

History in Depth

The New Weapons of War



Poison Gas

Soldiers wore masks like those shown at left to protect themselves from poison gas. Gas was introduced by the Germans but used by both sides. Some gases caused blindness or severe blisters, others death by choking.

Machine Gun

The machine gun, which fires ammunition automatically, was much improved by the time of World War I. The gun, shown to the left, could wipe out waves of attackers and thus made it difficult for forces to advance.

Tank

The tank, shown to the left, was an armored combat vehicle that moved on chain tracks—and thus could cross many types of terrain. It was introduced by the British in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

Submarine

In 1914, the Germans introduced the submarine as an effective warship. The submarine's primary weapon against ships was the torpedo, an underwater missile.

Military strategists were at a loss. New tools of war—machine guns, poison gas, armored tanks, larger artillery—had not delivered the fast-moving war they had expected. All this new technology did was kill greater numbers of people more effectively.

The slaughter reached a peak in 1916. In February, the Germans launched a massive attack against the French near Verdun. Each side lost more than 300,000 men. In July, the British army tried to relieve the pressure on the French. British forces attacked the Germans northwest of Verdun, in the valley of the Somme River. In the first day of battle alone, more than 20,000 British soldiers were killed. By the time the Battle of the Somme ended in November, each side had suffered more than half a million casualties.

What did the warring sides gain? Near Verdun, the Germans advanced about four miles. In the Somme valley, the British gained about five miles.

Vocabulary

In war, a *casualty* is anyone killed, injured, captured, or considered missing in action.

The Battle on the Eastern Front

Even as the war on the Western Front claimed thousands of lives, both sides were sending millions more men to fight on the **Eastern Front**. This area was a stretch of battlefield along the German and Russian border. Here, Russians and Serbs battled Germans and Austro-Hungarians. The war in the east was a more mobile war than that in the west. Here too, however, slaughter and stalemate were common.

Early Fighting At the beginning of the war, Russian forces had launched an attack into both Austria and Germany. At the end of August, Germany counterattacked near the town of Tannenberg. During the four-day battle, the Germans crushed the

invading Russian army and drove it into full retreat. More than 30,000 Russian soldiers were killed.

Russia fared somewhat better against the Austrians. Russian forces defeated the Austrians twice in September 1914, driving deep into their country. Not until December of that year did the Austrian army manage to turn the tide. Austria defeated the Russians and eventually pushed them out of Austria-Hungary.

Russia Struggles By 1916, Russia's war effort was near collapse. Unlike the nations of western Europe, Russia had yet to become industrialized. As a result, the Russian army was continually short on food, guns, ammunition, clothes, boots, and blankets. Moreover, the Allied supply shipments to Russia were sharply limited by German control of the Baltic Sea, combined with Germany's relentless submarine campaign in the North Sea and beyond. In the south, the Ottomans still controlled the straits leading from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

The Russian army had only one asset—its numbers. Throughout the war the Russian army suffered a staggering number of battlefield losses. Yet the army continually rebuilt its ranks from the country's enormous population. For more than three years, the battered Russian army managed to tie up hundreds of thousands of German troops in the east. As a result, Germany could not hurl its full fighting force at the west.

Germany and her allies, however, were concerned with more than just the Eastern or Western Fronts. As the war raged on, fighting spread beyond Europe to Africa, as well as to Southwest and Southeast Asia. In the years after it began, the massive European conflict indeed became a world war.

Social History



The Frozen Front

For soldiers on the Eastern Front, like those shown above, the overall misery of warfare was compounded by deadly winters. "Every day hundreds froze to death," noted one Austro-Hungarian officer during a particularly brutal spell.

Russian troops suffered too, mainly due to their lack of food and clothing. "I am at my post all the time—frozen [and] soaked . . .," lamented one soldier. "We walk barefoot or in rope-soled shoes. It's incredible that soldiers of the Russian army are in rope-soled shoes!"

MAIN IDEAS

Synthesizing

Why was Russia's involvement in the war so important to the other Allies?

SECTION 2

ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Central Powers
- Allies
- Western Front
- Schlieffen Plan
- trench warfare
- Eastern Front

USING YOUR NOTES

2. What were some of the conditions that soldiers on the front lines had to face?

I. *The Great War Begins*
A.
B.

II. *A Bloody Stalemate*

MAIN IDEAS

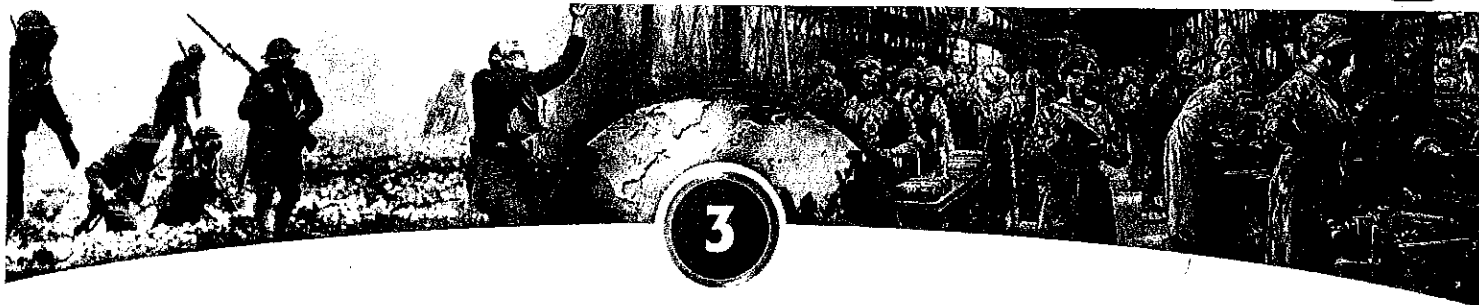
3. Which countries made up the Central Powers? Which countries comprised the Allies?
4. What were the characteristics of trench warfare?
5. What factors contributed to Russia's war difficulties?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **COMPARING AND CONTRASTING** How was war on the Western and Eastern Fronts different? How was it the same?
7. **ANALYZING CAUSES** Why did the Schlieffen Plan ultimately collapse? Cite specific details from the text.
8. **MAKING INFERENCES** Why might it be fair to say that neither side won the battles of the Somme or Verdun?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY** In an explanatory essay, describe the effects of the new technology on warfare. Use examples from your reading.

CONNECT TO TODAY PRESENTING AN ORAL REPORT

Find an image of a World War I monument from any one of the combatant countries. In an oral report, present the image to the class and provide details about its origin and purpose.



A Global Conflict

MAIN IDEA

ECONOMICS World War I spread to several continents and required the full resources of many governments.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The war propelled the United States to a new position of international power, which it holds today.

TERMS & NAMES

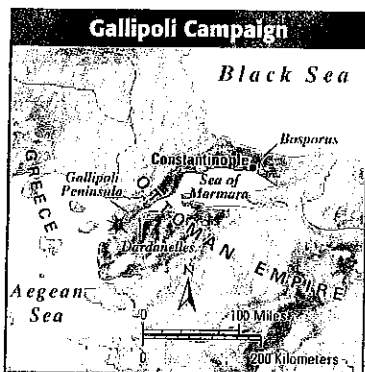
- unrestricted submarine warfare
- total war
- rationing
- propaganda
- armistice

SETTING THE STAGE World War I was much more than a European conflict. Australia and Japan, for example, entered the war on the Allies' side, while India supplied troops to fight alongside their British rulers. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Turks and later Bulgaria allied themselves with Germany and the Central Powers. As the war promised to be a grim, drawn-out affair, all the Great Powers looked for other allies around the globe to tip the balance. They also sought new war fronts on which to achieve victory.

War Affects the World

As the war dragged on, the main combatants looked beyond Europe for a way to end the stalemate. However, none of the alliances they formed or new battlefronts they opened did much to end the slow and grinding conflict.

The Gallipoli Campaign A promising strategy for the Allies seemed to be to attack a region in the Ottoman Empire known as the Dardanelles. This narrow sea strait was the gateway to the Ottoman capital, Constantinople. By securing the Dardanelles, the Allies believed that they could take Constantinople, defeat the Turks, and establish a supply line to Russia.



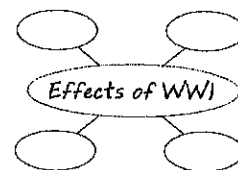
The effort to take the Dardanelles strait began in February 1915. It was known as the Gallipoli campaign. British, Australian, New Zealand, and French troops made repeated assaults on the Gallipoli Peninsula on the western side of the strait. Turkish troops, some commanded by German officers, vigorously defended the region. By May, Gallipoli had turned into another bloody stalemate. Both sides dug trenches, from which they battled for the rest of the year. In December, the Allies gave up the

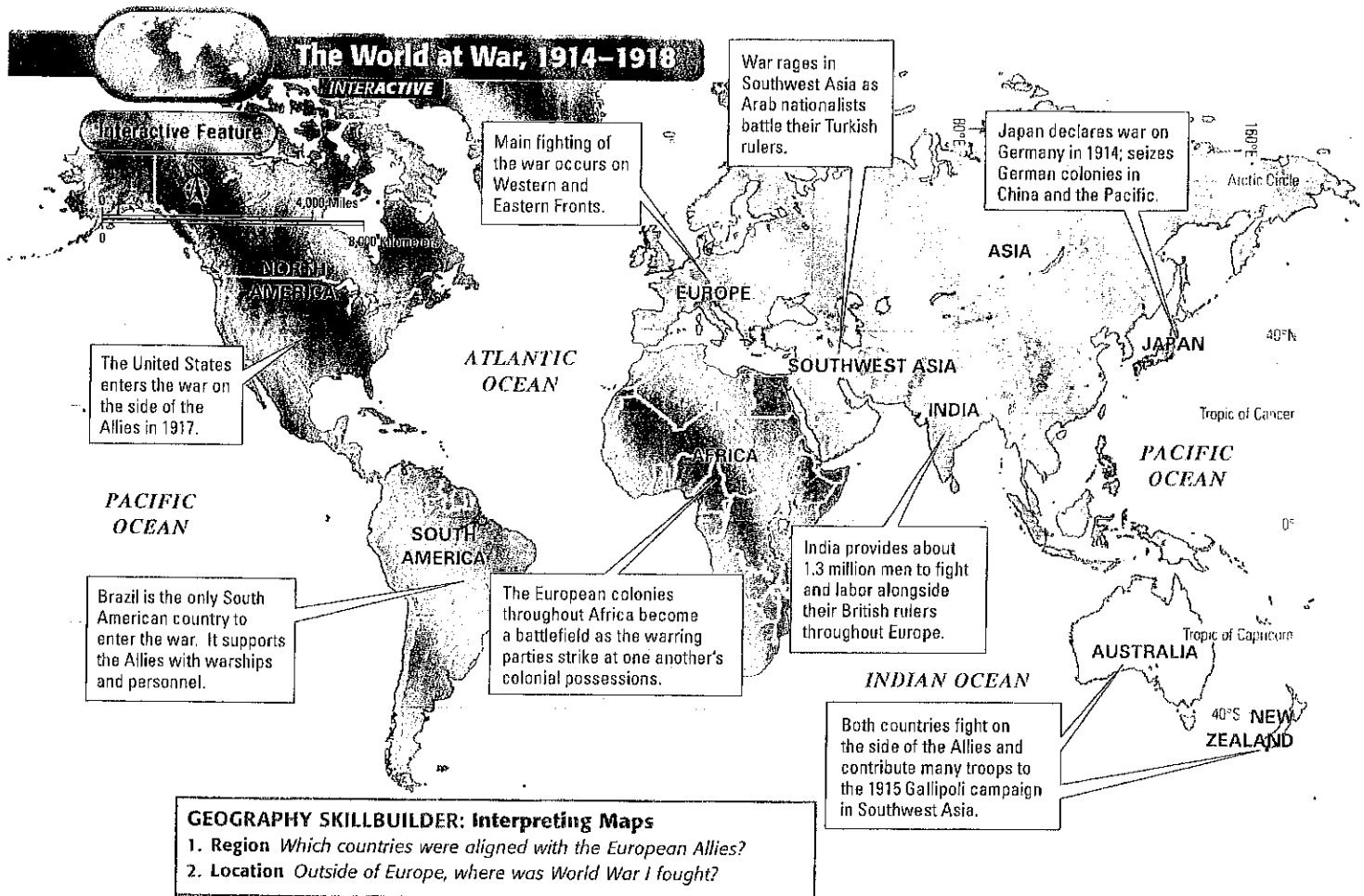
campaign and began to evacuate. They had suffered about 250,000 casualties.

Battles in Africa and Asia In various parts of Asia and Africa, Germany's colonial possessions came under assault. The Japanese quickly overran German outposts in

TAKING NOTES

Recognizing Effects Use a web diagram to show the effects of World War I.





China. They also captured Germany's Pacific island colonies. English and French troops attacked Germany's four African possessions. They seized control of three.

Elsewhere in Asia and Africa, the British and French recruited subjects in their colonies for the struggle. Fighting troops as well as laborers came from India, South Africa, Senegal, Egypt, Algeria, and Indochina. Many fought and died on the battlefield. Others worked to keep the front lines supplied. To be sure, some colonial subjects wanted nothing to do with their European rulers' conflicts. Others volunteered in the hope that service would lead to their independence. This was the view of Indian political leader Mohandas Gandhi, who supported Indian participation in the war. "If we would improve our status through the help and cooperation of the British," he wrote, "it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need."

America Joins the Fight In 1917, the focus of the war shifted to the high seas. That year, the Germans intensified the submarine warfare that had raged in the Atlantic Ocean since shortly after the war began. In January 1917, the Germans announced that their submarines would sink without warning any ship in the waters around Britain. This policy was called **unrestricted submarine warfare**.

The Germans had tried this policy before. On May 7, 1915, a German submarine, or U-boat, had sunk the British passenger ship *Lusitania*. The attack left 1,198 people dead, including 128 U.S. citizens. Germany claimed that the ship had been carrying ammunition, which turned out to be true. Nevertheless, the American public was outraged. President Woodrow Wilson sent a strong protest to Germany. After two further attacks, the Germans finally agreed to stop attacking neutral and passenger ships.