

Year 6: Let's Learn About... Britain at War (World War 1) Spring



World map illustrating the Alliances and their empires before the outbreak of war in 1914.

World War 1

The First World War, or the Great War, was an international conflict that involved countries from Europe, the United States of America, the Middle East, and other world regions. It started on **28th July 1914**, and finished over four years later, on **11th November 1918**. Around 20 million people died during the conflict. Many different factors caused the First World War. The event that sparked the War was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. This resulted in Austria-Hungary declaring war on Serbia.



Key Historical Vocabulary

| | | | |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|---|
| alliances | A person or organisation that cooperates with, or helps, another | invasion | Invasion of a country or region with an armed force |
| imperialism | The desire to conquer and colonise other countries | conflict | A prolonged armed struggle |
| conscription | Forcing people by law to join the armed services | propaganda | Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view. |
| militarism | The belief that it is necessary to build up, and use, strong armed forces to gain power, money or land | civilian | A person not in the armed service or the police force |

Let's Learn About...

| Significant events during WW1 | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Dates | Events |
| 28 th June 1914 | Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated in Sarajevo. |
| 4 th August 1914 | Germany invades Belgium. Britain declares war on Germany. |
| 2 nd March 1916 | Conscription for unmarried men aged 18-41 is introduced in Britain. |
| 6 th April 1917 | The United States of America join the war to support the allies. |
| 11 th November 1918 | France, Britain and Germany sign a peace agreement called the Armistice to stop the fighting. |



Life on the Home Front

The war changed the lives of ordinary people around the world. In Britain, rationing, bombing and strikes by discontented workers made life difficult for people living on the home front. New jobs were created to help with the war effort, including jobs for women that had previously been done by the men who had gone to fight. Women worked in munition factories making bombs and weapons, drove public transport, grew crops, and took care of livestock, joined the police force and undertook non-combative roles in the armed forces. Some men stayed at home because they refused to fight for moral reasons. They were known as conscientious objectors and were often treated harshly.

Becoming a soldier

When war broke out, the army needed soldiers. Initially, men did not have to fight but were persuaded to join by propaganda. Later on, conscription was introduced in Britain, meaning that men aged between 18 and 41 had to join the army. Soldiers were also recruited from British colonies overseas. In total, 8 million soldiers from Britain and the British Empire fought in battles in France, Belgium, Italy, the Middle East and Africa.



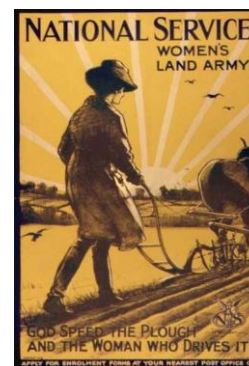
Life in the trenches

Soldiers on both sides dug deep, narrow ditches, called trenches, to hide from enemy attack. Soldiers lived in the trenches for weeks at a time. Trench conditions were terrible. They were smelly, muddy and infested with lice and rats. The soldiers did not get much sleep and were woken early to complete daily chores or fight. During rest time, soldiers wrote letters and sometimes played card games.



Women at Work

Roughly two million women replaced men at their jobs. Some of these were positions women might have been expected to fill before the war, such as clerical jobs. However, one effect of the war wasn't just the number of jobs, but the type. Women were suddenly in demand for work on the land, on transport, in hospitals and, most significantly, in industry and engineering.



End of the War

The war ended in 1918, at 11am on the 11th of November. Germany signed an armistice, an agreement for peace. The Allies celebrated the end of the war, and, in London, a huge crowd gathered in Trafalgar Square. On the 28th of June 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Germany and the Allied Powers signed a peace treaty called the Treaty of Versailles.