

Animated Atlas: Overview of World War I

Leader's Guide

Subjects: World History, Geography

Audience Level: Jr. High, High School, College, Adult

Length: 28 mins.

Objectives: *After viewing, viewers should be able to:*

- Identify the nations of Western Europe and have a sense of the nations of Eastern Europe
- Understand the alliances of the European nations at the beginning of the 20th century
- Outline the course of World War I and why it took the shape it did, especially why Belgium was invaded
- Gain a sense of the relationship of America to this war and how it affected America's foreign relations for the century to come
- Understand why the Russian Revolution of 1917 occurred
- Grasp the changes in European geography after the war
- Understand some of the historical and geographic reasons that led to the rise of fascism and World War II

Content

The study of World War I is essential for understanding the course of the 20th Century and the world we live in today. It led directly to World War II, and was one of the causes of the communist revolution in Russia, which resulted in the Cold War. Moreover, it was this European war that changed America's foreign policy of isolation, established by George Washington. With WWI, America entered the world stage, one on which she is now the dominant player. Ironically, the Great War itself began because of a German strategic miscalculation. Through map animation, it is now possible to visualize this and other causes of this complex war. Picturing the national players in this conflict through maps and animation, as well as historical footage, provides a clear sense of the largest events of the War. Moreover, by following this fascinating story told largely with animated maps, students will automatically learn the geography of Europe.

Before viewing:

Have students locate Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Belgium on a map. Briefly discuss the political and economic state of Europe before the war: largely monarchies and colonial "masters," with a slow evolution of parliamentary democracy in western Europe.

After Viewing:

- What were the underlying motives for World War I? (primarily nationalism and economic competition, particularly in regard to colonialism) What was the precipitating event? (assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914)
- What were the opposing alliances in 1914? (Triple Entente, with England, France and Russia; and the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy)
- What was the German master plan? (a two-flank attack on France first, then Russia) Why was Belgium invaded? (to instigate step one of the master plan, invading France)



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- What battle was the turning point in the German invasion of the west? (the battle of the Marne River)
- What was trench warfare? (parallel dug-outs with opposing forces facing each other, barbed wire between them, and machine guns behind them; stagnating positions which took a vast toll of lives)
- When and why did America enter the war? (April 1917, because of Germany's sinking of American ships supplying the Allies)
- When and why did Russia sue for peace with Germany? (1917, after Lenin and the Communist party gained control of Russia. Lenin considered the war a capitalist fight which was destroying the masses in Russia)
- What were the major factors in the defeat of the Central Powers in 1918? (blockade of supplies, entry of the United States into the war, deterioration of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire)
- What was the Versailles Treaty? (the treaty ending the war) What principle did America insist on? (self-determination)
- What were the results of the treaty in terms of national boundaries? (Division of Austria-Hungary and Ottoman Empire into separate nations, new states of Eastern Europe and the division of Germany with East Prussia separated) Locate these new countries on a map of the time.
- Can you foresee any causes of WWII in the results of WWI? (among other things, the chaos left by the war, communism, German defeat and anger, the fragile restructuring of Europe, particularly with German-speaking people outside Germany's borders, justifying Adolph Hitler's expansionism)
- Choose one of the major battles or events of the war and have separate groups, acting as newspaper investigative teams, write a series of articles that reflect a particular country's point of view. Thus they could write for the "Berlin Daily" or "Washington News." Have each group read the articles to the class and initiate a discussion about how history can be seen from many points of view, regardless of actual events.
- Recreate the peace conference that ended the war. Have class groups represent the Allied Nations and the Central Powers and discuss a peace treaty, keeping in mind the genesis of WWII and how many of its roots lay in the Versailles treaty. The goal here is to formulate a peace which will avoid WWII.
- Give each student a copy of the map from the reproducible master. As a class, in small groups, or singly, fill in the map. It can be used not only to identify countries, but also to show battle lines, troop movements and major events of WWI.

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