

GCSE History

Unit 4: Conflict and Tension 1894-1914

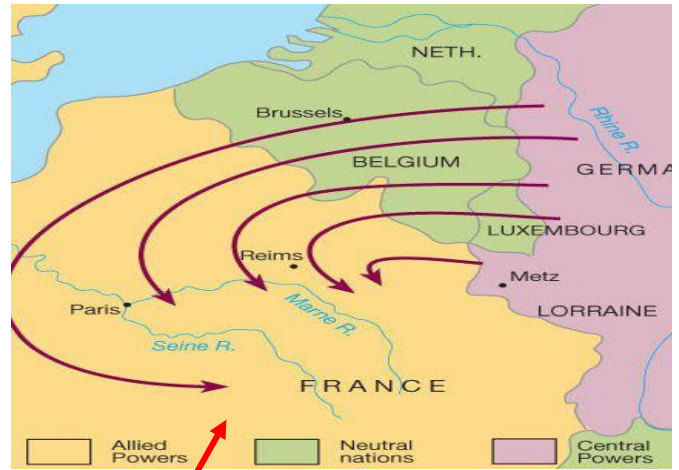
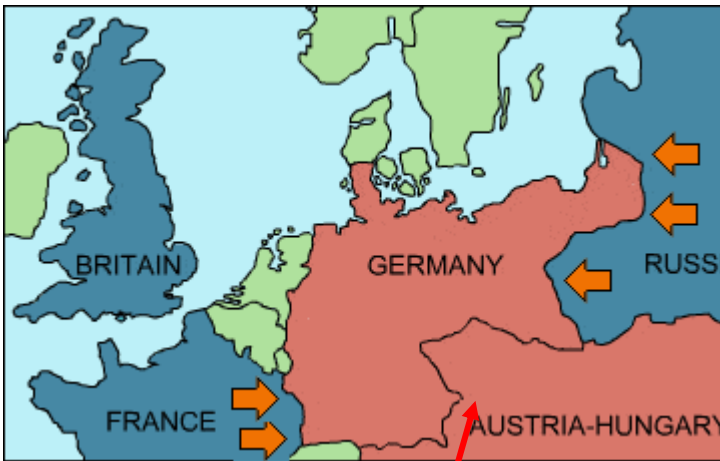
Work booklet 2 – Stalemate

What do I need to know for this topic?

Part two: The First World War: stalemate

- The Schlieffen Plan: the reasons for the plan, its failure, including the Battle of Marne and its contribution to the stalemate.
- The Western Front: military tactics and technology, including trench warfare and the war of attrition.
- The Western Front: key battles, including Verdun, the Somme and Passchendaele, (the reasons for, the events and significance of these battles)
- The war on other fronts; Gallipoli and its failure; the events and significance of the war at sea, including Jutland, the U-Boat campaign and convoys.

The Schlieffen Plan



Germany had been preparing for war long before 1914. Germany believed that if she went to war she would face a **war on two fronts** with France and Russia. In 1905 the head of the German army, von Schlieffen, decided that the best way to solve the problem was to attack the French first and defeat them within six weeks. The attack would go through neutral Belgium and Holland (where the French would not expect it) rather than Alsace-Lorraine. Germany assumed that Russia would take a long time to mobilise, so there would be plenty of time to move German troops to the east before the Russians could launch a major attack. The whole plan relied on the swift defeat of France.

As soon as war was declared the German army put its Schlieffen Plan into operation. The Schlieffen Plan was simple but risky. The idea was to quickly knock France out of the war - the Germans had to try to get to Paris and defeat France within six weeks, so that they could then send all their troops to fight against Russia. However, neither the Belgians nor the Russians did what the Schlieffen Plan expected them to do. At first, it looked as though the Germans could succeed. The German army invaded Belgium on 4 August. The Belgians put up a heroic resistance from their frontier forts but it did not stop the crushing German advance. Massive German artillery bombardments destroyed the Belgian forts and soon enormous numbers of well-equipped and well-trained German infantry and cavalry were moving towards the French border. Even so, the Belgian resistance bought time for British and French troops to mobilise and be ready for Germany.

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) landed in France and met the advancing Germans at Mons on 23 August. This small but well-trained force of professional soldiers gave the Germans a nasty shock. The troops at Mons were well led by Lieutenant-General Douglas Haig and were using Lee Enfield .303 bolt action rifles which could fire quickly and accurately. German reports from the time showed that they thought they were up against machine-gun fire. Despite their early success, the British were hugely outnumbered. They did slow the Germans down, but only the French had enough forces in the field to stop the German advance. However, the French were facing their own problems. When war broke out, the French launched a direct attack on Germany through Alsace-Lorraine. The French lost over 200,000 men in 12 days. They now regrouped their forces to defend Paris from the advancing Germans.

The Battle of the Marne

By the start of September 1914 things were not going entirely well for the Germans. The German Supreme Commander Moltke had to pull 100,000 troops out of the army advancing on Paris because the Russians had mobilised far more quickly than expected and had already invaded Germany. The Germans were also struggling to keep their troops supplied with food and equipment. Von Kluck, the German commander, decided he could not swing round Paris according to the original plan, so he advanced straight towards it. While the Germans advanced on foot, the French diverted troops to Paris by rail. The German army was weary and overstretched.

The combined British and French forces were able to stop the German advance along the line of the River Marne. They then counter-attacked and pushed the Germans back to the River Aisne. However, they could not drive them out of France entirely. Neither side could make any progress, and by 8 September troops on both sides were digging trenches to protect themselves from snipers and shell fire. Soon after, they added machine guns and barbed wire. Until now, it had been a war of movement, but these were the first signs of the STALEMATE that was to come.

The Battle of the Marne was a turning point. The German generals realised that they could not break through the enemy lines. They decided to try to outflank (get round the end of) the enemy's lines. The charge began on 12 October. It became known as 'the race to the sea'. As the Germans charged west towards the sea, the British and French moved troops (usually by rail) to block them whenever it seemed that the Germans were about to break through

By November 1914 it was a deadlock. The BEF had been decimated. The French had already suffered around 1 million dead or wounded in just ten weeks. Despite this, the French army tried to break through the German lines in Artois and Champagne in December, but they were beaten back with heavy losses. As 1914 ended, the fighting had reached a stalemate which was to last until 1918. Millions of troops were dug into a line of trenches that stretched from the sea in the west to the Alps in the east. It became known as the 'Western Front'.

The Schlieffen Plan		
What were the problems with the Plan?	Why did the Plan fail?	What were the consequences of the failure of the plan ?

Why did the war become a stalemate?

- Write an explanation of no more than 150 words. Think about:
- Why the German advance failed and how British forces contributed.
 - The significance of the Battle of the Marne
 - Why both sides built trenches.

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Trench Warfare

Write definitions for these keywords

Stalemate	
No mans' Land	
Snipers	
Going 'over the top'	
Bombardment	
Trench foot	

Describe the tactics used when attacking an enemy trench:

What was life like for a WW1 soldier?

Produce a mind map using pages 19-21



The technology of war: New developments

Once both sides became bogged down in a stalemate of trench warfare both sides constantly improvised new weapons and tried out new tactics in an attempt to break the stalemate. However, these measures often cancelled each other out. Complete the summary box for each weapon.

Artillery

Main use:

Initial problems and how they were overcome:

Advantages:

Consequences:

Machine Guns

Main use:

Initial problems and how they were overcome:

Advantages:

Consequences:

Gas

Main use:

Initial problems and how they were overcome:

Advantages:

Consequences:

Tanks

Main use:

Initial problems and how they were overcome:

Advantages:

Consequences:

Aircraft

Main use:

Initial problems and how they were overcome:

Advantages:

Consequences:

The key battles on the Western Front and their significance

In 1915 the French, British and Germans all tried and failed to break the deadlock. Early in 1915 the French lost many thousands in an unsuccessful offensive in Champagne. The British gained some ground at Neuve Chapelle in March but at a heavy cost. The Germans were driven back from Ypres in April 1915 with heavy losses. However, the situation remained unchanged.

1916 and 1917 saw 3 key battles.

1. The Battle of Verdun – February to December 1916
2. The Battle of the Somme – July to November 1916
3. The Battle of Passchendaele – July to November 1917

The Battle of Verdun

In February 1916 the Germans began a determined battle to capture strategic French forts surrounding Verdun. The Germans recognised that the French were leading the Allied effort at this stage of the war. The German commander, Falkenhayn, came up with a strategy of ATTRITION – that is, to wear down the enemy's strength until resistance was no longer possible. His tactic was to 'bleed France white'. The tactic failed, in that both sides suffered roughly equal losses. For six months both sides poured men and resources into this battle. Attacks were followed by counter-attacks and by July 1916 some 700,000 men had fallen. The French, led by General Pétain, held out, but by the summer of 1916 they were close to breaking point. The huge losses had weakened both sides, but the Germans had greater resources.

The Somme

To relieve pressure at Verdun, the British led by Field Marshal Douglas Haig launched an offensive at the Somme. After a week-long artillery bombardment of German trenches, British troops advanced. On the first day there were 57,000 British casualties. The fighting continued until November 1916 with the loss of 1.25 million men. Back in Britain, politicians and the general public were horrified at the losses. But to the military leaders the nature of the exercise was clear. The war was a contest to see which side could last out the long and dreadful war of attrition. Douglas Haig briefed the government that 'the nation must be taught to bear losses'. The nation did accept them and in doing so played a key role in victory.

Battle of Passchendaele, 1917

The Battle of Passchendaele is also known as the Third Battle of Ypres. It started in July 1917, and illustrates how new technology could become hopelessly outmanoeuvred by weather conditions. The British detonated huge mines at Messines which destroyed the German artillery positions and killed 10,000 German soldiers. However, the infantry advance which followed became hopelessly bogged down when heavy rain created nightmare conditions, particularly around the ruined village of Passchendaele. Even when tanks were used at Cambrai in November 1917 it was the same story: 350 tanks made good progress but were unable to hold the ground they had captured. The casualty figures for this battle are disputed, but there were nearly a quarter of a million casualties on the Allied side, and even more on the German side.

	Who launched the attack and why?	Problems faced	Results
The Battle of Verdun			
The Battle of the Somme			
The Battle of Passchendaele			

Why were there so many casualties during the Somme?

Categorise your sort cards and stick them into the boxes below:

General Haig's mistakes

Lack of support

Lack of information

The weather

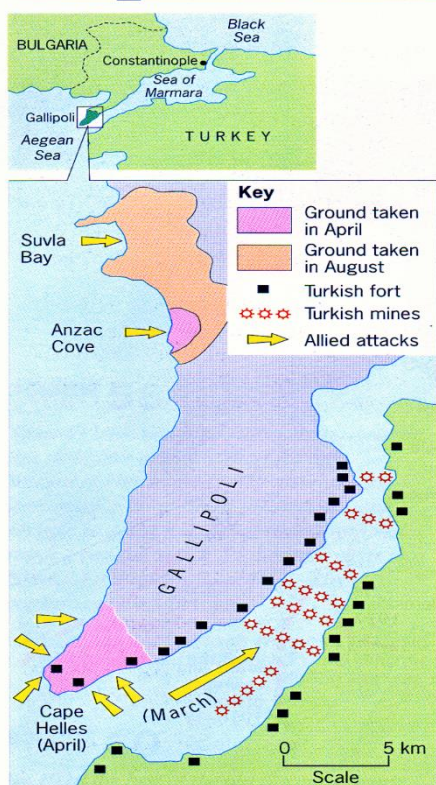
Was the Battle of the Somme a success or a failure for Britain and France? Explain the reasons for your opinion.

The Eastern Front – Gallipoli

The war was not just limited to the Western Front. Huge casualties were being suffered in the east where Russia was trying to defend itself against Germany and Austria–Hungary. Fighting was also taking place in the Middle East where 700,000 Indian troops were supporting the British against the Turks. The fighting which took place at Gallipoli in Turkey was particularly significant.

As casualties mounted on the Western Front, and with no prospect of ending the stalemate, ministers looked for alternatives. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, persuaded the British government that an attack should be mounted on the Dardanelles Strait in Turkey, a narrow stretch of water linking the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara, which then gave access to the Black Sea. This was an attack on the Turks but it would also enable supplies to get through to help Russia in their campaigns. Any such attack would require the use of the British navy. There was not to be a land attack.

SOURCE 2



The Dardanelles strait and the Gallipoli campaign.

In March 1915 the warships began their assault, and bombarded the strong forts that lined the strait. But as they entered the strait a combination of mines and shell fire from the forts on the shore resulted in the loss of 2/3 of the fleet. The Allied commanders decided that they would have to launch a land assault to capture the peninsula before the naval operation could succeed.

In April 1915 a hastily assembled force of British, French and ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand) troops attacked Helles Beach. The Turks, supported by German troops, had strengthened the defences and had dug trenches on the hills overlooking the beaches where the Allies were likely to land. The Allied troops fought bravely, and did capture a few trenches, but it quickly became clear that they would not be able to remove the Turks from the peninsula.

The Allied troops also dug trenches, but conditions for both sides were dreadful. In the blistering summer heat, and with decaying corpses strewn along the front line on both sides, disease was rampant. Neither side could break the deadlock, even with more troops. Another landing was made at Suvla Bay, but that also failed to break the Turkish defences.

By November there was a new problem for the Allies – frostbite. The troops were extremely ill-equipped for the harsh winter. By December it was clear that there was no prospect of success. The decision was taken to pull out. The withdrawal was well organised, but the campaign was seen as a failure, and Churchill was humiliated.

Only one part of the Allies' campaign was successful – submarines got through the minefields of the strait to attack Constantinople harbour and sank many Turkish ships. But the main fleet never attempted to get through.

The Reasons for the attack on Gallipoli	What was the plan?	What Problems did the British face in Gallipoli?	Results/Consequences

Write a paragraph to explain why Gallipoli was a failure (include at least three reasons in your paragraph):

The events and significance of the war at sea

There were no decisive battles at sea during the First World War. However, control of the seas was essential for both Britain and Germany as they both needed crucial supplies to be brought in by sea.

New technology before the war led to torpedoes which could be launched from ships, submarines or from the air. Improvements in radio meant that ships could keep in better contact with each other and with the shore. Crucially, submarines were new to warfare. Both sides had them, but the Germans were quick to use them more effectively than the British.

British tactics:

The British navy's main activity was to mount a BLOCKADE on German ports. The aim was to stop essential supplies of food and war materials reaching Germany. Many German ships were blocked in their own ports. As the war went on the blockade hit harder. By 1918 many Germans were starving and there was a mutiny in the German navy. Indeed, the blockade was one of the factors which led to the German surrender in November 1918.

German tactics:

Germany blockaded the sea around Britain using U-boats (submarines) with the aim of stopping supplies coming into Britain. They sank ships that were bringing supplies to Britain from the British Empire and from the USA. In Feb 1915 Germany declared the seas around Britain a 'war zone' and said they would attack any ship in these waters – This was known as 'unrestricted submarine warfare'.

There was much protest about the unrestricted campaign – Germany were forced to call it off in 1915 after a British cruise liner, the *Lusitania*, was sunk after being hit by torpedoes from a German U-boat, killing 1,198 passengers, including 128 US Citizens. Angry protests from the USA, still officially neutral, led the Kaiser to order the German navy to withdraw the unrestricted policy. However, Germany resumed the unrestricted campaign in 1917.

The plan nearly worked. By April 1917 Britain was left with only six weeks' supply of some basic goods. However, Britain used several different techniques to ensure supplies still got through.

- 1) The British began to defend their ships against U-boats by introducing the convoy system. Slow-moving merchant ships sailed in groups, protected by fast-moving destroyers. Soon the amount of shipping destroyed by U-boats began to fall.
- 2) The British also began to use massive underwater anti-submarine nets and laid minefields

Write definitions for these keywords

Unrestricted submarine warfare	
Blockade	
Convoy system	



The War at Sea



<p>The War at sea was so important because....</p>	<p>3 facts about the British blockade of Germany :</p>	<p>3 facts about the German blockade of Britain:</p>
<p>In response to the German blockade Britain used the following tactics:</p>	<p>A summary of the Battle of Jutland.</p>	
<p>Unrestricted submarine warfare failed because ...</p>	<p>Germany had the following successes in the war at sea:</p>	<p>Britain had the following successes in the war at sea</p>

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