



# The Road to War

## Objectives

1. Discover the factors that led to the outbreak of war in Europe.
2. Find out why World War I was deadlier than any earlier conflict.
3. Learn how the United States moved from neutrality to involvement in the war.

## Prepare to Read

### Reading Skill

**Identify Main Ideas and Support** In this textbook, a main idea is stated in the margin next to each main heading. Also look for supporting ideas within the text paragraphs that begin with subheadings. As you read, use the headings to guide you in identifying main ideas and supporting ideas.

## Vocabulary Builder

### High-Use Words

**provoke**, p. 706

**liable**, p. 710

### Key Terms

**militarism**, p. 706

**nationalism**, p. 706

**stalemate**, p. 707

**trench warfare**, p. 707

**propaganda**, p. 709

★ **Background Knowledge** In the last chapter, you traced the growing American role in world affairs. Here, you will see how the United States became involved in a huge world war.

## Main Idea

Imperialism, nationalism, and a complex alliance system helped spark war in Europe.

## Origins of World War I

In 1914, tensions in Europe erupted into the largest war the world had yet seen. There were many different causes for the conflict that later became known as World War I.

**Imperialism** European nations competed for trade and territory in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. France and England looked on distrustfully as Germany expanded its overseas holdings.

Imperialism fed a rise in **militarism**, or the glorification of the military. For self-protection and for national glory, nations built up their armed forces. Military leaders gained great influence in European governments.

**Nationalism** A surge of nationalism, or pride in one's nation or ethnic group, boosted tensions. In the Balkan region of southeastern Europe, different national groups sought to break free from Austria-Hungary. Russia encouraged Serbians and other Balkan nationalists to do so. Many people compared the Balkans to a "powder keg," or barrel of gunpowder. A single spark could easily **provoke** a major war.

**Alliance System** As tensions mounted, European nations formed alliance systems. Germany formed an alliance with Austria-Hungary. France, Britain, and Russia pledged to come to one another's aid if attacked. The alliance system meant that any conflict between two powers would quickly involve others.

## Vocabulary Builder

**provoke** (prah VOHK) v. to cause; to stir to action

**War Begins** The spark that set off the war came on June 28, 1914, in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo. A Serbian nationalist assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne. Austria-Hungary accused the government of Serbia of supporting terrorism. On July 29, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.

The alliance system drew one country after another into war. (See the chart below.) In time, more than 20 countries became involved in the fighting. Britain, France, and Russia led the Allies. Opposing them were the Central powers, including Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire.

**Checkpoint** How did nationalism contribute to war?

## The Deadliest War

Both sides hoped for a quick victory. By early September, German forces had advanced to within 30 miles of Paris. At the First Battle of the Marne, however, French and British troops halted the German advance. This area became known as the Western Front. Fighting quickly settled into a long **stalemate**, or **deadlock**, in which neither side could score a clear victory. The stalemate dragged on for more than three grueling years.

Along the Western Front, trench warfare fed the stalemate. In **trench warfare**, soldiers fire on one another from opposing lines of dugout trenches. Between the lines was an unoccupied territory known as “no man’s land.” After days of shelling, officers would order troops to charge into no man’s land and attack the enemy trenches. There, they were mowed down by enemy fire. As death tolls mounted, the two sides fought back and forth over the same patches of land.

### Main Idea

Advanced technology contributed to a long, deadly stalemate in Europe.

### The Road to World War I

During the summer of 1914, one European power after another was drawn into the conflict that became known as World War I.

**Critical Thinking: Apply Information** How does the information on the map help explain the sequence of events listed here?

### The Road to World War I, Summer of 1914

- **June 28** Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary is assassinated by a Serbian nationalist.
- **July 28** Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.
- **July 31** Russia mobilizes its armed forces.
- **August 1** Germany declares war on Russia.
- **August 3** Germany declares war on France.
- **August 4** Germany invades neutral Belgium.
- **August 4** Great Britain declares war on Germany.





### Identify Main Ideas and Support

What is the main idea of the section that begins on the previous page? What are some of the supporting ideas?

Technological advances made the war more lethal. Airplanes, invented a few years before, were used for scouting and support of ground forces. Armored tanks appeared on the battlefield. More than any other weapons, rapid-fire machine guns and heavy artillery raised the death toll.

But the most feared new weapon was poison gas. It was first used by Germany, then by the Allies. Various gases caused choking, blinding, or severe skin blisters. Even some soldiers who survived gas attacks suffered lung problems for years afterward. In 1925, after the war, a group of 140 nations agreed to ban the use of chemical weapons in war.

**✓Checkpoint** How did technology make the war more deadly?

### Main Idea

At first, the United States tried to stay out of the war in Europe.

## American Neutrality

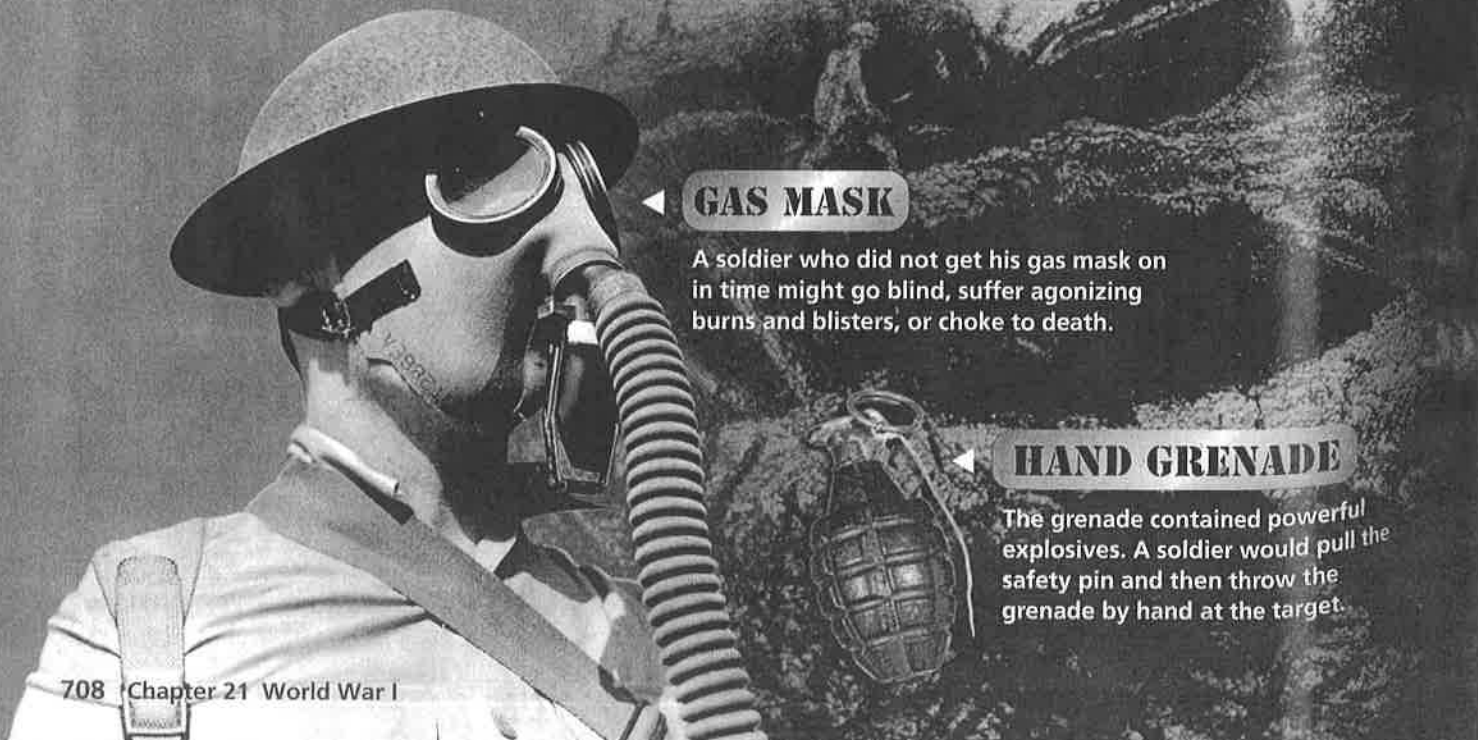
Horrified by the bloodshed, President Woodrow Wilson sought to keep the United States out of the war. Soon after the fighting began, he issued a proclamation of "strict and impartial neutrality."

**Ethnic Loyalties** Still, many Americans had strong ties to one side or the other. German Americans generally supported the Central powers. Many Irish Americans also favored the Central powers, out of hatred for England's long domination of Ireland.

# TRENCH WARFARE

Trenches snaked for miles along the French countryside. Soldiers on both sides endured mud, rats, cold, heat, and—worst of all—the constant threat of death.

**Critical Thinking: Analyze Effects** What impact do you think trench warfare had on the environment?



### GAS MASK

A soldier who did not get his gas mask on in time might go blind, suffer agonizing burns and blisters, or choke to death.

### HAND GRENADE

The grenade contained powerful explosives. A soldier would pull the safety pin and then throw the grenade by hand at the target.

Other Americans favored the Allies. Britain and the United States shared a common language and history. Americans of Slavic or Italian descent also generally supported the Allied side.

Britain used propaganda to win American support. Propaganda is the spread of information designed to win support for a cause. British propaganda often focused on Germany's brutal treatment of the Belgians at the start of the war. Many of the most horrifying tales were exaggerated or completely made up.

**Supplying the Allies** Legally, American firms were free to sell to both sides. Still, most American trade was with the Allies. In addition, American banks made large loans to the Allies.

Contributing to this imbalance was a British naval blockade of Germany. British ships stopped supplies from reaching German ports. The British intercepted not only weapons, but also food and cotton. Although Wilson objected, he reached an agreement with Britain. For instance, he required Britain to buy more American cotton to make up for lost sales to Germany.

**The Lusitania** Germany's navy had too few surface vessels to enforce a blockade of Britain and France. But the Germans had a large supply of U-boats, or submarines. In February 1915, Germany announced it would use its U-boats to blockade Britain.



### History Interactive

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### BIPLANES

Far overhead, airplanes observed the battleground. Airplanes equipped with machine guns also engaged in one-on-one dogfights.

### MACHINE GUN

With a rapid-fire automatic machine gun, a single gunner could mow down dozens of enemy soldiers as they tried to cross no man's land.



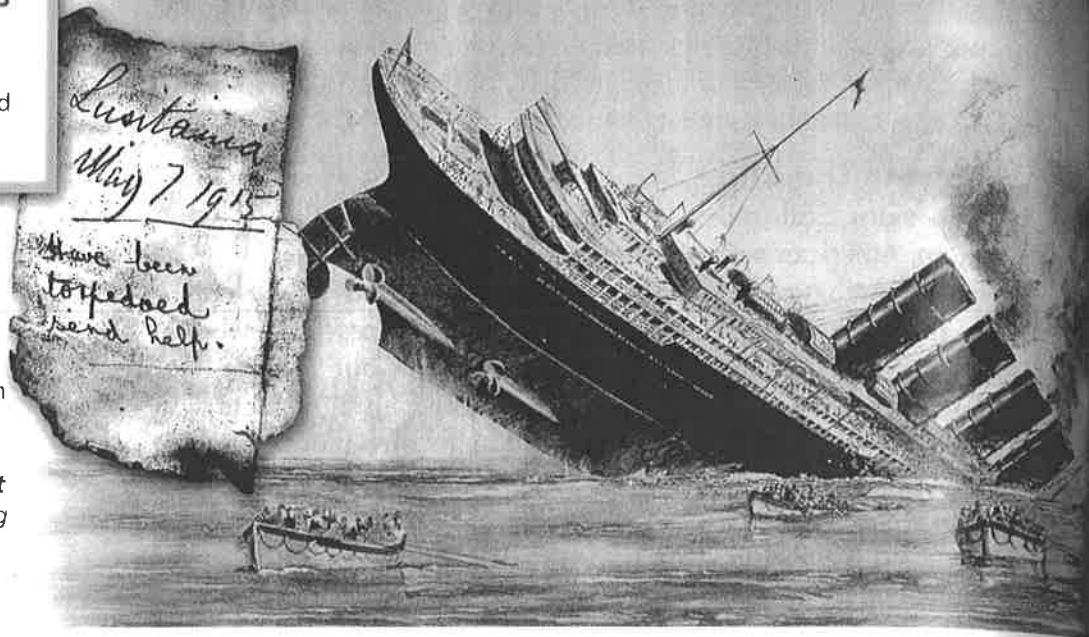
*"The past weeks have been ten thousand hells. It is nothing but death, noise, blood, and mud."  
—Canadian soldier*

**Explore More Video**

To learn more about the American entry into World War I, view the video.

**Sinking of the**

**Lusitania** On May 7, 1915, German U-boats torpedoed the British liner *Lusitania*. One passenger wrote the note shown here, sealed it in a bottle, and tossed it into the sea. **Critical Thinking: Analyze Cause and Effect** What impact did the sinking of the *Lusitania* have?



On May 7, 1915, a U-boat sank a British passenger liner, the *Lusitania*, off the coast of Ireland. Nearly 1,200 people died, 128 of them Americans. Wilson made angry protests to Germany. The Germans responded that the ship was carrying a load of ammunition to England. This argument mattered little to an outraged American public. Fearing that further attacks were liable to provoke the United States to declare war, Germany said its U-boats would no longer target passenger liners and neutral merchant ships.

**Vocabulary Builder**

**liable** (lī ah bahl) *adj.* likely to cause or have an effect

**Checkpoint** How did the war in Europe divide Americans?

**Main Idea**

German submarine attacks were a major factor that led the United States to enter the war on the Allied side.

**Entering the War**

Wilson was reelected in November 1916 on the slogan “He kept us out of war.” He then called on the warring powers to accept “peace without victory.” Such a peace, he said, should be based on the principles of democracy, freedom of the seas, and the avoidance of “entangling alliances.” But Wilson’s attempt to make peace failed.

Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917. Germany hoped that cutting off American supplies to the British would break the stalemate on the Western Front. In response, Wilson cut off diplomatic relations with Germany.

**Zimmermann Telegram** On February 24, Wilson was shown a telegram that the British had intercepted. Germany’s foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, proposed that Mexico join the war on Germany’s side. In return, Germany would help Mexico “reconquer” New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona.

The Zimmermann Telegram was released to the press on March 1. American anger exploded. Anger soon turned to thoughts of war after U-boats sank three American merchant ships.

**Russian Revolution** A revolution in Russia removed the final obstacle to America's entry. Russia was one of the three main Allies. Its ruler, Tsar Nicholas II, was an absolute monarch who had long resisted calls for democratic reforms. In March 1917, military defeats and food shortages led to an uprising. The tsar was overthrown. A new government vowed to keep Russia in the war.

The fall of the tsar made it easier for the United States to enter the war. By joining with the Allied powers, the United States would not be siding with a tyrant. Instead, Wilson reasoned, it would be joining with other democracies to fight tyranny.

**Declaring War** On April 2, Wilson asked Congress to declare war against the Central powers. His goal, he declared, was to fight

“... for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy.”

—Woodrow Wilson, war message, April 2, 1917

Congress overwhelmingly gave its approval. After nearly three years on the sidelines, the United States was at war.

**Checkpoint** How did submarine warfare help lead the United States into World War I?

**Looking Back and Ahead** Following its traditional policy of isolationism, the United States tried to stay out of World War I. Now that it had joined the war, American life would be greatly changed.



President Wilson asks Congress to declare war on Germany.

## Section 1 | Check Your Progress

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### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) List** Identify three factors that led to the outbreak of World War I.  
**(b) Identify Alternatives** What alternatives did European nations face when their Allies entered the war?
- (a) Recall** How did Wilson try to maintain neutrality?  
**(b) Draw Conclusions** Do you think the United States could have avoided entering the war? Why or why not?

### Reading Skill

- Identify Main Ideas and Support** Reread the text under the heading “American Neutrality.” Identify the main idea of this portion of text. Then, list supporting ideas.

### Vocabulary Builder

Complete each of the following sentences so that the second part further explains the first part and clearly shows your understanding of the key term.

- Serbs and other ethnic groups favored nationalism, or \_\_\_\_\_.
- The British tried to gain support by using propaganda, or \_\_\_\_\_.
- Technology contributed to a long stalemate, or \_\_\_\_\_.
- War fever was partly the result of militarism, or \_\_\_\_\_.

### Writing

- Based on what you have read in this section, write a thesis statement for an essay contrasting trench warfare with present-day warfare.