

Summary: World War I

Causes of the War

In the 1900s, nationalism made countries such as Germany, Russia, and France compete for land and power. Some nations practiced imperialism and started colonies. Nations wanted to protect their empires, so they made their armies and navies stronger. Militarism became popular in Europe.

Countries also made alliances with one another. The two most important alliances were the Allied Powers (or Allies), and the Central Powers. In 1914, a Serbian killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand, a member of Austria's royal family. Austria-Hungary responded by declaring war on Serbia. Russia and Serbia had an alliance, so Russia joined the war to help Serbia. Then Germany, a Central Power, declared war on Russia. Because of their alliances, many countries were pulled into the war. It was the start of World War I.

America Enters the War

At first, most Americans did not want the United States to join the war. Then in 1915, Germany sank the *Lusitania*, a British passenger ship that was carrying many Americans. Americans were angry, but Germany promised not to attack more passenger ships. In 1917, Germany broke its promise and attacked American ships. The United States declared war on the Central Powers.

Both sides used new ways of fighting and new weapons. Thousands of men fought and died in trench warfare. Armies used poison gas, machine guns, hand grenades, and cannons that fired large shells through the air. They fought using airplanes, submarines, and army tanks.

The war made many heroes. One was an American pilot named Eddie Rickenbacker. Many Tennesseans served in the war. Alvin C. York was one of the most famous Tennesseans to serve. He helped capture many Germans. Many heroes were never famous. Millions of soldiers were killed. World War I was the most destructive war in history at that time.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

nationalism *noun*, the belief that your country deserves more success than others

militarism *noun*, the building of a strong military to frighten or defeat other countries

alliance *noun*, an agreement nations make to support and defend each other

trench warfare *noun*, fighting by soldiers on both sides from long narrow ditches called trenches



After You Read

REVIEW Why did so many countries join the war?

Underline the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW What caused the United States to enter the war? Draw a box around the sentence that tells the answer.