

... and were the Alliances most to blame?

Most of the wars you will have studied in history were fought between just two countries. The Great War was different. All the most powerful countries in the world were dragged in. How did this happen?

◆ *Forty years up to the Great War*

For many years tension had been building in Europe. This diagram shows the main reasons.

Patriotism People were deeply patriotic. They wanted their own country to be the best and most successful.

Rival empires Each European power had an overseas empire. Britain had the biggest. Germany wanted more.

The ARMS RACE Germany and Russia were building up massive armies. Germany and Britain were building lots of new warships.

Alliances Countries made ALLIANCES with each other (see map). They promised to protect the other members of the alliance if they were attacked.



War plans War was accepted as a way for countries to get what they wanted. Some people wanted a war. Others said there was 'bound to be a war sometime'. Some were making careful plans for how to win a war if and when it happened.

The Kaiser For forty years Germany had been growing stronger. Germany's enemies were suspicious of the German ruler - called the Kaiser. They thought he wanted to make Germany stronger still.

ACTIVITY A

- The reasons on page 10 are all connected. For example, countries made *alliances* because they were worried about the *arms race*.
Draw, label and cut out six sticks of dynamite for yourself. Put them on a large blank sheet of paper. Work with a partner to see how many connections you can make. Draw lines to show these links. Write on each line what the link is.
- Write a paragraph to explain why the alliance system could turn a small local conflict into a much bigger one. Try to use some of the other dynamite sticks in your explanation.

◆ **Forty days up to the Great War**

In June 1914 Sarajevo in Bosnia suddenly became very important to the whole future of Europe.

Bosnia belonged to Austria–Hungary, but the people of Serbia felt that it should belong to them. On Sunday, 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand (son of the Emperor of Austria–Hungary) and his wife Sophie visited Sarajevo. It was a dangerous thing to do. The Archduke knew there were people in Sarajevo who hated Austria–Hungary.

At 10.45 a.m. Franz Ferdinand and Sophie were shot dead by a Serb student. Five weeks later all the great powers of Europe were at war. This is how it happened.



28 June Archduke murdered

5 July Germany promises to support Austria–Hungary if it attacks Serbia

23 July Austria–Hungary blames Serbia for the murder

29 July Russia prepares its army for war to help its ally, Serbia

28 July Austria–Hungary declares war on Serbia

1 August Germany declares war on Russia

2 August France prepares army for war

3 August Germany declares war on France and invades Belgium

4 August Britain declares war on Germany



DISCUSS

Is there any one event on this page which, if you took it away, would mean the war would not have happened? Give reasons.

1.3

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE BATTLEFIELDS?

Analyse how and why this war was different from other wars

The timeline and Sources 1–7 give an overview of the Great War.



SOURCE 1 The generals expected a short, fast-moving war. Germany invaded France rapidly in August 1914 but failed (just) to capture Paris. Both sides settled into trenches which, by the end of 1914, stretched from Switzerland to the English Channel.

SOURCE 2 British forces, with many Australians and New Zealanders (ANZACS), landed at Gallipoli to defeat Germany's ally, Turkey. The expedition failed, with heavy losses.



SOURCE 3 Both Britain and Germany had huge navies but the only time they met was at the Battle of Jutland. The battle ended in a draw, but the British navy was still able to prevent important overseas supplies such as petrol and food from reaching Germany. In the end this led to the German defeat.





SOURCE 4 The huge Russian army was badly led and badly supplied. By 1917 thousands of Russians had died on the Eastern Front. This led to the overthrow of the country's leader, the Tsar, in the revolution of March 1917. In November 1917 a COMMUNIST government took over Russia and took the country, now the USSR, out of the war.

SOURCE 5 There was a last, and nearly successful, German attack on the Western Front in spring 1918. After it failed, the Allies with support from newly-arrived US troops and better use of new technology, such as tanks, began to push back the German forces. An armistice was agreed on 11 November 1918.



SOURCE 6 At the end of the war the town of Ypres in France, which had a population of 20,000 before the war, was a ghost town with hardly a building left undamaged. The human cost of the war was even higher, as the table in Source 7 shows.

Soldiers killed in the Great War	
Germany	1,950,000
Russia	1,700,000
France (and French empire)	1,500,000
Austria	1,050,000
Britain (and British empire)	1,000,000
Italy	533,000
USA	116,000

SOURCE 7 Casualties of the Great War.

ACTIVITY

Using your own research see if you can find a suitable picture to use as Source 2 or Source 5. Your teacher can give you some suggestions about where to look, or you could use the internet, the library or look in other textbooks. Write a couple of sentences to explain each choice.

1.4

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE HOME FRONT?

...and how did the Great War become a 'total war'?

David Lloyd George was the British Prime Minister in 1916. He said: 'A soldier cannot function without the farms, the factory-workers and all the other providers behind them. Nowadays there is no such thing in a war as a non-combatant.'

He meant that this war involved everyone. The country was more important than individuals. This was **total war**.

◆ Recruitment

Britain had only a small army in 1914. After just a few weeks of war it was clear that it wasn't enough. For the time being, the Indian army was rushed to fight in France but it was clear that a large British army would be needed.

A huge campaign was launched to persuade young men to join up, led by the army hero Lord Kitchener. The campaign was based on:

- ◆ patriotism: love of your country and your duty to fight for it
- ◆ heroism: sharing in the glory of a great victory
- ◆ anti-German hatred: they spread propaganda stories of atrocities against babies by German soldiers
- ◆ shame: women handed out white feathers (a symbol of cowardice) to young men not in uniform.

SOURCE 1 Some women signed this declaration:

At this hour of England's peril, I do hereby pledge myself most solemnly in the name of my King and Country to persuade every man I know to offer his services to his country. I also pledge myself never to be seen in public with any man who, being in every way fit and free for service, has refused to respond to his country's call.

BRITONS



JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY!
GOD SAVE THE KING

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SOURCE 2 This poster features Lord Kitchener. It became one of the most famous posters of the whole war.

The recruitment campaign was very successful: between August 1914 and December 1915 nearly 2 million men enlisted, 300,000 in the first month. In some communities almost all the young men joined up. You can imagine the impact it would have on your local area if all the young men suddenly left to go to war. This was the largest British army ever assembled. There were more civilians learning to be soldiers than ever before in history.



SOURCE 3 In some areas whole groups of friends signed on together and became a 'Pals regiment'. These are some of the Accrington Pals.

SOURCE 4 From the *Yorkshire Post*, September 1914.

Stirring scenes were witnessed at Leeds City Football ground last night at the end of the match. The Lord Mayor addressed a crowd of 4000 spectators. There was a spirited rush across the field and rousing cheers. Up the steps sturdy young fellows came, to receive an armlet with the national colours. When the rush subsided, it was found that the number of volunteers was 149. The Lady Mayoress called for another 51. Another dash was made and, to the chorus of 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary!', the quota was quickly filled.

SOURCE 5 Some young men joined up even though they were too young or too small. Charlie Taylor went to sign up with his pals:

They asked me my height and I told them. They hummed and haaed about it. I'm five foot six [167cm] with paper stuffed into my shoes. Anyway I says to them: 'There's six of my pals joining up, all footballers.' So they says, 'Aw, go on, let him go in.' So I was one of the midgets.

Everyone wanted to be involved. They did not want to miss out on the event of the century. And it was a similar story all over Europe ...

SOURCE 6 A young Frenchman wrote home:

Thirty years of life would not be worth all that we are going to achieve within the next few weeks. I wish you could share in some way the peace we all feel here.

SOURCE 7 A young German soldier wrote home as he prepared to go to the front:

At last we have got our orders. Dear Mother, please try to remember that, if at this time we think of ourselves and those who belong to us, we shall be petty and weak. We must have a broad outlook and think of our nation, our Fatherland, and God.'

SOURCE 8 A young British officer wrote home:

You must all keep cheerful for my sake and it will not be long before I am back again. The general view is that it will not be a long show.

These were not desperate people, born losers, but keen and optimistic men. This extract from a popular school reading-book of the time might help to explain their actions.

SOURCE 9 From *The Hill*, by H.A. Vachell, published in 1905.

To die young, clean ... to die swiftly, in perfect health; to die saving others from death, or worse, disgrace; ... to die and to carry with you into the better life beyond the grave, hopes and ambitions, unembittered memories, all the freshness and gladness of May – is that not a cause for joy rather than sorrow?

ACTIVITY

You are a reporter at the event described in Source 4. You interview one of the 200 young men who have just volunteered to join the army.

- What questions might you ask him?
- What answers might he give?

Use the sources on these two pages to give you ideas.

DISCUSS

- Read through Sources 5–8. What is the attitude of the young man in each case? What does he expect the war to be like?
- The men in Sources 5–8 come from three different countries. What attitudes do they have in common?
- Read Source 9. These attitudes are not heard today. Why not?