

# THE GREAT WAR

## Grades 9–12 Answer Key

Answers listed below indicate main points and themes that students may address in their responses. Refer to research sources cited in the lessons, as well as the Great War videos, for additional answers.

### ACTIVITY SHEET 2

#### *Where Did They Fight?*

##### Eastern Front

#### **1. How was the war on the Eastern Front different than the Western?**

While the war on Western Front was locked in a stalemate, a war of movement ensued on the Eastern Front. Russia was able to supply vast amounts of troops, but had difficulty mobilizing and moving them, as well as producing enough weapons and supplies for them. German and Austro-Hungarian troops were also better trained and better supplied than the Russians. The terrain was much more spread out than on the Eastern Front, and the two sides fought over an area that was more than 1,000 miles long. Trench warfare was not common on the Eastern Front because armies had room to maneuver, move, and fight over larger distances.

#### **2. Which soldiers served on the Eastern Front?**

Germany and Austria-Hungary fought against Russia.

#### **3. How did the Russian Revolution impact the Eastern Front?**

The Russian Revolution (1917) brought Russia out of WWI, as Vladimir Lenin's Bolsheviks sought a separate peace with Germany. Following the armistice in December 1917 and the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, Germany was free to concentrate all its forces on the Western Front.

##### Middle Eastern Front

#### **1. Why was the Ottoman Empire considered the "sick man of Europe?"**

The size and strength of the Ottoman Empire had made it one of the great powers of Europe for centuries, but by the early 20th century, the Empire was in decline; it had lost much of its territory in eastern Europe and was facing internal division and calls for independence and autonomy from its non-Turkish population. Despite the Empire being known as the "sick man of Europe," many European nations, especially Great Britain, tried to prevent the Empire's collapse in the decades before World War I because they feared it would leave a power vacuum in the region and allow other empires, such as Russia, to gain influence and power.

#### **2. Why was the Battle of Gallipoli so important?**

The Ottoman Empire's main adversary was Russia, and in October 1914, the Turks joined the Germans in bombarding Russian ports on the Black Sea. Within days, Russia, Britain, and France declared war on Turkey. In 1915, British troops and Australian and New Zealander troops (called Anzacs) landed at Gallipoli, the Turkish-controlled peninsula that protected the Dardanelles straits. A success there would have eliminated the Ottoman Empire from the war and given the Allies a supply route to Russia. But over the course of nine months, the Turks defended their homeland successfully and beat back each of the Allied offensives. By December, the British and Anzac troops were forced to evacuate

Gallipoli. Turks and Allies together suffered about 250,000 casualties.

#### **3. How did the war help shape the modern Middle East?**

The emergence of the modern Middle East stems from WWI. The Ottoman Empire's defeat in 1918 led to the partitioning of its territory. The central Turkish homeland became the modern nation of Turkey while the remaining lands were divided into British and French mandates based on the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement. This directly countered what Arab nationalists had been promised by the British during the war, thus sowing the seeds of mistrust and discontent with the West among the people of the region. This animosity plagued relations between the Middle East and the West throughout the 20th century, and continues to cause conflict today.

##### Italian Front

#### **1. Which countries fought on this front?**

With Italy's entry into WWI on the side of the Allies in 1915, a new front opened in southern Europe, pitting that country against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

#### **2. What role did the physical terrain play on the Italian Front?**

Much of the fighting along this front took place in the Italian Alps. The Front stretched from Switzerland to the Adriatic Sea, some 400 miles. Conditions on the Italian Front were brutal, and both sides struggled in the icy, snowy, mountainous terrain. Frostbite was common and some 40,000 died due to avalanches.

### 3. Describe the campaigns along the Italian front.

Italy's preliminary objective was to break through the Austrian lines to capture Trieste. Over the next two years, the Italian army slowly pushed the Austrians back along the Isonzo River. In the fall of 1917, a combined German and Austro-Hungarian force attacked unexpectedly at Caporetto, a lightly defended sector in the Italian Alps. Italy's army retreated 60 miles before stopping the enemy advance. Losses were devastating: 40,000 casualties, 275,000 prisoners, 2,500 artillery pieces captured. In the wake of Caporetto, the Italian Army changed leadership, and by late October 1918 forced the Austro-Hungarian army to seek an armistice.

#### African Front

### 1. Why was the war in Africa fought differently than battles in Europe?

WWI in Africa took place across vast distances and witnessed the practice of guerilla warfare, disrupting the lives of millions of civilians. Lacking the trenches associated with Europe, fighting in Africa was nonetheless just as fierce, particularly in the East African campaign.

### 2. Why was there such a high death toll for laborers during the war in Africa?

African laborers and porters were forcibly drafted, and were ill-fed and ill-treated, leading to a high number of deaths from disease and malnutrition.

### 3. What were some of the notable battles and campaigns in Africa?

Over the course of WWI, British and French forces conquered Germany's four colonies in Africa. In August 1914, Togo, in West Africa, was quickly occupied. By July 1915, South African forces, supported by British ships, took control of South West Africa (present-day Namibia). But in German East Africa (later known as Tanganyika), German forces held out for the entire war, due to their remarkable commander, General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. An

Allied force of British, Indian, Nigerian, and South African troops took control of the coast and major towns, forcing the colonial German army to move deeper into the interior. Lettow-Vorbeck did not surrender until November 25, 1918, after South African and British forces managed to get word to him that Germany had signed an armistice in Europe.

#### LESSON 3

## The American Home Front in WWI

### How did U.S. citizens support the war effort once the country declared war?

Americans supported the war effort in a variety of ways. They raised money through the purchase of Liberty Bonds, worked to consume less meat and other foodstuffs necessary for soldiers in Europe, and volunteered with organizations like the American Red Cross.

### What role did propaganda play?

Spread to the American public by the Committee on Public Information (CPI), propaganda in the form of posters, pamphlets, and films sought to convince Americans of their patriotic duty to support the war effort. Propaganda told Americans what food to conserve and when/how to support Liberty Loan drives or civilian relief in Europe, all the while pushing a prowar message and demonizing Germany.

### How did extreme patriotic sentiment lead to violence and persecution?

The patriotic fervor brought on by the CPI's propaganda created an environment in which antiwar sentiment was not tolerated. Civilian vigilante groups like the American Patriotic League often attacked those perceived to be disloyal or unpatriotic, and the federal government, under the Espionage and Sedition Acts, persecuted and punished those who dissented with the Wilson administration. This charged atmosphere contributed to the postwar Red Scare, in which radicals,

communists, and anarchists were targeted by the federal government.

#### LESSON 4

## After the 11th Hour

### How do you think the Treaty of Versailles contributed to another horrible conflict 20 years later?

Failures of the Treaty of Versailles contributed to military, political and economic instability in the decades after World War I. The Big Three powers of France, Great Britain, and the United States had conflicting goals and motivations, particularly with respect to how Germany should be treated.

France pushed for the harshest possible punishments for Germany, most of which were included in the final treaty. Germany was forced to give up control of all of its overseas colonies and large amounts of territory in Europe, including Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhineland in Southern Germany, which was occupied by Allied troops. It had to demilitarize and give up its weapons, and the size of its armed forces was strictly limited. Germany was especially angered at the "war guilt" clause, which stated that Germany accept total responsibility for starting the war.

Germany was also forced to pay reparations (war damages). These reparations helped weaken Germany's already fragile post-war economy, and hyperinflation and unemployment were common. Things worsened after the 1929 Stock Market Crash and resulting worldwide economic depression.

The harsh punishments of the Treaty, as well as the fact that many Germans felt they had not been defeated, sowed resentment and bitterness in Germany. The Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler, capitalized on these feelings amid economic and political instability. He attacked the Treaty, calling for a new, even more virulent and violent form of nationalism—leading to the rise of the Nazi Party and the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

### ACTIVITY SHEET 4

## The Paris Peace Conference

### What were Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points?

The Fourteen Points were Wilson's plans for a permanent post-war peace in Europe. He outlined this plan in a speech to the U.S. Congress in January 1919:

- No more secret treaties or agreements between nations.
- Freedom of navigation on the seas, even during wartime.
- Removal of economic barriers between nations, encouraging international trade.
- Reduction in military weaponry, disarmament of nations.
- Impartial and fair resolutions of disputes over colonial matters.
- Removal of all armies (especially Germany) from Russia. Russia to be allowed to determine and develop its own politics.
- Independence of Belgium and restoration of all territories it lost during the war.
- Return of all French territory invaded during the war, as well as return of Alsace-Lorraine, which Germany had held since 1870s.
- Redrawing of Italian borders to include territories where Italians make up majority of population.
- National self-determination of people living in Austro-Hungarian Empire, allowing them the freedom to form their own states.
- National self-determination and independence for the Balkan States, including Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania.

- Ottoman Empire/Turkey should control only Turkish people. Land of non-Turkish people should be given independence.
- Creation of independent Poland (whose land had been conquered by Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary). New Polish state should have access to the sea.
- Creation of League of Nations.

### What was the purpose of the League of Nations, and why did the United States reject it?

The League guaranteed political and territorial independence of states; it sought to find peaceful solutions to international and territorial disagreements; members were not to use military forces (or threat of force) to solve disputes.

The central concern and a primary reason that the treaty and the League were rejected was "Article X" of the League's founding covenant. Article X required League members to come to the military aid of any other member in the event of the attack. Many feared that it weakened American sovereignty over its foreign affairs. Opposition to the League in the U.S. Senate came from the isolationist wing of the Republican Party, led by Senators Charles Evans Hughes and William Borah.

There was also a return to pre-war isolationist sentiments in the United States. Many Americans did not want to continue to be involved in what they considered European affairs, and did not want to contribute soldiers, money, or materials to the League or its future work.

President Woodrow Wilson refused to compromise on aspects of the legislation that would have helped gain support for its passage from both political parties.

### How was the map of Europe and the Middle East changed by the peace conference?

### conference?

Independence for Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia); creation of Finland; creation of Poland; breakup of Austria-Hungary into separate states of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia; breakup of German Empire, and massive loss of German territory in Europe (Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig, Poland) and all of its overseas colonies; expansion of territory for Romania and Italy.

Breakup of Ottoman Empire and creation of Turkey; former Ottoman lands in Europe and Middle East, including Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and the Gulf States placed under a mandate system of British and French control; creation of new territories of Arabia (later Saudi Arabia), Georgia, and Armenia.

### How is the impact of the Paris Peace Conference still felt today?

Although the League of Nations was greatly weakened by the United States' refusal to join it, it did lay the groundwork for future international organizations, most important, the United Nations, which was created after World War II. Several states created by the Treaty, including Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, forced different ethnic and nationalist groups together. These states would come undone after the Cold War, and Yugoslavia in particular faced brutal ethnic and religious wars during the 1990s. Divisions and conflicts in the Middle East can be traced back to postwar boundaries and decisions made by the Allies both during the war and at the Paris Peace Conference.