

Causes of World War One

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INTRODUCTION

Ask almost anyone what caused World War I, and the answer is almost always the same. Something along the lines of, “That Duke guy getting killed.” To a limited extent they would be correct. However, while the assassination of Francis Ferdinand and his wife Sofie was a major trigger of the war, it alone was not the cause of the war. An above average student may add that “entangling treaties” were also a cause of the war. But what does that mean? This curriculum unit will explain the overall picture of Europe in an attempt to make it easier for students to understand how this assassination plunged the world, and the United States, into the Great War. It will attempt to explain the situation of each individual country, and show why motives of each country entered this great struggle.

This essay and the model lessons that follow will give students enough information so they can easily understand this very complex issue. There will be a set of four lessons. One will be dedicated to Europe up until the war started in 1914. The second lesson will explain in detail the Central Powers and Allied powers. The third lesson will bring together all the information learned including the onset of the war. The final lesson will explain in detail why the United States entered the wars. Also, students will be referred back to different portions of this essay for important factual information.

SETTING THE STAGE: EUROPE IN GENERAL BEFORE JULY 1914

The inner turmoil that Europe suffered from before the Great War began long before 1914. The first underlying issue of this inner-European turmoil can be traced to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. In very simple terms it could be said that it all started because Spain needed a ruler. To fill this royalty void, a certain Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, a member of a branch of the ruling house of Prussia (a region of the future nation of Germany), was offered the throne.

When the French learned of these political plans they protested. They feared that having a Prussian sit on the throne of Spain, their southern border, would be a threat to them as they already had a Prussian ruler on their northern border. Because of these protests, the candidacy of Prince Leopold was withdrawn on July 12 of 1870. The next day the French ambassador to Prussia, Count Vincent Benedetti, had a meeting with King William I of Prussia. The meeting was cool and cordial, as the Count wanted reassurances that no one from Prussia would attempt to ascend to the Spanish throne. King William could not and would not give these assurances, and the meeting was over.

However, the Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was not satisfied. Bismarck wanted the Germanic states to become more united, and he felt that a war with France would achieve this goal. A telegram, known as the Ems Telegram, was sent to Bismarck. Bismarck took the telegram and altered the details of the meeting to make it appear as though both the King and the Count were rude to each other. The following is what the telegram said before the changes.

Count Benedetti intercepted me on the promenade and ended by demanding of me in a very importunate manner that I should authorize him to telegraph at once that I bound myself in perpetuity never again to give my consent if the Hohenzollerns renewed their candidature. I rejected this demand somewhat sternly as it is neither right nor possible to undertake engagements of this kind [for ever and ever]. Naturally I told him that I had not yet received any news and since he had been better informed via Paris and Madrid than I was, he must surely see that my government was not concerned in the matter.

[The King, on the advice of one of his ministers] decided in view of the above-mentioned demands not to receive Count Benedetti any more, but to have him informed by an adjutant that His Majesty had now received from [Leopold] confirmation of the news which Benedetti had already had from Paris and had nothing further to say to the ambassador. His Majesty suggests to Your Excellency that Benedetti's new demand and its rejection might well be communicated both to our ambassadors and to the Press. (O'Brien 1)

Bismarck took the telegram and changed it to fit his needs by taking out the pleasantries exchanged between the two men, which made it appear that each of the men had insulted the other. This is what the telegram said after Bismarck's changes.

After the news of the renunciation of the Prince von Hohenzollern had been communicated to the Imperial French government by the Royal Spanish government, the French Ambassador in Ems made a further demand on His Majesty the King that he should authorize him to telegraph to Paris that His Majesty the King undertook for all time never again to give his assent should the Hohenzollerns once more take up their candidature. His Majesty the King thereupon refused to receive the Ambassador again and had the latter informed by the adjutant of the day that His Majesty had no further communication to make to the Ambassador. (O'Brien 1)

Between two ordinary people there does not seem to be much difference between the two. However, diplomats speak a different language, which is often very subtle. When the softness of the original message was removed, it gave the new telegram an offensiveness that could not be ignored by the French people. The intent was to inflame their emotions at the thought of their official representative being offended. It worked, as the French became aroused to the point of declaring war on Prussia. It is for this reason

that France was blamed for the war, even though it was Bismarck who manipulated the situation. As Bismarck intended, this only made the French angrier, and on July 19th, they declared war on Prussia.

If you will recall, the reason that Bismarck wanted war was because he felt that it would unify all of the Germanic people. This was in fact accomplished as Prussia and the other Germanic states now became a unified Germany. As a unified Germany they were easily able to defeat France. The thorough and complete defeat of this once great European power came as a shock to much of Europe as Germany had always been fragmented in the past and therefore had never been a major player in European politics. However, after the war, that changed forever. In the Treaty of Frankfurt (1914), France agreed to pay \$1 billion dollars for “starting” the war and had to give up large portions of the eastern part of their country: two territories called Alsace and Lorraine. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine was an issue the French were never be able to live with and was the cause of hostile feelings between Germany and France. As will be discussed later, the hope of recapturing these lost territories was one of the motivations for French willingness to go to war with Germany in 1914.

A second underlying issue was Pan-Slavism. Pan-Slavism was a movement to increase the power of the Slavs. It was the hope that countries that were populated by a majority of Slavic people would rise up in a spirit of nationalism and create their own Slavic nations. The main problem with this is that these same Slavic people were usually already subjects of someone else, and to rise up and declare their own nation would be treason, and considered as a rebellion that needed to be squashed. According to Glencoe’s *World History*, the Slavs were originally a group out of what is today the country of Belarus. They split into three groups. The Western Slavs headed westward into the countries we know today as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. The Southern Slavs turned into the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs. The last group went southeast into the country we know today as Ukraine (Spielvogel 300). By the end of the 1800s and the early 1900s, the Slavs wanted to have their own identity and their own countries. This caused them to be a major irritant to Emperor Francis Joseph of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.

This Pan-Slavism made many of the southern regions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire very volatile. One such area was Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, the Congress of Berlin placed Bosnia and Herzegovina under the control of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1908, Bosnia and Herzegovina were completely annexed by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Serbia was also one of these volatile regions. It was from Serbia that Pan-Slavism spread, and it was in Serbia that the Francis Ferdinand assassination occurred.

Russia’s role in the middle of this was that they had adopted a Pro-Slavic position. This means that they were going to support Slavic people who wanted to establish their own country. Thus, when Graf von Bechtel, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the

Austro-Hungarian Empire, presented a set of ultimatums to the Serbs that he knew was unacceptable, the Serbs were brave enough to reject the ultimatums because they knew they had Russia's support. They knew that if Francis Joseph made a move against them that Russia would come to their aid.

A third underlying issue was the formation of entangling alliances, the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Remarkably, Russia originally had an alliance *with* Germany and Austro-Hungary. It was called the Three Emperor's League. However, by the 1880s, things had changed dramatically. Russia's Pro-Slavic support put it at odds with Austro-Hungary and the two were no longer compatible as allies. In 1882, Italy signed a secret agreement with Germany and Austro-Hungary forming the Triple Alliance.

On the other hand, without the Three Emperor's League, Russia was looking for new friends. Because France was increasingly concerned with Germany, they too were looking for friendly partners. By 1894 the Dual Alliance existed between the two countries.

The counterpart to the Triple Alliance was the Triple Entente. Because France was becoming ever increasingly at odds with Germany, they were seeking an alliance and felt that Russia would be a good possibility. France had already been involved with Russia in a number of economic ventures and now a military alliance seemed to be the next logical step. By 1895, Russia and France admitted publicly for the first time that there was in fact an alliance between the two powerful nations.

Finally, thanks in large part to the pro-French ascension of Edward VII to the British throne; an Entente Cordiale was arrived at in 1904. This was followed in 1907 by an agreement between Britain and Russia. With this final piece in place, the countries of France, Russia and Britain had formed the Triple Alliance.

THE CENTRAL POWERS

The Austro-Hungarian Empire

The Austro-Hungarian Empire was "created" by the Ausgleich, or compromise, of 1867. This was a constitutional compromise between the Hungarians, who wanted their independence, and Emperor Francis Joseph and his desire for a strong Austria.

The agreement was that the Empire would be divided into two states. One state, called Cisleithania, comprised of the areas we know as Austria, and Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovenia, and a part of what is known today as Poland. Transylvania was comprised of Hungary, Transylvania and Croatia.

Both of these states had their own elected, independent legislatures. These bodies of parliament handled the internal affairs of their own states and operated independent

ministries to aid in the running of their states. However, there was a common cabinet that dealt with foreign relations, the economy and one army that took care of the defense of the empire.

The leader of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was Franz Joseph. Franz Joseph began his reign in 1848, so when World War I started in 1914, he was already over 80 years old. His age was considered to be extremely old in those days. Franz Joseph had an extremely difficult job in holding together his empire. Made up of many different ethnic groups it was often difficult if not impossible to keep all of his subjects happy. Having to lead a nation made up of many different cultures, religions and goals made the job of emperor an extremely difficult one.

The trickiest of these problems was the desire of the Slavic people to have their own independent country. In fact, this spirit of nationalism was one of the greatest dangers facing the empire, and Franz Joseph knew it. It was this spirit of nationalism that brought about the plan to assassinate Franz Joseph's nephew, Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo by the Serbian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip.

The troubles involved in trying to contain and control this pro-Slavic nationalism would explain why the old Emperor wanted to use the death of his nephew as a serious reason to crack down on the movement. Knowing that this was a huge problem, he hoped to try and crack down on them before it caused his fragile kingdom to come apart at the seams.

Germany

Like most of the countries of Europe at the turn of the last century, Germany was a monarchy. From about 1860 to 1890, the country we know today as Germany was a collection of states and federations held together by the strong personality of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. When Bismarck was forced to resign in 1890, William II had already been King of Prussia for two years.

Kaiser William II had grand goals for Germany. He worked to increase the size of his navy and he wanted to expand the colonial efforts already underway. These two goals put him at odds with Great Britain. Germany and Great Britain historically had gotten along rather well, especially given the family relations between the two nations. In fact, William and Nicholas II, Czar of Russia, were very friendly to each other. In fact, it is well known that they often corresponded with each other. Dozens of letters were exchanged between the cousins on extremely friendly terms. In fact, it is in one of these letters that we find evidence of one of the reasons that Kaiser William felt the need to go to war. It was a concept called "encirclement". If you examine a Pre-World War I map, one can visualize how Germany is being "encircled" by Great Britain, France and Russia. When he wrote to the Czar in 1905 he showed his paranoia about Great Britain when he told his cousin "Nicky,"

The British have prostituted themselves before France and the French sailors in the hopes of gaining them over from you, and stopping any “rapprochement” between you, me and them. The French felt much flattered, but I hope the sensible people have kept their heads cool and clear and seen, that all is “consu de fil blanc,” and that Britain only wants to make France her ‘cats paw’ against us, as she used Japan against you. (Levine 1)

This point was reinforced in Camille Bloch’s book, *The Causes of the World War*, when she wrote about how Germany felt concerning the other European powers by saying, “They attributed to them, as we have seen, a desire to “encircle” Germany and prevent-as they expressed it -- a great nation from obtaining “her place in the sun” (Bloch 29). Germany felt that they were a great nation, and had potential to be an even greater nation. The one thing in their way was the appearance that countries such as Russia, Great Britain and France were trying to keep them down.

Germany had developed a close relationship with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. As pointed out earlier, they were involved with each other with the Triple Entente. Even before the assassination, Kaiser William had already given Franz Joseph the go-ahead to deal with the Pre-Slav problem any way he felt necessary, and Germany would back him up.

However, when emotions were running high, and war was eminent, it was the Kaiser who instructed Emperor Franz Joseph to not follow through with the ultimatums (discussed in greater detail below) and that there was no longer cause for war.

THE ALLIES

Russia

The most important player on the allied side of the war was certainly Russia. Russia had for years attempted to be a major player in world events. While it was the world’s largest country, much of its population was stuck in an almost medieval economy.

Modernization always seemed to elude the great Czars of Russia. At the time of the onset of World War I, Russia was under the rule of Czar Nicholas II. A complete opposite of his father Alexander I, Nicholas was a smaller, timid man. Although weak in personality, he was a very smart man. However, he was kept at a distance from his people. This distance, in the end, cost him his life and the lives of his family.

Russia felt it was their duty to support and encourage the rise of any Slavic people to form Slavic nations. This caused a great deal of tension between Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In countries like Croatia and Serbia, the Russians encouraged the Slavs in those countries to stand up and create their own countries. It was this type of

encouragement that gave the Slavic groups the courage to carry out incidents-such as the assassination of the Emperor's nephew.

When Serbia was given the ultimatum by Austro-Hungary, they felt like they could reject the demands of the Emperor because they knew that Russia was going to back them up if they were attacked. Of course, when Serbia rejected the ultimatums of Franz Joseph, troops on both sides mobilized.

France

At the turn of the twentieth century, France was a democracy. Although it was a democracy, it was a shaky one. Democratic governments in France changed frequently, and it was not that far removed from being a monarchy itself.

France's main reasons for entering the war were twofold. One was to back up Russia, as per the terms of the Triple Entente. Second, they were still dreaming of winning back the Alsace-Lorraine territories, lost during the Franco-Prussian War. On France's part, they entered the Triple Entente under the direction of the Premier Georges Clemenceau. As early as 1907 he realized the need to get support, if he were ever to regain the territories lost to Germany.

In the years leading up to 1914, France was led by a group of radicals. Up until 1912, France was led by Joseph Caillaux, but he was thrown out of office because he handed over to Germany a slice of Africa to try and ease tensions over Morocco. Caillaux was replaced by Raymond Poincaré. Poincaré was good in that he strengthened the French army and strengthened France's alliances. In 1913, he was elected as President of France.

Despite this, his party had lost popularity with the French people, and in the elections of 1914 his party had lost control of the government. However, before any policy changes could be made to reverse the nationalism encouraged by Poincaré, the assassination of the Duke occurred.

Because Poincaré was so Pro-France/Anti-Germany, the argument could easily be made that he and his government did not necessarily try very hard to keep France from going to war. Had Joseph Caillaux still been in power, war between France and Germany may have been avoided. Nevertheless, to maintain the integrity of the Triple Entente, and with the hopes of recovering the long-lost Alsace and Lorraine territories, France went along with the call to arms.

Great Britain

In the late 1800s, contention between Great Britain and Germany did not seem to be a problem. Traditionally, they were friends and the monarchs on both thrones were related.

Queen Victoria was Kaiser Wilhelm's grandmother and King Edward VII was his uncle. In fact, much of the leadership and aristocracy of Europe were related to one another. For example, the wife of Nicholas II, Alexis, was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Queen Victoria herself had married her first cousin, Albert. Queen Elizabeth's first-born daughter, Princess Victoria, married a man who would become King Frederick Wilhelm of Prussia.

Great Britain was actually a special player in the whole drama that was World War I. One place to investigate is the role that royalty played in the war. Of the five major countries involved in the start of the war, four were headed by a monarchy: the Czar in Russia, the Kaiser in Germany, the Emperor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and King George V in Great Britain.

Three of these four monarchs had a direct relationship with Queen Victoria. The lineage began with King George III, who was the grandfather of Queen Victoria. This is the same King George that "lost" the American colonies and was later considered to be insane. He had twelve living children, five of which were sons. The oldest was George, then Edward, and then William. George became King George IV at the death of King George III in 1819 and he ruled until 1830.

Edward married a German Princess, and together they produced Alexandria Victoria. Alexandria Victoria, though an English princess, spoke German until the age of three and even had Czar Alexander I as her godfather. Her father, Edward, died of pneumonia when she was just eight months old. William became king upon the death of George IV in 1830, but he died just seven years later with no heir to his throne. Thus, at the age of just 18, Princess Alexandria Victoria became Queen Victoria.

While Queen Victoria became arguably the most important monarch of the 19th century, her importance here is her family ties she shared with the leaders of Europe. Her oldest daughter, Princess Victoria Adelaide married Prince Frederick Wilhelm of Prussia. He eventually became Wilhelm I and reigned over Prussia for three months before he died prematurely of throat cancer. His son, grandson to Queen Victoria, became Kaiser Wilhelm II, the head of the German government going into World War I.

Victoria's eldest son, Prince Albert Edward, became King Edward VII in 1901 at the death of Queen Victoria. He died in 1910, and his son became King George V. Once again, he was yet another grandchild of Queen Victoria.

Finally, Queen Victoria's third child, Princess Alice Maud Mary, married Prince Ludwig, who later was known as the Grand Duke Louis XIV. They had a daughter named Alexis (granddaughter of Queen Victoria) and she married the man who eventually became Czar Nicholas II. Of course, as indicated above, Nicholas II was the monarch of Russia at the time the war broke out in the Balkans. As you may remember, Nicholas' strong support of the Pro-Slavic movement was one of the triggers of the war.

Great Britain was the one country that probably had the least to gain from entering into the war. They had no territory in the Balkans (the origin of the conflict), they had no overriding belief in Pan-Slavism and they had no real economic ties to the area. They did, however, have a defense treaty with France and Russia, and their honor as a nation to defend their word and keep their commitments.

Britain and Germany also had a natural rivalry in that both were economic leaders of Western Europe and both were builders of great navies. While Britain had grown an extensive colonial empire, Germany was catching up and was not going to be denied a share of the colonial world. If anything, it was expected that the fight for colonies would be the pretext for war between the two, not an incident in the Balkans.

Even before bullets actually began to fly, opinions were divided in Britain over how to handle the crisis. One side felt that if they made it clear that Britain would not stand idle and watch the destruction of Serbia, the Kaiser would lose his will and war would be averted. The other side countered that if it were made clear to the Czar that British troops would not die for the Pan-Slavic cause in Serbia, he would break down (Robbins 9). However, when Germany invaded neutral Belgium, Great Britain lost all options and was forced to declare war on Germany.

THE ONSET OF WAR

The spark that ignited the Balkan keg of gunpowder occurred on June 28, 1914. On this day, the nephew to the Emperor Franz Joseph was visiting Sarajevo visiting or inspecting the troops that were there on military maneuvers. The Pro-Slavic forces were also there, waiting for him.

The first attempt on the life of the Duke was a bomb tossed at the passing car. It missed the Duke's car and wounded an officer in the next car. The Duke felt bad for the wounded man and desired to visit him. It was on this trip, while en route to visit the wounded officer, that an assassin shot and killed the Duke and his wife.

Within a week of the assassination, Kaiser Wilhelm assured the old Emperor that he could start a "preventive war" against Serbia, and the Empire would have the support of the German military. Armed with this knowledge, an ultimatum was drafted with certain demands made upon the Serbian people. On July 19th, the final ultimatum was approved. It was delivered to the Serbs on July 23rd. These demands began with the following:

The Royal Serbian Government condemns the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, that is to say, the whole body of the efforts whose ultimate object it is to separate from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy territories that belong to it, and it most sincerely regrets the dreadful consequences of these criminal transactions.

The Royal Serbian Government regrets that Serbian officers and officials should have taken part in the above-mentioned propaganda and thus have endangered the friendly and neighborly relations, to the cultivation of which the Royal Government had most solemnly pledged itself by its declarations of March 31, 1909.

The Royal Government, which disapproves and repels every idea and every attempt to interfere in the destinies of the population of whatever portion of Austria-Hungary, regards it as its duty most expressly to call attention of the officers, officials, and the whole population of the kingdom to the fact that for the future it will proceed with the utmost rigor against any persons who shall become guilty of any such activities, activities to prevent and to suppress which, the Government will bend every effort. (Levine 1)

Not only must the Serbs comply with the above demands, ten others were made. Among them were items such as the Serbians must stop or not allow any anti-monarchy publications, the dissolution of the Narodna Odbrana, the removal of anyone in the government or military who has been found guilty of anti-government propaganda, suppression of all subversive movements against the monarchy, stopping Serbian authorities from smuggling weapons and explosives across the frontier and preventing high Serbian officials from talking badly about the monarchy while they were abroad (Levine 1).

On July 24th, Russia issued a declaration that Austro-Hungary must not be allowed to crush Serbia. The next day Serbia replied to the ultimatum. Serbia had agreed to accept all of the conditions laid out by Austro-Hungary, and as you can see from the above these conditions were quite extensive, except for two. One, they did not agree that Serbian officials could be dismissed at Austro-Hungary's wishes. Second, they did not agree that Austro-Hungary officials could take part, on Serbian soil, in hearings against organizations (such as Pro-Slavic groups) that were hostile to the Empire. They mainly objected to this point because it violated Serbia's sovereignty.

While Serbia rejected these two items, they offered to take the issue to an international arbitration hearing. However, Austro-Hungary rejected this proposal; they severed diplomatic relations and partially mobilized the military.

By July 27th, Berchtold had already persuaded Franz Joseph to authorize war against Serbia. However, on July 28th, Kaiser Wilhelm instructed his foreign office to tell Emperor Franz Joseph that there is no longer justification for a war with Serbia, as Serbia had accepted most of the terms of the ultimatum and had offered other concessions. At this point, Wilhelm felt that Franz Joseph should just be satisfied with the occupation of Belgrade.

Unfortunately, it was too late. That same day, Austro-Hungary declared war and the next day, July 29th, they began a bombardment of Belgrade. In response, Russia ordered a partial mobilization of their troops against Austro-Hungary, and Austro-Hungary began to mobilize their troops against Russia.

On July 31st, Germany sent Russia a 24-hour ultimatum to halt their mobilization of troops against Austro-Hungary. Germany also sent to France an 18-hour ultimatum that they must promise their neutrality in the coming events. Both ultimatums were ignored.

On August 1st, Germany ordered a general mobilization of their armies and declared war on Russia. In response, France then ordered a general mobilization of their armies. The very next day, Germany ordered troops into Luxembourg and demanded that Belgium grant them passage through their country. Belgium, being neutral, denied the German request.

August 3, 1914, Germany declared war on France and began to invade neutral Belgium. Because of Great Britain's commitment to protect Belgium's neutrality they were then forced to declare war against Germany on August 4th.

The very next day, August 5th, Austro-Hungary finally officially declared war on Russia. On August 6th, Serbia declared war against Germany. For what it was worth, on August 12th Montenegro, another small Balkan country, also declared war on Germany. On the same day, Great Britain decided to make a formal declaration of war against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Japan declared war on Germany on August 23rd, and on the 25th the Austro-Hungarian Empire declared war against Japan. Three days later, Austro-Hungary also declared war against Belgium.

This is how World War I began. This was a war fought like no other war. After this war, things such as automatic rifles, hand grenades, tactical use of aircraft, tanks and blimps, would all become staples of warfare. Empires ruled by monarchs, given a free hand to set policy and make decisions would no longer be found. Even though millions died, and the horrors of war were experienced on both sides, it would not be enough to stop Europe from plunging into another world war just a generation later.

United States Enters the War

Throughout much of the history of the United States, it was a nation that kept pretty much to itself. While there were occasions where we became involved in European matters as a nation, the United States had kept out of European business. There were factors that ran contrary to this general policy.

The first would be the Spanish-American War. It was the first time where the United States had essentially "picked a fight" with a European power. The war had mainly to do with Cuba, but at the end of the war we had expanded not only into Cuba, but had also

taken possession of the Philippines. It was widely thought by many at the time that this adventure onto the world stage would help break the isolationism that the United States had put itself under.

A second factor was the Republican President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt saw life in grand terms and, based on his actions, seemed to think that the United States should play a bigger role in the world than they did. He attempted to broker a peace between Japan and Russia, and won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts. He undertook as his own special project the completion of the Panama Canal, knowing the importance such a strategic waterway would have in the future, both economically and militarily. He expanded the navy of the United States so that the nation would be equal in might to his vision of where the United States should be as a world player.

A third factor was the heavy immigration that the United States had undergone in the late 1800s and early 1900s. At the turn of the century, almost 75% of those who migrated to the United States came from European countries. Between 1870 and 1920 approximately 20 million Europeans had migrated to the United States, 25% being German (Danzer 255). As the 1910 census puts the U.S. total population at just over 91 million, this meant that approximately 22% of the population came from Europe (McGovern 1). In political terms, because such a large percentage of the population had roots to either the central powers of the allied powers, it would be very difficult for a president to choose one side over the other. However, each group would still be applying pressure for the President to choose one side over the other. This was the very difficult position that President Woodrow Wilson found himself in during the first few years of the war.

In the first days of the war, Wilson attempted to protect the neutrality of the United States. On August 19th, he issued a declaration of neutrality, which contained five basic points. First, that while the United States was neutral, we would be willing to mediate a peace between the warring nations. Second, United States ports would be closed to all belligerents (those at war with each other). Third, there would be no military recruiting in the United States. Fourth, and American that volunteered to fight for any of the warring countries would lose his or her U.S. citizenship. Fifth, he called for an international conference to meet at The Hague (Hacken).

America's slide into the war was innocent enough in the beginning. As a capitalistic society, we wanted to make money by selling our goods to others. In this case, it meant that we began selling munitions to both sides of the conflict. It turned out that because of the British blockade against Germany, almost all of the munitions trade was going to Great Britain. As mentioned above, the allied powers were in debt to the United States approximately \$2 billion. What this meant was that the only way our corporations were going to see their money was if the Allied powers were successful in defeating the Central powers and extract from them an indemnity large enough to pay off their bill. In

essence, Americans went from being neutral to pro-allied based largely on financial reasons. They wanted to be paid back the billions that they had loaned.

Another step closer to war was taken with the sinking of a luxury liner called the *Lusitania*. The *Lusitania* was a sister ship to the *Titanic* and was considered to be the finest passenger liner in her day. The Germans had given clear warning that they considered the ship to be a legitimate U-boat target because it had the capability of ramming, and thus sinking a U-boat, and it carried munitions. On May 7, 1915, the ship was sunk by torpedoes and sunk with 1,198 going down with the ship. Of those, 128 were Americans. Because of the protest by Wilson, and the threat of breaking diplomatic relations with Germany, the Kaiser agreed to halt their all-out U-boat attack. This lasted for almost two years.

On January 19, 1917, the German Navy announced that they would once again begin sinking all ships in the war zone around the British Isles. Wilson quickly broke off diplomatic relations.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated even further with the discovery of the Zimmermann telegram. The Zimmermann telegram basically was a telegram from the German foreign minister, Arthur Zimmermann, to the German minister in Mexico City which planned to reward Mexico with territories lost in the Mexican-American War if they declared war against the United States and allied themselves with Germany. While the telegram itself did not lead us to war, Wilson surely lost his objectivity toward neutrality where Germany was concerned.

On April 2, 1917, Wilson called for a special session of Congress and requested a declaration of war. Wilson offered several reasons why we should declare war on Germany. One of the most important reasons was the use of the U-boats by the Germans. He indicated that Germany, more than any other country, was responsible for the war. He added that the United States had truly tried to stay neutral, that the United States would make the world safe for democracy and that the United States could guarantee “peace without victory” (Hacken). Congress obliged the president, and war against Germany was declared.

Conclusion

With the entry of the United States into the war, the United States also entered into a new state of international relations. Throughout the history of the country, it had always been isolated by distance and attitudes from Europe. Now, with the infusion of fresh troops and more money, Wilson hoped that this would also buy the United States a seat at the table that would determine the future of Europe.

Wilson had a plan for continued peace called the Fourteen Points. His plan called for things such as freedom of the seas, removal of all economic barriers, a plan to work out

colonial claims, the evacuation of Belgium, and the opportunity for the Balkans to attain their own sovereignty. The last point was the establishment of “a general association of nations must be formed ... for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike (Hacken).

It appeared that the United States was about to break out of her isolationism and take a lead role in world affairs. Wilson himself led the United States peace delegation to Paris, which was very unusual. However, Wilson miscalculated when he did not invite a Republican to go along with him. When he returned home with the treaty, he did not have the support of the Republican-controlled Senate that he needed for ratification and the Treaty was never approved. Without the involvement of the United States, the League of Nations was ultimately doomed to failure. The United States slowly returned to its pre-war state of isolation.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson 1: Europe Before the War

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the unit and to learn what Europe was like before the onset of the war.

Before class, go to <<http://gme.grolier.com/gme-ol/media/200/mh00048.gif>> and make a transparency of the map “Europe in 1914.” Put this map on the overhead projector and use this tool to aid in explaining the world just before World War I.

Class Instruction/Discussion

Lead a discussion with the class bringing out important points such as the Central powers and who they were, the Allied powers and who they were, the geography of the countries (especially the flatness of Belgium and the attractiveness this may have to an invading force), the Balkan countries and their relationship to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This portion of the lesson should take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Hand out to students copies of the essay portion of the curriculum unit. As a class, read through the first part of the essay “Setting the Stage: Europe in General Before July 1914.” Once again, discuss with the students any sections that perhaps students do not understand. Points to be sure to make clear are the inter-relations of the royal families, the rise of Germany as a major power, and the occupation of the Alsace-Lorraine territories of France by Germany as a reason for France to get involved in World War I, Pan-Slavism and Russia’s support of Slavic states, and the dangers of entangling treaties.

Class Activity

First, take about 30 minutes and have students complete the worksheet, “Europe Before 1914.”

Second, show about the first 30-45 minutes of “All Quiet on the Western Front.” This first part of the movie demonstrates the hopelessness of trench warfare, the horror of being wounded in this war, and the attitude of the young soldiers as they are still full of enthusiasm for the Fatherland.

Closure

By the end of this lesson your students should be familiar with the geographical and political map of Europe before the onset of World War I, the three major causes of the war, important facts related to the war, and are given a glimpse of the horror that was World War I.

Lesson 2: The Allied and Central Powers

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to make the students familiar with each of the five major countries involved in the beginning of World War I and understand what role each country played in the start of the war.

This lesson will focus on the countries, the leaders of those countries, their motivation for war, and the geographical location of each country.

Before class it might be beneficial to preview some of the websites listed in the annotated bibliography for additional information that your students will find useful in completing their poster projects.

Class Instruction/Discussion

This part of the unit relies on two parts of the essay portion of the curriculum unit. Either students can read quietly individually, or read as a class, the sections of the unit entitled “The Central Powers” and “The Allies.” This information and the information in the textbook will be the basis for the information students will put on their posters.

Lead a discussion with the class and review important points covered previously, but in more detail, such as the Central powers and who they were, the Allied powers and who they were, the geography of the countries, and the Balkan countries and their relationship to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Again, this portion of the lesson should take approximately 15-20 minutes.

Class Activity

Split your class into six different groups. Supply each group with a poster board, a set of markers and possibly printouts from any of the websites you have found to be helpful. Be sure to have a handout that thoroughly explains the relationship of Queen Victoria to many of the Royal families of Europe.

Groups 1-5 should each be assigned one of the five major countries (Germany, Great Britain, Austro-Hungary, Russia, and France). Each group should create a poster of their assigned country and show a map of their country, its relation to the countries around it, the leader of the country, the type of government of the country, and their motivations for going to war. If possible, they could also show a depiction of the flag of the country, charts or graphs that demonstrate the size of the country and the size of their military, and any other type of information that would make the poster interesting and educational.

The sixth groups should focus on the family tree of Queen Victoria, and chart as many relations as possible to any other monarchs of Europe. This project is actually more interesting if they start with King George III, but that may be a bit too much with the given time constraints.

Closure

Give each group time to show its poster and explain what they learned about. For a little competition, you may even have the class vote which poster they think is the best, and reward that group with extra credit of some type.

Ideally, keep one of each of these posters up as you finish covering World War I so the students will be able to remember more easily the key players of the war and the roles played by each.

Lesson 3: The Onset of the Great War

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to outline clearly the sequence of events between the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand on June 28th and the beginning of the actual fighting in the following August. This lesson will help students visualize the sequence of events that caused the world to go to war over the assassination of Francis Ferdinand.

Class Instruction/Discussion

Once again, lead the class in going over the section of the essay “The Onset of the War.” As you go through the events, feel free to expand on any of the items and add to the events in any fashion that would make the material clearer or of more interest to the students.

Class Activity

Once again, allow the students to divide into the same groups used in the Lesson 2. Today, they are going to use the information in the essay, their textbook, and any other information you make available to create a timeline of the events of the summer of 1914.

Please provide each group with an ample supply of paper (most preferable would be butcher paper), markers, and rulers. Direct the class first to determine the dates and

events they want to use in their timeline, and then to plot the timeline carefully so they will be able to fit everything they want to use on the paper.

Closure

Once again, for a little competition, you may even have the class vote which poster they think is the best, and reward that group with extra credit of some type.

Finally, close the lesson by viewing the rest of the movie, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, and if possible discuss with the students how different World War I was from any other wars previously fought (strategies, weaponry, airplanes, etc...).

Lesson 4: United States Involvement

Introduction

This lesson will chronicle the reasons the United States was compelled to enter into this European conflict. Also, it will help the students see the United States change from a nation of isolationists to one on the verge of international power before reverting back to its pre-war isolationism.

Class Instruction/Discussion

Lead the class in going over the section of the essay “United States Enters the War.” Emphasis should be place on the three factors that influenced U.S. involvement in the war: Wilson’s attempt at neutrality, the reasons Wilson decided to declare war and Wilson’s peace plan.

Class Activity

Before class, go to the website <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1918/14points.html>> and get copies of President Woodrow Wilson’s address to the joint session in which he lays out his 14 points. This document will be the basis for the class activity.

Divide the class into 4-5 groups and assign each group 3-4 points. Provide the groups with poster board or butcher paper. Instruct the groups that they need to divide the paper into two sides. The left side of the paper should contain the point they were assigned and their interpretation of what Wilson meant when he wrote the point. The right hand side of the paper should show how it was hoped that this point would help to establish or keep world peace. The poster should look something like this:

Point #:	What it Means:	How Will This Affect World Peace:

Students will need special attention on how each point would affect world peace, but they should discuss amongst themselves and come up with some ideas.

Closure

Have each group share their completed posters and explain each point. Finish discussion by pointing out that without the United States, this would not work; also note the high idealism of Woodrow Wilson. Display the posters to remind the students of the 14 Points until exam day.

APPENDIX 1

The objectives below are intended to be for the unit as a whole:

- WHS.01.b Analyze changes that resulted from turning points in world history including the significance of selected important dates.
- WHS.10 Analyze the influence of selected significant individuals on political, economic, and cultural events of the 20th century.
- WHS.11 Collect, analyze and interpret social studies data by creating representative products and posing/answering questions about geographic distributions and patterns.
- WHS.12 Interpret maps and contemporary to locate places of significance and explain the influence of geographic factors on major historic events and regions.
- WHS.09.a.01 Analyze and explain the causes and effects of World War I.

APPENDIX 2: Student Quiz

Student Name _____

Period _____ Date _____

Europe Before 1914

1. What did Spain need that sparked the Franco-Prussian War?
2. Who changed the Ems Telegram in order to make the French people angry?
3. Because of the Franco-Prussian War, what happened to Prussia and the surrounding German states?
4. In the Treaty of Frankfurt, besides \$1 billion, what else did France agree to give up to Germany?
5. What is considered to be the second underlying cause of World War I?
6. What is Pan-Slavism?
7. What country's stance regarding Pro-Slavism was considered to be a major cause of the start of World War I?
8. What were the three main Slavic groups, and where did they end up migrating to?

1. _____ - _____

2. _____ - _____

3. _____ - _____

9. What is considered to be the third cause of World War I?

10. Who formed the Triple Alliance in 1882?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

11. Who belonged to the Triple Entente?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Answers:

1. Spain needed a ruler
2. Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck
3. It became a unified country of Germany
4. The territories of Alsace and Lorraine
5. Pan-Slavism
6. The movement to increase the power of the Slavic people
7. Russia
8.
 1. Western Slavs-They migrated to the present day countries of Poland, The Czech Republic and Slovakia
 2. Southern Slavs-They migrated to the present day countries of The Slovak republic and Serbia.
 3. Eastern Slavs-They migrated mostly to the present day country of Ukraine.
9. Entangling Alliances
10.
 1. Germany
 2. Austro-Hungarian Empire
 3. Italy
11.
 1. France
 2. Russia
 3. Great Britain

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Bloch, Camille, and Jane Soames. *The Causes of the World War: An Historical Summary*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1935.
This is an older book, but Ms. Bloch does a fine job in spelling out the causes of the war in a readable way.
- Hacken, Richard. *19 August 1914: President Wilson's Declaration of Neutrality*. 1 February 1996. Brigham Young University. <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914/wilsonneut.html>>. Contains the complete text of Wilson's message to Congress in an attempt to set the boundaries for the U.S. involvement in the European War. This, and the entire site by Mr. Hacken, is an awesome collection of all the important and substantial documents related to the war. His site is easy to maneuver and seems to be very complete.
- _____. *23 July, 1914: The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia*. 14 March 1996. Brigham Young University. <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1914/austro-hungarian-ultimatum.html>>. Contains the complete text of the ultimatum the Serbs received from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- _____. *2 April 1917: President Woodrow Wilson's War Message*. October 2002. Brigham Young University. <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1917/wilswarm.html>>. Contains the complete text of Wilson's address before Congress requesting a declaration of war.
- _____. *8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points*. 15 October 1999. Brigham Young University. <<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1918/14points.html>>. Contains the complete text of the speech Wilson delivered to the Joint Session of Congress where he explains and lays out his fourteen points to world peace.
- Levine, Isaac. *Letters from the Kaiser to the Czar: 22 August 1905 to 26 March 1914*. 11 November 1997. Brigham Young University. <<http://www.lib.edu/~rdh/1914m/willnick/wilnicka.htm>>. Impressive and comprehensive collection letters that the Kaiser wrote to his cousin Nicholas II. The closeness and affection demonstrated in the letters is remarkable when you consider the two men were technically and factually at war with each other.

- McGovern, Nancy. *1910 State Level Census Data-Sorted by State/County Name*. University of Virginia Library. <<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/censusbin/census/cen.pl>>. On this site I was able to access census data and obtain the number of immigrants contained in the United States at about the start of the war. Site is not very user-friendly.
- O'Brien, Joseph. *The Ems Telegram*. 11 Nov.1998. <<http://web.jjay.cuny.edu/~jobrien/reference/ob20.html>>. This site contains both the original telegram and the telegram after Bismarck's edits.
- Robbins, Keith. *The First World War*. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. Mr. Robbins' book is a comprehensive telling of the war, but our interest is in only about the first 30 pages where he explains, from his point of view, the causes and details of the beginning of the war.
- Spielvogel, Jackson. *World History*. Columbus, Ohio: Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, 2003. This is the textbook used by Houston I.S.D. and has the basic information the students might use to study the causes of World War I.

Supplemental Resources

Websites

- Europe in 1914*. 2002. <<http://gme.grolier.com/gme-ol/media/200/mh00048.gif>>. This website has a map of Europe in 1914 with a color legend of the different alliances. This is part of the Houston Independent School District. *Project CLEAR Curriculum*. Social Studies, Tenth Grade.
- Iavarone, Mike. *Czar Nicholas II of Russia*. 15 January 2000. <<http://www.worldwar1.com/biorczar.htm>>. Much like the below site, this one is about Czar Nicholas II.
- _____. *Frederick Wilhelm Viktor Albert of Hohensollern: Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany*. 15 January 2000. <<http://www.worldwar1.com/biokais.htm>>. Short bio of the Kaiser, with pictures, family tree, and information about the Kaiser along with some interesting quotes.
- TeachingAmericanHistory.org*. <<http://teachingamericanhistory.org>>. This is a very nice website that teaches all kinds of topics about U.S. history. I was able to pull off a nice version of Wilson's Neutrality address from here, and there is a host of other useful pieces.

Filmography

All Quiet On the Western Front. Videocassette. Marble Arch Productions, Inc., 1992.

This is the 1979 version with Richard Thomas and Ernest Borgnine. While I think the 1930 version better illustrates the raw hopelessness of war, this one also expresses the same idea and since it is in color, would better hold the attention of the students.

Teacher and Student Resources

Bloch, Camille. *The Causes of the World War: An Historical Summary*. Trans Jane Soames. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1935.

This is a good summary of the war and offers Ms. Bloch's list of specific causes. Good for getting a comprehensive list of reasons for the war.

Bruun, Geoffrey. *Clemenceau*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1943.

This book offers details and insight into the French leader and helps to understand his stance regarding the war.

Esposito, David. *The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson: Woodrow Wilson's American War Aims in World War I*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1996.

This book explains in detail what Wilson hoped to accomplish in bringing the United States into the war. It is a very comprehensive account, and very detailed. Would be a slow read for the average student.

Hubatsch, Walther. *Germany and the Central Powers in the World War, 1914- 1918*. Ed. Oswald P. Backus. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Publications, 1963.

This is a text that details the Central powers, with an emphasis on Germany and the role Germany played during the war.

Hyndman, H. M. *Clemenceau: the Man and His Time*. New York: F. A. Stokes, 1919.

As indicated by the published year, this book was done right after the war and gives a perspective without the years between the events that can sometimes change the views of people.

Jannen, William. *The Lions of July: Prelude to War, 1914*. Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1997.

This is a relatively new piece of work that details the beginnings of the war. It is full of neat little tidbits and even has a listing of all the principals and their pictures.

Kohn, Hans. *Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology*. New York: Vintage Books, 1953.

Anyone interested in Pan-Slavism should read this book as it explains the subject in great detail. It is a dry read, but contains useful information. Not recommended for the everyday student.

Mazour, Anatole G. *Rise and Fall of the Romanovs*. Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1960.

This is a comprehensive look at the ruling family of Russia. While it contains information about the entire family history, it also has details regarding Nicholas II and his final years. The last part of this book would be good to review for this unit.

Nicolson, Harold. *King George the Fifth*. London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1952.

This book, published not long after the death of the king, gives a good account of the life of King George. Also contains chapters dealing specifically with the war years.

Taylor, A. J. P. *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary*. London: H. Hamilton, 1948.

This is another complete history, this time dealing with the rulers of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The last two chapters deal mainly with the final years of the dynasty and are what would be applicable to this unit.

Tuchman, Barbara. *The Guns of August*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1962.

If I were to suggest a book for a student to read to understand the complexities of the war this would be it. Ms. Tuchman makes it interesting and easy to understand as well as enjoyable to read.