Outbreak of World War I

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On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of the Austria-Hungary Empire was shot and killed. If Ferdinand had lived, he would have become the emperor of the Austria-Hungary Empire. Ferdinand's shooting started World War I. But this isn't the whole story. The seeds of the war had been planted many years before.

Europe by 1914

Problems began after the Franco-Prussian War (1870 to 1871). Prussia defeated France. Afterward, Prussia became stronger. Prussia grew to become the German Empire. France got worried that Germany was becoming too powerful. So France felt it needed a partner. Russia agreed to be France's ally. England also worried Germany was getting too strong. England became allies with France and Russia.
Soon after, Austria-Hungary and Russia both wanted to rule over new lands. They wanted Balkan countries. Some of these were Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1908, Austria-Hungary claimed Bosnia-Herzegovina. But Serbia thought it was theirs. It said the people who lived there were Serbians. Russia was upset too by what Austria-Hungary had done. Germany supported Austria-Hungary.

Serbia, Greece, Montenegro and Bulgaria then formed the Balkan League. In 1913, they fought to rule over more Balkan lands. This angered both Austria-Hungary and Russia.

As 1914 began, the German Empire and Austria-Hungary were allies on one side. France, England and Russia were allies on the other side. So this meant any problem in Europe could lead to war.

**Assassination of Franz Ferdinand**

On June 28, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife came to a city in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gavrilo Princip was part of the Young Bosnia group. It hated Austria-Hungary. It wanted to be part of Serbia. Princip and five others got weapons from the revolutionary group the Serbian Black Hand. They planned to kill the archduke.

Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, were being driven around the city in an open car. One of the Serbs threw a bomb at their car. But it rolled off the back and exploded. People nearby were hurt. Later that day, the archduke’s car took a wrong turn. Princip happened to be on that street. As the car passed, Princip fired. He shot Franz Ferdinand and his wife. He was arrested. The archduke and his wife died an hour later.
The road to World War I

Now Austria-Hungary wanted to punish Serbia. But, Russia wanted to help Serbia because it also wanted Balkan lands. Austria-Hungary was not ready for a war with Russia. So the emperor of Austria-Hungary wrote a letter to Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. He asked for help from Germany. On July 6, Germany agreed to help Austria-Hungary.

On July 23, Austria-Hungary told Serbia to wipe out groups like Young Bosnia and the Black Hand. It threatened to attack Serbia. Serbia asked Russia for help. The leader of Russia was the czar. He started getting the Russian army ready. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28. Then, Germany declared war on Russia. The German army moved through Belgium. It then attacked France, Russia’s ally. England joined the war to help Belgium.

The Great War and its impact

The Great War lasted four years. It was later named World War I. Italy, Japan, countries in the Middle East and the United States also joined the war.

More than 20 million soldiers died or were missing. Another 21 million were wounded. Millions of people around the world died from the flu. The war helped spread the sickness.

The war ended. Germany’s kaiser and Austria-Hungary’s emperor were defeated. At the same time, the Russian Revolution ended the rule of the czar. A peace treaty was signed in 1919. More troubles filled the next 20 years. Another world war would begin in 1939.
Quiz

1. What is the purpose of the first paragraph of the article?
(A) to describe solutions to a problem in the article
(B) to list different countries compared in the article
(C) to explain the life of an important person in the article
(D) to outline an important idea that the article will explain

2. Read the section "Europe by 1914."
Which paragraph gives information about why France, England and Russia became allies?

3. Read the section "Assassination of Franz Ferdinand."
What is the focus of this section?
(A) why and how Ferdinand was killed
(B) how killing Ferdinand affected others
(C) problems for those who killed Ferdinand
(D) reactions to the killing of Ferdinand

4. What is the MAIN idea of the section "The road to World War I"?
(A) Countries wanted to take the Balkan lands from Serbia.
(B) Countries soon began taking sides in the fight over Serbia.
(C) Serbia was told to get rid of the group that had killed Ferdinand.
(D) Serbia asked the czar who was the leader of Russia for help.