

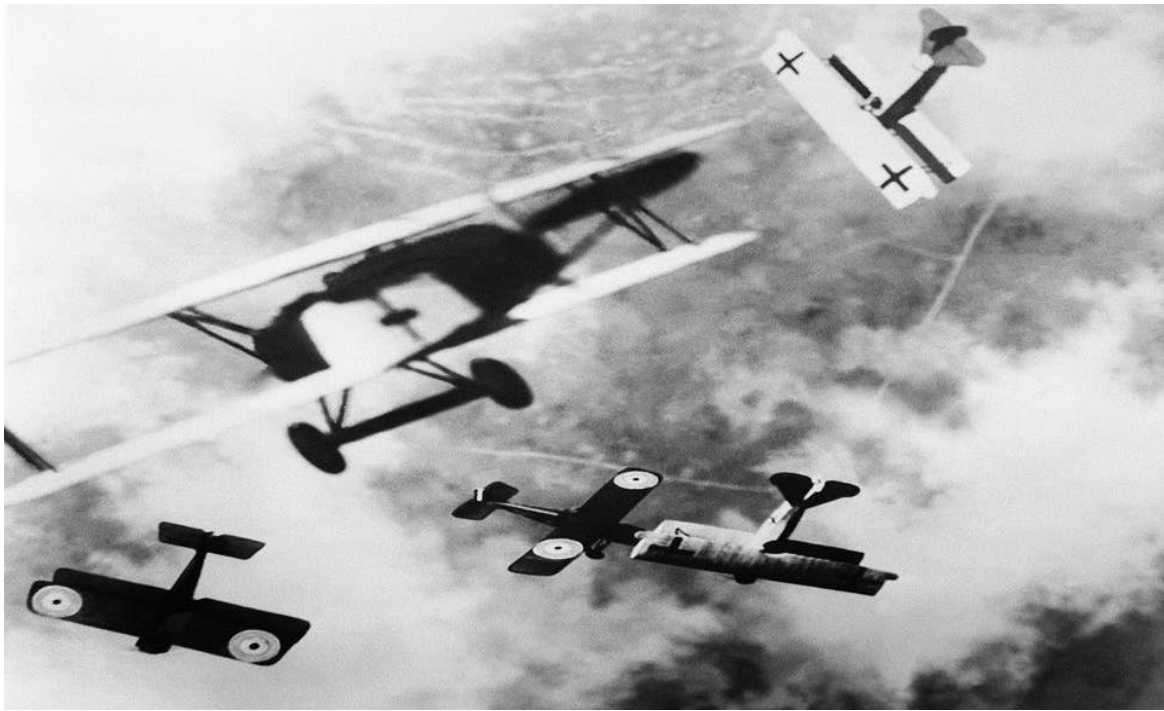
DOGFIGHTS



When World War I began, all the major powers had a small number of airplanes. Germany had the most, followed by France and Great Britain. Because the airplane was still in its infancy, at first it was used only for observation and reconnaissance.

Early in the war, pilots became combative. They began by throwing bricks, rusty chains, and other objects at the enemy's open cockpit or at enemy positions below. This quickly developed into shooting at one another with pistols, muskets, rifles, and shotguns. The air war escalated in May 1915 when the Germans discovered how to fire a machine gun straight ahead without hitting the propeller blade. "Dogfights," which were individual battles between enemy pilots, became commonplace in the skies over Europe.

World War I pilots were daring and cocky, and they were looked upon as heroes wherever they went. There was a certain camaraderie that grew among them, even in regard to the enemy. When an enemy ace (a pilot who had shot down five or more enemy planes) was killed, pilots from the other side often flew over his home base, dipping the wings of their planes to show respect. At other times they dropped sympathy notes or flowers. If they were shot down over enemy territory, many aces were even given elaborate funerals.



The war produced a number of aces. Germany's Baron Manfred von Richthofen, known as the Red Baron, was the top ace. He shot down 80 enemy planes. France's René Fonck shot down 75 enemy planes, England's Edward Mannock shot down 73, and Canada's Billy Bishop shot down 72. Eddie Rickenbacker, America's top ace, shot down 26 enemy aircraft.



The Red Baron's Fokker Dr. I triplane shooting down a British Sopwith Camel

Hoping to capitalize on its success in aerial warfare, Germany sent airships called Zeppelins to bomb cities in Britain. When the war started in 1914, the German armed forces had several Zeppelins, each capable of traveling at about 85mph and carrying up to two tons of bombs. As planes became more advanced, however, and incendiary bullets were developed, Zeppelins became obsolete because they were easy for the newer planes to shoot down.

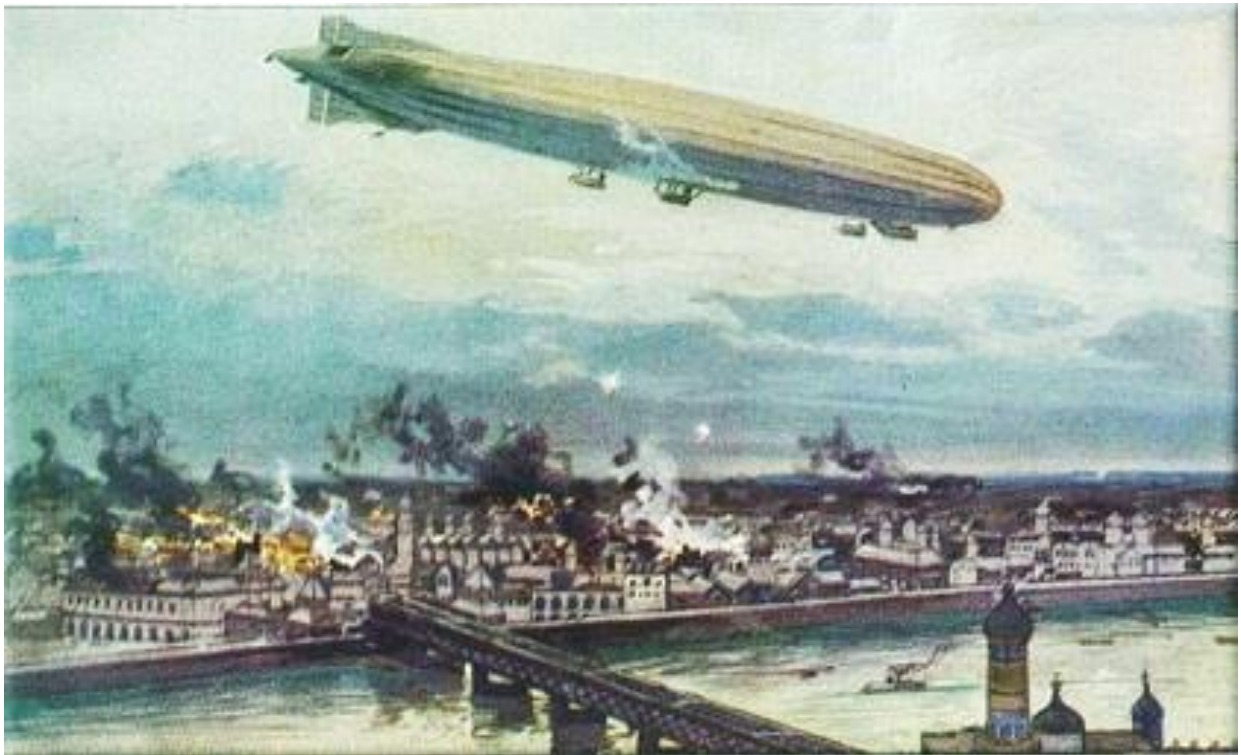
As the war progressed, the Germans began using heavy bombers, such as the Gotha G. IV, against Allied cities and targets. The Allies also developed their own bombers, such as the British Handley Page Type O. Strategic bombing had little impact on the war, however, and this tactic had little success until World War II when larger, more advanced bombers, capable of carrying heavier payloads, were developed.

1. What country had the most planes at the beginning of the war?

2. What purpose did airplanes serve in the early months of the war?

3. How many planes did a pilot need to shoot down to become an “ace”?

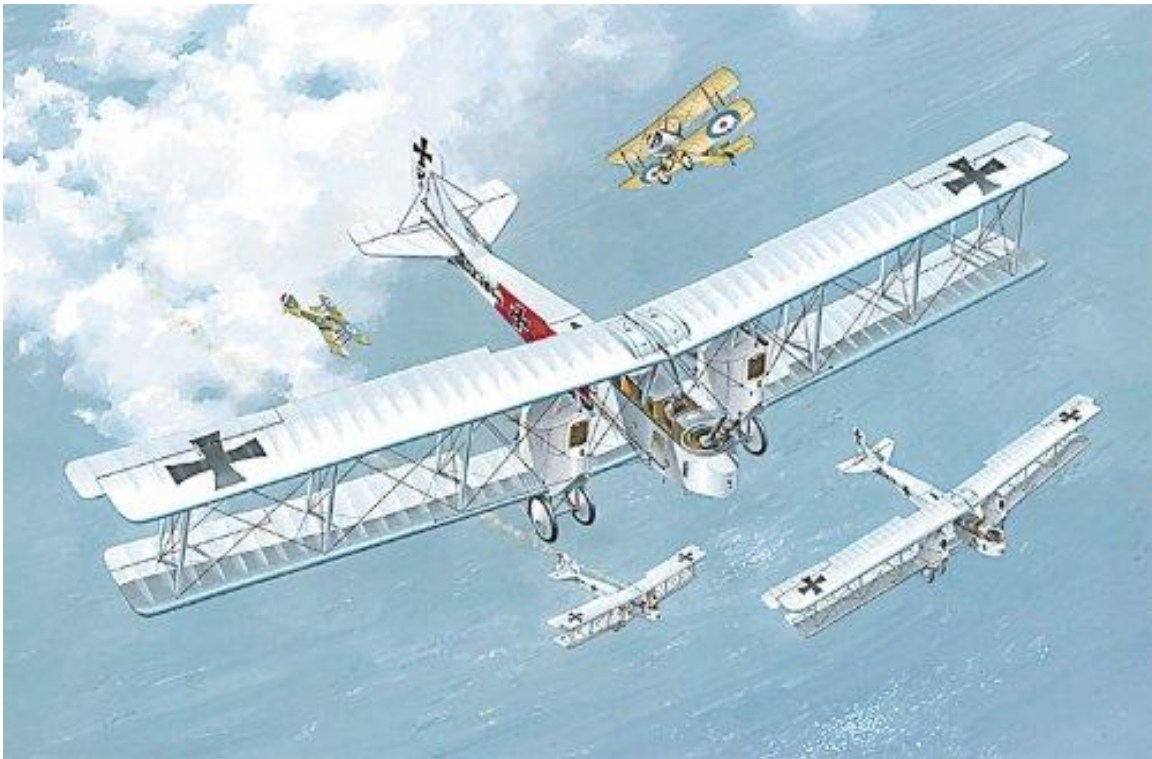
4. Who was the leading “ace” of WWI?



German Zeppelin raid over London

5. Who was America's top "ace" of WWI? How many planes did he shoot down?

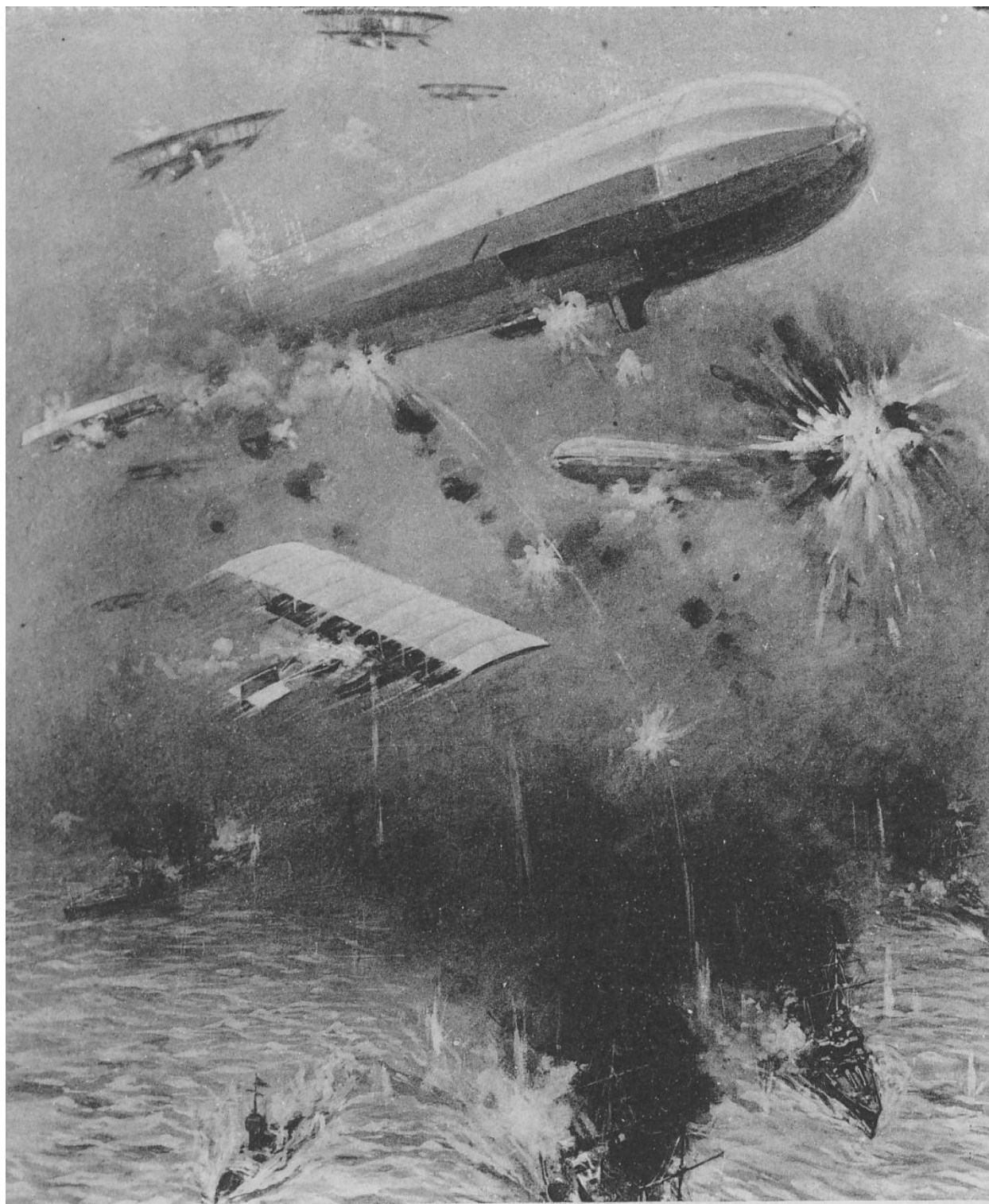
6. What was the average life expectancy of a new pilot during WWI?



WWI Gotha G.IV German Heavy Bomber

7. Why did Zeppelins become obsolete in the air war of WWI?

8. What were two of the heavy bombers developed during WWI?



1914... L'attaque de CUXHAVEN (port allemand, mer du Nord par les hydravions et contre-torpilleurs anglais

1914... The CUXHAVEN action (German port in the north sea) by the English hydroplanes and counter torpedoes

(E.D.)