

The Armistice

At 7:00 a.m. on November 8, 1918, Marshal Ferdinand Foch met with the German Armistice Commission in a railway car in the Compiègne Forest outside of Paris. The meeting was arranged to discuss a cease-fire that would bring an end to the war. The armistice was signed at 11:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918.

When news of the war's end reached the trenches, men on both sides were dumbfounded. They stood silently, their mouths open in disbelief. Then they began to laugh and cry, and soon they were cheering wildly. Finally, they left the trenches and walked out into no man's land.

Little fraternization took place between the former enemies. Some of the American soldiers met the Germans between the trenches and exchanged personal items. They traded cigarettes, food, and soap for German belt buckles, medals, and bayonets. Even a few German pistols were attained in the bargaining. Later, complete pandemonium broke out among the doughboys. With no other way to celebrate, they amused themselves by playing such childhood games as hopscotch and blindman's bluff.

In Washington, Paris, London, and Rome, crowds poured into the streets. Bands played, and people danced and sang.

The atmosphere in Germany and the other defeated countries was more subdued. They had lost the war and would continue to feel the weight of this loss for years to come.

1. When did World War I officially end?

2. What was the soldiers' reaction to the end of the war?

3. If you had been a soldier on the day the fighting ended in Europe, what do you think your feelings toward your former enemies would have been? Explain.

4. How do you think the German people reacted to news of the war's end?
