

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide

**networks**

## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

### Lesson 1 *The United States Enters World War I*

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

*Why do nations go to war?*

#### Reading HELPDESK

##### Content Vocabulary

**militarism** a policy of aggressive military preparedness

**nationalism** loyalty and devotion to a nation

**propaganda** the spreading of ideas about an institution or individual for the purpose of influencing opinion

**contraband** goods whose importation, exportation, or possession is illegal

##### Academic Vocabulary

**emphasis** a special importance given to an object or idea

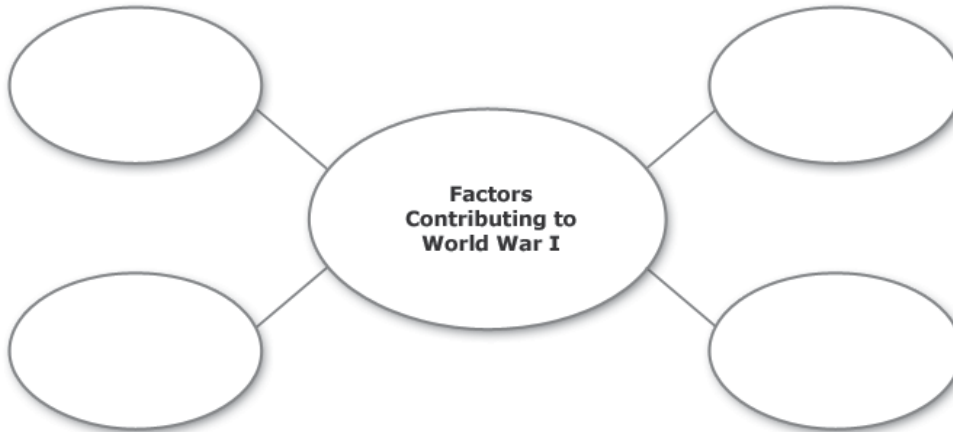
**erode** to wear away at something until it fades

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

**TAKING NOTES:** Organizing

**ACTIVITY** As you read, identify the factors that led to World War I by completing a graphic organizer similar to the one below.



**IT MATTERS BECAUSE...**

*During the late 1800s and early 1900s the stage was set for World War I. Countries were looking to expand their borders. They made partnerships with other countries to gain power. There was also a feeling of nationalism within Europe. In time, attacks on U.S. ships and U.S. support for the Allies caused the United States to enter the war.*

### World War I Begins

**GUIDING QUESTION** What political circumstances in Europe led to World War I?

In 1914 tensions were building among European nations. These feelings came from events dating to the 1860s. In 1864 the German kingdom of Prussia started the first of a series of wars to bring together the different German states into one nation. By 1871, Prussia had united Germany and formed the German Empire. The German Empire soon became one of the most powerful nations in the world. This rise changed the face of European politics.

### Militarism and Alliances

In 1870, Prussia forced France to give up territory along the German border. This action was part of its plan to bring Germany together. As a result, France and Germany became enemies. Germany signed an alliance with Italy to protect itself. Germany also signed an alliance with the huge empire of Austria-Hungary. Austria-Hungary controlled much of southeastern Europe. This alliance became known as the Triple Alliance.

The new alliance worried Russian leaders. They feared that Germany wanted to grow eastward. In addition, Russia and Austria-Hungary were competing for influence in southeastern Europe. Russia and France had a common interest in opposing Germany and Austria-Hungary. This led them to sign the Franco-Russian

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*

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## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

Alliance in 1894. Under the alliance, the two nations promised to come to each other's aid in a war against the Triple Alliance.

Such alliances encouraged **militarism**. Militarism is the strong buildup of armed forces to scare and threaten other nations. Over time, German militarism led Britain to become involved in the alliance system. Britain's policy was to try to stop one nation from controlling all of Europe. By the late 1800s, Germany had clearly become Europe's strongest nation.

In 1898 Germany began building a large modern navy. That buildup threatened the British, who rushed to build warships. By the early 1900s, Britain and Germany were in an arms race. The race convinced Britain to build closer ties with France and Russia. The British did not sign a formal alliance, so the relationship became known as an entente cordiale, or friendly understanding. Britain, France, and Russia became known as the Triple Entente.

### Imperialism and Nationalism

**Nationalism** is a feeling of strong pride in one's homeland. By the late 1800s, nationalism had become a powerful idea in Europe. Nationalists place the most **emphasis** on helping their homeland's culture and interests. They believe in the right of self-determination—the idea that those who share a national identity should have their own country and government. In the 1800s nationalism led to problems in the Balkan region of southeastern Europe.

In the 1700s and 1800s, imperialism—the controlling of other peoples or nations through taking land, using military strength, or using economic power—was how European nations built empires. For years the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires had ruled the Balkans. Nationalist groups in the area included the South Slavs, made up of Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes. They began to work for independence. The Serbs were the first to gain independence. They formed a nation called Serbia, which was located between the two empires. Serbia believed it was its duty to unite the South Slavs.

Russia supported the Serbs, but Austria-Hungary worked to limit Serbia's growth. In 1908 Austria-Hungary took over Bosnia, which had belonged to the Ottoman Empire. This angered the Serbs. By taking control of Bosnia, Austria-Hungary showed Serbia that it did not want the Slavic people to be independent.

### An Assassination Brings War

In June 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand visited the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. He was next in line to the Austro-Hungarian throne. A Bosnian rebel named Gavrilo Princip shot and killed the archduke and his wife as they rode through the city. The assassination took place with the knowledge of Serbian officials. They had hoped to start a war that would damage Austria-Hungary.

Austria-Hungary decided to crush Serbia to stop Slavic nationalism from threatening its empire. Leaders of the country knew an attack on Serbia might start a war with Russia. So the Austrians asked their German allies for support. Austria-Hungary then gave an ultimatum to the Serbian government. The Serbs counted on Russia to help them. The Russians, in turn, counted on France.

On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia immediately began preparing its army for war, including troops on the German border. Within days Germany declared war on Russia and France. World War I had begun.

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*



## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

Germany immediately started a huge attack on France. Germany hoped to remove the French from the war so Germany could turn its attention east to Russia. But the German plan meant that forces had to move through Belgium. The British government had signed an earlier treaty with Belgium promising it would help the country remain neutral. Britain declared war on Germany when German troops crossed the Belgian border.

Those fighting for the Triple Entente were called the Allies. Italy joined them in 1915 after being promised control of Austro-Hungarian territory after the war. What remained of the Triple Alliance—Germany and Austria-Hungary—joined with the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria to form the Central Powers. Germany quickly seized much of France, but Russia was a strong opponent to the east. When Russia attacked Germany, the Germans were forced to move some troops eastward to stop the attack. The Western Front became a bloody stalemate (tie) between British and French forces on the one side and the Germans on the other. This front stretched along hundreds of miles of trenches.

### **PROGRESS CHECK**

**Evaluating** How did the complex web of European alliances contribute to the outbreak of World War I?

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## The United States Declares War

**GUIDING QUESTION** What events motivated the United States to join the war?

When fighting in Europe began, President Wilson immediately declared the United States to be neutral. Nevertheless, many Americans supported one side or the other. Some German and Irish Americans sided with the Central Powers, but most American public opinion sided with the Allied cause.

### Americans Take Sides

For more than two years, the United States officially remained neutral. Debates began over whether the United States should prepare for war. Some believed that getting ready for war was the best way to stay out of the conflict. Others, including Jane Addams—a leader of the woman suffrage movement—started organizations urging the president not to build up the military. President Wilson’s cabinet, however, was mostly pro-British. Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, however, favored neutrality. In addition, many U.S. military leaders believed that an Allied win was the only way to keep the international balance of power.

British officials worked hard to win U.S. support through **propaganda**, or information designed to make people think a certain way. The British cut the telegraph cable across the Atlantic Ocean from Europe to the United States. That meant that most war news would be based on British reports. The U.S. representative to Britain supported many of these reports, and American public opinion swayed in favor of the Allies.

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## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

Companies in the United States also had strong ties to the Allies. Many U.S. banks invested heavily in an Allied victory. By 1917, U.S. loans to the Allies totaled more than \$2 billion. Other banks, especially in the Midwest, where pro-German feelings were strongest, lent some \$27 million to Germany. Yet U.S. wealth was tied closely to the Allies. If the Allies won, the invested money would be paid back. If not, the money might never be repaid.

### Moving Toward War

A series of events in time **eroded** U.S. neutrality and drew the United States into the war. Shortly after the war began, the British blocked off German ports. They forced neutral merchant ships sailing to Europe to land at British ports. The ships were then checked for **contraband**, or goods barred from shipment to Germany and its allies. The U.S. government complained about Britain's decision. But the German response angered Americans even more. In February 1915, the Germans announced that they would use submarines called U-boats to sink without warning any ship they found in the waters around Britain. This decision went against an international treaty signed by Germany. The treaty banned attacks on nonmilitary ships without warning.

On May 7, 1915, a U-boat sank the British passenger ship *Lusitania*. Over 1,000 passengers—including 128 Americans—were killed. The attack made British propaganda more believable. It changed American attitudes about the war. Wilson tried to calm the crisis. He officially said that Germany must stop putting civilians in danger. In March 1916, a U-boat torpedoed, or shot a special underwater bomb at, a French passenger ship. Wilson's closest advisers wanted to break off diplomatic relations with Germany. The president, however, gave one last warning demanding that the German government stop its methods or risk war with the United States.

Germany did not want to draw the United States into the war. That would only strengthen the Allies. So Germany promised to sink no more merchant ships without warning, with certain terms. This promise met the foreign policy goals of both Germany and President Wilson because it delayed the entry of the United States into the war. Wilson's efforts played an important part in his reelection bid in 1916. He won the close election because he had kept the country out of the war.

### The United States Declares War

However, events soon brought the United States close to war. In January 1917, German official Arthur Zimmermann sent a telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico. In it, he promised to return Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona to Mexico if it allied with Germany. British spies intercepted the Zimmermann telegram. It was printed in American newspapers. Furious, many Americans decided that war with Germany was necessary.

Then, on February 1, 1917, Germany restarted unlimited submarine warfare. German military leaders believed that they could starve Britain into surrendering if U-boats began sinking all ships on sight. They did not believe that the United States could raise an army and send it to Europe in time if it decided to enter the war. Between February 3 and March 21, U-boats sank six American ships. Driven to action, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany on April 2, 1917.

# Reading Essentials and Study Guide *Cont.*



## World War I and Its Aftermath, 1914-1920

Within days the Senate and the House had overwhelmingly voted for the resolution, and Wilson signed it. The United States was at war. Even so, 50 representatives and six senators had voted against declaring war.

**PROGRESS CHECK**

**Summarizing** How did Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare bring the United States into World War I?

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