

# World War I

## Background

On June 28, 1914, the son of Austria-Hungary's emperor was assassinated by a Serb nationalist. Five days later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Russia and France then mobilized their armies to assist Serbia. When they refused a demand by Germany, Austria-Hungary's ally, to de-mobilize, Germany declared war on them. Germany then invaded Belgium in order to bypass several French forts. Britain, Belgium's ally, then declared war on Germany. Both sides tried to blockade each other's ports. The British used surface ships, while the Germans used submarines, called U-boats. The U-boats often sunk ships without warning. For a brief span, Germany agreed to warn American merchant ships before sinking them. However, on February 1, 1917, Germany announced that it would end this policy.

## Declare War on Germany by "Wendy Wilson"

Germany and its allies are the aggressive nations in this war. In August 1914, Germany invaded Belgium, a country that had not taken sides in the conflict. During the invasion, the German army burned several cities and executed thousands of innocent civilians, including women, children, the elderly, and even priests.

During the past two years, the Germans deported 700,000 Belgians to Germany. There, they are forced to work in factories building guns and ammunition. In a typically brutal act in 1915, the Germans executed Edith Cavell, a British nurse stuck in Belgium who was accused of helping British prisoners escape to Holland.

Germany's allies are just as bad. In 1915, Turkish soldiers executed more than 50,000 Armenian civilians and deported hundreds of thousands more. At that time, Germany was the only major European nation not to protest Turkey's actions. This year, Austrian and Bulgarian soldiers executed 2000 Serbian civilians.

Germany was also the first country to launch dreaded gas attacks during the war. On April 22, 1915 German troops released nearly 170

tons of chlorine gas at the Battle of Ypres. Since then, the Germans have developed and been the first to use phosgene gas, which can kill at half the dose of chlorine. In addition, raids on London by Zeppelin blimps have killed hundreds of civilians.

Now Germany has turned its attention to the U.S. On February 1, 1917, its government announced that it would resume unrestricted submarine warfare. This means they will sink without warning all ships heading for Britain. This violates all rules of warfare. Civilian crews of merchant ships should be given an opportunity to board life rafts. Since February 1, the Germans have sunk several U.S. cargo ships, killing about 100 American crewmen.

On February 19, it was revealed that Germany's foreign minister, Alfred Zimmerman, has been encouraging Mexico to invade the U.S. Apparently, Germany has promised to help Mexico reconquer Texas, Arizona and New Mexico if it joins Germany and its allies.

Since the war began, Italy, Japan, Portugal and Romania have joined the allied cause. Only primitive Bulgaria has joined Germany's side. And, the czar of Russia was replaced by an elected government in March, so the allies are

now the truly democratic side in this conflict.  
It is time for us to join them.

**Stay Neutral During this War**  
**By "William Jennings"**

The war raging in Europe is the most terrible in the world's history. More than 6,000,000 people have died already. More than 300,000 men were killed during the Battle of the Somme in 1916. This was the British counterattack that was supposed to push the Germans back to their border. That is nearly equal to the total number of Union soldiers killed during the entire Civil War. Yet, when it was over, the British had moved the Germans back only about 5 miles.

Not only are men dying for no purpose, they are also victims of horrible chlorine and phosgene gas attacks. Tens of thousands of soldiers have been permanently blinded or killed in excruciating pain after being gassed. If we get involved, we should expect at least 100,000 and maybe 200,000 Americans to die.

Now, if the allied side is fighting for what is morally right, then maybe we should join them.

But, the British and their allies are only slightly less barbarous than the Germans and their allies.

The only reason Britain does not sink American cargo ships is because they have a surface navy, which the American ships can see coming. The Germans rely on U-boats, which cannot safely come to the surface to provide a warning before attacking. If American merchants want to trade with nations that are at war, they should accept the risk of doing so.

Like Germany, Britain is guilty of shedding innocent blood and launching gas attacks. Britain's blockade of Germany has killed approximately 200,000 German civilians through starvation. And, Britain used chlorine gas on Germans during the battle of Loos, less than six months after the German gas attack at Ypres.

Five months ago, the German Chancellor made a speech offering to negotiate a peace treaty. The allies rejected the offer.

The fact of the matter is, a network of silly alliances turned an assassination into a world war. History will record this as an example of what happens when ego and militarism prevent reasonable compromise. Numerous European nations recognize that this is a crazy war and have remained neutral, including Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

In his farewell address, President Washington warned us not to get involved in European wars. We should heed his words and not send our fathers, brothers and sons to die in the mud of Europe.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Hour: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**World War I  
Worksheet**

1. Describe what Wilson claims happened at the battle of Ypres. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. According to Wilson, what are three countries that have joined the allied powers?

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3. How many does Jennings claim have died during the war? \_\_\_\_\_

4. According to Jennings, what are three countries that have remained neutral?

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5. Compare and contrast their views on the German policy of not having a warning when a German u-boat is about to sink a ship headed to Britain.

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6. Compare and contrast their views on which side is responsible for killing the most innocent civilians?

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7. If the U.S. does not declare war on Germany, describe how and when you think the war will eventually end.

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8. Who do you agree with and what is their most persuasive argument, statistic or example?

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