



Western Civilization from 1650 to the Present

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TOPIC 11.1. WORLD WAR I

Supplement to Chambers, *The Western Experience*, Chapter 27: World War I and the World It Created, pp. 963-1003.

THE GREAT WAR Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand	In August 1914, World War I began in Europe. The ASSASSINATION OF AUSTRIAN ARCHDUKE FRANCIS FERDINAND by a Serbian nationalist set off a course of events that dragged Europe into its most destructive war to date. Locked into a well-armed, mutually hostile alliance system and goaded by belligerent nationalists, the Great Powers spun into hostilities that lasted four years and claimed millions of lives.
Versailles Treaty	The VERSAILLES TREATY created resentment among both the victors and defeated, contributing to the subsequent rise of Fascism in Italy and Germany. Unable to cope with the war, the Russian monarchy fell to a liberal government, which was itself overthrown by Lenin's Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution. During the ensuing civil war, the Bolsheviks fought off tsarist forces and their foreign allies, establishing the repressive Soviet state.
Disillusionment	The war created profound DISILLUSIONMENT with Western society and culture. Several soldier-writers conveyed their experience of war. A few glorified combat, but most depicted the brutality of modern warfare, the blindness of the leaders who pursued it, and the plight of the soldiers who fought its battles. These sentiments led to doubts about European culture, a "Lost Generation" of post-war American expatriates, and disdain for traditional values and aimless search for meaning.
Democratic and Socialist Ideals vs. Militarism and Totalitarianism	The war convinced many that reason and morality were shattered, that scientific progress meant more efficient carnage, and that liberalism was naïve. In the face of this crisis, many artists, intellectuals, and veterans hoped to prevent another such cataclysm by vigorously endorsing DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIALIST IDEALS. However, others embraced MILITARISM AND TOTALITARIAN IDEOLOGIES as the only viable responses to a meaningless, chaotic world. Brutal dictatorships rose in Germany, Italy, and Russia. With a powerful model of total war to emulate, these would mobilize their national resources with unprecedented efficiency, pursuing a war that nearly eradicated democracy from Europe.
ONLINE RESOURCES	<p>For details about the causes and consequences of the war, see the PowerPoint presentation on "The Great War" in Course Documents.</p> <p>For more information on this topic, explore one or more of the following online resources:</p> <p>Trenches on the Web: Great "who, what, where, when, why" website on World War I.</p> <p>The Great War and the Shaping of the Twentieth Century: PBS website on the World War I television series.</p> <p>The First World War: Spartacus website on many aspects of the war, including important battles, military and political leaders, war heroes, women at war, weapons and machines, and war statistics.</p>
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>Drawing on the resources you have had an opportunity to explore (textbook, course documents, online resources, library resources), answer one or more of the following questions:</p> <p>What conditions contributed to the outbreak of World War I? What series of events provoked the war? How did it end, and what was the political situation of Europe after?</p>

Assess the relative importance of diplomacy, imperialism, and nationalism in causing World War I.

Historians argue that this was an unwanted war, yet its outbreak was almost universally greeted with joy. How do you explain this contradiction? Does it point to domestic tensions as a major cause for the war, or was this reaction simple patriotism?

Research the role of women in the military today. What kinds of work are women doing? Are there any jobs they are not allowed to do? Are women accepted at the various military academies? Are women officers assigned to be in charge of men? Are military units integrated? What role should women play in the military? Should they be drafted?

Research the role of African Americans in the Vietnam War. How was it different from and similar to their experience during World War I?

How might a citizen who suffers from discrimination every day feel if he or she were expected to serve in the military and risk his or her life to defend democracy?