The War on the Land - Most people expected a short war, but it lasted through four years
- The Schlieffen Plan – expectation of short war, based on good rail lines → rapid shuttling of troops, Germany was capable of a two front war. The idea was to defeat France first, and then turn to Russia whose undeveloped rail lines and size would make deployment slower.
- Germany’s launched its attack with 78 divisions against about the same Allied strength – early German efforts successful.
- Then Russia came – attacked Germans from the east, pushed west successfully → Germany responded by moving troops from France to east Prussia → France detected the weakening of German lines and counter attacked → Battle of the Marne → Germans were forced to retreat; although Russians were defeated in the East → Trench warfare and stalemate
- The second year of the war brought Russian successes against Austria and the Allied attempt to punch through the Dardanelles to supply Russia—the Gallipoli campaign.
- The third year was characterized by the two great battles of attrition, Verdun (launched by Germany) and the Somme (launched by Allies). Artillery was built up on a massive scale and losses were immense, with no real gains. Poison gas was introduced at Verdun, and the tank at the Somme—neither with intelligence or success.

The War at Sea: Both sides blockaded the other, violating a 1909 agreement on contraband/non-contraband trading. Neutrals were kept out of German ports, and the US angered - called for “freedom of the seas.” — Affected Neutrals most due to no trade.
- Germany countered by using submarines, declaring a war zone around Britain in February of 1915. The sinking of the Lusitania in May (it carried both contraband and 1200 passengers) shocked the US and Germany, concerned about US entry, Germany backed down.
- The only major sea battle was the Battle of Jutland, which German felt their surface ships were going to waste. Showed efficiency of German navy, but none can overpower British Navy.

Diplomatic Maneuvers and Secret Agreements - The Ottoman Empire, traditional rival of Russia, quickly joined Germany; Bulgaria, being anti-Serb, joined the Central Powers in 1915.
- Italy bargained with both sides; Treaty of London in 1915 - promise of the Trentino, Trieste, and south Tyrol (“Italia Irredenta”) and other land - Italy joined the Allies—in spite of divided public opinion.
- The Allies made plans to divide up the Ottoman spoils: Russia (Armenia, the Bosporus), Britain (Iraq); and France (Syria).
- Germany worked to stir up discontent by minorities within its enemies borders.
- Zimmerman Note – sent to German minister in Mexico - If U.S. went to war with Germany, Germany would form an alliance with Mexico; promise of lost territory in US (Texas, Arizona…)
- The Allies worked on Slavic and Arab hopes for independence (with the work of T. E. Lawrence, “Lawrence of Arabia”), and Lord Balfour made promises concerning a Jewish homeland in Palestine.
- The Japanese entered the war to gain German colonies in the Pacific and to move further into both Manchuria and North China.
- Massacre of the Armenians in 1915, occurring as the Turks forced Armenians from their homeland to prevent a nationalist rising in support of Russia.
- Political ideas were exacerbated by an atmosphere of military crisis, political hatred, bureaucratic contempt, wartime scarcity, and much ethnic and religious hatred. Armenians speak of the “forgotten genocide”.
- Woodrow Wilson could see little to choose between the two sides; in 1916 he offered mediation, but both sides rejected compromise. Re-elected on the slogan “He kept us out of war,” Wilson continued to argue neutrality and supported “peace without victory.”

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