

Module 8: World War I and the Interwar Period
Topic 1 Content: World War I

The screenshot shows a presentation window titled "World War I". The main content area displays the title "World War I" and "The War to End all Wars" above a black and white photograph of a trench in a war-torn landscape. Below the image is a navigation bar with five colored segments: "Background" (green), "Causes of WWI" (red), "War!" (blue), "The Players Change" (yellow), and "War Ends" (purple). Each segment contains a small circle icon.

Narration Script
N/A

A Glamorous War

World War I

A Glamorous War

Ausflug nach Paris

Eisen-Lothringen 33644 Gm

Für Wiedersehen mit dem Boulevard

In den Kampf mit euch die Edelkuppe

Excited German soldiers on their way to the front - 1914.

A Glamorous War

Background Causes of WWI War! The Players Change War Ends

Narration Script

World War I lasted from 1914-1918. At the beginning, many people thought the war would be over quickly. In addition, the war, as it was portrayed in movies and posters, seemed glamorous and exciting. Presuming that the war would be easy and fast, many people enlisted into the military to join the fight.

What most people didn't understand was that the nature of warfare had changed, and that this war would be the bloodiest conflict that Europe, or the rest of the world, had ever seen. Over 10 million military personnel and about 7 million civilians were killed during the war, earning it the name "The Great War."

President Woodrow Wilson called World War I "the war to end all wars" in hopes that this would be the last large war in Europe.

Causes of WWI

Empire Building



Narration Script

Several events caused the tensions that led World War I. During the Industrial Revolution, industrialized nations needed new sources of raw materials for their industries and markets for the goods they produced. During the Age of Imperialism, these countries scrambled for territories and influence in Africa and Asia. Access to territories on those continents provided these industrialized nations with the raw materials and markets in which they could sell their goods. Often, imperialist powers came into conflict with one another and this led to rising tensions amongst those nations.

An important part of building a global empire was a strong military that could protect the interests of the empire, at home and abroad. This policy of funding a large army that could protect and expand the empire is known as militarism. Militarism was an important cause of the war.

Finally, all of these factors contributed to increased nationalism in Europe, as politicians and citizens in each country believed that their country was superior to its neighbors. As a result, each country sought to expand its power for the glory of its empire.

Causes of WWI

Competing Alliances



Narration Script

As part of protecting their interests, European powers made alliances with neighboring countries to guard against attack from their enemies. These alliances actually helped trigger World War I, since many of these agreements required that countries respond to attacks on their allies.

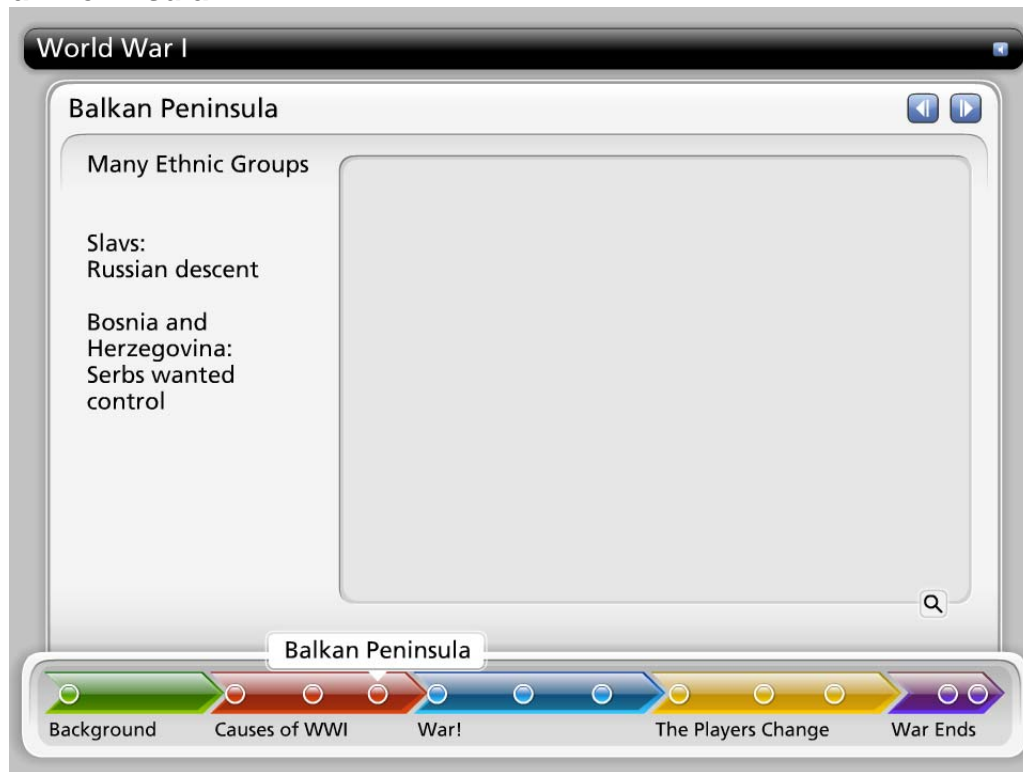
During the leadership of Otto von Bismarck from 1871 through 1890, Germany became a world industrial and military power, proving itself by defeating France in the Franco-Prussian War. Germany wanted to gain allies, while preventing France from doing the same. Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy all became allies under an agreement known as the Triple Alliance. This was a defensive alliance which promised mutual support in the event that one of the countries was attacked. Also, Germany made a treaty with Russia to keep it from allying with France. After Kaiser Wilhelm II became leader of Germany in 1888, he made expanding the country's military and naval power a national priority. Unfortunately for Germany, he did not see value in a treaty with Russia, and let it expire.

Meanwhile, France had been humiliated by Germany during the Franco-Prussian War and still had feelings of resentment towards Germany. At first, France was isolated, but eventually, the country was able to sign a treaty with Russia. This was a problem for Germany because its potential enemies, France and Russia, bordered the country on the east and the west.

Fearing Germany's military power, Britain joined with France and Russia in an alliance known as the Triple Entente. As a result, Europe was now divided into two competing camps.

Causes of WWI

Balkan Peninsula



Narration Script

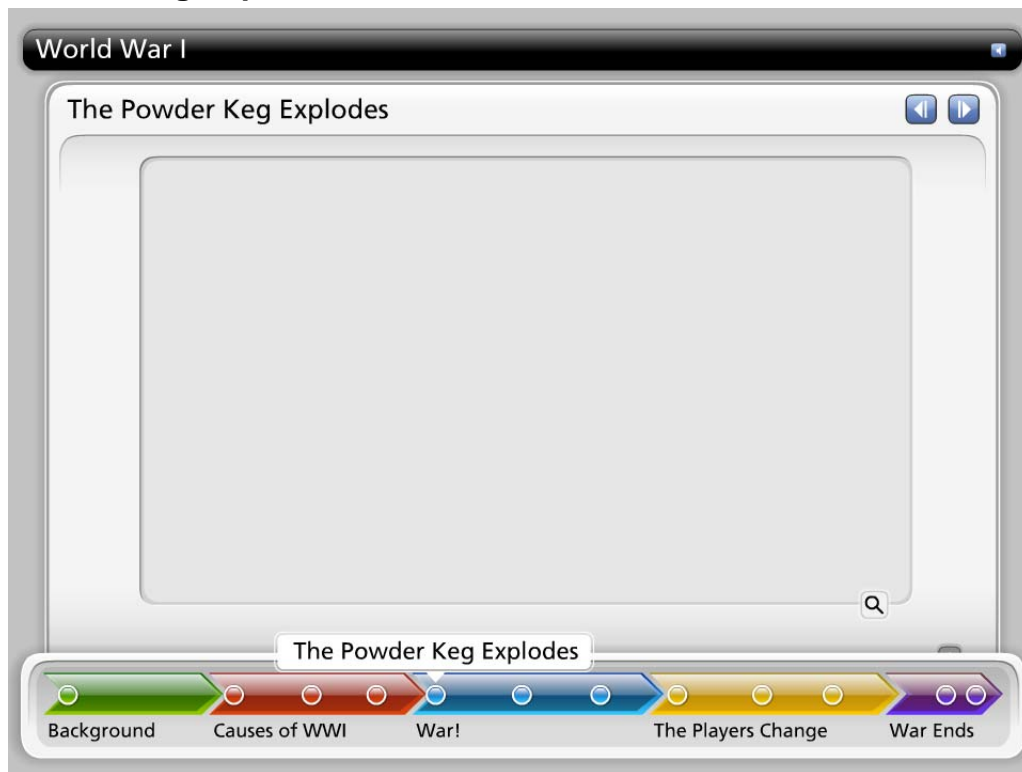
Since the Balkan Peninsula contained many different ethnic groups, it complicated diplomacy in Europe. Most of these groups were under the control of either the Ottoman Empire or Austria-Hungary. As the Ottoman Empire weakened, these groups began to form independent countries. Austria-Hungary was worried that many of the ethnic groups it controlled would also try to break away and become independent nations.

Many Russian people are considered to be Slavs, and Russia viewed itself as the protector of all Slavs. Many Slavs lived in the Balkan Peninsula under the control of Austria-Hungary and wanted to either rule themselves or be part of Serbia, another Slavic country. Russia encouraged the Slavs in their independence movements and, in doing so, Russia increased its influence in the Balkan Peninsula.

After the Congress of Berlin in 1878, Austria-Hungary took control of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had belonged to the Ottoman Empire. Serbia wanted to control this area because it had a large Slavic population. Tensions were very high in this region, and the Balkans was referred to as a "powder keg" ready to explode at any time. All of Europe was uneasy, as they feared they might be drawn into conflict as a result of their alliances with other countries.

War!

The Powder Keg Explodes



Narration Script

On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the Austrian throne, was assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip [gav-reel-oh print-seep]. The assassin was a member of a Serbian nationalist group known as the “Black Hand.” Austria was furious and used this opportunity to punish Serbia. They issued a set of demands, and then declared war on Serbia one month later.

War!

Chain of Events



Narration Script

The military alliances that were supposed to protect Europe brought it to the brink of mass destruction. Germany supported Austria-Hungary in its war against Serbia. Russia supported Serbia and mobilized its army to prepare for war. Germany reacted by declaring war on Russia.

Rather than wait and see if France would support Russia, Germany decided to declare war against France. After Germany took its army through neutral Belgium on its way to attack France, Britain joined the war against Germany in 1914. Now, almost every major power in Europe was at war.

War!

The Players

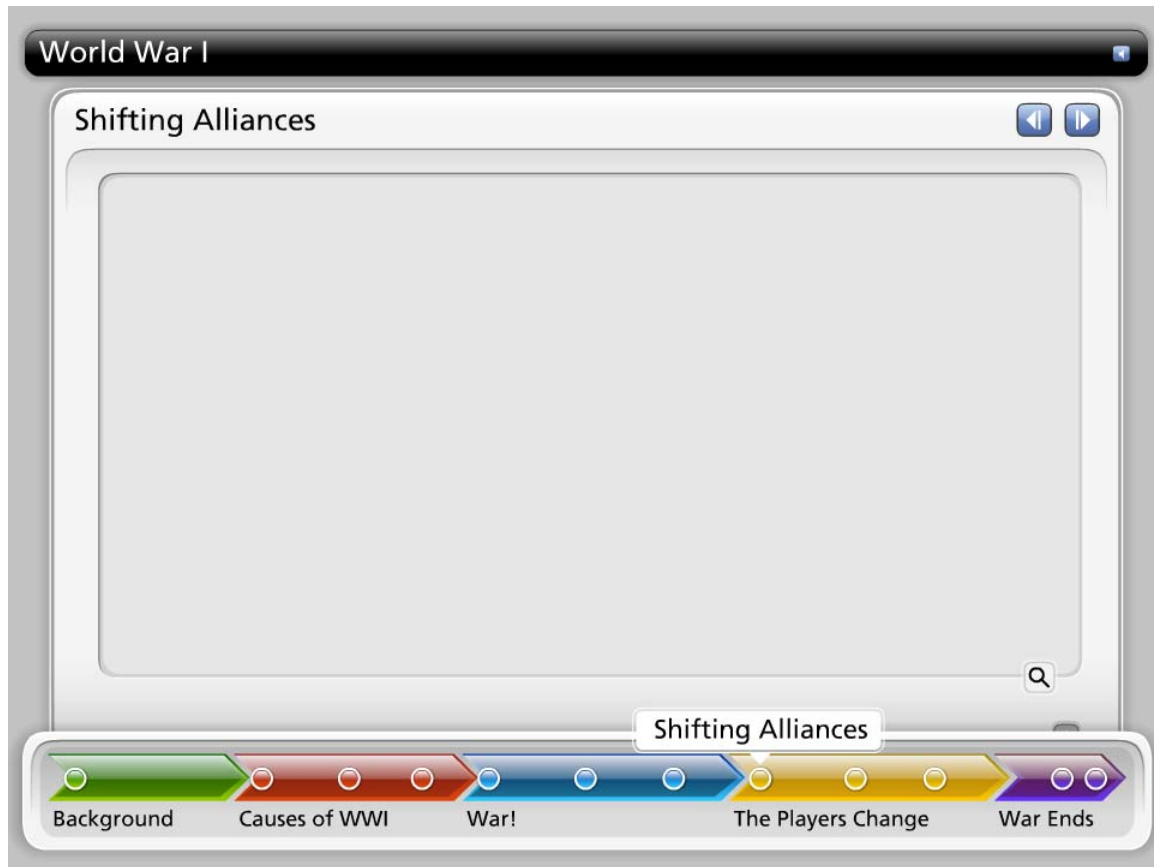


Narration Script

Europe's two major alliances, the Central Powers, represented mainly by Germany and Austria-Hungary, and the Allied Powers of Russia, France, and Britain fought directly against one another. Many people believed the war would be quick and would create long term peace in Europe. Although many soldiers went off to war with dreams of glory, people soon discovered that modern warfare brought destruction and death on a scale that had never before been seen.

The Players Change

Shifting Alliances



Narration Script

Italy decided that Germany was the aggressor and left the Triple Alliance. At first, Italy remained neutral. Then, in May of 1915, it went to war against Austria-Hungary and, in August 1916, declared war on Germany. In August of 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined forces with Germany and Austria-Hungary after signing a secret alliance with Germany.

The Players Change

Russian Revolution - 1917

World War I

Russian Revolution - 1917

- Russians overthrow Czar
- Bolsheviks take power
- Sign treaty with Germany

Russian Revolution - 1917

Background Causes of WWI War! The Players Change War Ends

Narration Script

Meanwhile, in Russia, the people had just completed a successful revolution, which removed the czar from power. After the revolution, the Bolsheviks [bol-sha-viks <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bolshevik>] ruled the country. The Bolsheviks were communists who led the struggle to overthrow the existing government.

Having just gone through a revolution, Russia was in no position to keep fighting in the war. As a result, the Russian government decided to sign a treaty with Germany, ending Russia's involvement in the war.

The Players Change

The Yanks Are Coming - 1917

World War I

The Yanks Are Coming - 1917

[Zimmerman Telegram](#)
Learn more at the National Archives

["Over There"](#)
Hear the music and read the lyrics to America's best known song from the war at First World War .com

The Yanks Are Coming - 1917

Background Causes of WWI War! The Players Change War Ends

Narration Script

Initially, the United States, under President Woodrow Wilson, stayed out of the war. After German U-boats sank commercial ships going to Britain, relations between the U.S. and Germany intensified. One of the most famous ships that the Germans sank was the *RMS Lusitania*, a commercial ship carrying 1,265 passengers and 694 crew members from New York City to Britain. The ship was also carrying ammunition and other wartime materials. The Germans considered these ships fair game for attack, and sank the ship in May 1915 off the coast of Britain.

America remained out of the war until April 1917, when it received the "Zimmerman Telegram" which Britain had intercepted from Germany. This telegram suggested that Mexico should declare war on the United States with the help of Germany, and that Germany would help Mexico regain territories that it had lost to America in previous wars.

The U.S. soldiers, called the doughboys, provided reinforcements for the Allied troops and helped turn the tide against the Central Powers. It would take another year-and-a-half of fighting before the Central Powers surrendered.

Select the link to visit the United States National Archives and Records Administration's website and learn more about the "Zimmerman Telegram".

War Ends

Allies Win - 1918



Narration Script

In November 1918, Germany signed a cease-fire and surrendered, even though there were no Allied troops inside Germany's border. Kaiser Wilhelm gave up his throne, as Germany eliminated its monarchy and became a republic.

Although peace had finally come to Europe, the war had taken a huge toll through millions of casualties and widespread destruction. Technology had changed the war from a localized operation involving relatively small numbers of soldiers and casualties, to a battlefield that spanned the globe, involving millions of troops from almost every continent. Advances in military technology like the machine gun, the tank, airplanes, and other weaponry, altered the way in which soldiers fought the war.

Would the peace be long-lasting, or would the countries soon be back at war? It all depended on the terms of peace laid out by the Big Four: England, France, the United States, and Italy. The leaders of these four countries met at Versailles, each with very different agendas.