

World War I, also called the Great War, was a major global conflict that lasted from 1914 to 1918. It began with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary in June 1914, which triggered a chain reaction among the major powers of Europe. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, leading Russia to support Serbia. Germany then declared war on Russia and its ally France. Britain joined the war after Germany invaded neutral Belgium.

The war was fought mainly between two alliances: the Allies (including Britain, France, Russia, and later the United States) and the Central Powers (led by Germany, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire). Much of the fighting took place on the Western Front, where trench warfare created a deadly stalemate. Soldiers faced harsh conditions in trenches, and battles like Verdun and the Somme resulted in massive casualties with little territorial gain.

New military technologies changed warfare dramatically. Machine guns, tanks, airplanes, poison gas, and submarines caused unprecedented destruction. The war was not limited to Europe; fighting also occurred in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia due to the global reach of European empires.

In 1917, the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies, providing much-needed troops and resources. Meanwhile, Russia withdrew after the Bolshevik Revolution led to a separate peace with Germany. After four years of brutal fighting, Germany signed an armistice on November 11, 1918, ending the war.

The Treaty of Versailles in 1919 officially ended the conflict but imposed harsh penalties on Germany, sowing resentment that contributed to World War II. World War I resulted in around 16 million deaths and reshaped the political map of Europe, ending empires and inspiring social and political changes worldwide.