

World War I

*A Half-Century of Crisis and
Achievement (1900–1945)*



The road to war

The Great War

The aftermath of war

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



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 have learned about the causes of World War I, and be able to answer the following key questions:

- How was Europe divided in the early 20th century?
- Why were there tensions between European nations?
- How would new technologies affect warfare?



In order to contextualize 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





During the 19th and early 20th centuries, a great number of technological advancements were made. Some of the key inventions from the period include:

- railroads
- steamships
- airplanes
- the telegraph
- barbed wire



Though these advancements generally improved people's quality of life, new types of weapons were also developed. Cannons that fired high explosive shells, machine guns and large submarines would help shape modern warfare, along with the development of chemical weapons such as tear gas.





Inventions of the 19th and early 20th centuries revolutionized communication, transportation and the way of life for people around the world. Press on the images to learn about new technologies that were later adapted for military use and changed the nature of warfare forever.

Press **start** to begin.

start



How do you think these inventions were used for war?



The growth of nationalism

Through the 19th and early 20th centuries, rivalries between European nations grew, as countries strove to increase their power and influence.

This was especially true for Germany. Now unified, Germans desired the wealth and status enjoyed by nations like France and Britain, and envied the vast British empire.



This period also saw a growth in popular **nationalism**. Citizens became increasingly proud of their country and sought not only to defend its honor, but also to spread its glory to other nations through **colonization**, or **imperialism**.

How do you think nationalism might affect people's willingness to go to war in 1914?





The emergence of a united and strong Germany, along with the colonization of Africa, caused major shifts in the balance of power in Europe. Watch this animation to find out more about the formation of alliances in Europe.

Press **start** to begin.

start





At the beginning of the 20th century, there was no international peace-keeping organization. Disputes were often settled by force, and the policy of **militarism** was common.

Many nations glorified the military and equated having a strong and powerful army with being a great nation. Militarism was therefore strongly linked to **patriotism** and national pride.

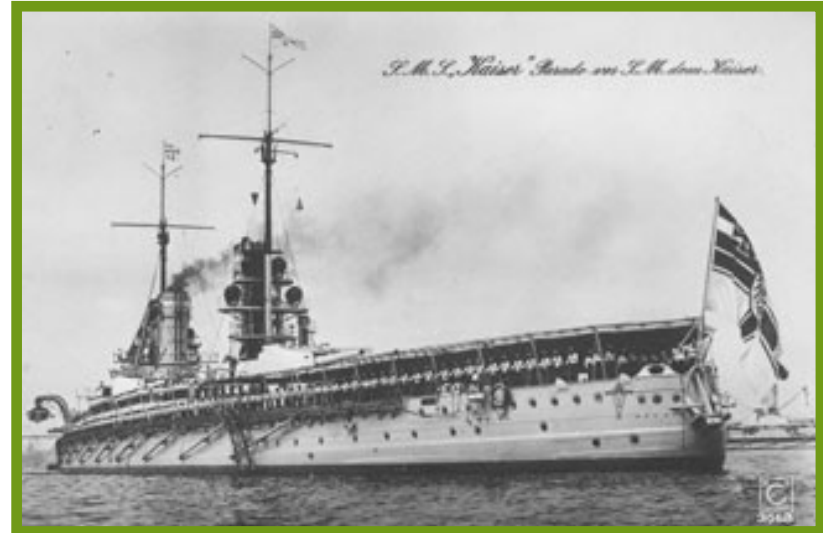
Despite his links to the British crown and the Russian Tsar, Kaiser **Wilhelm II** was a great advocate of German militarism. As political and economic tensions ran high, Germany began a process of rapid **industrialization**, increasing the size and power of its military.





Great Britain had long dominated the seas with its superior naval force, but Germany embarked upon a process of intense ship-building in the hope of surpassing the British.

Wishing to defend their homelands and empires, Russia, Britain and France responded by pouring a great deal of resources into enhancing their own armed forces. All the major powers in Europe had soon been drawn into an escalating arms race.



Complex plans for the mobilization of troops were put in place as these nations prepared for war.





The following terms are all key to understanding the tensions in Europe in the years prior to World War I.

Can you match each term to its definition?

Press **start** to begin.

start

