battle of the Marne (September 6–10). To stop the Germans, French military leaders loaded 2,000 Parisian taxicabs with fresh troops and sent them to the front line.

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

### The Eastern Front

Unlike the Western Front, the war on the Eastern Front was marked by mobility. The cost in lives, however, was equally enormous. At the beginning of the war, the Russian army moved into eastern Germany but was decisively defeated at the Battle of Tannenberg on August 30 and the Battle of Masurian Lakes on September 15. After these defeats, the Russians were no longer a threat to Germany.

Austria-Hungary, Germany's ally, fared less well at first. The Austrians had been defeated by the Russians in Galicia and thrown out of Serbia as well. To make matters worse, the Italians betrayed their German and Austrian allies in the Triple Alliance by attacking Austria in May 1915. Italy thus joined France, Great Britain, and Russia, who had previously been known as the Triple Entente, but now were called the Allied Powers, or Allies.

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

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

### GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

World War I took place along two main fronts.

- HUMAN SYSTEMS** *What generalizations can you make about the war based on the dates of important victories for the Allied and Central Powers?*
- THE USES OF GEOGRAPHY** *Why does the farthest advance of the Allied and Central Powers change more on the Eastern Front than the Western Front?*





▲ A boy delivers a newspaper to men living in the trenches during World War I.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**

**Explaining** What was unique about trench warfare?

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

**target** something or someone marked for attack

By this time, the Germans had come to the aid of the Austrians. A German-Austrian army defeated the Russian army in Galicia and pushed the Russians far back into their own territory. Russian casualties stood at 2.5 million killed, captured, or wounded. The Russians were almost knocked out of the war.

Encouraged by their success against Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary, joined by Bulgaria in September 1915, attacked and eliminated Serbia from the war. Their successes in the east would enable the German troops to move back to the offensive in the west.

✓ **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

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

## Trench and Air Warfare

**GUIDING QUESTION** What made World War I more devastating than any previous wars?

On the Western Front, the trenches dug in 1914 had by 1916 become elaborate systems of defense. The Germans and the French each had hundreds of miles of trenches, which were protected by barbed-wire entanglements up to 5 feet (about 1.5 m) high and 30 yards (about 27 m) wide. Concrete machine-gun nests and other gun batteries, supported further back by heavy artillery, protected the trenches. Troops lived in holes in the ground, separated from each other by a strip of territory known as no-man’s-land.

Trench warfare baffled military leaders who had been trained to fight wars of movement and maneuver. At times, the high command on either side would order an offensive that would begin with an artillery barrage to flatten the enemy’s barbed wire and leave them in a state of shock. After “softening up” the enemy in this fashion, a mass of soldiers would climb out of their trenches with fixed bayonets and hope to work their way toward the enemy trenches.

The attacks rarely worked because men advancing unprotected across open fields could be fired at by the enemy’s machine guns. In 1916 and 1917, millions of young men died in the search for the elusive breakthrough. In just 10 months at Verdun, France, 700,000 men lost their lives over a few miles of land. World War I had turned into a **war of attrition**, a war based on wearing down the other side with constant attacks and heavy losses.

By the end of 1915, airplanes appeared on the battlefield for the first time in history. Planes were first used to spot the enemy’s position. Soon, planes also began to attack ground **targets**, especially enemy communications. Fights for control of the air space occurred, and then increased over time. At first, pilots fired at each other with handheld pistols. Later, machine guns were mounted on the noses of planes, which made the skies considerably more dangerous.

The Germans also used their giant airships—the zeppelins—to bomb London and eastern England. This caused little damage but frightened

many people. Germany's enemies, however, soon found that zeppelins, which were filled with hydrogen gas, quickly became raging infernos when hit by anti-aircraft guns.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

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

## A World War

**GUIDING QUESTION** *Why did the war widen to become a world conflict?*

Because of the stalemate on the Western Front, both sides sought to gain new allies. Each side hoped new allies would provide a winning advantage, as well as a new source of money and war goods.

### Widening of the War

Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, as Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire were called. Russia, Great Britain, and France—the Allied Powers—declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The Allies tried to open a Balkan front by landing forces at Gallipoli (guh • LIH • puh • lee), southwest of Constantinople, in April 1915. However, the campaign was disastrous and the Allies withdrew.

By 1917 the war had truly become a world conflict. That year, while stationed in the Middle East, a British officer known as Lawrence of Arabia urged Arab princes to revolt against their Ottoman overlords. In 1918 British forces from Egypt mobilized troops from India, Australia, and New Zealand and worked to destroy the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East.

The Allies also took advantage of Germany's preoccupations in Europe and lack of naval strength to seize German colonies in the rest of the world. Japan, a British ally beginning in 1902, seized a number of German-held islands in the Pacific. Australia seized German New Guinea.

### Entry of the United States

At first, the United States tried to remain neutral. As World War I dragged on, however, it became more difficult to do so. The immediate cause of the United States's involvement grew out of the naval war between Germany and Great Britain.

Britain had used its superior navy to set up a blockade of Germany. The blockade kept war materials and other goods from reaching Germany by sea. Germany, in turn, set up its own blockade of Britain and enforced it with the use of **unrestricted** submarine warfare, including the sinking of passenger liners.

On May 7, 1915, German forces sank the British ship *Lusitania*. About 1,100 civilians, including more than 100 Americans, died. After strong protests from the United States, the German government suspended unrestricted submarine warfare in September 1915 to avoid antagonizing the United States further. Only once did the Germans and British engage in direct naval battle—at the Battle of Jutland on May 31, 1916; neither side won a conclusive victory.

By January 1917, however, the Germans were eager to break the deadlock in the war. German naval officers convinced Emperor William II that resuming the use of unrestricted submarine warfare could starve the British into submission within six months. When the emperor expressed concern about the United States, German Admiral Holtzendorf assured him: "I give



▲ The sinking of the *Lusitania* made the front page of *The New York Herald*. Germany claimed that the British passenger ship was a fair target because it carried 173 tons of ammunitions as cargo.

### CRITICAL THINKING

**Inferring** Why did this event help lead to the U.S. entry in the war?

**unrestricted** having no restrictions or bounds

### Influenza Pandemic of 2009

The pandemic of 1918 was caused by a type of the H1N1 influenza virus. A previously unknown strain of this virus appeared in 2009. First occurring in Mexico in February 2009, the disease spread rapidly worldwide, presumably due to high levels of air travel. In June, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that H1N1 had become a pandemic, or an outbreak affecting a high proportion of the population over a wide geographic area. Unlike the 1918 outbreak, the H1N1 flu did not mutate into a more deadly form, and the death toll remained relatively low. In August 2010, the WHO announced that the H1N1 flu had moved into a post-pandemic stage.

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

**planned economy** an economic system directed by government agencies

your Majesty my word as an officer that not one American will land on the continent.”

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

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

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

## The Impact of Total War

**GUIDING QUESTION** *What was the impact of total war?*

As World War I dragged on, it became a **total war** involving a complete mobilization of resources and people. It affected the lives of all citizens in the warring countries, however far from the battlefields. The home front was rapidly becoming a cause for as much effort as the war front.

### Increased Government Powers

Most people had expected the war to be short. Little thought had been given to long-term wartime needs. Governments had to respond quickly, however, when the new war machines failed to achieve their goals. Many more men and supplies were needed to continue the war effort. To meet these needs, governments expanded their powers. Countries drafted tens of millions of young men, hoping for that elusive breakthrough to victory.

Wartime governments throughout Europe also expanded their power over their economies. Free-market capitalistic systems were temporarily put aside. Governments set up price, wage, and rent controls. They also rationed food supplies and materials; regulated imports and exports; and took over transportation systems and industries. In effect, in order to mobilize all the resources of their nations for the war effort, European nations set up **planned economies**.

As a result of total war mobilization, the differences between soldiers at war and civilians at home were narrowed. In the view of political leaders, all citizens were part of a national army that was dedicated to victory. Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States, said that the men and women “who remain to till the soil and man the factories are no less a part of the army than the men beneath the battle flags.”

### Manipulation of Public Opinion

As the war continued and casualties worsened, the patriotic enthusiasm that marked the early stages of the war began to wane. By 1916 signs indicated that civilian morale was beginning to crack. War governments, however, fought back against growing opposition to the war.

Authoritarian regimes, such as those of Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary, relied on force to subdue their populations. With the pressures of the war, however, even democratic states expanded their police powers to stop internal dissent. The British Parliament, for example, passed the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). It allowed the government to arrest protesters as traitors. Newspapers were censored, and sometimes publication was suspended.

Wartime governments made active use of propaganda to increase enthusiasm for the war. As the war progressed and morale sagged, governments were forced to devise new techniques for motivating citizens.

## Total War and Society

In the fall of 1918, a deadly influenza struck, adding to the horrors of World War I. Probably spread by soldiers returning from the front, influenza became the deadliest epidemic in history. An estimated total of 50 million people died worldwide.

Total war also had a significant impact on European society. World War I created new roles for women. Because so many men left to fight at the front, women were asked to take over jobs that were not available to them before. Women found themselves employed in jobs that once were considered beyond their capacity. These jobs included civilian occupations such as chimney sweeps, truck drivers, farm laborers, and factory workers in heavy industry. For example, 38 percent of the workers in the Krupp Armaments works in Germany in 1918 were women.

The place of women in the workforce was far from secure, however. Both men and women seemed to expect that many of the new jobs for women were only temporary.

At the end of the war, as men returned to the job market, governments quickly removed women from the jobs they were encouraged to take earlier. By 1919, 650,000 women in Great Britain were unemployed. Wages for the women who were still employed were lowered.

Nevertheless, in some countries the role women played in wartime economies had a positive impact on the women's movement for social and political emancipation. The most obvious gain was the right to vote, which was given to women in Germany, Austria, and the United States immediately after the war. British women over the age of 30 gained the right to vote, together with the right to stand for Parliament, in 1918.

Many upper- and middle-class women also gained new freedoms. In ever-increasing numbers, young women from these groups took jobs, lived in their own apartments, and relished their new independence.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

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

### CRITICAL THINKING

**Drawing Conclusions** How might this poster have increased British support for the war?

▼ This British recruiting poster is an example of wartime propaganda.



## LESSON 2 REVIEW

### Reviewing Vocabulary

**1. Applying** Describe the steps that resulted in the development of trench warfare.

### Using Your Notes

**2. Identifying** Use your notes to describe the ways in which alliances shifted during World War I.

### Answering the Guiding Questions

**3. Contrasting** How did the war differ on the Western and Eastern Fronts?

**4. Drawing Conclusions** What made World War I more devastating than any previous wars?

**5. Identifying** Why did the war widen to become a world conflict?

**6. Determining Cause and Effect** What was the impact of total war?

### Writing Activity

**7. Informative/Explanatory** Write a paragraph discussing the role that women played in World War I.