

# SECTION 3

# A Bloody Conflict

## Guide to Reading

### Main Idea

After four years of fighting, the war in Europe ended in November 1918.

### Key Terms and Names

“no man’s land,” convoy, Vladimir Lenin, Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, armistice, Fourteen Points, League of Nations, Treaty of Versailles, reparations

### Reading Strategy

**Organizing** As you read about the battles of World War I, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the kinds of warfare and technology used in the fighting.



### Reading Objectives

- **Discuss** the fighting techniques used in World War I.
- **Characterize** the American response to the Treaty of Versailles.

### Section Theme

**Individual Action** American troops played a major role in helping end the war, while President Wilson played a major role in the peace negotiations.

### Preview of Events

◆ 1915

**July 1916**

Battle of the Somme begins

**November 1917**

Communists seize power in Russia

◆ 1917

**March 1918**

Treaty of Brest-Litovsk ends war between Russia and Germany

**September 1918**

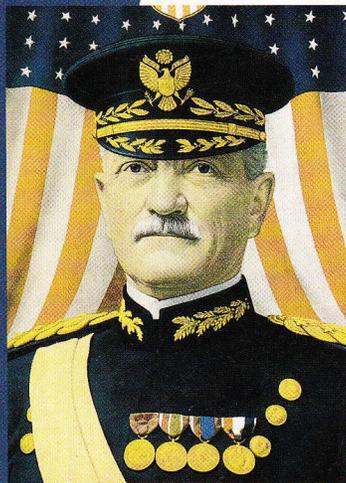
Beginning of Battle of the Argonne Forest

◆ 1919

**November 1918**

Armistice ends war

## ★ An American Story ★



John J. Pershing

General John J. Pershing, commander of the American forces in World War I, could not help but feel a sense of pride and excitement as he watched the Second Battalion of the First Division’s 16th Infantry march through the streets of Paris on July 4, 1917:

“... The battalion was joined by a great crowd, many women forcing their way into the ranks and swinging along arm in arm with the men. With wreaths about their necks and bouquets in their hats and rifles, the column looked like a moving flower garden. With only a semblance of military formation, the animated throng pushed its way through avenues of people to the martial strains of the French band and the still more thrilling music of cheering voices.”

—quoted in *The Yanks Are Coming*

While his men marched through Paris, Pershing raced to Picpus Cemetery, the burial place of the Marquis de Lafayette, a French noble who had fought in the American Revolution. One of Pershing’s officers, Colonel Charles E. Stanton, raised his hand in salute and acknowledged the continuing American-French relationship by proclaiming, “Lafayette, we are here!”

## Combat in World War I

By the spring of 1917, World War I had devastated Europe and claimed millions of lives. Terrible destruction resulted from a combination of old-fashioned strategies and new technologies. Despite the carnage Europeans had experienced, many Americans believed their troops would make a difference and quickly bring the war to an end.

**Trench Warfare** The early offensives of 1914 quickly demonstrated that the nature of warfare had changed. Troops that dug themselves in and relied upon modern rifles and a new weapon—the rapid-fire machine gun—could easily hold off the attacking forces. On the Western Front, troops dug a network of trenches that stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss border. The space between the opposing trenches was known as “no man’s land,” a rough, barren landscape pockmarked with craters from artillery fire.

To break through enemy lines, both sides began with massive artillery barrages. Then bayonet-wielding soldiers would scramble out of their trenches, race across no man’s land, and hurl grenades into the enemy’s trenches. The results were often disastrous. The artillery barrages rarely destroyed the enemy defenses, and troops crossing no man’s land were easily stopped by enemy machine guns and rifle fire. These kind of assaults caused staggeringly high casualties. In major battles, both sides often lost several hundred thousand men.

These battles produced horrific scenes of death and destruction, as one American soldier noted in his diary:

“Many dead Germans along the road. One heap on a manure pile . . . Devastation everywhere. Our barrage has rooted up the entire territory like a ploughed field. Dead horses galore, many of them have a hind quarter cut off—the Huns [Germans] need food. Dead men here and there.”

—quoted in *The American Spirit*

**New Technology** As it became clear that charging enemy trenches could bring only limited success at great cost, both sides began to develop new technologies to help them break through enemy lines. In April 1915, the Germans first used poison gas in the Second Battle of Ypres. The fumes caused vomiting, blindness, and suffocation. Soon afterward the Allies also began using poison gas, and gas masks became a necessary part of a soldier’s equipment.

In 1916 the British introduced the tank into battle. The first tanks were very slow and cumbersome, mechanically unreliable, and fairly easy to destroy. They could roll over barbed wire and trenches, but there were usually not enough of them to make a

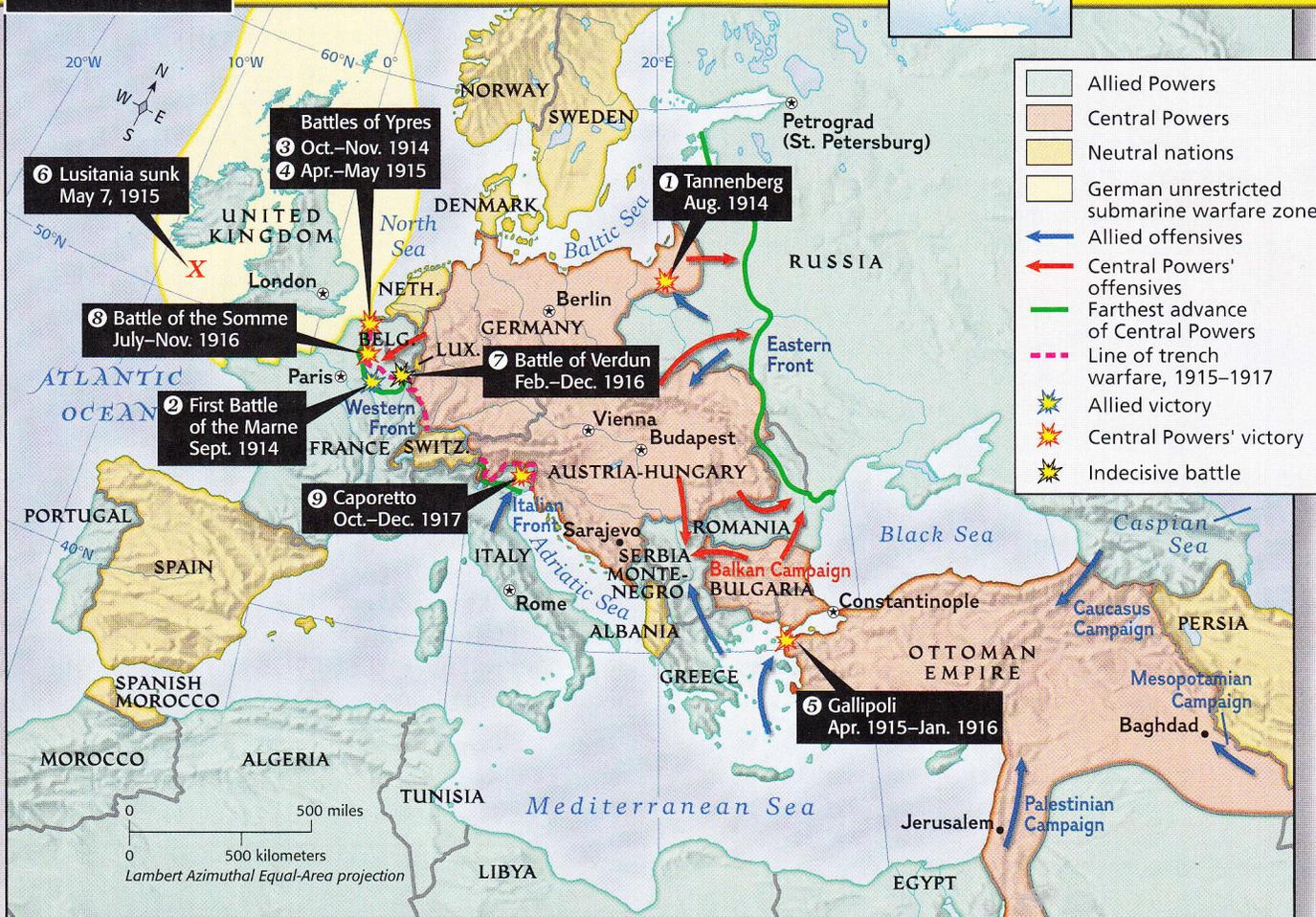
## An American Hero



Although the brutal trench warfare of World War I led to many acts of astonishing bravery, the heroism of one American, Corporal Alvin York, captured the nation’s imagination. Born in 1887, York grew up poor in the mountains of Tennessee, where he learned to shoot by hunting wild game.

On October 8, 1918, during the Battle of the Argonne Forest, York’s patrol lost its way and ended up behind enemy lines. When a German machine gun emplacement on a fortified hill fired on the patrol and killed nine men, York took command and charged the machine gun. Although the details of the battle are unclear, when it ended, York had killed between 9 and 25 Germans, captured the machine guns, and taken 132 prisoners. For his actions, he received the Medal of Honor and the French Croix de Guerre. After returning home, he used his fame to raise money for the Alvin York Institute—a school for underprivileged Tennessee children.





difference. While tanks did help troops, they did not revolutionize warfare in World War I.

World War I also saw the first use of airplanes in combat. At first, planes were used mainly to observe enemy activities. Soon, the Allies and Central Powers used them to drop small bombs. As technology advanced, they also attached machine guns to aircraft to engage in deadly air battles known as dogfights.

**Reading Check** **Describing** What new technologies were introduced in World War I?

## The Americans and Victory

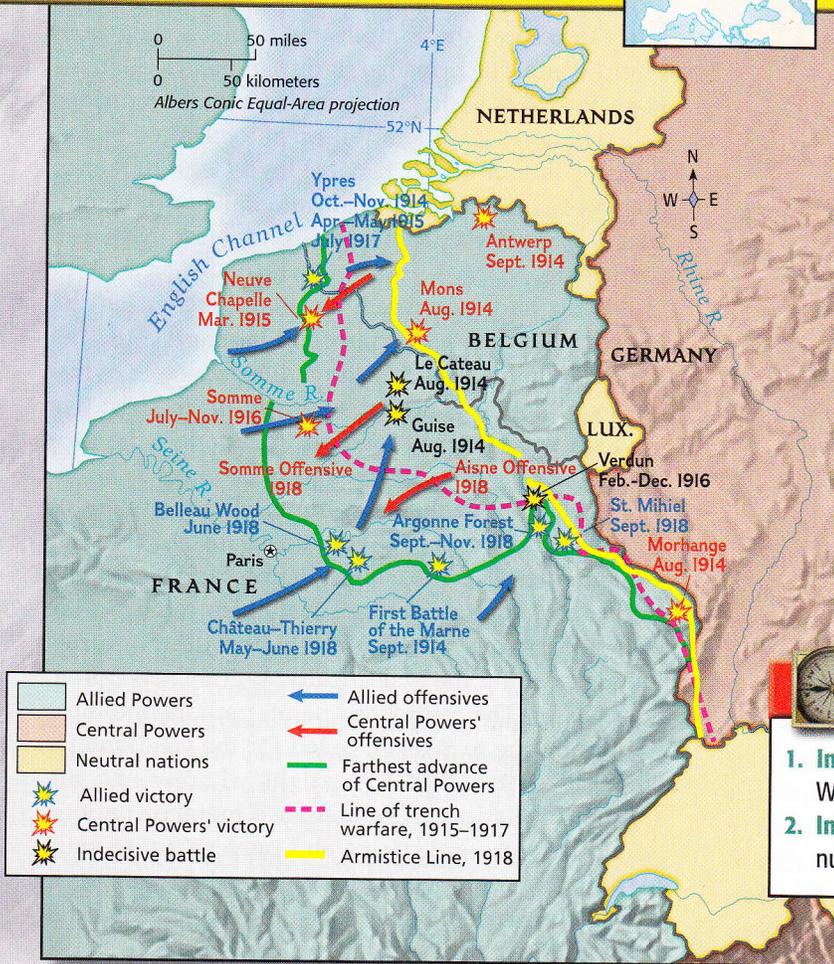
Wave upon wave of American troops marched into this bloody stalemate—nearly 2 million before the war’s end. These “doughboys,” a nickname for American soldiers, were largely inexperienced, but they were fresh, so their presence immediately boosted the morale of Allied forces.

**Winning the War at Sea** No American troopships were sunk on their way to Europe—an accomplishment due largely to the efforts of American Admiral William S. Sims. For most of the war, the British preferred to fight German submarines by sending warships to find them. Meanwhile, merchant ships would race across the Atlantic individually. The British approach had not worked well, and submarines had inflicted heavy losses on British shipping.

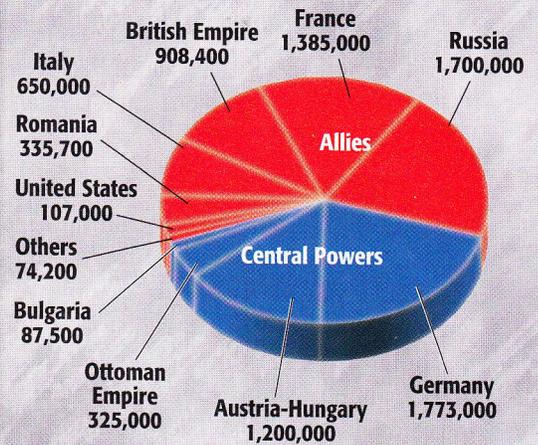
Sims proposed that merchant ships and troop transports be gathered into groups, called **convoys**, and escorted across the Atlantic by warships. If submarines wanted to attack a convoy, they would have to get past the warships protecting it. The convoy system greatly reduced shipping losses and ensured that American troops arrived safely in Europe. They arrived during a pivotal time in late 1917.

**Russia Leaves the War** In March 1917, riots broke out in Russia over the government’s handling of the war and over the scarcity of food and fuel. On March

# Western Front, 1914–1918



## World War I Military Deaths\*



\* Figures are approximate



## Geography Skills

- Interpreting Maps** Where did the majority of World War I battles occur?
- Interpreting Charts** Which nation suffered the largest number of military deaths during World War I?

15, Czar Nicholas II, the leader of the Russian Empire, abdicated his throne. Political leadership in Russia passed into the hands of a provisional, or temporary, government, consisting largely of moderate representatives who supported Russia's continued participation in World War I. The government, however, was unable to adequately deal with the major problems, such as food shortages, that were afflicting the nation.

The **Bolsheviks**, a group of Communists, soon competed for power in Russia. In November 1917, **Vladimir Lenin**, the leader of the Bolshevik Party, overthrew the Russian government and established a Communist government.

Germany's military fortunes improved with the Bolshevik takeover of Russia. Lenin's first act after seizing power was to pull Russia out of the war and concentrate on establishing a Communist state. He accomplished this by agreeing to the **Treaty of Brest-Litovsk** with Germany on March 3, 1918. Under this treaty, Russia lost substantial territory,

giving up Ukraine, its Polish and Baltic territories, and Finland. However, the treaty also removed the German army from the remaining Russian lands. With the Eastern Front settled, Germany was now free to concentrate its forces in the west.

**The German Offensive Falters** On March 21, 1918, the Germans launched a massive attack along the Western Front, beginning with gas attacks and a bombardment by over 6,000 artillery pieces. German forces, reinforced with troops transferred from the Russian front, pushed deeply into Allied lines. By early June, they were less than 40 miles (64 km) from Paris.

American troops played an important role in containing the German offensive. In late May, as the German offensive continued, the Americans launched their first major attack, quickly capturing the village of Cantigny. On June 1, American and French troops blocked the German drive on Paris at the town of Château-Thierry. On July 15, the Germans launched

one last massive attack in a determined attempt to take Paris, but American and French troops held their ground.

**The Battle of the Argonne Forest** With the German drive stalled, French Marshal Ferdinand Foch, supreme commander of the Allied forces, ordered massive counterattacks all along the front. In mid-September, American troops drove back German forces at the battle of Saint-Mihiel. The attack was a prelude to a massive American offensive in the region between the Meuse River and the Argonne Forest. General Pershing assembled over 600,000 American troops, some 40,000 tons of supplies, and roughly 4,000 artillery pieces for the most massive attack in American history.

The attack began on September 26, 1918. Slowly, one German position after another fell to the advancing American troops. The Germans inflicted heavy casualties on the American forces, but by early November, the Americans had shattered the German defenses and opened a hole in the German lines.

**The War Ends** While fighting raged along the Western Front, a revolution engulfed Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Turks surrendered. Faced with the surrender of their allies and a naval mutiny at Kiel in early November, the people of Berlin rose in rebellion on November 9 and forced the German emperor to step down. At the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, 1918, the fighting stopped. Germany had finally signed an **armistice**, or cease-fire, that ended the war.

 **Reading Check** **Explaining** What was Vladimir Lenin's first goal after controlling Russia in 1917?

### Picturing History

**American Artillery** This photo shows some of the materials used to fight World War I. Artillery shells are piled at the feet of these American soldiers. **What American battle demanded the largest amount of supplies and artillery pieces?**



## A Flawed Peace

In January 1919, a peace conference began in Paris to try to resolve the complicated issues arising from World War I. The principal figures in the negotiations were the “Big Four,” the leaders of the victorious Allied nations: President Wilson of the United States, British prime minister David Lloyd George, French premier Georges Clemenceau, and Italian prime minister Vittorio Orlando. Germany was not invited to participate.

Wilson had presented his plan, known as the **Fourteen Points**, to Congress in January 1918. The Fourteen Points were based on “the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities.” In the first five points, the president proposed to eliminate the general causes of the war through free trade, disarmament, freedom of the seas, impartial adjustment of colonial claims, and open diplomacy instead of secret agreements. The next eight points addressed the right of self-determination. They also required the Central Powers to evacuate all of the countries invaded during the war, including France, Belgium, and Russia. The fourteenth point, perhaps the most important one to Wilson, called for the creation of a “general association of nations” known as the **League of Nations**. The League’s member nations would help preserve peace and prevent future wars by pledging to respect and protect each other’s territory and political independence.  (See page 956 for the text of the Fourteen Points.)

**The Treaty of Versailles** As the peace talks progressed in the Palace of Versailles (vehr·SY), it became clear that Wilson’s ideas did not coincide with the interests of the other Allied governments. They criticized his plan as too lenient toward Germany.

Despite Wilson’s hopes, the terms of peace were harsh. The **Treaty of Versailles**, signed by Germany on June 28, 1919, had weakened or discarded many of Wilson’s proposals. Under the treaty, Germany was stripped of its armed forces and was made to pay **reparations**, or war damages, in the amount of \$33 billion to the Allies. This sum was far beyond Germany’s financial means. Perhaps most humiliating, the treaty required Germany to acknowledge guilt for the outbreak of World War I and the devastation caused by the war.

The war itself resulted in the dissolution of four empires: the Russian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, which lost territory in the war and fell to revolution in 1922, the German Empire after the abdication of the emperor and loss of territory in the treaty, and

Austria-Hungary, which was split into separate countries. Furthermore, nine new countries were established in Europe, including Yugoslavia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

While Wilson expressed disappointment in the treaty, he found consolation in its call for the creation of his cherished League of Nations. He returned home to win approval for the treaty.

**The U.S. Senate Rejects the Treaty** The Treaty of Versailles, especially the League of Nations, faced immediate opposition from numerous U.S. lawmakers. A key group of senators, nicknamed “the Irreconcilables” in the press, assailed the League as the kind of “entangling alliance” that Washington, Jefferson, and Monroe had warned against. These critics feared that the League might supersede the power of Congress to declare war and thus force the United States to fight in numerous foreign conflicts.

A larger group of senators, known as the “Reservationists,” was led by the powerful chairman of the Foreign Relations committee, Henry Cabot Lodge. This group supported the League but would ratify the treaty only with amendments that would preserve the nation’s freedom to act independently. Wilson feared such changes would defeat the basic purpose of the League and insisted that the Senate ratify the treaty without changes.

Convinced that he could defeat his opposition by winning public support, Wilson took his case directly to the American people. Starting in Ohio in September 1919, he traveled 8,000 miles and made over 30 major speeches in three weeks. The physical strain of his tour, however, proved too great. Wilson collapsed in Colorado on September 25 and returned to the White

## World Geography Connection



### Global War

Although World War I was fought mainly in Europe, it touched the lives of peoples throughout the world, including those in Africa and India. By the time the war broke out, much of Africa and India was under the control of European nations. While the British controlled much of India, no less than seven European powers had divided up Africa among themselves. As a result of living under the rule of Europeans, Africans and Indians took part in the great war. About one million Indians fought for the British in Europe, while nearly as many Africans served in the French army. The fighting also spread to Africa, as the Allies fought to seize control of Germany’s African colonies. **Why is it accurate to characterize World War I as a global conflict?**

House. There, he suffered a stroke and was bedridden for months, isolated from even his closest advisers but determined not to compromise with the Senate.

The Senate voted in November 1919 and again in March 1920, but it refused to ratify the treaty. After Wilson left office in 1921, the United States negotiated separate peace treaties with each of the Central Powers. The League of Nations, the foundation of President Wilson’s plan for lasting world peace, took shape without the United States.

**Reading Check** **Examining** What major issues did Wilson’s Fourteen Points address?

## SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

### Checking for Understanding

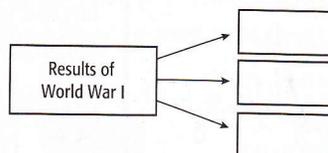
- Define:** *convoy, armistice, reparations.*
- Identify:** “no man’s land,” Vladimir Lenin, Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Fourteen Points, League of Nations, Treaty of Versailles.
- List** the four nations that dominated the Paris peace conference in 1919.

### Reviewing Themes

- Individual Action** Why did President Wilson propose his Fourteen Points?

### Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** What impact did John J. Pershing and the Battle of the Argonne Forest have on World War I?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer to list the results of World War I.



### Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Maps and Charts** Examine the map and chart on page 467. Prepare a quiz with questions based on information from both. Give the quiz to some of your classmates.

### Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Imagine that you are an American soldier fighting in Europe during World War I. Write a letter home describing your situation, and explain why you are there.