

WORLD WAR I OR THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918

Literature

Child, John, Tim Hodge and David Taylor. Understanding History 3.

MacDonald, Lynn. Voices and Images of the Great War.

Traynor, John. Europe 1890-1990.

Walsh, Ben. GCSE Modern World History.

The path to the war

TASK 1:

Revise your notes for the years 1870 – 1914. Then fill-in the chart:

Long-term causes of World War I	Short-term causes of World War I

- The final **spark** to the war was the **assassination of Franz Ferdinand d'Este in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, on 28 June 1914**. Austria issued an ultimatum on **Serbia**. Russia stepped in to protect Serbia, then Germany entered to back Austria. Finally, France and Great Britain joined Russia against Germany.

Who fought who in World War I?

- **The Allies:**

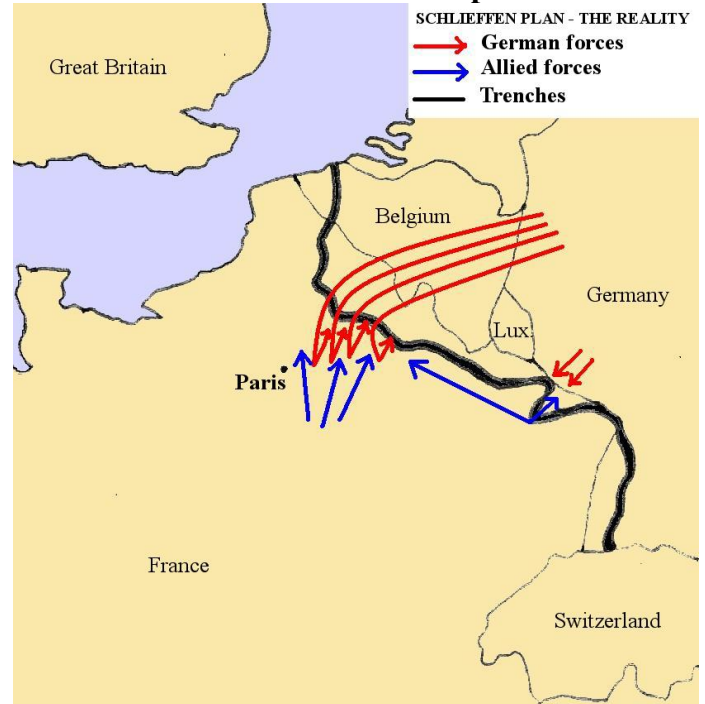
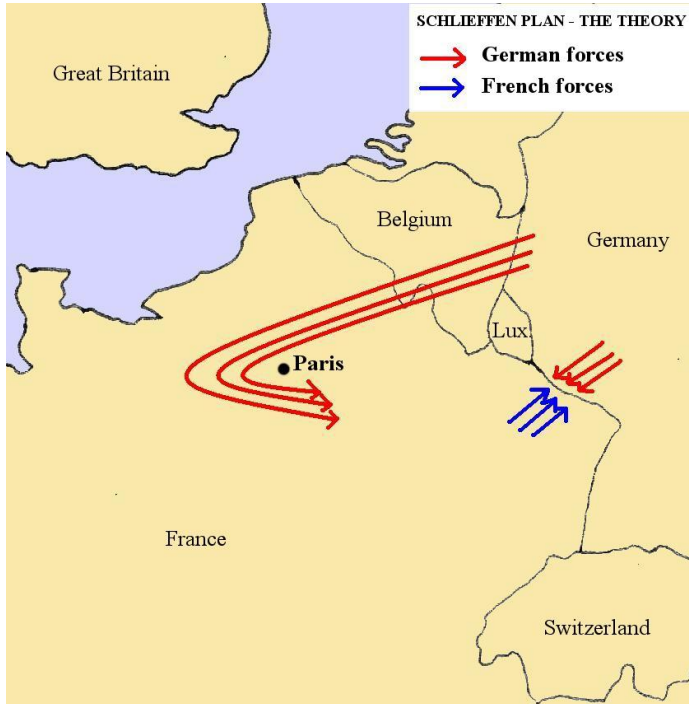
- **The Central Powers:**

- The first move was done by Germany on the basis of the **Schlieffen Plan**.

TASK 2: Study the maps and:

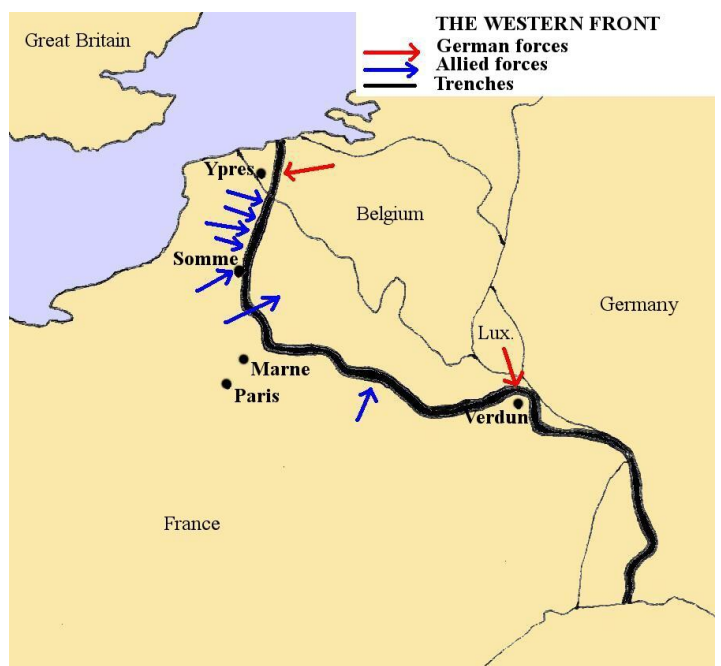
1. Based on the first map showing the theory, describe the main idea of the Schlieffen Plan.

2. The second outline shows the real movement of the armies. How well did the plan work?



The Western Front

- the strongest fights took place between French-British and German troops
- soon Germany conquered Belgium (German armies commanded by general Moltke)
- but then the frontline stopped at the river Marne and short war changed into **trench war**
- the trench line led from the English Channel to Switzerland
- the French armies were commanded by general Pétain
- the most famous battles on the Western Front:
 - 1914 – the first battle of the **Marne** – stopped German offensive
 - 1915 – battle of **Ypres** – infamous for the first use of _____
 - 1916 – battle of **Verdun** – lasted for five months, more than one million dead, but German offensive was stopped by gen. Pétain
 - 1916 – battle of the **Somme** - _____ were used for the first time here
 - 1916 – battle of **Jutland** – the biggest naval battle of the war, both sides claimed victory
 - 1918 – the second battle of the **Marne** - Allied victory





A British tank on the Western Front



A machine gun in the trenches

TASK 3: Life in the trenches - Study the sources below and make a list of factors which made life in the trenches so miserable. Also, which do you think were the worst to deal with?

SOURCE A: Captain A. O. Pollard.

“Until that time [1917], both sides conducted their battles on similar lines. Artillery blazed away at the enemy’s wire and trenches for weeks on end. Then...we stumbled into attack. Usually we ran up against large patches of uncut wire. Many men were often mown down by machine gun fire. The element of surprise was always missing...Even if we overcame these obstacles, we could not possibly advance farther than 4000 yards or so. We carried packs with three days’ rations and entrenching tools, 180 rounds of ammunition and grenades...Burdened like pack horses, we were expected to fight for our lives with the bayonet if the occasion arose...”

SOURCE B: A German soldier R. Binding.

“One is overcome by a peculiar sour, heavy and penetrating smell of corpses. Rising over a plank bridge, you find that its middle is supported only by the body of a long-dead horse. Men that were killed last October lie half in swamp. The legs of an Englishman stick out into a trench...a soldier hangs his rifle on them...A little brook runs through the trench, and everyone uses the water for drinking and washing; it is the only water they have. Nobody minds the Englishman, who is rotting away a few steps farther up...”

SOURCE C: A diary of a British soldier, 1915.

“Army food was monotonous. Tinned bully beef was the usual. We were always hungry. Many times we only got one slice of bread, often without butter or jam, for breakfast and hard biscuits for tea. These were so hard that you had to put them on a firm surface and smash them with a stone or something. Sometimes when drinking water did not arrive, we had to boil rainwater from shell holes.”

SOURCE D: From S. Case: The First World War, 1976.

“To add to the general discomfort, the trenches were alive with rats. The knowledge that the gigantic trench rats had grown fat through feeding of the dead bodies in no man’s land made the soldiers hate them more fiercely than almost anything else...”



A trench on the Somme

The Eastern Front

- the original plan was that while Germany would fight France and Britain, Austria-Hungary would engage Russia to prevent it from joining the fights on the Western Front
- but Austria-Hungary was not ready for the war at all so Germany had to send there their troops too
- Tsar's troops were pushed deep into Russia in 1915 where the front stayed (with the exception of **Brusilov's offensive**), the fighting was not so strong here
- by 1916 Russia's economy was ruined and they lost too many lives, also their weapons were too old
- in 1917 Russia's failures resulted in a revolution

The Italian Front

- Originally, Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance but it did not enter the war in 1914, it entered it in 1915 on the side of the Triple Entente
- most of the fighting was done in the Dolomites, until 1917 when the Italians were defeated at **Caporetto**, but with the help of the Allies they managed to hold until the end of the war

The Balkan Front

- even though the war started there, Balkan front was not so important for the whole war
- Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria conquered Serbia and the front formed in Thessaloniki
- more than from fighting itself, the soldiers suffered from diseases (e.g. malaria)
- after Greece entered the war in 1917, the Allied offensive led to total defeat of Bulgaria and the front collapsed



- **1915 - battle of Gallipoli** – the Allies' unsuccessful attack on Turkey to seize control of the Dardanelles

1917 - Russia out of the war, the USA in

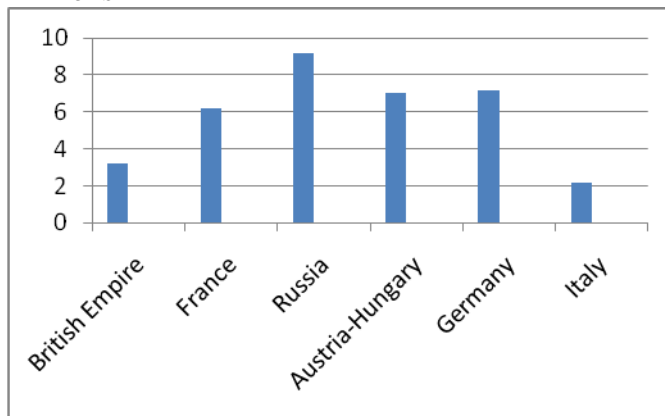
- Russia left the conflict because of the revolution
- before the war USA led the policy of isolation (not entering European affairs) but there were three things which made USA enter the war:
 - economic bond with Britain which was endangered by German submarine warfare (U-Boats)
 - US president **Woodrow Wilson** saw Germany as a danger to democracy
 - On 7 May 1915 British steamship was sunk with 124 American passengers on board
- USA sent new troops and weapons, mainly on the Western Front

The end of the war

- Germany was losing the war
- Russia signed the **Treaty of Brest Litevsk** (3 March 1918)
- this freed some German troops which then joined the Western Front and helped start the **Ludendorff offensive** (March to May 1918). But this last German offensive failed and the front broke down. The Allies made them retreat. The German army was in total despair, German economy was exhausted and Austria-Hungary was breaking down because of its many nationalities.
- finally, **armistice** was signed at **Compiègne** on **11 November 1918**.

The impact of the war:

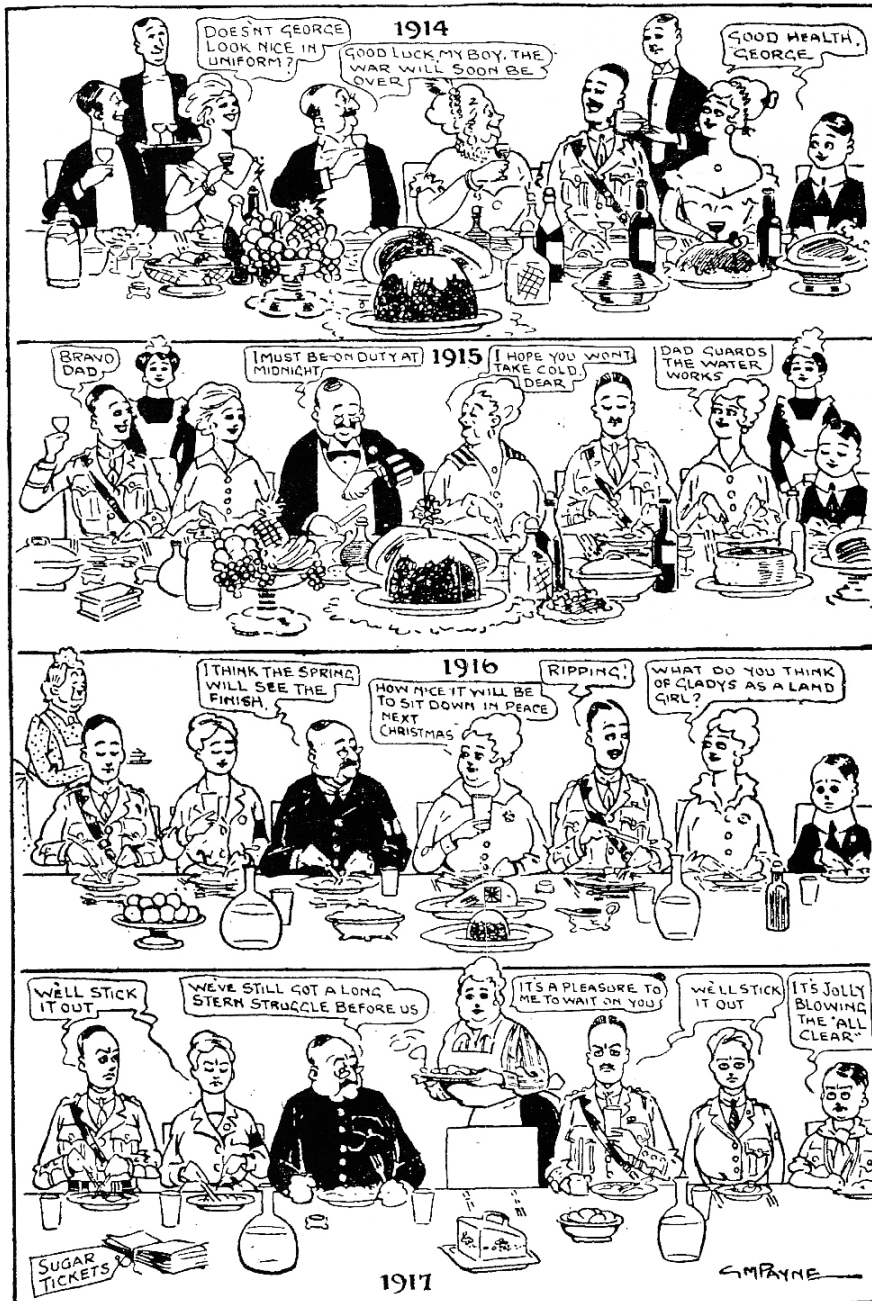
- **casualties** in millions



- many soldiers died of other things than combat – dysentery, gas burns, gangrene (amputations), typhoid, tetanus, “shell shock” (mental shock)
- **new weapons** were brought into the world, e.g. tank, machine guns, flame throwers, poison gas, airplanes (aerial bombing, dogfights), submarines, zeppelins
- landscapes were devastated
- economies were ruined (it was a long, exhausting conflict)
- social trauma - society and philosophy affected by the losses and disillusionment
 - literature, e.g. Lost Generation (USA – Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald)
 - role of women - emancipation, Suffragettes (womens’ voting rights movement)
- civilian population was affected too – **the home front** – living conditions were worse, food tickets, women worked more and became independent, war industry
- **propaganda** was used to manipulate public opinion at home so that people support the army

TASK 4: Study the following cartoon and comment on the development on the home front in Britain.

THE BROWN FAMILY'S FOUR WAR CHRISTMASSES.



- worker's parties in Europe stronger, some of them joined the **Commintern** (Communist International, organized from Moscow) in 1919
- **Peace Treaties** signed in **Paris in 1919 and 1920** (e.g. Treaty of Versailles)
- establishment of the **League of Nations** in 1919
- and a "bonus" after the war – an **influenza epidemic** known as **the Spanish Flu** (1918-1919, 20 million dead worldwide) spread by the soldiers returning home from the war