

SECTION 1

The United States Enters World War I

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

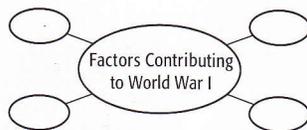
Although the United States tried to remain neutral, events soon pushed the nation into World War I.

Key Terms and Names

Pancho Villa, guerrilla, nationalism, self-determination, Franz Ferdinand, Allies, Central Powers, propaganda, contraband, U-boat, Sussex Pledge, Zimmermann telegram

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the start of World War I, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by identifying the factors that contributed to the conflict.



Reading Objectives

- **Discuss** the causes and results of American intervention in Mexico and the Caribbean.
- **Explain** the causes of World War I and why the United States entered the war.

Section Theme

Continuity and Change Ties with the British influenced American leaders to enter World War I on the side of the Allies.

Preview of Events



★ An American Story ★



Raising the flag at Veracruz

Edith O'Shaughnessy could not sleep on the rainy night of April 20, 1914. Living at the American embassy in Mexico City, the wife of diplomat Nelson O'Shaughnessy was well aware of the growing crisis between Mexico and the United States. Earlier that day, President Wilson had asked Congress to authorize the use of force against Mexico. In her diary, O'Shaughnessy described the tensions in the Mexican capital:

“I can't sleep. National and personal potentialities [possibilities] are surging through my brain. Three stalwart railroad men came to the Embassy this evening. They brought reports of a plan for the massacre of Americans in the street to-night, but, strange and wonderful thing, a heavy rain is falling. . . . Rain is as potent as shell-fire in clearing the streets, and I don't think there will be any trouble.”

The next day, O'Shaughnessy reported that the conflict had begun: “We are in Mexico, in full intervention! . . . Marines are due to-day in Vera Cruz. . . .”

—adapted from *A Diplomat's Wife in Mexico*

Woodrow Wilson's Diplomacy

As president, Wilson resolved to “strike a new note in international affairs” and to see that “sheer honesty and even unselfishness . . . should prevail over nationalistic self-seeking in American foreign policy.” Wilson strongly opposed imperialism. He also

believed that democracy was essential to a nation's stability and prosperity, and that the United States should promote democracy in order to ensure a peaceful world free of revolution and war. During Wilson's presidency, however, other forces at work at home and abroad frustrated his hope to lead the world by moral example. In fact, Wilson's first international crisis was awaiting him when he took office in March 1913.

The Mexican Revolution From 1884 to 1911, a dictator, Porfirio Díaz, ruled Mexico. Díaz encouraged foreign investment in Mexico to help develop the nation's industry. A few wealthy landowners dominated Mexican society. The majority of the people were poor and landless, and they were increasingly frustrated by their circumstances. In 1911 a revolution erupted, forcing Díaz to flee the country.

Francisco Madero, a reformer who appeared to support democracy, constitutional government, and land reform, replaced Díaz. Madero, however, proved to be an unskilled administrator. Frustrated with Mexico's continued decline, army officers plotted against Madero. Shortly before Wilson took office, General **Victoriano Huerta** seized power in Mexico, and Madero was murdered—presumably on Huerta's orders.

Huerta's brutality repulsed Wilson, who refused to recognize the new government. Wilson was convinced that without the support of the United States, Huerta soon would be overthrown. Wilson therefore tried to prevent weapons from reaching Huerta, and he permitted Americans to arm other political factions within Mexico.

Wilson Sends Troops Into Mexico In April 1914, American sailors visiting the city of Tampico were arrested after entering a restricted area. Though they were quickly released, their American commander demanded an apology. The Mexicans refused. Wilson used the refusal as an opportunity to overthrow Huerta. He sent marines to seize the Mexican port of Veracruz.

Although the president expected the Mexican people to welcome his action, anti-American riots broke out in Mexico. Wilson then accepted international mediation to settle the dispute. Venustiano Carranza, whose forces had acquired arms from the United States, became Mexico's president.

Mexican forces opposed to Carranza were not appeased, and they conducted raids into the United States hoping to force Wilson to intervene. **Pancho Villa** (VEE·yah) led a group of **guerrillas**—an

Picturing History

Moral Imperialism President Wilson sent General John Pershing (below) to stop Pancho Villa's (right) raids into the United States.

Why was Villa conducting these raids?



armed band that uses surprise attacks and sabotage rather than open warfare—that burned the town of Columbus, New Mexico, and killed a number of Americans. Wilson responded by sending more than 6,000 U.S. troops under General **John J. Pershing** across the border to find and capture Villa. The expedition dragged on as Pershing failed to capture the guerrillas. Wilson's growing concern over the war raging in Europe finally caused him to recall Pershing's troops in 1917.

Wilson's Mexican policy damaged U.S. foreign relations. The British ridiculed the president's attempt to "shoot the Mexicans into self-government." Latin Americans regarded his "moral imperialism" as no improvement on Theodore Roosevelt's "big stick" diplomacy. In fact, Wilson followed Roosevelt's example in the Caribbean. During his first term, Wilson sent marines into Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic to preserve order and to set up governments that he hoped would be more stable and democratic than the current regimes.

Reading Check **Examining** Why did President Wilson intervene in Mexico?

The Outbreak of World War I

Despite more than 40 years of general peace, tensions among European nations were building in 1914. Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, a number

of factors created problems among the powers of Europe and set the stage for a monumental war.

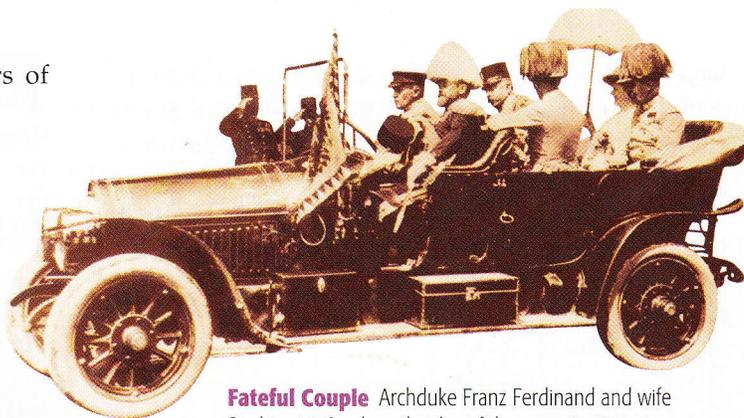
The Alliance System The roots of World War I date back to the 1860s. In 1864, while Americans fought the Civil War, the German kingdom of Prussia launched the first of a series of wars to unite the various German states into one nation. By 1871 Prussia had united Germany and proclaimed the birth of the German Empire. The new German nation rapidly industrialized and quickly became one of the most powerful nations in the world.

The creation of Germany transformed European politics. In 1870, as part of their plan to unify Germany, the Prussians had attacked and defeated France. They then forced the French to give up territory along the German border. From that point forward, France and Germany were enemies. To protect itself, Germany signed alliances with Italy and with Austria-Hungary, a huge empire that controlled much of southeastern Europe. This became known as the **Triple Alliance**.

The new alliance alarmed Russian leaders, who feared that Germany intended to expand eastward into Russia. Russia and Austria-Hungary were also competing for influence in southeastern Europe. Many of the people of southeastern Europe were Slavs—the same ethnic group as the Russians—and the Russians wanted to support them against Austria-Hungary. As a result, Russia and France had a common interest in opposing Germany and Austria-Hungary. In 1894 they signed the Franco-Russian Alliance.

The Naval Race While the other major powers of Europe divided into competing alliances, Great Britain remained neutral. Then, in 1898, the Germans began to build a navy challenging Great Britain's historical dominance at sea. By the early 1900s, an arms race had begun between Great Britain and Germany, as both sides raced to build warships. The naval race greatly increased tensions between Germany and Britain and convinced the British to establish closer relations with France and Russia. The British refused to sign a formal alliance, so their new relationship with the French and Russians became known as an "entente cordiale"—a friendly understanding. Britain, France, and Russia became known as the **Triple Entente**.

The Balkan Crisis By the late 1800s, **nationalism**, or a feeling of intense pride of one's homeland, had become a powerful idea in Europe. Nationalists place



Fateful Couple Archduke Franz Ferdinand and wife Sophia visit Sarajevo the day of the assassination.

primary emphasis on promoting their homeland's culture and interests above those of other countries. Nationalism was one of the reasons for the tensions among the European powers. Each nation viewed the others as competitors, and many people were willing to go to war to expand their nation at the expense of others.

One of the basic ideas of nationalism is the right to **self-determination**—the idea that people who belong to a nation should have their own country and government. In the 1800s, nationalism led to a crisis in southeastern Europe in the region known as the **Balkans**. Historically, the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire had ruled the Balkans. Both of these empires were made up of many different nations. As nationalism became a powerful force in the 1800s, the different national groups within these empires began to press for independence.

Among the groups pushing for independence were the Serbs, Bosnians, Croats, and Slovenes. These people all spoke similar languages and had come to see themselves as one people. They called themselves South Slavs, or Yugoslavs. The first of these people to obtain independence were the Serbs, who formed a nation called Serbia between the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires. Serbs believed their nation's mission was to unite the South Slavs.

Russia supported the Serbs, while Austria-Hungary did what it could to limit Serbia's growth. In 1908 Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia, which at the time belonged to the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs were furious. They wanted Bosnia to be part of their nation. The annexation demonstrated to the Serbs that Austria-Hungary had no intention of letting the Slavic people in its empire become independent.

A Continent Goes to War In late June 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, the Archduke **Franz Ferdinand**, visited the Bosnian capital

of Sarajevo. As he and his wife rode through the city, a Bosnian revolutionary named Gavrilo Princip rushed their open car and shot the couple to death. The assassin was a member of a Serbian nationalist group nicknamed the "Black Hand." The assassination took place with the knowledge of

Serbian officials who hoped to start a war that would bring down the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Austro-Hungarian government blamed Serbia for the attack and decided the time had come to crush Serbia in order to prevent Slavic nationalism from undermining its empire. Knowing an



attack on Serbia might trigger a war with Russia, the Austrians asked their German allies for support. Germany promised to support Austria-Hungary if war erupted.

Austria-Hungary then issued an ultimatum to the Serbian government. The Serbs counted on Russia to back them up, and the Russians, in turn, counted on France. French leaders were worried that they might someday be caught alone in a war with Germany, so they were determined to keep Russia as an ally. They promised to support Russia if war began.

On July 28, Austria declared war on Serbia. Russia immediately mobilized its army, including troops stationed on the German border. On August 1, Germany declared war on Russia. Two days later, it declared war on France. World War I had begun.

Germany's Plan Fails Germany had long been prepared for war against France and Russia. It immediately launched a massive invasion of France, hoping to knock the French out of the war. It would then be able to send its troops east to deal with the Russians.

The German plan had one major problem. It required the German forces to advance through neutral Belgium in order to encircle the French troops. The British had guaranteed Belgium's neutrality. When German troops crossed the Belgian frontier, Britain declared war on Germany.

Those fighting for the Triple Entente were called the **Allies**. France, Russia, and Great Britain formed the backbone of the Allies along with Italy, which joined them in 1915 after the other Allies promised to cede Austro-Hungarian territory to Italy after the war. What remained of the Triple Alliance—Germany and Austria-Hungary—joined with the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria to form the **Central Powers**.

The German plan seemed to work at first. German troops swept through Belgium and headed into France, driving back the French and British forces. Then, to the great surprise of the Germans, Russian troops invaded Germany. The Germans had not expected Russia to mobilize so quickly. They were forced to pull some of their troops away from the attack on France and send them east to stop the

Russians. This weakened the German forces just enough to give the Allies a chance to stop them. The Germans drove to within 30 miles (48 km) of Paris, but stubborn resistance by British and French troops at the Battle of the Marne finally stopped the German advance. Because the swift German attack had failed to defeat the French, both sides became locked in a bloody stalemate along hundreds of miles of trenches that would barely change position for the next three years.

The Central Powers had greater success on the Eastern Front. German and Austrian forces stopped the Russian attack and then went on the offensive. They swept across hundreds of miles of territory and took hundreds of thousands of prisoners. Russia suffered 2 million killed, wounded, or captured in 1915 alone, but it kept fighting.

Reading Check Explaining What incident triggered the beginning of World War I?

American Neutrality

When the fighting began, President Wilson declared the United States to be neutral in an attempt to keep the

Profiles IN HISTORY

Jeannette Rankin

1880–1973

As he addressed the "Gentlemen of the Congress" on April 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson actually misspoke. Sitting in the chamber listening to the president's request for a declaration of war against Germany was Representative Jeannette Rankin—the first woman ever elected to Congress.

Rankin was born in Missoula, Montana, in 1880. She became a social worker and participated in the woman suffrage movement. In 1916 she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Montana—one of the few states at that time that allowed women to vote. As a representative, Rankin sponsored legislation to grant federal voting rights for women and to provide health services for them.

Apart from her title as the first woman in Congress, Rankin is remembered most for her strong pacifism. She was one of 56 legislators who voted against the nation's entry into World War I. "I want to stand by my country," she said, "but I cannot vote for war."



In 1940 Rankin ran again for Congress as a representative from Montana. She ran on an isolationist policy and won. In 1941 she was the only member of Congress to vote against declaring war on Japan and entering World War II.

After leaving Congress in 1943, Rankin continued working for peace. In 1968, at 87 years of age, she led thousands of women in the March on Washington to oppose the Vietnam War.