The Great War
1914-1919

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Causes of The Great War

Imperialism

• Germany felt that other powerful nations didn’t respect them economically.

• Competition for colonies in Africa brought Germany and France to the brink of War.

• The British felt threatened by Germany’s rapid economic Growth.

• The British began to unite with the French against Germany’s imperialist desires.
Causes of The Great War

Militarism

• Militarism: Glorification of the military. The military began to dominate many counties national policy.

• Arms Race: Rival countries tried to make sure that they would “build a bigger military than the enemy will build when they hear we’re building a bigger military then theirs.”

• Social Darwinism: Naturally, the strongest will survive

• Fear of war gave military leaders more influence in Government.
Causes of The Great War
Aggressive Nationalism

- Germany was proud of their military power and victory in the Franco-Prussian War.
- The French were bitter and wanted to regain “lost provinces” in Alsace and Lorraine.
- Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire feared that people living within their borders may form nationalist movements to form their own countries.
- Pan-Slavism: Meant that all Slavic people shared a common nationality. As the largest Slavic country, Russia swore to defend all Slavic nations against any threat.
Causes of the Great War
Tangle of Alliances

• Out of fear, nations signed treaties promising to defend each other.

• This system made it easy for a small local wars to escalate into a horrifying World War.

• Allies (Triple Entente) France, Great Britain, Russia, and eventually the United States of America.

• Central Powers (Triple Alliance): Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire.
1914

- June 28: Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated in Sarajevo by Serbian Nationalists.
- July 28: Austria-Hungary Declares war on Russia.
- August 3: Germany Declares War on France.
- August 4: Britain declares war on Germany and Austria-Hungary.
- August 19: The President of America, Woodrow Wilson appeals to neutrality.
- December 25: Unofficial Christmas Truce (Cease-fire) on the Western Front.

1915

- February 4: Germany declares a submarine blockade of Britain, stopping all supplies from getting in.
- April 22-May 5: Second battle of Ypres, the first large scale use of chemical weapons in WW1, adding horrific effects.
- May 7: The Lusitania, a passenger ship is sunk off the coast of Ireland killing 1200 of 2000 passengers including 128 Americans, and 125 children.

1916

- November 7: Woodrow Wilson is re-elected President with the Slogan “Keep us out of war.”

1917

- February 1: Unrestricted submarine warfare declared by Germany, with the intention of sinking many more ships.
April 2: President Woodrow Wilson asks the House of Representatives to declare war on Germany.

April 6: The U.S declares war on Germany, entering the First World War.

1918

March 3: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk signed by Soviet Russia and the Central Powers. Russia leaves the war and loses 25% of their land and population.

May 16: Espionage Act, makes it so Americans can be fined for criticizing or interfering with the war effort. Peace-wanting pacifists are forced to stop “speaking out.”

September 29: Allies break through the Hindenburg line. Breaking Germanys last defense.

November 11: WW1 ends, The Central Powers Stand down and a cease-fire is initiated. The treaty was signed at 11:00, on the 11th day, of the 11th month.

1919

June 28: Treaty of Versailles is signed, punishing Germany and rewarding the Triple Entente.
Machine Gun (MG)

The machine gun is a weapon that unlike a rifle, (semi-automatic) can fire fully automatic, mowing down waves of troops. They were used to defend trenches just because of that, and weren’t used on offense very often because they were large and were ill-suited for rapidly advancing soldiers. By the end of the war MGs could fire 800-1200 rounds per minute. Which is definitely more than rifles. The rounds were fed through a fabric belt or a metal strip. Some of the MGs disadvantages was that it heavy, 30kg-60kg, it had a crew from 4-6, it jammed frequently with an inexperienced crew, and it overheated rapidly (sometimes within 2 minutes). Normally in WW1 the MG operator fired in bursts, keeping the weapon temperature low.

The MG stopped advancing armies dead in their tracks. Making a battle that would’ve lasted a day, last a few months.

In WW1 a single Machine Gun was estimated to be worth 80 rifles (firstworldwar.com). The total deaths from WW1 was about 10 million (Hokanson). The MG is estimated to have killed just over 7 million of those people (wiki.answers.com), making it a very effective weapon.
U-Boat (Submarine)

A U-Boat is a naval vessel that, instead of floating above water, goes underwater and attacks ships from there. They use torpedoes as their main weapon to sink ships, since the rounds of the guns wouldn’t work very well underwater. They are the invisible predator of WWI, because back then they didn’t have a SONAR detection system to find the subs.

U-Boats in WW1 destroyed approximately 4387 allied and neutral ships, (http://www.worldwar1.com/arm012.htm) which killed thousands of people. This doesn't sound like very many people with the total number of dead, but many of the ships sunk by U-Boats were carrying military supplies. Those supplies never made it to the troops on the front lines, killing many more.

U-Boats helped increase the length of the war, and decrease it. Since they were sinking ships with military supplies, they kept armies not as supplied as they needed to be to attack cities and trench lines (prolonging the war). But, they also helped bring America into the war with the sinking of the Lusitania, and the death of the Americans onboard (shortening the war).
Poison Gas was first used in the first months of the war in 1914 by the French. They fired Tear-Gas grenades to the Germans. After that the Germans gave serious thought to chemical weapons. They were the first to use it on a large scale. On January 31st, 1915 the Germans fired 15mm howitzer shells filled with liquid Tear-Gas to the Russians on the eastern front. It was ineffective because the liquid tear gas failed to turn into a gas at Russia’s cold temperatures. There were other gases as well, such as the deadly chlorine gas. It was first used at the Second Battle of Ypres. Allied soldiers noticed a yellow “cloud” on the ground. They thought it was going to mask a German infantry attack; it didn’t. The gas brought on choking attacks. Allied troops fled, creating a 4 mile gap in the Triple Entente line. Luckily for the Allies, the Germans weren't prepared for an attack, the German soldiers were just as nervous and hesitant as the Allied troops were.

Poison gas surprisingly didn’t kill very many people. Only about 88,498 people died (wikianswers.com). Compared to the death toll of WW1 it didn’t kill very many people.

Gas didn’t affect the length of WW1 in a big way. Gas mostly just added to the horror of the war.
Tanks

A WW1 tank is basically a huge machine made out of metal and normally moves around on tracks with some exceptions including the Czar tank on the right. Tanks are operated by a crew inside, protected by the bullet-proof metal. The tanks were used to break enemy trench lines. This worked well at the beginning until the other side figured out that a flamethrower could easily destroy a tank, and with most tanks top speed of 4 mph on flat ground, they had plenty of time to go and get one.

Tanks didn’t kill very many people in WW1, they weren’t very effective. They were mostly an experiment to find out what worked and what didn’t. These tanks led the way to the WW2 tanks that were devastating, killing thousands if not millions of people.
Western Front

Germany, France, Britain, and Belgium fought upon this 475 mile front running from the English Channel to Switzerland, from Switzerland to the Adriatic Sea. Germany had already thought of a plan to take out France in case of a war on two fronts. This plan was called the Schleiffen plan. This plan called for a quick all-out attack on France through the lowlands of Belgium, capture France, and then turn their attention to Russia. August 1914, Germany attacked Belgium. Within one month the Germans were within 50 miles of Paris. Germany made several strategic mistakes and both sides became locked in a stalemate impassible line of trenches.

France then initiated the Battle of the Somme which lasted 6 months and had more than 1 million casualties. In April 1917, the United States entered WW1. Russia became a shaky ally in November of 1917 with their revolution. Russia signed the Brest-Litovsk treaty taking them out of the war. Germany then was able to concentrate its war effort on the western front, an act that was counterbalanced by the arrival of American money, supplies, and troops. 1918 began with a huge push by the Germans who were repulsed after many losses on both sides, and the full participation of American troops. On August 8, The German lines were finally broken, and the allies had a straight shot into Germany.
Eastern Front

In 1914, Russia sent its massive armies against the Germans and the Austrians along this vast front. This front stretched from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea. The Russians experienced early triumphs, but after the battle of Tannenburg the Germans marched eastward to victory after victory.

Russia's lack of modern technology meant her troops were under-supplied and were poorly equipped. ¼ of Russian troops went into battle without rifles. They were instructed to follow behind their armed comrades and pick up their rifles after they had fallen.

The Russian morale was very low. Communists prompted the Russian troops to desert the fighting and return home. These deserters were very important in the overthrow of the Czar in February of 1917. In November 1917, Vladimir Lenin led the Russian Revolution that put an end to their government and took Russia out of the war. Lenin signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Central Powers. This Treaty caused Russia to lose 25% of her land and population.
Treaty of Versailles

Article 1:
The Polish people in eastern Germany would be granted independence so they could form their own nation.

Article 2:
A League of Nations will been formed to act as an international peace-keeping body to stop another World War from breaking out. The League will have troops “contributed” to them by nations in the league.

Article 3:
Free navigation of seas will be enforced. Free Trade will be initiated as soon as possible to get each country’s economy started back up.

Article 4:
Countries will be on alert and have troops on border areas for the next 3 years.

Article 5:
All colonies of ALL countries will be granted independence so the countries won’t be fighting over colonies.
Article 6: The blame for starting WW1 will be put upon the Black Hand, a terrorist group in Serbia.

Article 7: Land lost by each country to opposing forces will be returned to their pre-war nations.

Article 8: Every country will help out other countries that have been hurt by the war.

Article 9: There will be no such discrimination of race, ethnicity, religious views, and/or gender.