

First World War 1914–1918

Before the war

In the early 1900s, Britain was one of the world's most powerful nations and had a large empire. British politicians wanted to avoid war and there had been a period of peace in Europe. However, Germany was becoming a cause for concern, ruled by an ambitious **kaiser** who was envious of Britain's military strength.

Causes of war

The First World War started after the **assassination** of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28th June 1914. However, other factors, including **imperialism**, **nationalism**, **militarism** and **alliances** between countries, also contributed towards war breaking out.

Warring countries

The war was fought between two groups: the **Central Powers** (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire) and the **Allied Powers** (Serbia, Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium and the United States of America). The USA joined the Allies in 1917. Some countries remained neutral during the war.



Kaiser Wilhelm II (Germany), Winston Churchill (GB), David Lloyd George (GB), Nicholas Romanov II (Russia), Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (Germany), Vladimir Lenin (Russia), Woodrow Wilson (USA), Horatio Herbert Kitchener (GB), Franz Josef I (Austria), Georges Clemenceau (France)

Becoming a soldier

When war broke out, the army needed soldiers. Initially, men did not have to fight but were persuaded to join by **propaganda**. Later on, **conscription** was introduced meaning that men aged 18–41 had to join the army. Hundreds of thousands of men were sent to battlefields in places such as northern France and Belgium.



Life in the trenches

Soldiers on both sides dug deep, narrow ditches called **trenches** in the ground to hide from enemy attack. Soldiers lived in the trenches for weeks at a time and thousands were killed in battle. Trench conditions were terrible. They were smelly, muddy and infested with lice and rats. The soldiers did not get much sleep and were woken to complete daily chores or fight. During rest time, soldiers wrote letters and sometimes played card games.

Weapons and technology

During the First World War, both sides used a combination of weapons such as **artillery**, poison gas, tanks and aircraft. Some of these, like poison gas and tanks, were newly-invented and being used for the first time. Poison gas was one of the most feared weapons of the war and was fired into the trenches inside shells. Its effects included vomiting, sore eyes, blistering skin and internal and external bleeding.

Life on the home front

The war changed people's lives at home in Britain. **Rationing**, bombing and strikes by discontented workers made life difficult for people living on the **home front**. New jobs were created to help with the war effort, including jobs for women that had previously been done by men, such as working in **munitions** factories. Children were also expected to help with the war effort by doing jobs around the home. Some men refused to fight for moral reasons. They were known as conscientious objectors and were often treated harshly.

The end of the war

The war ended in 1918 at 11 am on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Germany signed an **armistice**, an agreement for peace, that had been prepared by Britain and France. The Allies celebrated the end of the war, and in London, a huge crowd gathered in Trafalgar Square. On the 28th June 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Germany and the Allied Powers signed a peace treaty called the Treaty of Versailles.

Remembrance

The poppy is a symbol of remembrance. During the First World War, poppies grew on barren land such as old battlefields. A Canadian doctor called Lt Col John McCrae was inspired by the sight of the poppies to write a famous poem called *In Flanders Fields* after his friend died at Ypres. After the war, the poppy became an official symbol of remembrance.

First World War timeline

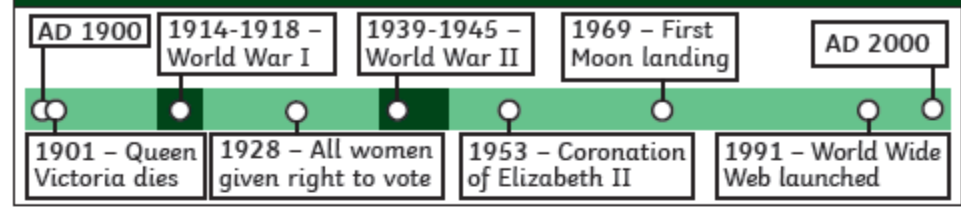
1914	
28th June	Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo
28th July	Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia and Russia mobilises its troops
4th August	Germany invades Belgium and Britain declares war on Germany
6th–10th September	First Battle of Marne
19th October – 22nd November	First Battle of Ypres
24th–25th December	Christmas truce
1915	
17th February	Battle of Gallipoli begins
22nd April	German forces launch their first gas attack near Ypres, Belgium
7th May	A German submarine sinks the British passenger ship, RMS <i>Lusitania</i>
31st May	London suffers first German Zeppelin attack
1916	
9th January	Battle of Gallipoli ends
21st February – 18th December	Battle of Verdun
2nd March	Conscription for unmarried men aged 18–41 is introduced in Britain
25th May	Conscription for married men aged 18–41 is introduced in Britain
31st May – 1st June	Battle of Jutland
1st July – 18th November	Battle of the Somme
15th September	Britain deploys the first ever tank used in warfare
7th December	David Lloyd George becomes the British prime minister
1917	
6th April	USA joins the war to support the Allies
17th July	The Royal Family change their surname to Windsor to appear more British
31st July – 10th November	Third Battle of Ypres, also known as the Battle of Passchendaele
1918	
January	Compulsory food rationing is introduced in stages in Britain
1st April	The Royal Air Force (RAF) is formed in Britain
8th – 11th August	Battle of Amiens
August	Allies force the German army to retreat
9th November	Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates as ruler of Germany
11th November	Armistice is signed between France, Britain and Germany
1919	
28th June	Treaty of Versailles is signed, formally ending the war

1914	1915	1916	1917	1918
28 June <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated 	April <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy joined the war on the side of the Allies (Britain, France, Russia) 	February–August <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle of Verdun 	April <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USA declares war on Germany 	March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final German attack New Bolshevik government of Russia signed peace treaty with Germany
August <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outbreak of war Russians defeated by German forces at Tannenberg 	May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle of Ypres 	June–August <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brusilov Offensive: Russia defeats Austria-Hungary 	July–November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle of Passchendaele 	November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At 11:00hrs Paris time on 11 November an armistice was signed between the Allies and Germany signalling Germany's defeat and the end of the war
September <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle of the Marne Russian army defeated by German forces at Masurian Lakes 		July–November <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battle of the Somme 	December <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USA declares war on Austria-Hungary 	

Key Events

1939	1 st September	German troops invade Poland.
	3 rd September	Britain and France declare war on Germany.
1940	10 th May	The Battle of France begins.
	26 th May	Allied forces are evacuated from Dunkirk in France.
	10 th July	The Battle of Britain begins.
1941	7 th September	The Blitz begins.
	22 nd June	Germany invades the USSR (Soviet Union).
1941	7 th December	Japan bombs Pearl Harbor in the US.
	16 th and 17 th May	The Dambusters bombing raid is carried out.
1944	6 th June	The D-Day landings.
1945	7 th May	Germany surrenders to the Allies.
	6 th and 9 th August	The US drops atomic bombs on two cities in Japan.

Timeline



Evacuation

During World War II, over 3.5 million children, along with some of their teachers and helpers, mothers with very young children, pregnant women and people with disabilities, were evacuated from the cities to the countryside, where it was believed they would be safer from bombing. All evacuees had to take their gas mask, ration book and identity card. When they reached their destination, a billeting officer would arrange a host family for them.

Evacuation happened in waves, beginning on 1st September 1939. Other waves occurred at the start of the Battle of Britain and at the start of the Blitz.

Rationing

Supply ships were targeted by German bombers and it was necessary to conserve as much food as possible. Rationing meant that each person was only allowed a fixed amount of foods. Ration books were issued, with coupons that showed people how much of each item they were allowed. Shopkeepers would remove or stamp the coupons when they were used. People were also encouraged to 'Dig for Victory' and grow as much of their own food as possible.

Petrol, soap, clothing and timber were also in short supply. Clothing ration books were issued and people were encouraged to 'make do and mend'.



A ration book

How Did World War II Start?

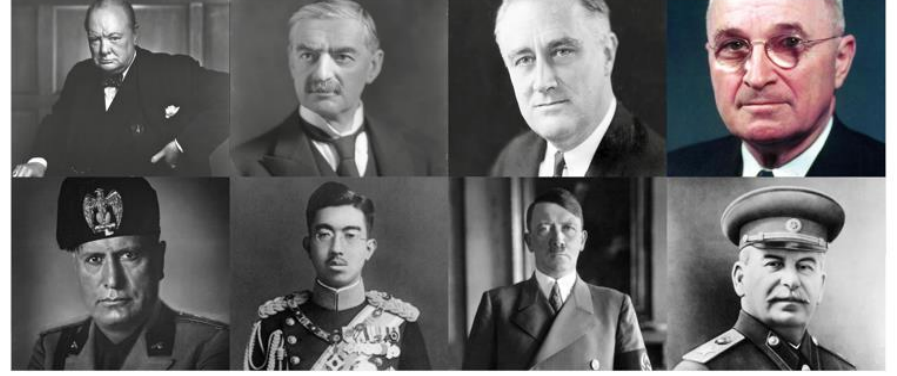
The leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler, had plans to take over other countries. In March 1938, Germany invaded and annexed Austria, which made other countries worried. On 29th September 1938, British, French, German and Italian leaders signed a treaty called the Munich Agreement. This allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland (an area of Czechoslovakia) if he agreed not to invade anywhere else. However, in August 1939, Hitler broke the agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia, followed by Poland on 1st September. Britain, France and Poland had made a pact to support each other, so Britain and France declared war on Germany.

World War II Allied/Axis

Individual countries

Green- Allies before the attack on Pearl Harbor
 Blue- Allies after the attack on Pearl Harbor
 Black- Axis Powers
 Red- Russia started Axis and switched to Allied
 Gray- Neutral or not involved countries

Warring nations of the Second World War



Winston Churchill, Neville Chamberlain, President Roosevelt, President Truman, Benito Mussolini, Emperor Hirohito, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin