World War I took place between 1914 and 1918. Although the conflict began in Europe, it ultimately involved nations as far away as the United States and Japan. At the time, the English-speaking world knew it as the “Great War”—the term “World War I” was applied decades later. Historians still actively disagree over the fundamental causes of the war. The period leading up to the war was a complex tangle of diplomacy and political maneuvering—many countries debated over strategies and alliances until nearly the last minute—and the first few weeks of the conflict were similarly chaotic and confusing. However, historians agree nearly unanimously about the war’s consequences: World War I led almost directly to World War II and set the stage for many other important events in the twentieth century.

**Causes of World War I**

*Militarism*

*Alliances that divided Europe into competing camps*

*Imperialism*

*Competition over colonies*

*Nationalistic feelings (Serbia, Black Hand)*

*Diplomatic failures*

**Major events**

*Assassination of Austria’s Archduke Ferdinand*

*United States enters war*

*Russia leaves the war*

**Major leaders**

*Woodrow Wilson*

*Kaiser Wilhelm II*

**Outcomes and global effects**

*Colonies’ participation in the war, which increased demands for independence*

*End of the Russian Imperial, Ottoman, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires*

*Enormous cost of the war in lives, property, and social disruption*

**Treaty of Versailles**

*Forced Germany to accept guilt for war and loss of territory and pay reparations*

*Limited the German military*

*League of Nations*