

## **World War I** by Grace Callaghan 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020



**World War I (1914 – 1918)** was the first war in history to be fought by many different nations around the world. About eight million men were killed, many in horrific trench warfare before armistice (laying down of weapons). The guns of World War I finally fell silent at 11am on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month of 1918.

### **The road to War**

In 1914 Europe was divided into two hostile groups of countries. Germany and Austria-Hungary were called the Central Powers. They were opposed by the Allies: Russia, France, Britain and Belgium.

The leaders of the Central Powers believed that war would break out eventually and that it would be better for them if it happened quickly. They began to look for an excuse to go to war, and they found it when Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot dead by Serb nationalists in Sarajevo.

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary were already bad, and this incident led to the outbreak of war.

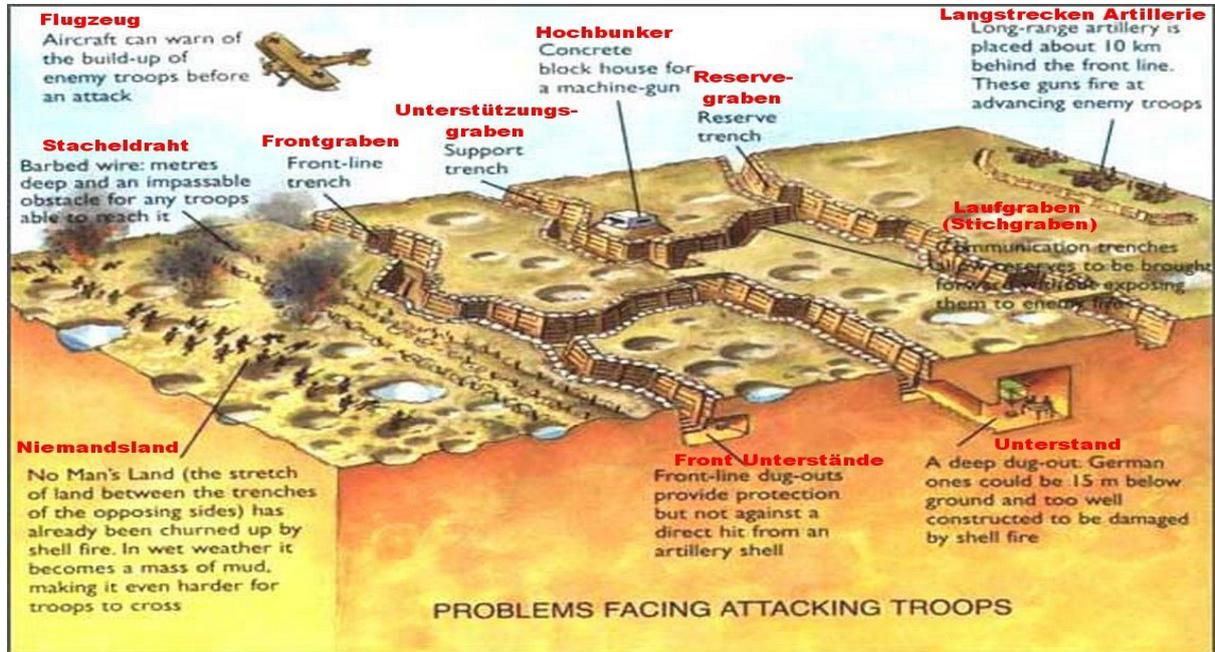
When Austria-Hungary demanded Serbia's virtual surrender, Russia said it would come to Serbia's aid. The rest of Russia's allies followed, and a large scale conflict became inevitable.

### **Why did war break out ?**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, European nations formed competing military alliances. War finally broke out in 1914 when a Serbian nationalist assassinated the heir to the throne of Austria. Austria went to war against Serbia, and many other countries joined in. On one side were the British, the French and Russian empires, Italy, and Japan. On the other side were the Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Bulgarians and Turks (the Central Powers).

## Trench Warfare

In World War I, both sides dug long trenches as lines of defence, which stretched across Western Europe. These trenches filled up with stinking mud. Any order to go 'over the top' and attack the enemy resulted in thousands of deaths.



### Where was no man's land ?

The territory between the two front lines was called 'no mans land'. It was a sea of mud, with broken stumps of trees and barbed wire entanglements. The area was raked by machine gun fire and pounded by heavy artillery, leaving craters big enough for soldiers to throw in.





## World war one year by year

### The war begins 1914

The central powers declare war against Russia and France . Germany marches through Belgium to attack France and Britain joins the allies.

### The war develops 1915

A trench system extends across western Europe . Germany uses poison gas against the allies. The Russians are pushed back by a major German offensive (attack) . Allied landings at Gallipoli against the Turks fail.

### Western Front, 1916

A German offensive against the French at Verdun is stopped at great cost. An allied offensive along the River Somme also causes heavy casualties but doesn't produce a victory for either side.

### The naval war 1916-17

British and German fleets fight at Jutland . Neither side wins outright and the German are unable to break the British naval blockade of their ports. The Germans use submarines to attack British shipping.

### **Year of decisions 1917**

The United States enters the war on the Allied side. Once American armies are trained and ready, Germany is outnumbered. The Russian army begins to collapse as revolution topples the Tsar.

### **Defeat of central powers 1918**

American troops and equipment helps the Allies defeat the Germans on the Western Front. The Germans ask for peace talks in November by which time Austria-Hungary and Turkey have already collapsed.

### **Treaty of Versailles**

Signed in 1919, the Treaty of Versailles brought the war to a formal close.

The Central Powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary were forced to admit defeat. Germany lost territory, while the Austro-Hungarian Empire was disbanded.

Germany also had to pay reparations (money) to the Allies.