

World War I Module Notes:

- Tensions Build in Europe
 - The Great War began in Europe. A number of background tensions created a situation full of conflict.
 - From late 1800s to early 1900s, European countries experienced building tensions from nationalistic rivalries, imperialistic realities, an arms race, and complex alliances.
 - Nationalistic rivalries can come in a number of forms. Britain was the strongest European country, had a huge empire, and the biggest and best navy. Germany, however, was a relatively new nation. Kaiser Wilhelm II wanted to make Germany the top of the food chain, and a good way to do that was through war. Since Germany had the army to do so, many Germans wanted a fight. The first country in the way was France, since they had a historic rivalry. Next you have Austria-Hungary. Empire contained mix of people from different religious, ethnic, and national backgrounds. More troubled than even them, was Russia. Massive country, about a century behind in politics, economy, and military. Had a massive, inefficient army and poor leadership (Czar Nicolas II)
 - Imperialistic rivalries. By early 1900s, Europeans had claimed almost all of Africa and Asia. Arguments over who owned what land and who had rights.
 - Arms race that consisted of bigger, stronger and more lethal weapons like machine guns and larger artillery shells. Only reasons to increase military was to go on the offensive or be prepared for an attack. Germans created U-boat (known as submarines to us) that could maneuver under the water and attack without warning.
 - Evolution of alliance systems also helped set the stage. Get people on your side to avoid war, because a country would be less likely to attack if they knew they were going up against 3-5 other countries as well.

- Europe Goes To War, 1914-1917
 - The major alliance systems that existed before 1914 were the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente. Neither side had 3 players. Had three major players though.
 - Triple Alliance (Or Central Powers) was Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Ottoman Empire, and Kingdom of Bulgaria.
 - Triple Entente (Or Allied Powers) was Russia, France, and Britain. But Britain also had loyalty to Belgium, which complicated things. Italy switched sides during the war.
 - On June 28, 1914 the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were assassinated by a Serb nationalist. The assassin was a member of the Black Hand, a terrorist group that wanted an independent Serbia. Ferdinand was nephew to the ruler of Austria-Hungary. Therefore, they wanted to punish Serbia, and blamed the government for the attack. Due to ethnic and historic ties between Russia and Serbia, Russia pledge support of Serbia in event of an attack. In response, Germany pledged support to Austria-Hungary.
 - As Europe headed to war, Germany devised a plan for how the war would go. Named the Schlieffen Plan, and created by Count Alfred Von Schlieffen, they were to execute a two front war by taking on one front at a time. Planned to hit French hard and heavy, then turn efforts to Russia.
 - On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, they invaded France. In a move they probably regret, they chose to go through Belgium, who put up quite a fight. Delayed invasion by around 2 weeks, and gave them time to mobilize for war. Backfired and created an eastern and western front.
 - War became a stalemate of trench warfare. War had massive casualty numbers because weapons were more deadly, trench warfare killed many due to illness and trench foot, and attacking in an orderly fashion didn't work.
- The US Moves Toward War, 1915-1917
 - Chain of events in Russia led to internal revolutions between Tsarist autocracy, Soviet workers council, and Bolshevik communists. Bolsheviks were ultimately triumphant, and paved the way for the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics. Meant that Russia was in no position to continue war. Signed treaty with German in March 1918, called the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

- America slowly drifted to war because of traditional customs of international war, historical connections and financial ties, and Germany's submarine warfare.
 - Customs of international war were only having a blockade if you had the ships to command it, could only blockade out contraband materials or war items. Not food, clothing, or medicine. And you could supervise imports of neutral countries under visit and search policy. Merchant ships were only supposed to carry merchant goods, not contraband. Passenger ships carried passengers and not contraband.
 - Both Britain and Germany broke these rules.
 - Britain declared whole North Sea under their search and control. Britain declared all imports to Germany were contraband. Sent all ships to England to be searched, which was not a part of traditional visit and search. Britain put guns of merchant ships and contraband on passenger ships.
 - Using U-boats, Germany struck passenger and merchant ships without visit and search procedure.
 - Germans began policy of submarine warfare that didn't sit well with Americans. Wilson did nothing when British passenger ship Falaba (1 American death) or US Tanker Gulflight (3 American deaths) were sunk. When British passenger liner, the Lusitania, was sunk (1,200 total deaths), Wilson issued strong verbal protest that declared US was too proud to fight. Germans took brief hiatus but then continued. When British passenger liner, the Arabic, was sunk (2 American deaths), Wilson considered breaking diplomatic relations. Sussex, French passenger ship, was hit and some Americans were injured. Wilson threatened to break diplomatic relations, but didn't follow through. 6 weeks later, Germans gave "Sussex pledge" and promised to follow international law.
 - Not just warfare, but internalized prejudice against Germany and love to European countries like Britain. Also had financial stake in Britain