

## Section Summary

### FROM NEUTRALITY TO WAR

Although there had been no major wars, the 50 years before World War I were not tranquil. Nationalism renewed old grudges among countries. **Militarism**, or glorification of the military, eventually produced an arms race between Germany and Britain at sea and among Germany, France, and Russia on land.

In addition to strengthening their military power, European leaders prepared for war by forming alliances. Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy formed the Triple Alliance. Opposing them were France, Russia, and Great Britain, which formed the Triple Entente. In 1914, a Serbian youth assassinated **Francis Ferdinand**, the archduke of Austria-Hungary. War spread as European countries entered the fighting to help their allies. Russia came to the aid of Serbia against Austria. Germany declared war on Russia. France, Russia's ally, declared war on Germany. After Germany declared war on Belgium, Great Britain declared war on Germany. World War I had begun.

Although fighting went on in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and other parts of the world, the **Western Front** in France became the critical battle front. German soldiers settled onto high ground, dug trenches, and fortified their position. The French and British then dug their own trenches. A stalemate developed and the war dragged on for years. New military technology, including machine guns and poison gas, led to millions of **casualties**.

As the war continued in Europe, President Woodrow Wilson called for Americans to remain impartial. However, the brutal German invasion of Belgium swayed American opinion against Germany. Americans also protested when a German submarine, or **U-boat**, sank the British passenger liner **Lusitania**.

In January 1917, German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann sent a telegram to Mexico proposing an alliance between Germany and Mexico. The **Zimmermann note** was intercepted by the British, who gave it to American authorities. When the telegram was published, Americans were shocked by its contents. Next, Germany announced unrestricted submarine warfare against Britain. On April 6, 1917, the United States Congress declared war on Germany.

### Review Questions

1. How did the alliances between European countries lead to war?

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2. Why did the United States get involved in the war?

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### READING CHECK

Who was Francis Ferdinand?

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### VOCABULARY BUILDER

What does the word *allies* mean in the underlined sentence? What clues can you find in the surrounding words, phrases, or sentences? Circle the words that could help you learn what *allies* means.

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### READING SKILL

**Identify Causes** Identify the causes of World War I.

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