

AQA GCSE History



Conflict and Tension, 1894-1918 Revision Book

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Part 1: The Causes of the First World War

Hundreds of books have been written by historians and politicians to try and explain how total war engulfed the nations of Europe between 1914 and 1918. It was the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand which ignited the First World War on 28 June 1914. However, the true reasoning behind the war is far more complex than this.

One way to remember the key causes of the war is to remember the acronym MAIN:

Militarism	European countries increased the size of their armed forces during this time, especially Germany and Britain. New deadlier weapons were developed such as poison gas, aircraft and machine guns.
Alliances	As tensions increased, countries formed agreements with other countries vowing to support one another in the event of war.
Imperialism	Empires had been a feature of European nations since the 16 th century. However, there was a great expansion of European imperialism in the late 19 th century in Africa – the <i>scramble for Africa</i> . Competition to gain the best territories was high.
Nationalism	Patriotic and nationalist sentiments became increasingly common in many European countries in the early 20 th century, particularly in Britain and Germany. Many were eager to prove that they were the greatest country.

The table above provides a useful summary of the key themes, but the details behind these themes are the key to understanding why war broke out in 1914.

The Alliance System



Film: <https://youtu.be/UAeMeuspmk> A short, but very useful clip, providing an overview of the alliances which developed prior to 1914.

Two **alliances** had formed in Europe by 1914:



Key

	The Triple Alliance (Central powers)
	The Triple Entente

The Triple Alliance (Central Powers) Formed: 1882	The Triple Entente Formed: 1907
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Germany <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Only became a unified nation following the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Fearful of a future French attack, Germany formed an alliance with Austria-Hungary. ○ Germany's ruler from 1890, <i>Kaiser Wilhelm II</i>, vowed to make Germany a world power to rival Britain and France. A new navy was created (see <i>Anglo-German Rivalry</i>), and the Kaiser sought ways to expand Germany's colonial possessions in Africa, where they had two colonies. ○ France's formation of an alliance with Russia in 1892 and their increasingly close relations in the later 19th century worried Germany. They feared <i>encirclement</i> – surrounded on both sides by enemy nations. ● Austria-Hungary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The central European empire of Austria-Hungary contained a complex mix of different ethnicities such as Germans, Serbs, Czechs and Slovaks. Unsurprisingly, many of these groups sought independence. Keeping the empire together was an increasingly difficult task. ○ Serbia, just over the border from Austria-Hungary, became more powerful during this time following the Balkan Wars (see <i>pre-war crises</i>). This increased tensions. ○ Furthermore, Serbia was supported by a powerful ally – Russia. ● Italy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Much like Germany, Italy had only been unified in 1871. ○ However, unlike Germany, it was not militarily or industrially strong. ○ They were very much the minor partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Britain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Since Britain's victory in the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century, Britain had adopted a policy of <i>splendid isolation</i>. Britain did not get involved in Europe. In the early 19th century, France and Russia were seen as their main rivals. However, by the late 19th century things were changing. ○ The <i>Entente Cordiale</i> was signed between Britain and France in 1904. The main aim of this was to settle disputes between their North African colonies, but it served as a declaration of peace between the two former enemies. ○ Russia was seen as less of a threat after their defeat by Japan in 1905. The <i>Anglo-Russian Entente</i> was signed between Britain and Russia in 1907. ○ Ultimately, Britain saw the growing power of Germany as a serious threat to itself and their empire. ○ IMPORTANT: Neither of Britain's agreements committed them to military action. But it would have seemed very unlikely for Britain not to support its allies. ● France <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Defeated by Germany in 1870, concerned ever since then of a future conflict. ○ Signed a military alliance with Russia in 1892 which aimed to protect one another against Germany. ○ Desired the return of Alsace-Lorraine, which had been taken by Germany in 1870. ● Russia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A vast country with a very primitive industry, with most of the economy based on agriculture. ○ Felt most threatened by Austria-Hungary, although increasingly concerned by Germany as well. ○ It is worth noting that Russia suffered a series of internal problems resulting in revolution in 1905. Whilst their ruler, Tsar Nicholas II, survived the problems persisted.

Pre-war Crises: Morocco and The Balkans

There were events prior to 1914 both in Europe and Africa which very nearly evolved into a conflict between the alliances. Whilst world war was averted, the crises show us the tensions which existed and how these affected the alliances.

The Moroccan Crises: 1905 and 1911

Many European nations, although principally Britain and France, had gathered African nations into their empires during the *scramble for Africa* in the late 19th century. Kaiser Wilhelm II was eager to add to Germany's colonies in Africa and knew that to do this he would have to take on Britain and France.

It was an open secret that France wanted Morocco to be formally part of its empire. Morocco was one of the few remaining independent states in Africa, but it was heavily under French influence. In 1905 Wilhelm arrived in Tangiers, Morocco, where he spoke publicly in favour of Moroccan independence. Wilhelm had two intentions. At best, France and Britain may fall out over the situation, with Britain wanting to be the dominant power in Africa and taking the opportunity to reduce France's power there. At worst, France would have no choice but to relinquish control there. However, neither of these things happened. A conference was held in Algeiras, Spain, in 1906 where Britain backed France. The Kaiser was left humiliated and weakened. It no doubt strengthened his resolve to continue to oppose Britain and France.

IMPORTANT: There are two things which the 1905 crisis show us:

1. **The *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France was strong.** Britain and France stuck together and forced Germany to back down. Following this they increasingly discussed possible military alliances.
2. **Germany under Kaiser Wilhelm II desired colonies in Africa.** Whilst the Kaiser had publicly stated his support for an independent Morocco, his real intention was to cause problems for France which he then hoped would allow Germany to expand its possessions in Africa.

Violence broke out in Morocco during 1911. France decided to send in their army supposedly to protect the Sultan, although many suspected, and were correct, that France was taking the opportunity to formally take control of Morocco. Germany was furious and sent a gunboat, the *Panther*, to Agadir, Morocco. Britain feared that Germany might establish a naval base, which would then threaten the British dominated Mediterranean. Once again a conference was held and once again Britain and France stood together against Germany. France's control of Morocco was confirmed, but only after Germany had been compensated with additional territories in Central Africa.

IMPORTANT: There are three things which the 1911 crisis show us:

1. **The *Entente Cordiale* between Britain and France remained strong.** Britain and France agreed to cooperate on naval patrols following the crisis.
2. **Germany was prepared to use aggression.** Sending a gunboat was a big escalation. However, it paid off for Germany, with them receiving new colonies.
3. **No one wanted a major war.** Whilst Germany had send a gunboat, which was very risky, it seems they did not seek a war. The fact that Britain and France gave new colonies to Germany also shows us that they did not want a war.

The Balkans Wars: 1912 and 1913

The Balkans, an area of South-Eastern Europe, was a notoriously unstable area. It had been dominated by the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire for centuries, but by the early 20th century the Ottoman Empire was generally regarded as 'the sick man of Europe', with many internal problems. Both Russia and Austria-Hungary desired to control the region to give them access to the Mediterranean.

In 1908 Austria-Hungary added the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to its empire. Russia and Serbia both spoke out against this annexation, but Germany vowed to back Austria-Hungary and therefore Russia and Serbia backed down.

IMPORTANT: The 1908 crisis shows us:

- a) **Russia and Serbia were not prepared to risk a war with Austria-Hungary and Germany.**
- b) **Germany was prepared to support their ally, Austria-Hungary, and risk a major war.** Some historians argue that this gave Austria-Hungary the confidence to go further in future disputes, knowing that Germany would support them.

In 1912 the time was right to see off the Ottoman (Turkish) presence in the Balkans. Russia organised the Balkan nations into *The Balkan League* (Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Serbia). The Balkan League defeated the Ottomans in just six weeks. Former Ottoman land was redistributed amongst the Balkan League at a conference held in London. Serbia doubled in size, which greatly annoyed neighbouring Bulgaria.

Therefore, in 1913, a Second Balkan War took place. This involved Bulgaria fighting against the rest of the Balkan League. Unsurprisingly, Bulgaria was quickly defeated and Serbia gained even more land.

IMPORTANT: **Serbia became the dominant power in the Balkans** following the wars of 1912-13. The Serbs were a *Slavic* people, the same people who lived over the border in Bosnia, now a part of Austria-Hungary. To add to this, Serbia was backed by a powerful ally – Russia. Austria-Hungary could not tolerate a resurgent and increasingly powerful Serbia. It would have to be dealt with.

Anglo-German Rivalry

Any study of the causes of the First World War must consider the central role played by Germany's ruler, Kaiser Wilhelm II. A grandson of Queen Victoria, Wilhelm had a difficult birth into the world which resulting in lasting damage to his left arm, which never developed correctly. He had a rather unloved upbringing and no concessions were made to take account of his physical disability. His childhood summers were often spent holidaying in England with the Royal Family (remember, his relatives). He became impressed with the size and grandeur of the Royal Navy and it seems that he decided at a young age that Germany would one day possess such a navy. He was certainly very ambitious for Germany's future

when he became Kaiser aged 27 in 1888. Whilst he could be enthusiastic and full of energy, he was also very unpredictable.

Different theories have emerged over the years as to who was responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914. Historians such as Niall Ferguson and Christopher Clark have argued that many nations should share the responsibility for the outbreak of war, whereas others such as Fritz Fisher and Gary Sheffield have argued that German aggression was mostly to blame as the Kaiser was intent on replacing Britain as the leading European power. Whatever the truth, it is clear that Wilhelm's unpredictable nature increased tension between the European powers.

Naval Arms Race

Britain's Royal Navy had dominated the oceans for centuries, protecting the vital trade routes between Britain's colonies. Upon assuming the throne in 1888, the Kaiser made it clear that he intended to build a sizeable German navy. This greatly concerned Britain as they were uncertain why Germany would want a large navy. Germany was a continental power with virtually no overseas possessions. A navy was not needed to protect itself. Therefore, officials in Britain became increasingly concerned that a German navy would become dominant in the North Sea and therefore threaten Britain. The two sides engaged in a naval arms race to build the greatest naval force.

Britain heightened tensions when they launched a new type of battleship, *HMS Dreadnought*, in 1906. *Dreadnought* could fire shells over a five-mile distance and could travel at 21 knots. By 1914 Britain had built 29 of these battleships, in response Germany had built 17.

European Rearmament

All of the major European powers made preparations for a possible war.

Triple Alliance	Triple Entente
Germany: Conscription resulted in a large army, though not the largest. However, it was very well-trained and very well-equipped. Their war plan hinged on the success of <i>The Schlieffen Plan</i> (see below). Germany would defeat France quickly before turning their attention onto Russia.	Britain: Military discussions had been ongoing with France for years before 1914. Britain disliked conscription and instead relied on a well-trained and well-equipped force of 150,000 men known as the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). This small force could be deployed quickly to support France.
Austria-Hungary: Much like Germany, Austria-Hungary had a large army. However, they were relying on Germany to help hold back Russia, which meant they needed the Schlieffen Plan to succeed.	France: Being a dominant continental power, France had a large and well-equipped army. Under <i>Plan 17</i> France planned to cross the French-German border and advance deep into Germany.
Italy: As stated previously, Italy was a minor figure in the preparations for war and had no specific plans.	Russia: Although poorly-equipped, the Russian army was enormous. The sheer size of Russia meant that mobilising the army would take time, but once mobilised it would be very difficult to stop.

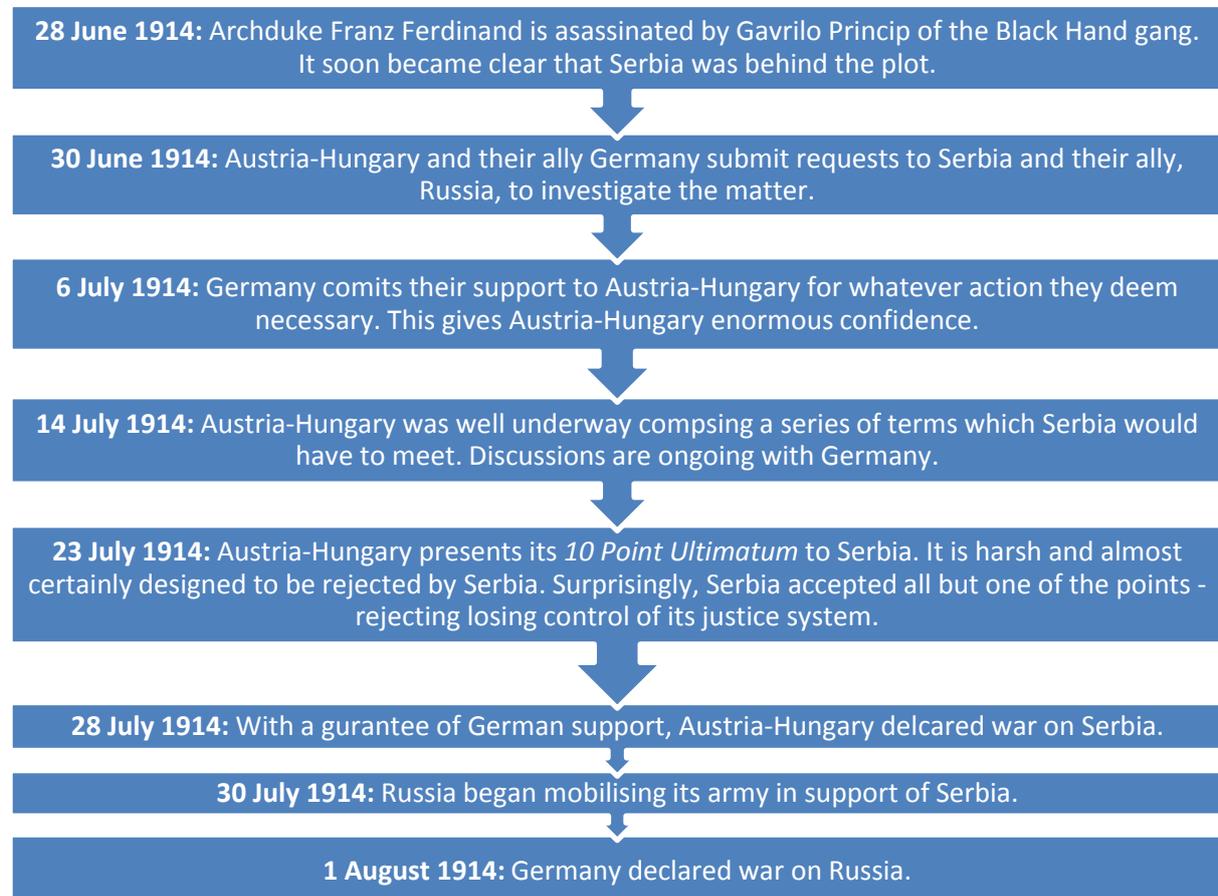
The Outbreak of War

The heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, visited Sarajevo in Bosnia on 28 June 1914. Austria-Hungary was very unpopular in their recently acquired territory of Bosnia, with many residents wanting to be a part of Serbia. The Archduke's visit was a goodwill tour designed to get the people on their side.

Serbia secretly organised an assassination attempt on Franz Ferdinand. A group of assassins known as the *Black Hand* were smuggled into Bosnia and supplied with weapons. The plan was to line the route of the Archduke's motorcade and assassinate him with a grenade. As the car passed an assassin threw the grenade towards the car. However, he had forgotten about the ten second time delay and as the grenade exploded the car was safely away from the blast. The assassins, believing they had failed, regrouped in a nearby park and decided to go for lunch.

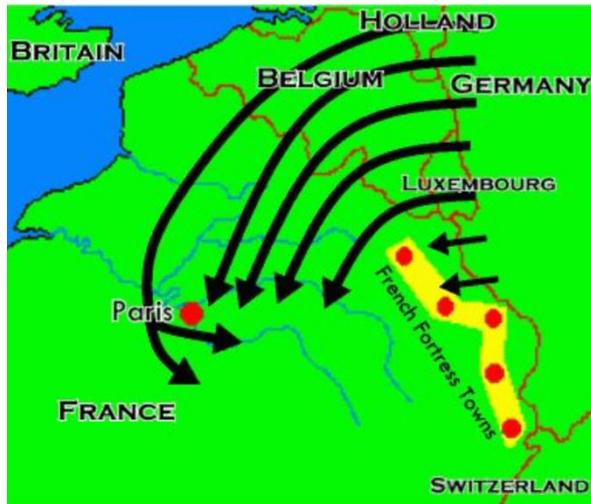
Later in the day completely by chance, Gavrilo Princip, one of the assassins, stepped out of a nearby café having eaten his lunch and saw the Archduke's car turning into the same street. The Archduke's driver had made a wrong turn and stopped to reverse. Princip took his chance and shot both the Archduke and his wife Sophie. They both died of their wounds. Princip was arrested but did not care. He had succeeded and knew he was dying of tuberculosis. Little did he know that his actions would ignite the First World War.

Take a look at this flow-diagram to understand how Princip's actions led to war in the east:



War in the west occurred not only because of the triggering of the alliances, as detailed above, but also because of the *Schlieffen Plan*.

Germany had long been concerned about another war with France following their victory over the French in 1870. The problem by the early 20th century was that France had a powerful ally in Russia, and Germany was therefore encircled. In 1905 General von Schlieffen of the German army came up with a plan to first attack France and defeat them swiftly before turning their attention to Russia, who was expected to take a long time to mobilise.



The initial plan involved Germany invading through Holland and Belgium, where French defences were non-existent, to encircle Paris and take France out of the war within six weeks. The plan was later modified to avoid Holland and go straight through Belgium. Everything hinged on defeating France as quickly as possible. Germany could not afford a war on two fronts.

Although Britain was under no obligation to fight a European war, it is inconceivable that Britain would have remained neutral when you consider the close alliances they had formed with France and Russia and the ways it had shown strength against the Germans during the Moroccan crises.

There was a further reason for British involvement – Belgian neutrality. The Treaty of London, signed 1839, guaranteed that the neutrality of Belgium would be respected by neighbouring European powers. **Germany (who was a signatory) violated this when they invaded Belgium on 3 August 1914.**

Britain demanded that Germany withdraw or face war. Germany refused and therefore Britain declared war on 4 August 1914. It is worth noting that Austria-Hungary, the main protagonist in all of this, waited until 6 August before declaring war on Russia.

On 28 June 1914 an Archduke who had barely been heard of was assassinated. By 4 August Europe was engulfed in a war which would change the world forever.



Film: <https://youtu.be/66HHZUkzAE0> BBC History file: The Approach of War. A very useful 20 minute summary of the key causes of the First World War.

The Causes of the First World War: Exam Questions

- Write an account of how events in Morocco became an international crisis. (8 marks)
- Write an account of how events in Sarajevo led to the outbreak of war in 1914. (8 marks)
- 'The main reason for the outbreak of war in 1914 was the German invasion of neutral Belgium.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (16 marks)
- 'The actions of Austria-Hungary are the main reasons for the outbreak of war in 1914'. How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.

Part 2: The First World War: Stalemate

The failure of the *Schlieffen Plan* along with rapid developments in the technology of war led to a stalemate on the Western Front which ensured the war would be lengthy and laborious.

The Failure of the Schlieffen Plan

Initial Actions

The *Schlieffen Plan* (see previous section) was swiftly put into action in August 1914. **German** troops advanced through Belgium towards Paris. They had to defeat France within six weeks before the Russians could mobilise their vast forces.

However, **Belgian** troops put up a fierce resistance to the German advance and, whilst they were overwhelmed by the enormous numbers of the German forces, managed to delay their advance and buy the French and British valuable time to mobilise their forces.

Britain quickly dispatched the *British Expeditionary Force (BEF)* to France where they came into contact with the Germans at the *Battle of Mons* on 23 August 1914. The BEF was tremendously outnumbered by the German forces, but they were very well trained and well-equipped. Whilst they could not stop the German advance, they did slow the advance. The standard-issue British rifle, the Lee Enfield .303 proved very successful, with German soldiers believing they were facing machine guns during the battle.

Meanwhile, **France** had launched an all-out attack across the Franco-German border into their formerly held territory of Alsace-Lorraine. It was a disaster, with the French losing 200,000 troops in just twelve days. German forces, who had marched through Belgium (*Schlieffen Plan*), were now moving towards Paris. France regrouped their forces to mount a defence.

The Battle of the Marne

By September 1914 the war was in full-swing. Surprisingly, the Russians had managed to mobilise their forces far quicker than expected and were now invaded Germany in the East. This was a massive blow to Germany's Schlieffen Plan as they now had to move 100,000 troops from the West to defend against the Russians in the East. Germany's planned movement to swing around Paris and surround it was changed to a direct all-out assault.

French troops were hurriedly moved to Paris to join up with the BEF and halt the German advance. This was achieved along the River Marne (*Battle of the Marne*) and the combined British and French force then managed to push the Germans back to the River Aisne. However, with both sides been equally matched, it was not possible to push them out of France. A *stalemate* followed as each side dug ditches (*trenches*) to protect themselves from enemy fire.



Film: https://youtu.be/N_5AwuxxZEs BBC History file: Stalemate. A very useful 20 minute summary of how the war ended as a stalemate.

The Race to the Sea

Germany realised that it was impossible to break through the British and French lines. They therefore attempted (in October 1914) to outflank (move around the edge) their lines. Britain and France moved troops to meet the German manoeuvre, and therefore a 'race to the sea' began.

The result was a 'Western Front' of trenches, barbed wire, and decimated land which stretched from the Belgium coast to the foot of the Alps on the Franco-Swiss border.

Summary Diagrams:

1. Belgian resistance bought time for Britain and France to mobilise.
2. The BEF was well-trained and well-equipped. They mobilised quickly and slowed the German advance.

Why did the Schlieffen Plan fail?

3. Russia mobilised far quicker than expected. Germany had to divert troops to the Eastern Front.
4. British and French forces halted the Germans during the Battle of the Marne.

1. Germany was forced to change its plan and head straight for Paris following Russia's mobilisation.
2. Britain and France pushed back German forces at the River Marne, resulting in a *race to the sea*.

Why did the war become a stalemate?

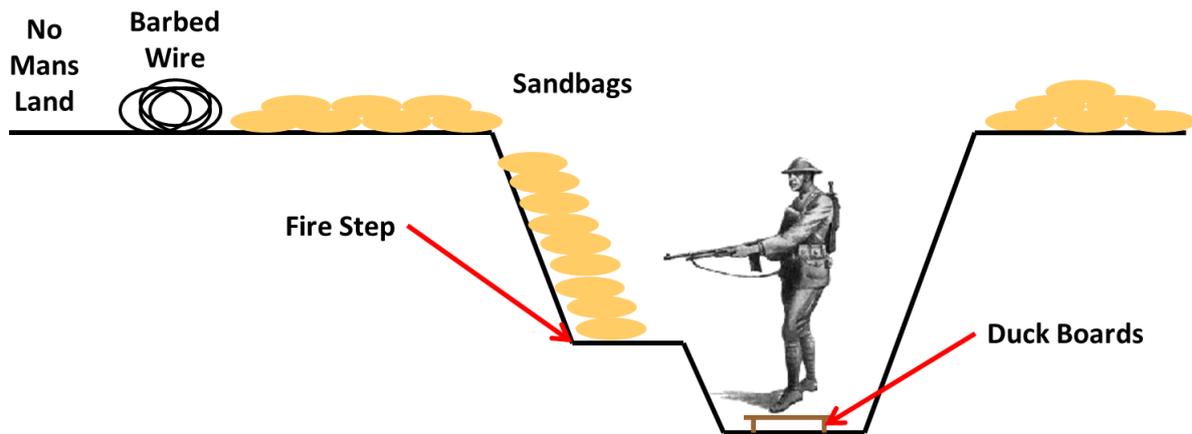
3. The weapons of each side were evenly matched. Instinct set-in as troops dug down to escape enemy fire.

The Western Front

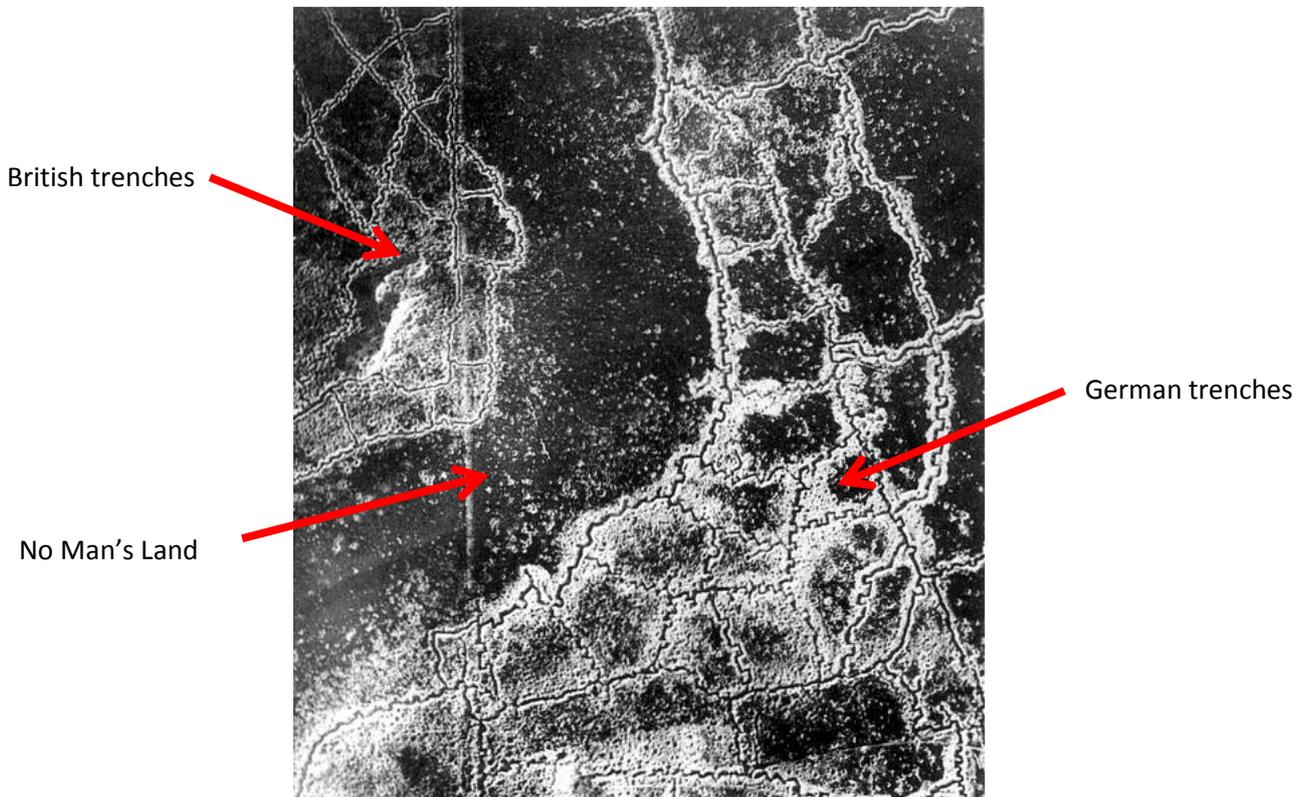
The Trenches

Initially these were intended as a temporary measure. No one wanted to end up in a stalemate as this would necessitate a lengthy war. A mobile war was far more preferable. However, as both sides were evenly matched it became impossible to break through the enemy's lines. As time passed, elaborate trench systems developed as can be seen in the diagrams below.

Cross-section of a typical trench:

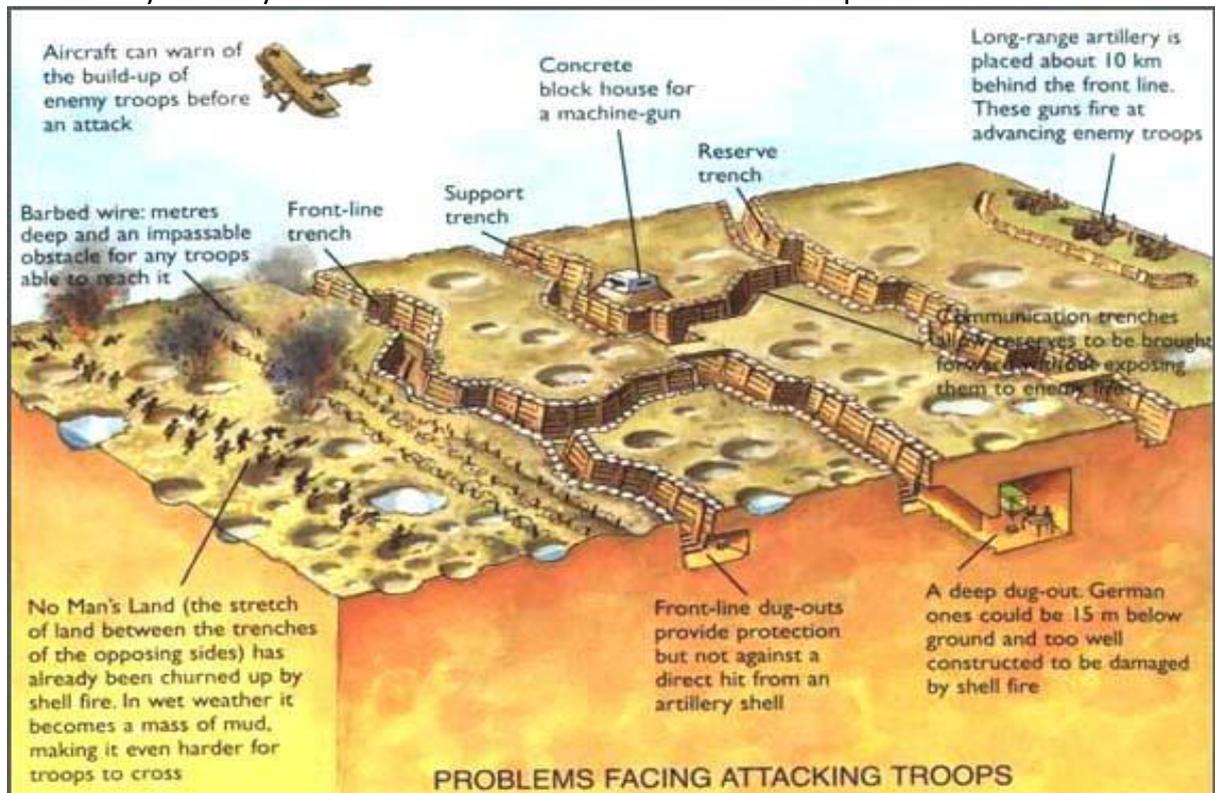


Aerial view of a typical trench system:



A Typical Attack

A common format of attack soon developed in trench warfare, which in itself was a major reason why so many attacks failed – both sides knew what to expect!



This was the usual process:

1. Artillery situated behind your trenches would fire over towards the enemy trenches, bombarding their lines. This could last for minutes, hours, or even days.
2. Artillery stopped and men went 'over the top' and advanced towards the enemy lines.
3. Enemy soldiers, who often sheltered in 'dug-outs', took up defensive positions and opened fire with machine guns. Many of the attackers were cut down before they reached the enemy lines. Those that did make it were slowed down by barbed wire and were then an easy target for the defenders.
4. Either:
 - a. The attackers took the enemy trench and then had to try and hold it, which often proved impossible.
 - b. Or... the attackers fell back to their original trench and often had to then defend their own trenches against a counter-attack.



Film: <https://youtu.be/AI7m8TDBH2I> This is a clip from *All Quiet on the Western Front*, a 1979 movie based on a German novel about the First World War. It is very tame by modern standards (no blood and guts!), but shows clearly the process described above.

Life in the Trenches

The trenches themselves were freezing cold in the winters and dusty and hot in the summers. Rain, which could be intense at times, often water-logged the trenches leading to some soldiers developing ‘trench-foot’ – a disease caused by having constantly wet feet. Rats were also common, often feasting on the corpses which littered no-man’s land.



Film: <https://youtu.be/M7bDnjAeFjl> Another clip from *All Quiet on the Western Front*. This shows typical daily life for soldiers in the trenches.

Contrary to popular belief, soldiers did not spend most of their time attacking the enemy. A lot of the time was spent in boredom, with soldiers finding all sorts of ways of passing the time.

Life for a soldier	
<p style="text-align: center;">Humour</p> <p>In the midst of death and destruction, it is not surprising that humour became important for keeping up morale. Newspapers such as <i>The Wipers Times</i> made fun of the war.</p> <p> (Film: https://youtu.be/SKPXum4Va7k)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Comradeship</p> <p>British soldiers were encouraged to sign up with their friends with the promise of being kept together. These ‘Pals’ battalions became very famous, such as the ‘Hull Pals’. Men fought loyally together, not wanting to let their friends down.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Comforts</p> <p>Soldiers received regular rations, with British soldiers faring the best. Food was often better than what they would receive at home. These were supplemented with gifts from home such as chocolate and alcohol. Letters were regularly exchanged, but they were censored by the army.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Leisure Time</p> <p>Around ten days per month were spent in the trenches, with just three of these days being in the most dangerous front-line trenches. Major assaults might see this increased, but on average around 60% of a soldier's time was out of the trenches. Sports became very important, as did visits to Paris and other French towns, particularly to brothels!</p>



New Technology

NB. Links are to *Dan Snow's History Hit* clips showing the weapons in action.

<p style="text-align: center;">Artillery</p> <p>Not exactly new, but had developed enormously by 1914. These 'big guns' at the rear of the trenches caused the most casualties. Getting the range right was important otherwise you would hit your own men.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Machine Guns</p> <p>(https://youtu.be/B06izR0HWyc)</p> <p>Many of these were developed in the 19th century and advanced further in WW1. They were one of the key reasons why soldiers could not break the stalemate.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Poison Gas</p> <p>First used by the Germans in 1915 and then copied by the British. Gas was the most feared weapon, although effective gas masks were quickly developed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Tanks</p> <p>(https://youtu.be/ezBSURCMe-o)</p> <p>A major innovation of the war, Britain was the first to develop tanks using them at the Somme in 1916. Initial attacks were poor, but they later became a decisive weapon.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Aircraft</p> <p>(https://youtu.be/JbVZGLI8izk)</p> <p>Another major innovation, initially used by both sides as reconnaissance but later adapted to fire machine guns and even drop bombs.</p>	

Key Battles on the Western Front

There were many battles on the Western Front. Here are three that you need to know about:

Battle	Detail
<p>1916: Verdun</p>	<p>Germany was determined to capture this fortified area south of the Somme. They fought a war of attrition (killing as many of the enemy as possible) to force the French out. It failed, with both sides suffering huge losses. The French needed another battle to draw the Germans away.</p>
<p>1916: The Somme</p>	<p>Britain's planned assault had to be adapted to help pull German soldiers away from attacking the French at Verdun. A colossal artillery bombardment hammered the German lines for days before the attack on 1 July 1916. However, German soldiers were largely protected in their deep dugouts. When British soldiers attacked, they faced heavy fire from the Germans. 20,000 British soldiers died on the first day – the deadliest day in the history of the British army. By November 1916 Britain had achieved many of its objectives, but at a heavy cost.</p>
<p>1917: Passchendaele (AKA. Third Battle of Ypres)</p>	<p>Britain aimed to push the Germans back and break through their front line in Belgium. However, heavy rain caused enormous problems when the battle began in July 1917. Many soldiers became bogged down in the horrendous mud of Passchendaele. No one knows exactly how many lost their lives.</p>

The War on Other Fronts

Gallipoli

Turkey was an important ally of Germany. Taking Turkey out of the war would have dealt a major blow to Germany. Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, suggested a daring attack up the Dardanelles Strait towards the Turkish capital – Constantinople. In March 1915 the Royal Navy attempted to enter the Strait but faced heavy bombardment from the Gallipoli peninsular. They also discovered that the area was covered in sea mines. The only chance of success lay in taking the peninsular.

In April 1915 British, French and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand) forces landed at Gallipoli with the aim of taking the peninsular. However, the rocky terrain and steep cliffs made it impossible to make significant gains. Casualties were very high. Despite a second landing, the troops failed to make any gains and the decision was taken to withdraw in November 1915.

The War at Sea

- Allied Blockade of Germany: At the outbreak of war the Royal Navy had blocked supplies from reaching Germany's ports. The blockade proved effective, starving Germany of essential food supplies. This became particularly severe in 1918 and is one of the key reasons why Germany eventually surrendered.
- U-Boat Campaign: To counter the Allied blockade, Germany launched a U-Boat (submarine) campaign against Allied ships travelling across the Atlantic. In 1914 and 1915 it was very effective, even leading to a potential crisis in Britain through a severe shortage of food. However, the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a German U-Boat in 1915 led to widespread anger. 1,198 passengers were killed, with 128 of them US citizens. Germany decided to stop targeting US ships, but later resumed attacks in 1917 due to desperation back home. This persuaded the USA that Germany had to be stopped and they therefore declared war on Germany in April 1917.
- Convoys: Britain responded to the U-Boat attacks by organising supply ships into convoys where they were protected by the Royal Navy. It proved highly effective with the number of losses falling.
- The Battle of Jutland, 1916: Jutland was the only major sea battle of the war, and the only time that Germany's battleships left port. Jutland, off the coast of Denmark, was the scene of a major battle between Britain and Germany on 31 May 1916. Losses were high on both sides with Britain losing 14 ships and Germany losing 13 ships. Whilst Germany lost 2,500 sailors, Britain suffered losses of 6,000. The battle, though, was inconclusive. Britain lost more men, but Germany's ships returned to port and never set sail for the rest of the war. Britain was able to dominate the seas.

The First World War: Stalemate: Exam Questions

- Write an account of aerial warfare in the First World War, explaining its significance in influencing the result of the war. (8 marks)
- Write an account of how the Battles of Verdun and the Somme became important on the Western Front. (8 marks)
- Write an account of how the use of gas influenced trench warfare on the Western Front. (8 marks)
- 'Mud was the main enemy on the Western Front.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (16 marks)

Part 3: Ending the War

The last two years of the war saw major developments for both sides. 1918 was the pivotal year, when at times it seemed that either side was within days of victory.



Film: <https://youtu.be/oEaeX6JX1UI> BBC History file: Making Peace. A very useful 20 minute summary of how the war was brought to an end.

All change for the Allies

As mentioned previously, the USA joined the war in April 1917 following continued Germany U-Boat attacks on Allied and American ships. It was a severe blow for Germany. The USA had the third largest navy in the world and was beginning to assemble a formidable army. However, it would take some time to assemble the soldiers and transport them over the Atlantic to France.

Whilst the entry of the Americans was a significant boost to the Allies, it wasn't all plain sailing. In November 1917 the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia saw the Communists take power. One of their immediate actions was to call a cease fire with Germany and negotiate a peace deal. The Allies had lost one of their major partners. By early 1918 Germany was able to withdraw its troops from the East and redeploy them to the Western Front.

The Ludendorff (Spring) Offensive, 1918

By 1918 conditions were terrible in many parts of Germany. Food supplies were severely short due to the Allied naval blockade. The shortage of food and of supplies hit the German army hard. People were beginning to openly question the Kaiser's judgement and whether continued involvement in the war was the right thing to do. This was the first time they had done this. A further problem was that the Americans were now arriving in Europe at around 50,000 men a month. Germany needed a victory to avert disaster at home and they needed to get it before the Americans arrived in greater numbers.

General Ludendorff planned a massive all-out assault on the Allied lines to bring about a swift victory. Lightly equipped and specially trained German soldiers were ordered to advance on the Allies. Initially, it was a great success, with the Germans gaining 64km of territory and placing their heavy guns within firing range of Paris. However, losses were high with the Germans suffering 400,000 casualties. The troops outran their supply lines due to the speed of their advance, and also had a tendency to loot trenches and houses rather than keep pressing forward or consolidating their position. This delay gave the Allies a chance to regroup, especially with the ever growing numbers of American soldiers in France.

The Hundred Days: The Allies advance

From May to August a further stalemate set in as the Germans failed to make further advances. By the summer the USA had a million soldiers in France. Reinvigorated by the US troops and supplies, the Allies launched a major offensive in August 1918. It was the beginning of the end for Germany. By October they were in full retreat, by November they were looking for a peace deal with the Allies.

Surrender of Germany

In the dying days of the war the German navy, which had not seen action since Jutland in 1916, was ordered out to sea. The sailors, sensing that the war would soon be over, mutinied and refused to set sail. Protests became increasingly common in Germany as people called for an end to the war.

Both the German generals and the politicians felt that a peace deal with the Allies was the only hope of saving Germany. There was just one obstacle in their way – the Kaiser. After a series of negotiations and threats, Kaiser Wilhelm II agreed to abdicate on 9 November 1918.

The Armistice

In January 1918 Woodrow Wilson, US President, had issued his *Fourteen Points* on what he believed should happen to avoid future conflicts. Wilson was a big believer in fairness for all – winners and losers. With the situation in Germany growing more and more worse, by November 1918 the Germans were keen to strike a deal with the Allies. Germany wanted a peace deal based on Wilson's principles of fairness as shown in his Fourteen Points.

On 11 November 1918 a German delegation met with the Allies in a railway carriage on the Allied lines at the Western Front. They were presented with the demand that Germany had to unconditionally surrender. Additionally they had to:

- Leave any occupied territory (i.e. France, Belgium etc.) within two weeks.
- Surrender its navy to the Allies.
- Surrender 5,000 rifles, 25,000 machine guns, 1,700 planes, 150,000 trucks, and 5,000 locomotives.

It was a strict deal which did not reflect Wilson's ideas. However, the Germans had little choice but to accept it. They signed at 5:00am, with the armistice coming into effect at 11:00am. During four years of war it is estimated that 18 million people were killed, with millions more injured and scarred for the rest of their lives.

A peace conference was held at Versailles, Paris in 1919. The resulting *Treaty of Versailles* dealt with Germany severely and some historians see this as a direct cause of the Second World War in 1939.

Ending the War: Exam Questions

- Write an account of the Ludendorff Offensive of 1918. (8 marks)
- 'The main reason for the German decision to surrender in November 1918 was the entry of the USA into the war.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (16 marks)
- 'Germany lost the First World War because of the British naval blockade.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer. (16 marks)