

How the War Really Started



The Triple Alliance and Triple Entente turn against each other when Archduke Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for this and since Serbia and Russia were long time allies it pulled the Triple Entente into the war. The rest of the Triple Alliance was then forced to come and support their allied country, resulting in the first World War.

By the early 20th century, Europe saw itself in two armed camps. On one side was the Triple Alliance, between Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy. On the opposite side to them was the Triple Entente, made up of Great Britain, France and Russia. Russia also had very close ties to Serbia due to their common Slavic heritage. As well, Great Britain, France, and Germany had all agreed to come to the assistance of Belgium if it was ever invaded.



Once Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Russia immediately came to Serbia's assistance. Russia's entry then triggered the alliance between Germany and Austria-Hungary, and pulled them into war. This imbalance was then corrected by France's entry into the war on the side of Russia. In order to attack France, Germany had entered into Belgian territory which triggered Britain's response which was a declaration of war against Germany. If it had not been for these complex alliances, the assassination would only have brought about a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. It was the alliance system that turned a small conflict into World War I.



On June 28th, 1914, Gavrillo Princep, a member of the terrorist group, The Black Hand, would assassinate the Austro-Hungarian, Franz Ferdinand. Immediately Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia for the assassination and issued a series of ultimatums. Austria-Hungary used these ultimatums as an excuse to declare war on Serbia. Once war was declared, it was not long before Russia, Germany, France, and Great Britain turned this conflict into World War I.



However, it could only become a world war because of the pre-existing conditions that were in place in Europe at that time. It was the alliance system that increased this small event into a giant conflict. As well, the war could only take place because of increased tension in Europe due to a large number of conflicts as a result of Imperialism. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand should have only been a small side note in European history, but because of how all the countries were interconnected it became the main cause of World War I.



Inside Look On The Soldier's Life

These are accounts from soldiers that we have collect throughout the war. They give you an insight on the war from the perspective of the soldiers and what they had of overcome.



This first passage was taken from a diary that was found on the battlefield.

"Hell would be a tame word to describe what we went through, German shells are raining down around the farm, just 100 yards behind the British fire trench, and we are struggling to cope with the wounded as they flood in. In the garden behind, British and German dead are laid out waiting to be buried as soon as the shelling dies down in the evening. Many fell in our frontline trenches, causing awful casualties. Men were buried alive whilst others were just dug out in time and brought to, unable to stand, with their backs half broken. My cellar was soon packed, but I could not put any wounded upstairs as any minute I expected the place to be blown up. There is nothing I know of more trying to the nerves than to sit listening to shells and wondering how long there is before one comes and finds your hiding place."

This second letter was submitted not too long ago, Company Sergeant-Major James Milne wrote this letter to his wife moments before he was ordered over the top. It was to be delivered in the event of his death – but luckily James Milne survived and was later reunited with his family.

July 20, 1918

My own beloved wife,

I do not know how to start this letter. The circumstances are different from any under which I ever wrote before. I am not to post it but will leave it in my pocket, if anything happens to me someone will perhaps post it. We are going over the top this afternoon and only God in Heaven knows who will come out of it alive.

The War To End All Wars

I am in his hands and whatever happens I will look to him in this world and the world to come. If I am called my regret is that I leave you and my bairns. I go to him with your dear face the last vision on earth I shall see and your name upon my lips, you the best of women. You will look after by Darling Bairns for me and tell them how their daddy died.

Oh! How I love you all and as I sit here waiting I wonder what you are doing at home. I must not do that. It is hard enough sitting waiting. We may move at any minute. When this reaches you for me there will be no more war, only eternal peace and waiting for you.

It is a legacy of struggle for you but God will look after you and we shall meet again when there will be no more parting. I am to write no more sweetheart... Kiss the Bairns for me once more. I dare not think of them my Darlings.

Goodbye, you best of women and best of wives, my beloved sweetheart. May God in his mercy look over you and bless you all... May he in that same mercy preserve me today. Eternal love from

Yours for evermore

Jim xxxxxxxx

The letter below was submitted by Frank's father. Frank died shortly after writing this letter to his father. This letter was also to be delivered in the event of his death and that is exactly what happened.

Sunday afternoon, 1 Sep, 1918.

My dear Father,

It is a strange feeling to me but a very real one, that every letter now that I write home to you or to the little sisters may be the last that I shall write or you read. I do not want you to think that I am depressed; indeed on the contrary, I am very cheerful. But out here, in odd moments the realisation comes to me of how close death is to us. A week ago I was talking with a man, a catholic, from Preston, who had been out here for nearly four years, untouched. He was looking forward with certainty to going on leave soon. And now he is dead – killed in a moment during our last advance. Well it was God's will. I say this to you because I hope that you will realise, as I do, the possibility of the like happening to myself. I feel very glad myself that I can look the fact in the face without fear or misgiving. Much as I hope to live thro' it all for your sakes and my little sisters! I am quite prepared to give my life as so many have done before me. All I can do is put myself in God's hands for him to decide, and you and the little ones pray for me to the Sacred Heart and Our Lady.

I hope that you will not move out of the old house yet. Write and let me know when anything happens. I see that you went to Preston a few days ago. It seems years and years since I tried to get drowned in the canal.

Well I have not much time left and I must end.

With my dear love. Pray for me.

Your son

Frank.

There was a total of 38 million casualties in World War I. Over 17 million deaths and 20 million wounded, ranking it among the deadliest conflicts in human history. The Allies (mainly Britain, France, US) won WWI. Germany was the main loser, along with Austria - Hungary, The Ottoman Empire, other Central Powers, and Russia. Although Russia withdrew from the war early due to civil war issues at home. Germany had formally surrendered on November 11, 1918, and all nations had agreed to stop fighting while the terms of peace were negotiated. On June 28, 1919, Germany and the Allied Nations (including Britain, France, Italy and Russia) signed the Treaty of Versailles, formally ending the war.



The bravery and sacrifice that the men who fought in this war demonstrated was incredibly unforgettable. After the war people called it the beginning of the 20th century because of how much the world changed. They are saying that the 'long 19th century' ended with World War I, because after the war ended all the maps were redrawn, dividing up the land between countries. This is really the tipping point into a new era, turning over a new leaf to start the 20th century.

The aftermath of World War I saw drastic political, cultural, and social change across Europe, Asia, Africa, and in areas outside of those that were directly involved. A few empires collapsed due to the war, old countries fell and new ones rose, boundaries were redrawn, populations moved, and many new and old ideas took a firm hold in people's minds.

