

WORLD WAR 1

WORLD WAR 1 IS KNOWN AS THE GREAT WAR AND IT LASTED FROM 1914 to 1918

HOW DID WW1 START?

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, which triggered WW1, took place in Sarajevo, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Archduke was traveling in an open-top car with his wife, Sophie. The incident took place during an official visit by the Archduke to inspect imperial armed forces. The gunman was 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip, a Serbian nationalist. This led Austria-Hungary to declare war on Serbia, but the war was fueled by a complex web of underlying causes, including militarism, alliances, imperialism, and nationalism. This drew major European powers into the devastating conflict. Germany supported Austria-Hungary, while Russia backed Serbia, escalating the regional crisis into a world war due to pre-existing military alliances and rivalries.

The assassination was the catalyst, but deep-seated rivalries and rigid alliances transformed a local conflict into a global war.

- Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for the assassination and issued a harsh ultimatum, which Serbia partially rejected.
- Austria-Hungary, with German support, declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914.
- Germany declared war on Russia and France
- Germany invaded neutral Belgium to attack France, prompting Britain to declare war on Germany.
- An arms race and military buildup among European powers.
- A complex system of secret treaties pulled nations into war.
- Competition for colonies and resources.
- Nationalism, intense patriotism, and desires for self-determination, especially in the Balkans.

WHO FOUGHT IN WW1?

It involved many of the world's great powers and was divided into two opposing powers: the *Allies and the Central Powers*.

Key Allied Powers (1914-1918)

France: A principal member, heavily involved in the Western Front

British Empire: Included the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa

Russian Empire: A major power on the Eastern Front until its withdrawal in 1917

Italy: Joined in 1915 after switching from the Triple Alliance.

Japan: Joined in 1914, primarily securing interests in the Pacific

United States: Entered in 1917 as an "associated power" rather than a formal treaty ally, providing crucial resources and troops.

Belgium: Involved after Germany violated its neutrality

Key Central Powers (1914 – 1918), known as the Quadruple Alliance

German Empire

Austria-Hungary

The Ottoman Empire

The Kingdom of Bulgaria

Despite initial military strengths and strategic successes, the Key Central Powers were defeated, leading to the collapse of their empires and severe economic, territorial, and political penalties.

HOW IS WW1 REMEMBERED?

World War I (WW1) is remembered as a uniquely brutal conflict. The war was marked by significant technological advancements in weaponry, immense human suffering, and trench warfare.

TRENCH WARFARE: The idiom “*in the trenches*” originated from the brutal trench warfare of WW1. It refers to the long, narrow, and dangerous ditches where soldiers lived, fought, and endured harsh, muddy, and unsanitary conditions. The massive amounts of debris, corpses, and a putrid environment contributed to the rapid breeding of trench rats. The rats played a role in damaging the soldiers’ health, psyche, and morale. They were responsible for the lack of sleep, which added to the filthy conditions and unsanitary hygiene in the trenches.

INTRODUCTION OF THE FLAMETHROWER: The German army introduced the flamethrower to the WW1 battlefield, which was designed for trench clearing, using nitrogen to propel burning oil up to 30 meters. The flamethrower had a physiological impact as it caused extreme burns, asphyxiation, and carbon monoxide poisoning; the burning fuel could flow into bunkers, corners, and trenches, bypassing conventional cover. Known as the “terror weapon,” the sight and sound of flames caused immense fear, panic, and retreat before the attack even reached the target. Flamethrowers were a psychological weapon designed to break the enemy’s will to fight through terrifying means.

INTRODUCTION OF POISONOUS GAS: Poisonous gas was introduced by the Germans in 1915. Over 100,000 tons of 30+ different chemicals, including chlorine, phosgene, and mustard gas, caused roughly 90,000 to 100,000 deaths and over 1 million total casualties, primarily causing agony, panic, and lasting physical damage. Initially released from pressurized cylinders and allowed to drift with the wind, gas was delivered via artillery shells, enabling longer range and greater accuracy.

The extensive use of chemical weapons led to widespread condemnation, contributing to the post-war reputation of WW1 as a uniquely brutal conflict, ultimately leading to the prohibition of the use of chemical and biological weapons of war in the 1925 Geneva Protocol.

INTRODUCTION OF THE TANK: Tanks were introduced to WW1 in 1916 by the British to break the stalemate of trench warfare, featuring heavy armor and caterpillar tracks to cross rough terrain. The early tanks were slow, mechanically unreliable, and hot. They were effective at crushing barbed wire and providing mobile firepower. Some were armed with 6-pounder guns to destroy enemy bunkers, others with machine guns to combat enemy infantry, and still others with a 360-degree rotating turret. As the war progressed, the design and effectiveness of the tank improved, and by the end of the war in 1918, the tank had established itself as a critical component of modern warfare.

WHAT WAS THE DEATH TOLL OF WW1?

WW1 resulted in an estimated 15 to 22 million total deaths, comprising roughly 9.7 million military personnel and 6.8 to 10 million civilians. Combined, the war caused nearly 40 million total casualties (deaths and wounds). Total deaths varied by source, with some estimates reaching up to 15 million. The Spanish Flu, which occurred toward the end of the war, is sometimes included in total fatality counts, adding millions more.

HOW DID WW1 END?

World War 1 ended not through mutiny or popular uprising but through military defeat. World War I ended with the Armistice signed by Germany and the Allies on November 11, 1918, halting fighting at 11 AM after years of devastating trench warfare, driven by Germany's collapsing military, supply shortages, and internal unrest, leading to a formal peace with the **Treaty of Versailles in 1919.**

The Treaty of Versailles included five key provisions, and its harsh terms fostered German resentment, contributing to instability.

War Guilt Clause – Germany accepted sole responsibility

Reparations – Massive payments to allies

Territorial Losses – Alsace-Lorraine to France, colonies lost

Military Restrictions – The Army limited demilitarization

The Establishment of the League of Nations – To ensure future peace