

World War I

*The Emergence of Modern
America (1890–1930)*



Origins and causes

The Great War

The home front

An imperfect peace

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about the origins and causes of World War I and be able to answer these key questions:

- How did nationalism and imperialism threaten the peace in Europe?
- What was the Alliance system and which countries were involved?
- What was the trigger that caused the outbreak of war?



In order to contextualize the events of World War I, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

start





In the lead-up to World War I, several developments made for an unstable environment and threatened the peace in Europe.

Nationalism

Imperialism



Alliance system

Militarism

Do you know what each of these things are?





In the 19th century, **nationalism** grew in the hearts of many of the people of Europe, with different outcomes. People became increasingly interested in having their own **sovereign** nation that would unify people of the same ethnicity and culture.

This threatened to tear apart empires like Austria-Hungary, which was made up of a diverse populace.

On the other hand, Prince **Otto von Bismarck** of Prussia used nationalism to unify German states into one country by manufacturing the **Franco-Prussian War** in 1870. The German states unified for mutual protection.





Imperialism was a dominant force in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The powers struggled to expand their empires, fighting for dominance over Africa and Asia. They also made sure that they held every possible advantage over their rivals.

In 1814, following Napoleon's defeat, the great powers of Europe had met in Vienna to create a balance of power.

However, with Germany's unification and rising military might, the power balance was shifting.



Why were the Americas not subject to imperialism?
What do you think the cartoon shows?



Although Europe remained war-free for some years, some countries felt threatened and humiliated by each other. Therefore they all placed emphasis on policies of **militarism**.

It became imperative, as a sign of strength and patriotism, to maintain a strong standing army and to be ready to mobilize in an instant.



With the exception of Britain, all the great powers of Europe had impressive standing armies by 1914. Britain was, however, the world's leading naval power.



By the outbreak of World War I, the great powers of Europe were all allied to each other in two groups. These groups were formed by the **Triple Alliance** and the **Triple Entente**.

Press on the countries to find out which powers were involved in each alliance and how the alliances developed.

Press **start** to begin.

start



What would happen if any two countries went to war?



The “powder keg of Europe”



The **Balkans** in southeastern Europe was a volatile region in the early 20th century. Nationalism threatened the peace and the great powers were entangled in its affairs. The trigger that led to war occurred here. Watch this animation to find out how World War I started and then engulfed Europe.

Press **start** to begin.

start

