

WWI

GREAT WAR → the first war to involve Europe and the whole world

USA in WWI: Background

- 19th century it was a GOLDEN AGE
- economic power
- imperialistic expansion

USA maintained a position of NEUTRALITY and ISOLATION for almost a century

ISOLATION

USA only joined the war in 1917

Before joining the war the president Wilson showed support to the allies through LOANS and PROPAGANDA

USA joined the war for 2 reasons:

1. BRITISH EMBARGO → Germans bombed ships coming to Britain, so it was a problem for the American trade in Europe
2. SINKING OF THE LUSITANIA (merchant ship) → violation of rights and international obligations

ENGLAND in WWI: Background

- 1815 -1917 SPLENDID ISOLATION → great economic power and no interest in European business
- 1900 Otto von Bismarck signed the TRIPLE ALLIANCE (Italy and Austro-Hungarian Empire) → break the balance of power in Europe



England needed an alliance.

Germany: no alliance because the Kaiser was increasing the navy and that was a threat to the British Empire

Entente Cordiale 1904

UK, France and Russia

1904: England signed a treaty with France

ENTENTE → economic and political treaty

ALLIANCE → military treaty

1907: Russia joined (already had an alliance with France)

→ England was in a position of SEMI COMMITMENT: an entente with 2 countries that had an alliance.

In case of war England would not get military help from France or Russia, but they would expect help from England, while England was cut out of decisions. If England didn't join the war, in case of victory would not get anything, in case of loss, would be isolated.

First stages

- 28th June 1914: Archduke Franz Ferdinand was killed in Sarajevo → signed the beginning of the war
- Austria declared war to Serbia
- Russia joined Serbia and declared war to Austria
- Germany declared war to Russia (and France)

BRITAIN: many were in favour because they feared Germany

Joined when Germany invaded Belgium (UK and Belgium had a treaty)

They believed it was FLASH WAR → war was welcomed in UK, many volunteers → it was a sign of social union and it could bring money.

Great propaganda to support the war

Battle of the MARNE Sept 1914

- stopped the German advance
- Changed the war → war of TRENCHES

They destroyed the soldiers physically and mentally

- GAS → new weapon to attack from a distance

Battle of the Somme 1916

After the battle of Verdun England attacked Germans on the Somme

It was a disaster → huge loss

It made clear the reality of the war, so there were no more volunteers in England.

Government introduces the CONSCRIPTION, forcing young men to join the army.

UK moved to the STATE OF TOTAL WAR

1917

- Russia left the war because of internal problem (Russian Revolution)
- USA joined →

Germany were using U-Boats (submarines) to impose an Embargo on Britain and they bombed any ship approaching the island.

They bombed and sunk the Lusitania, an American merchant ship with civilians.

1918: After the entrance of the USA the German decline started and was fast.

1918

- 11 nov 1918 Germany signed the armistice
- 19 jan 1919 PEACE TREATY IN VERSAILLES

→ Germany was considered the main responsible and was heavily punished:

1. Lost many territories and colonies
2. Was forced to pay a huge debt
3. The army was dismantled and the armament production brought under the Allies control

These were the premises for the following WWII

WEAPONS - great innovation



GUNS → the first could fire 15 bullets and could kill a person from distance

The first **machine guns** needed 4-6 to work them and they had to be on a flat surface.

Artillery had a long range and could delivery devastating blows to the enemy but needed up to 12 men to work them.



ZEPPELIN → airship that was used in the early stages in bombing raids, they carried machine guns and bombs.

They were abandoned because they were easy to shoot out of the sky

GAS

The German army was the first to use **Chlorine gas**, that caused a burning sensation and chest pain. The victim died suffocated. The weather must be right.

Mustard gas was deadlier, it was fired in shells, it was colourless and took 12 hours to take effect



TANKS

The first tank was called “Little Willie” and needed a crew of 3 and could not cross the trenches. Very slow
More modern tanks were developed during the war, they could carry 10 men and had a turret on it with weapons.



SUBMARINES

German submarines were called **U-Boats**.
They had torpedoes to blow ships carrying supplies to Britain (Lusitania)

PLANES

At first were used to spy or deliver bombs, but soon they became fighter armed aircrafts.



WAR POETS

When the war broke out thousand of young men volunteered as soldiers.

Many saw the war as a patriotic act and heroic adventure.

They started to change their mind when the first trenches appeared and especially after the battle of the Somme that showed the true horrors of the war.

Among these young soldiers there were some poets and many others who started to write about the war, and they are known as WAR POETS

War poets represented war in an unconventional and very realistic way.

They are generally divided into 2 groups:

1. Those who volunteered and lived the first stages of the war. They welcomed the conflict and had a positive view of it, associating it with heroism and patriotism
2. Those who lived the last stages of the war (many were conscripted). They saw the real horrors of the war, rejected the idea of patriotism and had a negative view of the conflict

RUPERT BROOKE

He belonged to the first group.

He joined the war at the very beginning (navy) and died very soon at sea because he was sick. He never saw the reality of the war, so he maintained his unrealistic and romantic view of the conflict.

He describes the war with a sentimental attitude -> act of patriotism to defend the motherland, and death is the final reward of heroism

THE SOLDIER

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by
England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

*Se dovessi morire, pensa solo questo di me:
che c'è qualche angolo del campo straniero
che sarà per sempre Inghilterra. Ci dovrebbe essere
In quella ricca terra una più ricca polvere nascosta;
una polvere di cui l'Inghilterra si fece, si formò,
s'informò,
diede, una volta, i suoi fiori all'amore, le sue vie
al vagabondaggio,
un corpo inglese, respirante aria inglese,
lavato dai fiumi, benedetto dal sole di casa.
E pensa, questo cuore, tolto tutto il male,
un battito nella mente eterna, nondimeno
restituisce da qualche parte i pensieri dati
dall'Inghilterra;
le sue visioni ed i suoi suoni; sogna felice come il suo
giorno;
e la risata, imparata dagli amici; e gentilezza,
nei cuori in pace, sotto un cielo inglese.*

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

He belonged to the second group.

He joined the war in 1915 and was sent to fight in France, where he witnessed the reality of the war and really lived the life in the trenches.

He was injured so he was sent back to England.

He started to openly protest against the war and the politics of the government, he was also sent to prison for this. He was released because the authorities believed he suffered from SHELL SHOCK (PTSD), so he was sent to a hospital, this is when he started writing.

In his poems he denounced the political mistakes of the Government and accused it of sacrificing hundreds of young men.

He describes the life in the trenches and the warfare in a very realistic way.

Suicide in the Trenches

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

1. Conoscevo un giovane soldato
2. Che al destino rideva senza gioia,
3. La notte dormiva con la paura,
4. E all'alba fischiava con l'allodola.
5. Nelle trincee invernali timoroso e triste,
6. Con i crampi ed i pidocchi senza una goccia di rum,
7. Si é sparato un proiettile nella testa.
8. Del suo nome da allora poco resta.
9. Folle compiaciute ed eccitate
10. Che tifate a vedere i soldati marciare,
11. Andate a casa e pregate Dio di non sapere
12. In quale inferno finiscono la gioia e la speranza.