The Great War

World War I: 1914-1918

World War I: Essential Questions

1. What were the fundamental causes of World War I?

2. What was the immediate cause of World War I and how did it lead to the July Crisis, and, eventually, to war?

3. What was the nature of warfare in the First World War?

4. What factors contributed to the end of World War I and the Armistice of November 1918?

5. How did geography impact World War I?

6. How did Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” affect the negotiations and settlement at the Paris Peace Conference?

7. What were the terms, conditions and results of the Treaty of Versailles (1919)?

8. What were the general results of World War I?
“Every war is ironic because every war is worse than expected. Every war constitutes an irony of situation because its means are so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends. In the Great War eight million people were destroyed because two persons, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his Consort, had been shot...The Great War was more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress.”

Fundamental Causes: Overview

- Militarism
- Alliances
- Imperialism
- Nationalism

“Balkan Troubles” (c. 1912)
Fundamental Causes: Militarism

● Anglo-German Naval

✓ Germany

- sought a navy that could compete with Britain’s navy

- Kaiser Wilhelm II appointed Alfred von Tirpitz to build and lead the Germany navy

✓ Great Britain

- believed it was their geographic destiny to have the world’s most powerful navy

- used the “Two-Power Standard” to maintain its lead

- developed new “Dreadnought” class of ships, which further intensified the naval race

Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz
“But just as the Hohenzollern eagle wiped the two-headed Austrian eagle off the field and clipped the wings of the Gallic cock, so with God’s help and Your Majesty’s strength and wisdom, it will also deal with the English leopard.”

—Bernhard von Bülow, German chancellor (1900-09), to Kaiser Wilhelm II
Fundamental Causes: Militarism

Franco-German Standing Army Race

✓ Germany
- regarded France as Germany's natural enemy
- competed with France to build Europe's most powerful standing army (via conscription)

✓ France
- regarded Germany as France's natural enemy
- competed with Germany to build Europe's most powerful standing army (via conscription)
Fundamental Causes: Alliances

The Triple Alliance

Germany

Austria-Hungary

Italy

-1879-

-1882-

-1882-
Fundamental Causes: Alliances

The Triple Entente

Russia

Dual Alliance

1894

France

1904

Entente Cordiale

1907

Britain
“It is one of the ironies of history that Germany’s embarkation on a course of global politics in the last decade of the nineteenth century and its construction of a great battle fleet to support that policy should have turned the attention of its great power rivals back to Europe. For the British saw in the German fleet a threat to the security of their home islands, to which all Britain’s own imperial concerns were subordinate; to counter that threat the British not only built up their own fleet but formed alliances with their archrivals in the imperial field, France and Russia. The formation of these alliances, and the German belief that they had been formed for the encirclement and destruction of their newly formed empire, set the stage for World War I, a conflict that could more accurately be called a European civil war and one that hastened the end of Europe’s global primacy.”

Fundamental Causes: Imperialism

- Subsaharan Africa, earliest to c. 1400
- Ancient Kingdoms, 15th - 19th centuries
- Colonial Partition, to 1914
- African Independence, 1914 to present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colonial Possessions (period of colonial annexation)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Belgian (1885 - 1908)</td>
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<td>French (1830 - 1912)</td>
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<td>German (1884 - 1911)</td>
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<td>Portuguese (1420 - 1905)</td>
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<td>Spanish (1497 - 1912)</td>
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<td>Independent</td>
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Fundamental Causes: Imperialism

- Crises resulting from the Berlin Conference (1884) and the “Scramble for Africa”

✓ Fashoda Crisis (1898): crisis between Britain and France for control of a key section of Sudan

- France sought an east-west corridor of colonies that would connect the Atlantic to the Nile

- Britain sought a north-south corridor that would allow them to set up telegraph & railway lines from southern Africa to Egypt (Cape Town to Cairo)

- crisis intensified until war was imminent, but eventually a peaceful solution was brokered, in hopes of establishing better relations (both countries began to fear Germany more than each other)

Cecil Rhodes
Source: Wikipedia from Punch Magazine
Fundamental Causes: Imperialism

- Crises resulting from the Berlin Conference (1884) and the “Scramble for Africa” (cont’d)

✓ Boer War (1899-1902)

- war between Britain and Afrikaners of the Boer Republics (descendants of Dutch settlers) for political rights and control of natural resources, such as gold and diamonds

- the bloody and devastating war was highlighted by trench warfare, concentration camps, malnourished soldiers, guerrilla warfare and scorched earth techniques

- Britain eventually won the war, but a high cost was paid in terms of money, lives and public perception

Emily Hobhouse: campaigned for better conditions for prisoners in British concentration camps during the Boer War.
Moroccan Crises: conflicts between France and Germany for control of Morocco in North Africa

- 1st Moroccan Crisis (1905-06)
  - Germany challenged France’s attempt to establish a protectorate in Morocco
  - Kaiser Wilhelm II made a dramatic appearance in Tangiers where he delivered a speech supporting Moroccan independence
  - Tensions ran high but were eventually settled diplomatically; crisis further solidified the **Entente Cordiale** between France and Britain

- 2nd Moroccan Crisis (1911)
  - France sent military troops to the Moroccan city of Fez to quell a rebellion; Germany dispatched its gunboat *Panther* to the Moroccan coastal city of Agadir
  - Tensions ran high but the dispute was eventually solved diplomatically as France gave up a slice of its colony in French Congo in exchange for Germany recognizing that France had a special interest in Morocco
Fundamental Causes: Nationalism

- **Revanche**: French desire for revenge against Germany
  - French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71)
  - France’s loss of Alsace-Lorraine after the Franco-Prussian War
- **Pan-Slavism**: Russia’s desire to unify the various persuasions of Slavs in order to rival Western European powers
- **Pan-Germanism**: make Germany an imperial and military power
- **Nationalistic pressures in the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire** (the so-called “Sick Man of Europe”)
- **Serbian nationalism**: growing desire of Serbia to expand their power over all Slavs in the Balkans (Balkans: referred to as the “Powder Keg of Europe”)

Fundamental Causes: Nationalism

Balkans 1913

- Growth of Balkan Independence, 1822
- Growth of Balkan Independence, 1913
- Balkans, 1945
- Balkans, 1995
- Independent Balkan countries, 1913

Territory lost by Ottoman Empire as a result of the Balkan war of 1913

Years in which independence or autonomy was gained

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“The Serbian revolution of 1903 ended any cooperation with the Habsburgs and eventually led to the wars [Balkan Wars of 1912-13] which partitioned the remaining Ottoman territories in Europe. As the Habsburgs used every diplomatic trick to box in the Serbs and kick them away from Albania, the Serbs found themselves permanently trapped inland. Straightforward Serbian nationalism, in this pressure-cooker, mutated into Yugoslavism. If the Serbs were not strong enough to take on the Empire, perhaps they should ally with other Slavic people? This would make it legitimate to absorb Habsburg-ruled and substantially still Muslim Bosnia (the temporary occupation had become permanent in 1908), and Croatia and Slovenia, even though none of them had any real historical links with Belgrade, aside from the usual medieval nonsense. As with almost all Balkan issues this would need a fatal weakening of the Imperial power. This seemed unlikely until the Serbian-sponsored killing of Franz Ferdinand in Bosnia in 1914, perhaps the amazingly successful terrorist act in modern history, one which—after terrible suffering—fulfilled all the most far-fetched Serbian fantasies....”

Immediate Cause: Assassination of Franz Ferdinand

- Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand (28 June 1914)
  - assassination occurred in Sarajevo, Bosnia
  - killed by Gavrilo Princip of the Black Hand, a Serbian Nationalist Terrorist Organization

Franz Ferdinand
Heir to the Austrian throne
Franz Ferdinand: Reflections On

“The Archduke Franz Ferdinand is one of the modern era’s terrible ghosts, doomed to re-enact year after year his floundering final hours, ostrich feathers everywhere, his body bulging in an absurd uniform. He is always en route to that wrong turn which will bring him face to face with the depressed young man, sitting in a Sarajevo cafe mulling over the pathetic failure of his assassination plot, who is suddenly presented with the incredible reprieve. Betrayed by his useless security arrangements and daft, pop-eyed, mustachioed appearance, Franz Ferdinand seems to cry out to be killed and usher in a new and awful world.”

Immediate Cause: Assassination of Franz Ferdinand

Austrian archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie Chotek, in Sarajevo, Bosnia, on June 28, 1914, about one hour before they were shot by Gavrilo Princip, a 19-year-old Serbian nationalist.
28 June

- Assassination of Franz Ferdinand
- Austria blamed Serbian government for assassination

Gavrilo Princip: Franz Ferdinand’s assassin
The Road to War: The July Crisis

5 July

• Germany issued “blank check” to Austria
• Austrian initiated bolder policy against Serbia

German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was in the group that supported a “blank check” to Austria.
The Road to War: The July Crisis

23 July

• Austria issued ultimatum to Serbia

Austrian Foreign Minister Count Leopold Bechtold was instrumental in bringing about Austria’s ultimatum to Serbia

“The Serbian reply [to the Austrian ultimatum] was a masterpiece of diplomatic language, especially considering the speed with which it was composed. The Serbs had been advised by everybody to be conciliatory, and they were; butter remained visibly unmelted in their mouths. Five of the ten demands were accepted outright; four others with reservations or reasonable requests for clarification. Only the sixth, the somewhat anomalous demand that Austro-Hungarian agents collaborate in investigations relating to the bringing to trial of accessories to the plot, was rejected. The appearance of the reply was so conciliatory, even sycophantic, as to be seriously embarrassing to the Austrians, who felt obligated before passing it to their representatives abroad to append a long essay pointing out in precisely what ways it was evasively and cunningly contrived to negate the reality of the demands. The Serbs had done what they could, which was from one point of view the best imaginable...The Austrian Minister, Baron Giesel, was already under orders to reject any reply that was not a complete unconditional acceptance.”

25 July

- Serbia mobilized its army
- Germany encouraged Austria to declare war on Serbia

Helmuth von Moltke (the Younger),
Chief of Germany’s General Staff
26 July

• Austria mobilized its army on the Russian frontier

Austrian Emperor Franz Josef ordered the mobilization of Austrian troops.
The Road to War: The July Crisis

28 July

• Austria declared war on Serbia

Serbia’s King Peter I
30 July

• Russia declared war on Austria

Letters written between Russian Tsar Nicholas II (right) and his cousin the German Emperor Wilhelm II failed to prevent the outbreak of World War I

1 August

• Germany declared war on Russia
3 August

- Germany declared war on France
- Germany initiated strategic Schlieffen Plan

General Alfred von Schlieffen (1833-1913)
The Road to War: The July Crisis

4 August

• Germany invaded Belgium

✓ Brought Britain into war against Germany and Austria

✓ Belgian independence had been guaranteed by 1839 treaty

H.H. Asquith: Britain’s Prime Minister from 1908-16
Although it is not true that Germany started the war, as its enemies in 1914 popularly believed, it must be granted that its policies had for some years been rather peremptory, arrogant, devious, and obstinate.

—Palmer Chapter 84 • pp. 677-87—

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
World War I: Major Combatants

- **Central Powers**
  - Germany
  - Austria-Hungary
  - the Ottoman Empire
  - Bulgaria

- **Entente Powers** (Allies)
  - Britain (UK)
  - France
  - Russia
  - Serbia
  - Japan
  - U.S. (1917)
Treaty of London, 1915

- Brought Italy into war on the side of Entente Powers (Allies) against the Central Powers
- Italy sought Austrian territories it deemed Italian (*Italia irredenta*)
  - Trentino
  - Trieste
Journal 85: After the failure of the Schlieffen Plan the war of movement in the West settled into a war of position.

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
The Major Fronts in Europe
The Warfare: Style & Technology

- Trench warfare
- Application of new technology to war
  - machine gun
  - tank
  - submarine
  - poison gas
  - airplane (aeroplane)
  - zeppelin (dirigible)
- Major fighting on the Western Front, the Eastern Front, and the Eastern Mediterranean
The soldiers who faced one another along the Western Front were drawn from remarkably similar societies. On both sides there were industrial workers and farm laborers. On both sides there were aristocratic senior officers and middle-class junior officers. On both sides there were Catholics, Protestants and Jews. Anyone seeking fundamental differences of national character will look in vain in the records of the trenches. There could be no better illustration of this point than four of the finest novels written about the war by former soldiers—Henri Barbusse’s *Under Fire*, Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Frederic Manning’s *Middle Parts of Fortune* and Emilio Lussu’s *Sardinian Brigade*—which depict the experience of service in the ranks in almost interchangeable ways.

Verdun, 1916

- German offensive against France
- 500,000 dead (total)
Major Battles: The Somme (1916)

Somme, 1916
- British offensive against Germany
- Kitchener’s Army
- 1 million casualties (total)
Video Spotlight: Glimpses into Trench Life
“The Somme was the battle of total planning. On paper, there was no way this offensive could go wrong. The confrontation had been on the drawing boards for months on either side of the front, while at least a million soldiers and 200,000 horses, along with untold quantities of rifles, canons and munitions, were being assembled. The countless tents, field kitchens, field hospitals, command posts and halting-places looked like little cities. The British had even built a special bunker along the front line for Geoffrey Malins, the man assigned to make their victory film. The Germans, supposedly wiped out by days of shelling, nevertheless proved to be alive and kicking at the start of the battle. Their barbed-wire barriers, their strong positions, their machine guns, all were still intact. It was the greatest slaughter in British military history. Of the 100,000 men who moved out that day, more than 19,000 had been killed by noon. Forty thousand were wounded. [British Army] General Sir Beauvoir de Lisle reported ‘It was a remarkable display of training and discipline, and the attack failed only because dead men cannot move on.’

World War I: The Nature of the War

- **Death & Destruction**
  - ✓ new technologies when combined with 19th-century strategies resulted in mass slaughter on all major fronts
  - ✓ farmland, buildings, and infrastructure were badly damaged or destroyed in many parts of Europe

- **Increased government involvement**
  - ✓ waging total war required new levels of government involvement in the lives of both the economy & their citizens
  - ✓ examples: organization of the economy, price controls on certain foods, press censorship, regulating hours of pubs, etc.

- **Role of women**
  - ✓ women took on new jobs when the men left to fight on the fronts: worked in munitions factories, drove cabs and buses; women also worked as nurses on the war fronts
  - ✓ demanded right to vote (suffrage) in exchange for role they played in war
Women in World War I

British women working at a shell factory.
Video Spotlight: The “Christmas Truce 1914”
Major Battles: Jutland (1916)

**Jutland, 1916**

- Two-day surface naval battle between Britain and Germany
- Both sides claimed victory
Propaganda in World War I: The British

- Are YOU in this?
- BRITONS

JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY!
GOD SAVE THE KING

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Propaganda in World War I: The French

- “They looked forward to the offensive as to a holiday. They [the soldiers] were so happy! They laughed! They joked!”

- “Anyway, our troops laugh at machine-guns now… Nobody pays the slightest attention to them.”

- “It’s nothing to speak of, I’ll be disabled, that’s all.”

- “The war, for all its devastating appearances, only seems to be destructive.”

- “Our soldiers are becoming spoiled, the parcels will have to be less lavish.”

–as reported in the French press
United States entered the war (1917)

- Germany’s use of unrestricted submarine warfare to combat what it regarded as Britain’s illegal naval blockade of the North Sea

- Zimmermann Telegram (1917)
  - German telegram to Mexico that encouraged Mexico to attack the United States in order to regain lost territory
  - telegram intercepted by Britain and then passed to the United States

The Zimmermann Telegram
Russia pulled out of war (1918)

- Bolsheviks (communists) had taken control of Russia during the Russian Revolution (1917)
- Bolsheviks ended Russian participation in the war with the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (1918)
  - Russia ceded significant lands to Germany
  - the end of Russian participation in the war allowed Germany to launch a major offensive in the west
- Central Powers no longer had to fight a two-front war
Central powers launched a major offensive in the spring of 1918

- German-led offensive broke the stalemate on the Western Front
- the offensive nearly made it to Paris before it was stopped by an Entente counteroffensive
- failure of the 1918 offensive led to social unrest on the German homefront and the collapse of Kaiser’s Wilhelm II’s government

Germany and the Central Powers agreed to an armistice on 11 November 1918

The railway in Compiègne, France where the 1918 armistice was signed.
“Today the dreadful armistice terms have been signed. [German diplomat Ernst] Langwerth says that anything else was out of the question: our Front has cracked completely. The Emperor has fled to Holland.”

—diary entry, Count Harry Kessler, German diplomat and writer, 11 November 1918

The peacemakers of 1919 believed they were working against time. They had to draw new lines on the maps of Europe, just as their predecessors had done at Vienna, but they also had to think of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. ‘Self-determination’ was the watchword, but this was not a help in choosing between competing nationalisms. The peacemakers had to act as policemen and they had to feed the hungry. If they could, they had to create an international order that would make another Great War impossible. And, of course, they had to draw up the treaties. The expectations of the Peace Conference were enormous; the risk of disappointment correspondingly great.

World War I: The Paris Peace Conference

Paris Peace Conference opened, 1919

Georges Clemenceau
France

David Lloyd George
Britain

Woodrow Wilson
United States

Vittorio Orlando
Italy

Note: Neither the Central Powers nor Bolshevik Russia were represented at the conference.
Journal 89/A: To obtain a League of Nations, Wilson made a number of concessions and compromised the idealism of the Fourteen Points.

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
Wilson brought his “Fourteen Points” to Paris: an理想istic plan to prevent war in the future

✓ called for self-determination of peoples (recognition of nationalism)
✓ called for freedom of seas
✓ called for an end to secret treaties
✓ called for the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and an independent Poland
✓ called for a League of Nations (Point #14): countries would work together to prevent war
World War I: The Treaty of Versailles (1919)

• **Background**

  ✓ most important treaty signed at Paris Peace Conference

  ✓ treaty between victor states and Germany (except the United States, which did not ratify the treaty)

  ✓ became the blueprint for the “Associated Treaties” signed with Austria, Hungary & Turkey

  ✓ Germany not allowed to participate in negotiations; forced to sign treaty of Versailles under threat of returning to war

  ✓ some elements of Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” incorporated into treaty
World War I: The Treaty of Versailles (1919)

• Major Provisions

✓ war guilt clause: Germany was morally responsible for starting the war and causing all the death and destruction (Article #231)

✓ reparations: Germany forced to pay reparations (payments in money or in kind)

✓ Germany demilitarized (no navy and an army no larger than 100,000 people)

✓ League of Nations created, but Germany not allowed to be a member (eventually allowed to join in the 1920s)

✓ Germany lost its colonies to League of Nations “mandates” awarded to victor powers
Journal 89/B: The Germans felt no such responsibility for the war as they were formally obliged to accept under the “war guilt” clause.

—Palmer Chapter 89 • pp. 709-18—

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
New states created in Eastern Europe

- Hungary
- Austria
- Poland
- Czechoslovakia
- Yugoslavia
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Estonia
World War I: The Treaty of Versailles (1919)

Journal 89: The most general principle of the Paris settlement was to recognize the right of national self-determination, at least in Europe.

Directions: Using sentences or detailed bulleted notes, identify & explain the evidence Palmer uses to support the thesis listed above.
Journal 89: The League of Nations marked a great step beyond the international anarchy before 1914, but it had its limitations.
World War I: Consequences & Results

- Death & destruction

  ✔ 9.5 million people dead (approx.)

  ✔ 21 million wounded (approx.)

  ✔ devastation of European farmland, buildings and infrastructure

An all-too-common sight in post-war Europe
World War I: Consequences & Results

- Contributed to economic instability after World War I
  - German Inflation (1923-24)
  - Great Depression (1929-39)

German bank notes in the 1923-24 inflation were worth so little that they were used as wallpaper.
World War I: Consequences & Results

- Contributed to the rise of totalitarian states after World War I
  - Fascist Italy—Mussolini
  - Fascist Nazi Germany—Hitler
  - Fascist Spain—Franco
  - Communist Soviet Russia—Stalin

Adolf Hitler
Germany’s fascist leader, 1933-1945
World War I: Consequences & Results

- Women gained the right to vote
  - Britain (1918)
  - Germany (1918)
  - Belgium (1919)
  - The Netherlands (1919)
  - United States (1920)
  - Turkey (1930)
  - France (not until 1944)

A 1909 poster from the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU)
In the Immediate Aftermath of World War I

- **1918 Influenza Pandemic (Spanish Flu)**
  - began in the U.S., spread to Europe and then to the rest of the world
  - estimated deaths: 50 million
- **Spartacist Uprising, Germany (1919)**
  - worker strike that turned violent
  - Karl Liebknecht (socialist/communist) and Rosa Luxemburg (socialist/communist) were eventually caught up in the uprising and, then, executed
- Democratic governments established in Europe (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, Hungary)
- Civil war in Russia (renamed Soviet Union in 1922)
- The United States returned to isolationism

Rosa Luxemburg
executed in the wake of the Spartacist Uprising

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“Europe paid a terrible price in many ways for its Great War: in the veterans who never recovered psychologically or physically, the widows and orphans, the young women who would never find a husband because so many men had died. In the first years of the peace, fresh afflictions fell on European society: the influenza epidemic (perhaps as a result of churning up the rich microbe-laden soil in the north of France and Belgium) which carried off some 20 million people around the world; starvation because there were no longer the men to farm or the transportation network to get food to the markets; or political turmoil as extremists on the right and the left used force to gain their ends. In Vienna, once one of the richest cities in Europe, Red Cross workers saw typhoid, cholera, rickets and scurvy, all scourges they thought had disappeared from Europe. And, as it turned out, the 1920s and 1930s were only a pause in what some now call Europe’s latest Thirty Years War. In 1939, the Great War got a new name as a second world war broke out.”

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