

▼ A wounded German soldier in 1915



### WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

## A Soldier on the Western Front

“The blue French cloth mingled with the German grey upon the ground, and in some places the bodies were piled so high that one could take cover from shell-fire behind them. The noise was so terrific that orders had to be shouted by each man into the ear of the next. And whenever there was a momentary lull in the tumult of battle and the groans of the wounded, one heard, high up in the blue sky, the joyful song of birds! Birds singing just as they do at home in spring-time! It was enough to tear the heart out of one’s body!”

—German soldier Richard Schmieder, writing from the trenches in France

**Focus Question** How and where was World War I fought?

World War I artillery shell ►



## A New Kind of War

### Objectives

- Understand why a stalemate developed on the Western Front.
- Describe how technology made World War I different from earlier wars.
- Outline the course of the war on the Eastern Front, in other parts of Europe, in Turkey, and in the Middle East.
- Summarize how colonies fought in the war.
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### Terms, People, and Places

stalemate

convoy

zeppelin

Dardanelles

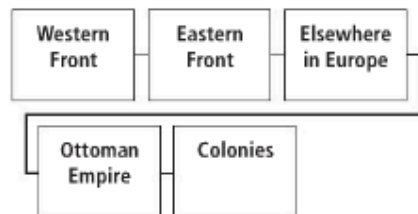
U-boat

T. E. Lawrence

### Note Taking

#### Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details

Record important details about the various battlefronts of World War I in a flowchart.



The Great War was the largest conflict in history up to that time. The French mobilized almost 8.5 million men, the British nearly 9 million, the Russians 12 million, and the Germans 11 million. “One out of every four men who went out to the World War did not come back again,” recalled a survivor, “and of those who came back, many are maimed and blind and some are mad.”

## Stalemate on the Western Front Stalemate on the Western Front

As the war began, German forces fought their way through Belgium toward Paris. The Belgians resisted more than German generals had expected, but the German forces prevailed. However, Germany’s plans for a quick defeat of France soon faltered.

The Germans’ Schlieffen Plan failed for several reasons. First, Russia mobilized more quickly than expected. After a few small Russian victories, German generals hastily shifted some troops to the east, weakening their forces in the west. Then, in September 1914, British and French troops pushed back the German drive along the Marne River. The first battle of the Marne ended Germany’s hopes for a quick victory on the Western Front.

Both sides then began to dig deep trenches to protect their armies from fierce enemy fire. They did not know that the conflict would turn into a long, deadly **stalemate**, a deadlock in which neither side is able to defeat the other. Battle lines in France would remain almost unchanged for four years.

 **Checkpoint** How did the Allies stop the Germans from executing the Schlieffen Plan?

## The Western Front and the Eastern Front, 1914–1918

Geography **Interactive**

For: Interactive map and timeline  
Web Code: nap-2621



**Map Skills** World War I was fought on several fronts in Europe. Despite huge loss of life and property, the two sides came to a stalemate on the Western and Eastern fronts in 1915 and 1916.

- 1. Locate** (a) Paris (b) Battle of the Marne (c) Verdun (d) Tannenberg
- 2. Movement** Using the scale, describe how the battle lines moved on the Western Front from 1914 to 1918.
- 3. Draw Inferences** Based on this map, why do you think many Russians were demoralized by the progress of the war?

**The Human Cost** To break the stalemate on the Western Front, both the Allies and the Central Powers launched massive offensives in 1916. German forces tried to overwhelm the French at Verdun (vur dUN). The French defenders held firm, sending up the battle cry “They shall not pass.” The 11-month struggle cost more than a half a million casualties, or soldiers killed, wounded, or missing, on both sides.

An Allied offensive at the Somme River (sum) was even more costly. In a single grisly day, nearly 60,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded. In the five-month battle, more than one million soldiers were killed, without either side winning an advantage.



▲ Wounded soldiers on stretchers in Verdun in 1916

## Note Taking

**Reading Skill: Summarize** Review the information under the heading "Technology of Modern Warfare." Summarize key points using a concept web like the one below. Add circles as needed.



## Technology of Modern Warfare

The enormous casualties suffered on the Western Front proved the destructive power of modern weapons. Two significant new or improved weapons were the rapid-fire machine gun and the long-range artillery gun. Machine guns mowed down waves of soldiers. The shrapnel, or flying debris from artillery shells, killed or wounded even more soldiers than the guns. Artillery allowed troops to shell the enemy from more than 10 miles away.

**Poison Gas** In 1915, first Germany and then the Allies began using another new weapon—poison gas. Poison gas blinded or choked its victims or caused agonizing burns and blisters. It could be fatal. Though soldiers were eventually given gas masks, poison gas remained one of the most dreaded hazards of the war. One British soldier recalled the effects of being gassed:

### Primary Source

“I suppose I resembled a kind of fish with my mouth open gasping for air. It seemed as if my lungs were gradually shutting up and my heart pounded away in my ears like the beat of a drum. . . . To get air into my lungs was real agony.”

—William Pressey, quoted in *People at War 1914–1918*

Poison gas was an uncertain weapon. Shifting winds could blow the gas back on the soldiers who launched it.

## INFOGRAPHIC

# Trench Warfare

From the end of 1914 through 1918, the warring armies on the Western Front faced each other from a vast system of deep trenches. There, millions of soldiers lived out in the open, sharing their food with rats and their beds with lice. Between the opposing trench lines lay “no man’s land.” In this tract of land pocked with shell holes, every house and tree had long since been destroyed. Sooner or later, soldiers would go “over the top,” charging into this manmade desert. With luck, the attackers might overrun a few enemy trenches. In time, the enemy would launch a counterattack, with similar results. The struggle continued, back and forth, over a few hundred yards of territory.



Soldiers peered over the edges of their trenches, watching for the next attack.



Soldiers ate, slept, and fought in trenches. ▶ Tea tins (above) supplied to British soldiers in World War I, contained 200 tablets of compressed tea.



**Tanks, Airplanes, and Submarines** During World War I, advances in technology, such as the gasoline-powered engine, led the opposing forces to use tanks, airplanes, and submarines against each other. In 1916, Britain introduced the first armored tank. Mounted with machine guns, the tanks were designed to move across no man's land. Still, the first tanks broke down often. They failed to break the stalemate.

Both sides also used aircraft. At first, planes were utilized simply to observe enemy troop movements. In 1915, Germany used zeppelins (ZEP uh linz), large gas-filled balloons, to bomb the English coast. Later, both sides equipped airplanes with machine guns. Pilots known as “flying aces” confronted each other in the skies. These “dogfights” were spectacular, but had little effect on the course of the war on the ground.

Submarines proved much more important. German U-boats, nicknamed from the German word for submarine, *Unterseeboot*, did tremendous damage to the Allied side, sinking merchant ships carrying vital supplies to Britain. To defend against the submarines, the Allies organized convoys, or groups of merchant ships protected by warships.

**✓ Checkpoint** What made World War I much more deadly than previous wars?

**Vocabulary Builder**

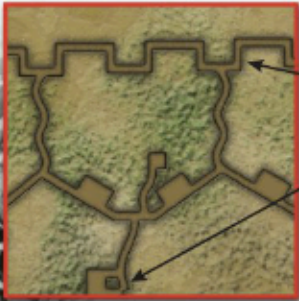
utilized—(YOOT il yzd) *vt.* put to practical use

confronted—(kun FRUNT id) *vt.* faced in opposition

**Battle on Other European Fronts**

On Europe’s Eastern Front, battle lines shifted back and forth, sometimes over large areas. Even though the armies were not mired in trench warfare, casualties rose even higher than on the Western Front. The results were just as indecisive.

Messenger dogs, trained to leap over barbed wire, carried vital information to the front lines. ▼



**◀ Trench Design**

Front line trenches were dug in a zigzag pattern to prevent the enemy from firing down the line.

Communications trenches, perpendicular to the front line trenches, served as routes for mail, food, supplies, reinforcements, and the transport of wounded soldiers.

Tanks, developed during the war, rolled on sturdy tracks, which allowed them to navigate through barbed wire and over the rough terrain of no man's land. ▶

**Thinking Critically**


- 1. Determine Relevance** How did technological advances in machine guns and tanks affect soldiers in the trenches?
- 2. Make Inferences** What effect do you think that trench warfare had on soldiers' morale?



**Russian Losses on the Eastern Front** In August 1914, Russian armies pushed into eastern Germany. Then, the Russians suffered a disastrous defeat at Tannenberg, causing them to retreat back into Russia. As the least industrialized of the great powers, Russia was poorly equipped to fight a modern war. Some troops even lacked rifles. Still, Russian commanders continued to send masses of soldiers into combat.

**New Combatants in the Balkans and Southern Europe** The Balkans were another battleground. In 1915, Bulgaria joined the Central Powers and helped defeat its old Balkan rival Serbia. Romania, hoping to gain some land in Hungary, joined the Allies in 1916, only to be crushed by the Central Powers.

Also in 1915, Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary and later on Germany. The Allies had agreed in a secret treaty to give Italy some Austrian-ruled lands inhabited by Italians. Over the next two years, the Italians and Austrians fought eleven battles along the Isonzo river, with few major breakthroughs. In October 1917, the Austrians and Germans launched a major offensive against the Italian position at Caporetto, also on the Isonzo. The Italians retreated in disarray. British and French forces later helped stop the Central Powers' advance into Italy. Still, Caporetto proved as disastrous for Italy as Tannenberg had been for Russia.

 **Checkpoint** In what way was the Eastern Front different from the Western Front?

**Geography Interactive**  
For: Audio guided tour  
Web Code: nap-2622

### The Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918



**Map Skills** From 1914 to 1918, the Ottoman empire struggled against enemies on multiple fronts.

**Location** Given that Britain controlled Egypt at this time, describe how the Ottoman empire's location affected what happened to it during World War I.

## War Around the World

Though most of the fighting took place in Europe, World War I was a global conflict. Japan, allied with Britain, used the war as an excuse to seize German outposts in China and islands in the Pacific.

### The Ottoman Empire Joins the Central Powers

Because of its strategic location, the Ottoman empire was a desirable ally. If the Ottoman Turks had joined the Allies, the Central Powers would have been almost completely encircled. However, the Turks joined the Central Powers in late October 1914. The Turks then cut off crucial Allied supply lines to Russia through the **Dardanelles**, a vital strait connecting the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

In 1915, the Allies sent a massive force of British, Indian, Australian, and New Zealander troops to attempt to open up the strait. At the battle of Gallipoli (guh LIP uh lee), Turkish troops trapped the Allies on the beaches of the Gallipoli peninsula. In January 1916, after 10 months and more than 200,000 casualties, the Allies finally withdrew from the Dardanelles.

Meanwhile, Turkey was fighting Russia in the Caucasus mountains on Turkey's northern border. This region was home to ethnic Armenians, some of whom lived under Ottoman rule and some of whom lived under Russian rule. As Christians, the Armenians were a minority in the Ottoman empire and did not have the same rights as Muslims. As the Russians advanced in 1914, some



Turkish Armenians joined or helped the Russian army against the Turks. The Ottoman government used this cooperation as a reason to deport the entire Armenian population south to Syria and Mesopotamia. During the deportation, between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenians died. Many were killed by planned massacres; others starved as they were forced to march with no food. Many Armenians fled to other countries, including the United States, leaving almost no Armenians in the historic Armenian homeland in Turkey.

On a third front, the Turks were hard hit in the Middle East. The Ottoman empire included vast areas of Arab land. In 1916, Arab nationalists led by Husayn ibn Ali (HOO sayn IB un AH lee) declared a revolt against Ottoman rule. The British government sent Colonel **T. E. Lawrence**—later known as Lawrence of Arabia—to support the Arab revolt. Lawrence led guerrilla raids against the Turks, dynamiting bridges and supply trains. Eventually, the Ottoman empire lost a great deal of territory to the Arabs, including the key city of Baghdad.

**War and the Colonies** European colonies were also drawn into the struggle. The Allies overran scattered German colonies in Africa and Asia. They also turned to their own colonies and dominions for troops, laborers, and supplies. Colonial recruits from British India and French West Africa fought on European battlefields. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand sent troops to Britain's aid.

People in the colonies had mixed feelings about serving. Some were reluctant to serve rulers who did not treat them fairly. Other colonial troops volunteered eagerly. They expected that their service would be a step toward citizenship or independence. As you will read, such hopes would be dashed after the war.



### Armenian Refugees

A group of Armenian refugees wait for their daily rations from Near East Relief, an American organization founded to help the surviving Turkish Armenians. Public opinion, especially in the United States, was sympathetic to the Armenians during and after World War I. However, the Allies' attempts to protect the Armenians through the treaty that ended the war with Turkey ultimately failed.

**Checkpoint** How did World War I affect the Ottoman empire and European colonies and dominions?

## SECTION 2 Assessment

### Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-quiz with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: naa-2621

#### Terms, People, and Places

1. For each term, person, or place listed at the beginning of the section, write a sentence explaining its significance.

#### Note Taking

2. **Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details** Use your chart and concept web to answer the Focus Question: How and where was World War I fought?

#### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

3. **Draw Conclusions** Why did a stalemate develop on the Western Front?

4. **Synthesize Information** Describe three ways in which technology affected the war.

5. **Predict Consequences** Governments on both sides of World War I tried to keep full casualty figures and other bad news from reaching the public. What effect do you think news about disastrous defeats such as Tannenberg and Caporetto would have had on the attitudes of people back home?

6. **Recognize Causes** How did nationalism within the Ottoman Empire come into play during the war?

#### Writing About History

**Quick Write: Write a Thesis Statement** Suppose that you are writing an essay on the effects of Ottoman Turkey's decision to join the Central Powers during World War I. Answer the questions below. Use your answers to create a thesis statement for the essay.

- Why were the Dardanelles important to the Allies?
- Who won the Battle of Gallipoli?
- What impact do you think Gallipoli had on the Russian war effort?