



THE FIRST WORLD WAR

WITH IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS

SARAH WEBB



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Aug War begins
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 Aug/Sept Battles of Tannenberg and Masurian Lakes on Eastern Front
 Sept Trench warfare begins on Western Front

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 Apr Gallipoli campaign begins
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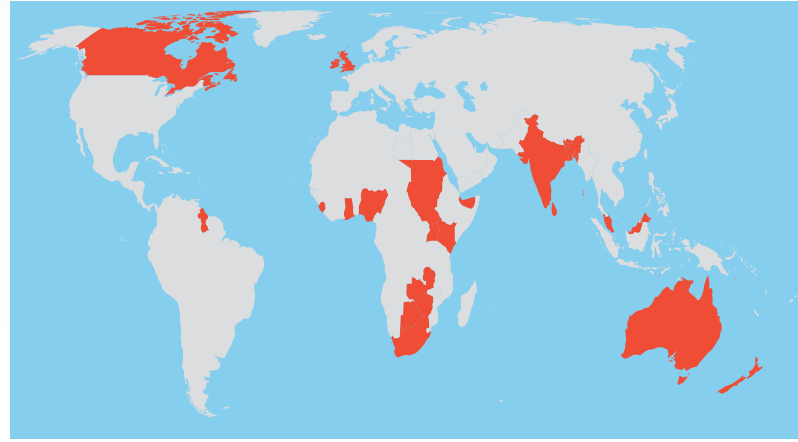
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WHO FOUGHT IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

Armed conflict first broke out between Austria–Hungary and Serbia in the summer of 1914 and within three weeks much of the world was at war. Germany and Austria–Hungary (sometimes referred to as the **Central Powers**) were allied against Britain, France and Russia (known as the **Allies**). Other countries joined later, including Turkey and Bulgaria for the Central Powers and Italy and the USA for the Allies.

The impact of the First World War was huge. It involved 32 countries and was the first truly ‘world’ war. More men were killed than in any previous European conflict while **civilians** lived with the hardships of war for over four years, and even became targets themselves. The death toll for troops in the **British Army** and **British Empire forces** was enormous; almost one in every ten soldiers were killed (almost 1 million), and over 2 million were wounded.



▲ A map showing where the British Empire troops came from (highlighted in red).

Faces of the First World War

These are the faces of some people from Britain and the British Empire whose lives were transformed by the War. Not all of these people survived it. Throughout this book, you will get to know some of these people and hear their stories.

▼ **Source A** Faces from the First World War.



Lieutenant William Hamo Vernon.



Lieutenant Joshi.



Privates Theo and George Seabrook and their brother Lieutenant William Seabrook.



Lottie Meade, a munitions worker.



Captain William (Billy) Avery Bishop.



Lieutenant Arthur Douglas Dodgson and daughter.



Private Reginald Roy Inwood.



Captain Fred Sellers, engaged to Grace Malin.



Grace Malin, engaged to Captain Fred Sellers.



Private Gordon Colebrook.

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Many, but not all of these people were from Britain. Just over 5 million men from the United Kingdom served in the British Army during the War. A further 3 million troops were from the British Empire, serving with the British Empire forces. The British had the largest empire in the world in 1914. It had approximately 445 million people, which was about one quarter of the world's population. From the Empire, India contributed the largest number of troops, at 1.5 million, followed by Canada then Australia.

Most of these troops were volunteers. **Conscription** was only introduced in Britain and New Zealand in 1916 and in Canada in 1917, elsewhere in the Empire there was no conscription. The legal minimum age for overseas service was 19 years old, but some younger teenage boys lied about their age to enlist. Most volunteers were sent to Europe, mainly to northern France and Belgium. However, fighting took place throughout the world: in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

ACTIVITY

- Look at the photographs on pages 4–5. Who do you think is the:
 - youngest soldier?
 - the eldest soldier?
- Read George Coppard's Story.
 - Why did George want to enlist in the Army?
 - How was he able to enlist despite being underage?
- List the countries mentioned on this spread that fought in the War and indicate for which side they fought.



GEORGE COPPARD'S STORY

'In 1914 ... Rumours of war broke out and I began to be interested in the [soldiers] tramping the streets in their big strong boots ... Military bands blared out their martial music in the streets. This was too much for me to resist and ... I knew I had to enlist straightaway. ... Towards the end of August I presented myself to the recruiting sergeant in Croydon. There was a steady stream of men, mostly working types, queuing up to enlist. The sergeant asked me my age [sixteen] and when told replied, 'Clear off son. Come back tomorrow when you're nineteen, eh?' So I turned up the next day and gave my age as nineteen ... and holding up my right hand, swore to fight for King and Country.'



Private Ivor Evans.



Florence Farmborough,
Red Cross nurse.



Corporal Leslie Wilton
Andrew.



Private Gordon
Etheridge.



Lieutenant Walter Tull.



Captain (Bernard)
Paul Beanlands.



Second Lieutenant
George Doman.



General Sir Charles
Carmichael Munro.



Corporal George
Coppard (seated).



Private William Cecil Tickle.

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WHY DID TENSIONS DEVELOP BETWEEN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BEFORE 1914?

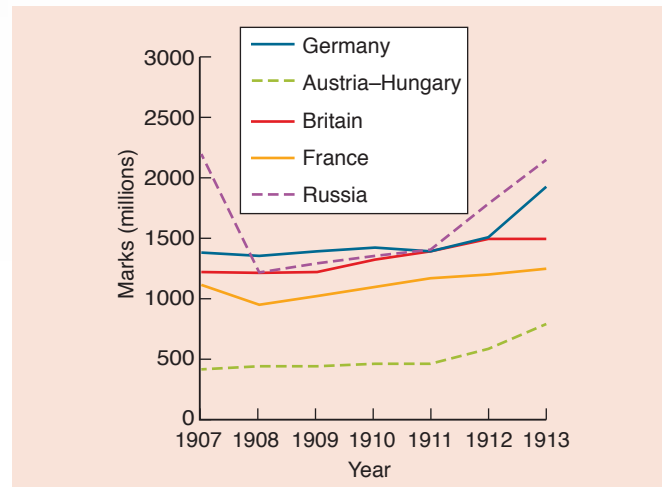
The causes of the First World War go back to growing tensions between Germany, Austria–Hungary, Russia, France and Britain in the decades before 1914. Tensions stemmed from the fact that most of these countries wanted to increase or maintain their power in Europe. At the time, a country's power was measured by its wealth, military strength and the size of its empire. As a result, competition developed to build up economic, military and imperial strength. This fuelled rivalries which worsened relations. Countries sought security by allying themselves with others, resulting in the creation of two rival alliance systems in Europe.

Economic strength

The **industrial revolution** of the nineteenth century meant that the wealthiest countries were now those that could produce the most coal, iron and steel. Economic wealth and industrial output were both essential to building up military strength. Britain initially took the lead, but by 1910 Germany emerged as the leading industrial power in Europe.

Military strength

Most countries in the decades before 1914 were keen to equip their armies with modern military equipment. They knew they would be at a disadvantage compared to their rivals if they did not. An **arms race** developed as countries spent more and more money on weapons. Germany was particularly alarmed by the sharp increase in Russian military spending (see graph above). Britain meanwhile interpreted German investment in their battlefleet as evidence of German ambitions to challenge the supremacy of the British Royal Navy. A fierce competition developed between them in building up numbers of **dreadnought** battleships. Some in Germany came to believe that if war was to come, they stood a better chance of winning if it was fought sooner rather than later before their rivals grew even stronger.



▲ The amount of money each country was spending on defence, 1907–13.

Imperial strength

Competition for large empires was another cause of rivalry. Empires brought prestige and often increased economic strength as they were a source of resources and trade. Britain, and to a lesser extent France, had large overseas empires which they were keen to protect. Both were alarmed and affronted by the German Kaiser's aspirations to establish Germany as a world power. These common concerns helped to bring about an alliance between Britain and France who had formerly been rivals.

The Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires competed for control of the **Balkans**. In 1908 Austria-Hungary added the Balkan territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina to its Empire. This angered Russia who became determined to resist any further extension of Austro-Hungarian influence in the Balkans. Austro-Hungarian control in the Balkans was also opposed by the Kingdom of Serbia who was keen to extend its own influence.

Both Russia and the Kingdom of Serbia supported the growth of Slavic **nationalism** which encouraged the **Slavic** peoples of the Balkans to resist foreign rule by Austria-Hungary. This contributed to unrest in the Balkans.

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Britain

Population (millions)	46
Power held by	Parliamentary Democracy
Wealth	£ £ £ £ £
*Industry	
Army	
Naval force	
Allies	France, Russia



Germany

Population (millions)	65
Power held by	Emperor Wilhelm II
Wealth	£ £ £ £
***Industry	
Army	
Naval force	
Allies	Austria-Hungary, Italy



Austria-Hungary

Population (millions)	65
Power held by	Emperor Franz Josef
Wealth	£ £
Industry	
Army	
Naval force	
Allies	Germany, Italy



France

Population (millions)	40
Power held by	Parliamentary Democracy
Wealth	£ £ £
Industry	
Army	
Naval force	
Allies	Russia, Britain



Russia

Population (millions)	140
Power held by	Emperor Nicholas II
Wealth	£ £ £
**Industry	
Army	
Naval force	
Allies	France, Britain

Alliance systems

Countries made **alliances** to make them feel more secure. By 1907, two rival alliance systems had formed: the **Triple Alliance** (Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) and the **Triple Entente** (France, Russia and Britain). All alliance members, apart from Britain, promised to provide military help if their allies were attacked. Despite their defensive purpose, in some ways alliances actually increased insecurity because it seemed as if countries were forming threatening rival groups. Germany, in particular, felt surrounded by hostile countries.

ACTIVITY

- What does the graph on page 6 suggest about why there might have been growing tensions between European countries before 1914?
- Look at the cards on this page showing the status of those European countries that went to war in 1914.
 - List the strengths and weaknesses of each major European country around 1914 that went to war.
 - What main worries do you think members of the Triple Entente had about the Triple Alliance?
 - What main worries do you think members of the Triple Alliance had about the Triple Entente?
- Tensions between countries were caused by economic developments, military and imperial strength and alliance systems.
 - Draw a mind map with 'Reasons for tensions between countries' in the middle, giving examples for each main cause: economic strength, imperial strength, military strength, alliance systems.
 - Draw arrows between the four main factors and add your own notes to show ways in which they were linked.

* The leading producer until the early 1900s. Wanted to regain this position.
 ** Still not much modern industry but output was increasing quickly.
 *** Had recently become the leading industrial producer and output continued to increase.

Italy, a member of the Triple Alliance, did not actually go to war on the side of its allies Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914. Italy joined the War in 1915, but on the side of the Triple Entente.

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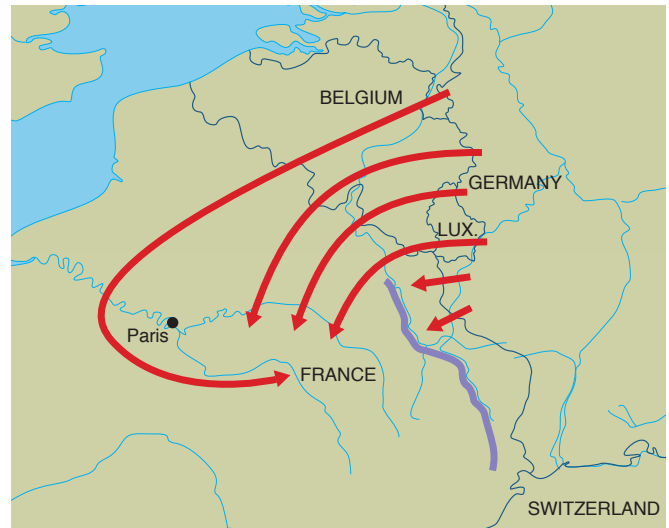
DID COUNTRIES' MILITARY PLANS MAKE WAR MORE LIKELY?

Every major European country had drawn up military plans in the decades before 1914. These set out how their armies should act to give themselves the best chance of victory in the event of a war.

German military plans

Germany was in a particularly vulnerable position if war did break out. This was because Germany would have to face a war on two fronts; against France to the west and against Russia to the east. The German Army was strong, but not strong enough to divide its strength and win.

The German military plan was based on the ideas of the German General Alfred von Schlieffen, drawn up in the 1890s. It became known as the Schlieffen Plan. It argued that the best hopes for a German victory lay in avoiding a two front war. It set out that this could be achieved by launching such a massive and rapid attack to the west that Belgium and France would be defeated within six weeks. It was estimated that the vast Russian Army would take eight weeks to mobilise and be ready for action. A full scale two front war could therefore be avoided because German troops would have already defeated France before having to face the full force of the Russian Army. The key to the success of the plan was an invasion to the west that was swift and forceful enough to outmanoeuvre



▲ The original Schlieffen Plan.

French and Belgian troops. To achieve this the plan said that over 1 million German troops would advance rapidly in a 'hook' like formation through the largely flat terrain of Belgium and northern France, thereby avoiding the strong French fortifications along the Franco-German border (see the purple line on the map above). It was a risky plan. To have any chance of success German troops would have to strike first before French and Belgian troops were prepared and ready for action.



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Austro-Hungarian military plans

Austria-Hungary also had to face the threat of a war on multiple fronts, against the Kingdom of Serbia to the south and Russia to the east. The Austro-Hungarian Army was comparatively weak and as such wanted to avoid war unless help from its German ally was guaranteed.

Russian military plans

The Russian Army was vast but under-resourced (see page 7). It took a large amount of time to organise its troops to be ready for action. Russian military plans emphasised that it was vital that the order be given to mobilise the Russian Army early, well in advance of the need to actually fight. However, an early mobilisation order would alarm other countries and might panic them into thinking that Russia was threatening war.

French military plans

French military planners believed the best hope of achieving victory was by launching a large scale, rapid attack across the Franco-German border. The French were confident that the strong fortifications they had built along the Franco-German border would be sufficient to seriously protect against a German invasion.

British military plans

The British had a relatively small professional army in 1914 (see page 7). They did not want to be involved in a large scale war in Europe. However, they planned to send troops to help France in the event of a German attack. This was because Britain was keen to prevent what they saw as the threat of German domination in Europe. British military planners believed that the British Royal Navy should be its biggest contribution, acting to destroy the German navy and **blockading** German ports to prevent the receipt of vital supplies.

Did military plans make war more likely?

In some ways the plans made war more likely. German leaders knew that Germany's best, perhaps only hope of survival, was if they were able to attack *before* they were attacked. This might make German leaders more likely to escalate to war rather than negotiate if a conflict seemed likely. Russia knew they had to mobilise early to stand a chance of victory. This might make Russian leaders more likely to order early mobilisation which would panic other countries into thinking war was imminent. All countries felt reasonably confident in their military plans. Might this mean they were more likely to risk involvement in a war? Despite these things, the military plans did not mean that countries wanted war. The plans were there to make sure their armies were best prepared if a war broke out. There was no immediate sign that it would at the beginning of 1914.

ACTIVITY

1. Why did German generals feel Germany's best hope of victory was by following the Schlieffen Plan? Try to identify three reasons.
2. Try to think of three risks which might cause the Schlieffen Plan to fail? Use the diagram on page 8 to help you.
3. How far, if at all, do you think the military plans made war more or less likely? Mark your view on the continuum below and give reasons to support your position.

War less likely

War more likely

◀ The Kaiser and his party watch proceedings on horseback during the manoeuvres of 1899. The Kaiser is turning round to laugh with General von Schlieffen, Chief of General Staff (fourth from right).

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WHAT EVENTS LED TO THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN THE SUMMER OF 1914?

Despite growing tensions in 1914, war did not seem immediately likely. Then, on 28 June 1914, a fatal double shooting in Austria–Hungary provided the trigger for war.

The trigger

The victims of the **assassination** were Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary, and his wife Sophie. They were killed in the city of Sarajevo in Bosnia, which had recently become part of Austria–Hungary (see page 6). The gunman was nineteen-year-old Gavrilo Princip. He belonged to Young Bosnia, a **terrorist** group committed to ending Austria–Hungary’s control of Bosnia. Young Bosnia received weapons and funding from powerful Serbian individuals. Austria–Hungary was quick to blame Serbia for the assassination, partly because they had been looking for an opportunity to attack Serbia, one of their rivals for control in the Balkans.

How did the assassination lead to war?

The events triggered by the assassination meant that within six weeks of the Archduke’s death much of Europe was at war. The timeline opposite shows how events unfolded.

Source A Theobald Bethmann Hollweg, the German Chancellor (the leading German politician), speaking in August 1914.

Should all our attempts [for peace] be in vain ... we shall go into the field of battle with a clear conscience and the knowledge that we did not desire this war.

▼ **Source B** Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife entering their car in Sarajevo, a few moments before the assassination on 28 June 1914.



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28 June The heir to the throne of Austria–Hungary is assassinated.

5 July Germany promised to support Austria–Hungary in taking action against Serbia.

23 July Austria–Hungary issued a harsh ultimatum to Serbia, threatening them with war unless all demands were agreed to.

28 July Austria–Hungary, encouraged and assured of support from its German ally, declared war on Serbia.

29 July Peace talks were suggested by Britain but never took place. Russia ordered its army to prepare for possible military action. Russia was desperate to prevent Austria–Hungary gaining further influence in the Balkans.

30 July Germany warned Russia to stop preparing its army. Russia refused.

1 August Germany declared war on Russia.

3 August Because of the Schlieffen Plan (see page 8), Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium.

4 August Britain declared war on Germany, claiming they were honouring their 1839 promise to protect Belgium.

6 August Austria–Hungary declared war on Russia. Serbia declared war on Germany.

12 August Britain and France declared war on Austria–Hungary.

▲ The main events that led to the outbreak of war in 1914.

Source D Georg Alexander Müller, an admiral in the German navy and friend of the Kaiser, writing in his diary in August 1914.

Brilliant mood. The government has succeeded very well in making us appear as the attacked.

Source E Von Moltke, the leading general of the German Army, 26 July 1914.

We shall never again strike as well as we do now, with France's and Russia's expansion of their armies incomplete.

Did countries want war in the summer of 1914?

Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia all appeared to take aggressive actions in the lead up to the outbreak of war (see timeline). Did this mean that these countries had just been looking for an excuse to go to war? German and Russian leaders claimed they did not want war, as Sources A and C suggest. However, not all the evidence suggests that war was unwanted, whether this was because conflict was actually seen as the best means of defence or as an opportunity to preserve and extend power, see Sources D and E. Many countries ended up at war because they feared the consequences of not going to war *more* than they feared war itself.

Source C Extracts from telegrams sent between Tsar Nicholas II, ruler of Russia, and Kaiser Wilhelm II, ruler of Germany, on 28 July 1914. Nicholas II and Wilhelm II were cousins.

[To Kaiser Wilhelm II] To try and avoid such a calamity as a European war, I beg you in the name of our old friendship to do what you can to stop your allies from going too far. Nicky.

[To Tsar Nicholas II] With regard to the hearty and tender friendship which binds us both from long ago, I am exerting my utmost influence to arrive at a satisfactory understanding with you. Your sincere and devoted friend and cousin. Willy.

The war that broke out in the summer of 1914 was in some ways the anticipated result of tensions and rivalries that had been building up between countries for decades (see pages 6–7). But the rapid descent into war also took people by surprise; arguably even Europe's leaders had hoped to avoid actual hostilities in the summer of 1914. But recklessness, fear, ambition and miscalculation all contributed to the outbreak of war in the summer of 1914.

ACTIVITY

1. a) For each of the following countries, write down the actions they took which contributed to the outbreak of war: Austria–Hungary, Serbia, Germany, Russia, Britain.
b) Rank these countries from most to least responsible for causing the War. Try to think about their motives as well as their actions. Explain your rankings.
2. a) How far do Source A, C, D and E agree about German motives in the lead up to war?
b) What motives might other countries have had for going to war?
3. To what extent was the arms race responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914? Try to include all the reasons you have learned about in pages 6–11 in your answer. Your answers should explain your view about which reasons were most important or how they were linked together.

GLOSSARY

Alliances Formal agreements of friendship between countries.

Allies Countries bound together by formal promises of support.

Armistice A truce or temporary pause in fighting.

Arms race Competition between countries to have the strongest military force.

Artillery Large, long range guns used for firing shells.

Assassination The murder, usually of a prominent person. Often for political reasons.

Balkans The geographical region of south eastern Europe, it now incorporates countries including Bulgaria and Serbia.

Battalion A military unit consisting of approximately 1,000 soldiers.

Blockade To seal off a place to prevent goods or people from entering or leaving.

British Army Made up of soldiers from the all parts of the United Kingdom.

British Empire forces Made up of soldiers from the British Empire outside of the United Kingdom.

Cavalry Troops trained to fight on horseback.

Censored Material which has been checked for sensitive or unauthorised information, and any such information deleted.

Central Powers Germany, Austria-Hungary and their allies which included Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire.

Civilians People not in the military forces.

Commonwealth An association of countries that includes Britain and a number of countries formerly in the British Empire that are now independent but which still have loyalty to the British monarchy.

Communist A supporter of the principles of communism, a left-wing political ideology.

Conscription Compulsory enlistment into the armed services.

Convoy System Merchant ships sailing in groups often protected by an armed naval escort ship.

Creeping barrage Artillery fire which moves slowly towards the enemy just in front of advancing troops to provide a covering curtain of fire.

Dreadnought A big battleship armed with heavy guns, first launched in 1906.

Dug-outs A covered shelter for troops in the trenches, usually dug into the trench wall or underground.

Epitaph A phrase or something by which a person or event will be remembered.

Flanders A geographical region in northwest Europe, including parts of northern France and Belgium.

High explosive shells Shells which detonate with a high explosive effect.

Hindenburg line A strong line of German trenches and fortifications built in France in 1916.

Imports Produce or goods coming into a country.

Industrial Revolution The rapid development of industry as a result of the introduction of machinery which led to the transition from a primarily agricultural to an industrial economy in Britain in the 19th century.

Inflation An increase in prices and a fall in the purchasing value of money.

Malnutrition Having insufficient food.

Mandates Territory assigned to the control of another country.

Merchant ships A ship that transports produce.

Mesopotamia A geographical region in the Middle East between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, including much of what is now Iraq.

Morale The state of the spirits and enthusiasm of a person or group.

Morse Code A mode of transmitting messages in which the letters of the alphabet are represented by a series of dots or dashes in sound or light.

Mutinied Having refused to obey the orders of a person in authority.

Nationalism Nationalism involves the sharing of a common identity between peoples of the same race, language, culture and geographical territory. It usually promotes the belief that these peoples have a right to rule themselves independently and not be ruled by another country.

Naval blockade The use of ships to block access to a country's ports and shoreline.

No man's land The disputed territory between the front line trenches of two opposing sides.

Ottoman Empire The Turkish Empire whose territory at its largest included land in southwest Asia, northeast Africa and southeast Europe.

Pacifists People who believe war and violence are unjustifiable.

Parody A literary or artistic work which exaggeratedly imitates the style of another person for critical and comic effect.

Patriotism Love, support and devotion to one's country.

Peninsula A piece of land projecting into a body of water that almost entirely surrounds it.

PoW Prisoner of War.

Protectorate A country or state under the control and protection of another.

Quakers Members of a Christian movement called the Quakers.

Reconnaissance aircraft A military plane used to gather information about the enemy such as the position of their troops.

Reparations Compensation payments to cover damage or injury to those who have been wronged.

Runners People who carry military messages on foot.

Semaphore A system of sending messages with flags.

Shrapnel shells Shells filled with small metal balls or objects, designed to explode and scatter in mid-air causing serious casualties to troops.

Slavic The term used to describe peoples from eastern Europe with shared ethnic, cultural and territorial identities.

Sniper A gunman who shoots at individual people from a concealed position.

Socialists Supporters of socialism, a left-wing political ideology.

Stalemate A military situation in which both sides have reached a deadlock and are unable to advance further.

Terrorist A person who uses force or violence in support of their political beliefs.

TNT A highly explosive chemical substance.

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk The peace treaty signed between Germany and the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic on 3 March 1918. It formally ended Russia's involvement in the First World War, but the terms imposed by Germany were harsh and included: the loss of the Baltic states (to Germany) and the Ukraine and the payment of 6 billion German gold marks in reparations.

Trench warfare Combat in which soldiers fight each other from opposing trenches.

Triple Alliance The alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy formed before the First World War.

Triple Entente The alliance between France, Russia and Britain formed before the First World War.

U-boats German submarines.

Victoria Cross Britain and the British Empire's highest military award for bravery.

War bonds Government issued bonds to fund military spending in wartime.

Warfare The activities of war and conflict.

Western Front The trench lines running through Belgium and France in the First World War.

Zeppelin A large German airship, used in the First World War for bombing and reconnaissance.

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