it was the end itself. The need for rapid industrialization, as in the Soviet case, did not exist. Germany already possessed the most modern industrial plant in Europe. . . . The totalitarian features of the new regime were most pronounced, however, in the radically new conception of the nation as a biological entity engaged in a struggle for survival. Whether or not Nazi leaders believed in the race doctrine is irrelevant. What is relevant is the purpose the doctrine was to serve. For the Nazis, both domestic and international politics was warfare. For German "national socialism," the Jewish "race" could be effectively depicted as the enemy—Communist or capitalist, domestic or foreign.

In sum, the problem of the First World War as turning point would appear to be basic to the meaning of contemporary history. With the spotlight on the events of 1914–18, both the prewar and postwar worlds are illuminated. Although the illumination is necessarily selective, what emerges are the very outlines of our time.

Murphy,ed.(2002), *World War I.*

The Scars of Total War

Jay Winter and Blaine Baggett

Cambridge University historian Jay Winter and television documentary producer Blaine Baggett explain some of the lasting social and psychological effects of World War I on postwar Europe. The authors present a moving account of the massive human costs of the war. The war's destructiveness forever dashed romantic images of war still common in 1914. As Winter and Baggett suggest, the war "democratized suffering." Hundreds of thousands of mutilated veterans, together with their shocked and grieving families, found postwar adjustment extremely difficult.

The Great War, a leap into the modern age, unleashed an avalanche of the unmodern. This paradox has given the twentieth century its characteristic form. The war accelerated the ascent to a world dominated by machines of unparalleled power, and at the same time precipitated the descent into a world of unparalleled brutality. The trajectory of human progress was fractured: technical change leaped forward yet political life moved backward into a new age of cruelty, made worse than the past by the new and more efficient machinery of degradation and death.

The recognition that something terrible, something overwhelming, something irreversible had happened in the Great War explains its enduring significance for those born after the Armistice. For this war was not only the most important and far-reaching political and military event of the century; it was also the most important imaginative event.

New identities emerged during the war: new nations, new commitments, new solidarities. The United States emerged

as an economic world power, although for a generation it withdrew from the political responsibilities that followed industrial pre-eminence. The ideological conflict between Communism and capitalism came out of this war; so did the European state system, the boundaries of which were set at Versailles in 1919. Seventy years later, Communism as a political system collapsed. Germany was reunified, without threatening the peace of Europe. In the 1990s the national boundaries created after 1918 began to disintegrate, either through the centripetal [centralizing] pressures of the European Community or through the centrifugal [fragmenting] pressures of ethnicity and nationalist movements.

The Great War established not only the political framework of our time, but also many of the fundamental assumptions to which we turn in trying to understand it. Above all it normalized collective violence, the signature of our century.

At some time between 1914 and 1918, virtually the whole world put on the clothes of war. In terms of outlook, of pessimism, of fear, few have completely shed them since. For war has entered our imaginations, our mental landscape, as a permanent feature of the world we inhabit, both the world we see, and the world of dreams and nightmares our desolate century has created.

The Scars of Total War

The face of war was transformed during the Great War. Nineteenth-century frontal assaults by massed infantry made no sense against the twentieth-century weaponry, yet more than a million men died in the first year of the war before generals began understanding the new nature of war.

Even then the lesson was not entirely learned: not at Verdun, not at the Somme, not at Passchendaele [a bloody, unsuccessful British offensive in 1917], or not even in the last year of the war when a desperate German Army launched its final offensive in an effort to win the war before Germany collapsed. All these hideous failures help to account for the fact that the successful Allied offensive in the last months of the war has largely been forgotten. It was a remarkable

achievement, but this military feat has been obscured by the shock of earlier offensive failures.

Those who had seen war for what it was knew that older romantic illusions about war were inadequate, absurd or obscene. In order to absorb the shock, language itself changed, taking a more terse and realistic tone.

It is not surprising, then, to know that the men who endured combat were no longer the happy warriors of nineteenth-century romanticism. In 1927 Philippe Pétain, the hero of Verdun, inaugurated the giant ossuary [monument to dead soldiers] at Douaumont. It was, as Antoine

The Lost Generation of World War I

UCLA historian Robert Wohl explored the impact of the Great War on Europe's young intellectuals in his study The Generation of 1914. *The following excerpt suggests how the war and its consequences created a lasting image of a disillusioned postwar younger generation.*

Generation of 1914—close your eyes and a host of images leaps to mind: of students packing off to war with flowers in their rifles and patriotic songs on their lips, too young, too innocent to suspect what bloody rites of passage awaited them; of trenchfighters whose twisted smiles and evasive glances revealed their close companionship with death; of pleasure-seekers in the 1920s, cigarettes hanging from the corner of their mouths, defiance and despair showing in the directness of their stares and the set of their faces; of Communists, heads bobbing in a sea of masses, prisoners of the movement they claimed to guide; of Fascists, tight-lipped, stiff-postured, without pity for others or themselves; of pacifists campaigning belligerently against war; of veterans unable to forget the grandeur of the trenches; of wasted women who had become widows before becoming wives; of a generation missing, sacrificed, decimated, destroyed "for an old bitch gone in the teeth, for a botched civilization."

Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 1.

Prost has put it, 'a kind of cemetery of cemeteries'. Pétain spoke of the common soldier of the Great War: 'We who have known him know that he is simply a man, with his virtues and his vices, a man of the people, to whom he remained attached . . . to the circle of his family, to his workshop, his office, his village, to the farm where he grew up.' Doing his duty, 'he went up the line without enthusiasm but without weakness'.

This war democratized suffering. In most combatant countries, roughly 50 per cent of the male population between the ages of eighteen and forty-nine were in uniform. Nothing like this had ever happened before. France and Germany mobilized the highest proportion: about 80 per cent of men of military age were conscripted. Austria-Hungary mobilized 75 per cent of its adult male population; Britain, Serbia and Turkey called up between 50 and 60 per cent. In Russia, about 16 million men or 40 per cent of the male population between fifteen and forty-nine served during the war. In the United States, in the brief space of eighteen months about 4 million men, or roughly 16 per cent of the same age group, were in uniform.

Total casualties and losses as a proportion of those who served passed a threshold beyond previous experience: the total of roughly 9 million dead soldiers (according to varying estimates) constitutes one in eight of the men who served. Adding statistics on other casualties, roughly 50 per cent of the men who served were captured, wounded or killed.

Overall, the Western Front was the most murderous theatre of operations. But a higher proportion of those who fought on the Eastern Front died. There, disease and enemy action killed combatants with equal force. This [the Eastern Front] was a nineteenth-century war waged with twentieth-century weapons. Of the Serbs who served in the war, 37 per cent were killed; roughly one in four Romanians, Turks and Bulgarians also perished. On the Western Front, where the war was won and lost, combat was perhaps only half as lethal: German and French losses were about one in six of those who served; British losses one in eight.

Another feature of total war may be more surprising. Initially, casualties among social élites were higher than among the rest of the population. The reason is casualties of officers who led from the front were significantly higher than those in the ranks—about 10 per cent of men in the ranks were killed; between 12 and 20 per cent of all officers perished. And who were the officers? Men from the upper and upper middle class, since social selection of the officer corps mirrored the inequalities in pre-war life. Consequently in the early stages of the war, the higher up the social scale a man was, the greater were his chances of serving as an officer and of becoming a casualty of war. But by 1917 these strata of society had been sufficiently reduced to require the armies to draw junior officers from wider social groups, still mostly middle-class but now from commercial or shopkeeping families. These groups in their turn suffered disproportionately higher casualties in the last two years of the war.

Among the poor and the underprivileged, the story is different. Pre-war deprivation saved the lives of millions of working-class men, whose stunted stature and diseases made it impossible for them to pass even the rudimentary standards of medical fitness for military service. In Britain, roughly 35 per cent of men examined for military service were either unfit for combat or unfit to wear a uniform at all. They were the lucky ones. Inequality was their salvation.

Broken Faces, Missing Limbs

During and after the war the wounded were there—on street corners, in public squares, in churches. No village or town in Europe was without them. The French textile worker Mémé Santerre described her village in the north of the country:

> The agricultural laborers came back as amputees, blind, gassed, or as 'scar throats', as some were called because of their disfigured, crudely healed faces. We began to see more and more returning. What a crowd! What a rude shock at the railway station, where the wives went to meet their husbands, to find them like that—crippled, sick, despairing that they would be of no use anymore. At first, we had the impression that all those returning had been injured. It wasn't

> until later that those who had escaped without a scratch returned. But, like their comrades, they were serious, sad, unsmiling; they spoke little. They had lived in hell for four years and wouldn't forget it.

The wounded came in many forms: psychologically damaged men, men who suffered from illness contracted during the war, men literally torn apart. Among them were thousands of ordinary men afflicted with extraordinary wounds. These were the *gueules cassées*, men with broken faces. Estimates vary, but at least 12 per cent of all men wounded suffered from facial injuries, and perhaps one third of these were permanently disfigured. Since in Britain, France and Germany alone roughly 7 million men were wounded, about 280,000 disfigured men in these three countries returned home after the 1914–18 war. Not all were severely disfigured, but those who were could no longer look in the mirror: they had literally lost their identities. For these men, the road back to some semblance of ordinary life was tortuous.

Henriette Rémi was a French nurse who knew first-hand of their fate. In the spring of 1918 she visited a friend, an officer who had in his care a man with no face: 'He has only one leg; his right arm is covered by bandages. His mouth is completely distorted by an ugly scar which descends below his chin. All that is left of his nose are two enormous nostrils, two black holes which trap our gaze, and make us wonder for what this man has suffered? . . . All that is left of his face are his eyes, covered by a veil; his eyes seem to see. . . .'

The wounded man talked of home, where his mother and sister lived: ' "I cannot see them, it is true, but they will see me. Yes, they will see me! And they will care for me. They will help me pass the time. You know, time passes terribly slowly in hospital. My sister is a teacher, she will read to me. My mother's eyes are weak; she can hardly read; she sewed too much when we were kids; she had to provide for us; my father died when we were little." '

The authorities at the hospital did not encourage family visits, which were potentially traumatic. But the time had come when this veteran would return to his family. He asked

Rémi if they would recognize him. 'Certainly,' was her hesitant answer, hoping that if their eyes did not find the man, their hearts would. Then the sister came:

> A young woman, fresh, pretty, approaches quickly; she searches in the crowd for her brother. All at once, her face pales, an expression of terror forms; her eyes grow in fright, she raises her arms as if pushing away a vision of horror, and murmurs, 'My God . . . it's he.' A little further away, a woman in black, a bit bent, advances timidly, searching with an expectant smile. And in an instant, those poor tired eyes grow terrified, those tired hands raised in fear, and from this mother's heart comes the cry: 'My God . . . it's he.' . . .

Other disfigured men and their companions succeeded in forming a new, collective identity. The Union of Disfigured Men . . . was just one of a host of veterans' associations in post-war France, but it remained separate from the larger organizations—the disfigured had special problems of sociability which only their own association could address.

The idea was hatched by two disfigured men who had met at the Val-de-Grâce military hospital in Paris, and who invited all those whom they had known there to band together. Their first meeting was held on 21 June 1921, four years after other, inclusive groups of veterans began to create their own associations. Their leader, Colonel Picot, then aged fifty-nine, was a towering figure in the veterans' movement as a whole, but he always affirmed the special character of this association. Its members met at a banquet twice a year, and drew on each other's strength to face their terrible problems. In 1927 the association turned a country house with parkland at Moussy-le-Vieux, 25 miles from Paris, into a place where disfigured men could rest away from a still uncomfortable public. As Colonel Picot put it, it would be 'a place worthy of them, a château like those acquired by the men who got rich when we lost our faces'. Some men came for short stays: others for good. Their families were welcome too. All were invited to join in farming activities; even those who thought they were unemployable found work.

The presence of these victims was commonplace in the

post-war generation. In Paris on Bastille Day, 14 July 1919, the crippled, the blind and the disfigured led the victory parade, creating an ambiance [environment, or atmosphere] which converted celebration into sombre meditation. An entire industry grew to service the needs of men without limbs. In Britain, the money collected on 11 November each year in exchange for an artificial poppy went to the families of ex-soldiers in need. Some 80 per cent of the unemployed in the mid-1920s were ex-veterans; they were all in need. How much greater, then, the plight of those whose injuries would not go away.

Appendix of Documents

Document 1: Assassination at Sarajevo: June 28, 1914

Rising tensions between Austria-Hungary and Serbia finally exploded with the assassination of Austro-Hungarian archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo in Bosnia. The following account by Borijove Jevtic, a member of the Bosnian Serb secret nationalist society Narodna Odbrana, *was given to the* New York World *ten years later.*

A tiny clipping from a newspaper, mailed without comment from a secret band of terrorists in Zagreb, capital of Croatia, to their comrades in Belgrade, was the torch which set the world afire with war in 1914. That bit of paper wrecked old, proud empires. It gave birth to new, free nations.

I was one of the members of the terrorist band in Belgrade which received it.

The little clipping declared that the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand would visit Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, June 28, to direct army maneuvers in the neighboring mountains.

It reached our meeting place, the café called Zeatna Moruna, one night the latter part of April, 1914. To understand how great a sensation that little piece of paper caused among us when it was passed from hand to hand almost in silence, and how greatly it inflamed our hearts, it is necessary to explain just why the *Narodna Odbrana* [Bosnian Serb secret society] existed, the kind of men that were in it, and the significance of that date, June 28, on which the Archduke dared to enter Sarajevo. . . .

How dared Francis Ferdinand, not only the representative of the oppressor but in his own person an arrogant tyrant, enter Sarajevo on that day? Such an entry was a studied insult.

June 28 is a date engraved deep in the heart of every Serb, so that the day has a name of its own. It is called the *vidovnan.* It is the day on which the old Serbian kingdom was conquered by the Turks at the battle of Amselfelde in 1389. It is also the day on which in the second Balkan War the Serbian armies took glorious revenge on the Turk for his old victory and for the years of enslavement. . . .

As we read that clipping in Belgrade we knew what we would do to Francis Ferdinand. We would kill him to show Austria there yet lived within its borders defiance of its rule. We would

ARTICLE 181. After the expiration of a period of two months from the coming into force of the present Treaty the German naval forces in commission must not exceed:

6 battleships . . .
6 light cruisers,
12 destroyers,
12 torpedo boats,

or an equal number of ships constructed to replace them as provided in Article 190.

No submarines are to be included.

All other warships, except where there is provision to the contrary in the present Treaty, must be placed in reserve or devoted to commercial purposes. . . .

ARTICLE 198. The armed forces of Germany must not include any . . . air forces. . . .

PART VI *Reparation*

ARTICLE 231. The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies. . . .

PART XIV *Guarantees*

ARTICLE 428. As a guarantee for the execution of the present Treaty by Germany, the German territory situated to the west of the Rhine, together with the bridgeheads, will be occupied by Allied and Associated troops for a period of fifteen years from the coming into force of the present Treaty. . . .

ARTICLE 431. If before the expiration of the period of fifteen years Germany complies with all the undertakings resulting from the present Treaty, the occupying forces will be withdrawn immediately.

Quoted in Louis L. Snyder, ed., *Historic Documents of World War I.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1958, pp. 185–89.

Document 17: Failure at Versailles: John Maynard Keynes Attacks the Treaty

John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946) was a brilliant young economic adviser to the British delegation at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. His Economic Consequences of the Peace *(1920) caused a sensation as a savage yet persuasive indictment of the economic blunders of the "Big Four" leadership. He especially attacked the German reparations settlement as a disastrous mistake.*

The Treaty includes no provisions for the economic rehabilitation of Europe,—nothing to make the defeated Central Empires into good neighbors, nothing to stabilize the new States of Europe, nothing to reclaim Russia; nor does it promote in any way a compact of economic solidarity amongst the Allies themselves; no arrangement was reached at Paris for restoring the disordered finances of France and Italy, or to adjust the systems of the Old World and the New.

The Council of Four paid no attention to these issues, being preoccupied with others,—Clemenceau to crush the economic life of his enemy, Lloyd George to do a deal and bring home something which would pass muster for a week, the President to do nothing that was not just and right. It is an extraordinary fact that the fundamental economic problems of a Europe starving and disintegrating before their eyes, was the one question in which it was impossible to arouse the interest of the Four. Reparation was their main excursion into the economic field, and they settled it as a problem of theology, of politics, of electoral chicane [trickery, deception] from every point of view except that of the economic future of the States whose destiny they were handling. . . .

The essential facts of the situation, as I see them, are expressed simply. Europe consists of the densest aggregation of population in the history of the world. This population is accustomed to a relatively high standard of life, in which, even now, some sections of it anticipate improvement rather than deterioration. In relation to other continents Europe is not self-sufficient; in particular it cannot feed itself. Internally the population is not evenly distributed, but much of it is crowded into a relatively small number of dense industrial centers. This population secured for itself a livelihood before the war, without much margin of surplus, by means of a delicate and immensely complicated organization, of which the foundations were supported by coal, iron, transport, and an unbroken supply of imported food and raw materials from other continents. By the destruction of this organization and the interruption of the stream of supplies, a part of this population is deprived of its means of livelihood. Emigration is not open to the redundant surplus. For it would take years to transport them overseas, even, which is not the case, if countries could be found

which were ready to receive them. The danger confronting us, therefore, is the rapid depression of the standard of life of the European populations to a point which will mean actual starvation for some (a point already reached in Russia and approximately reached in Austria). Men will not always die quietly. For starvation, which brings to some lethargy and a helpless despair, drives other temperaments to the nervous instability of hysteria and to a mad despair. And these in their distress may overturn the remnants of organization, and submerge civilization itself in their attempts to satisfy desperately the overwhelming needs of the individual. This is the danger against which all our resources and courage and idealism must now cooperate. . . .

This is the fundamental problem in front of us [the economic reconstruction of Germany within an international economy], before which questions of territorial adjustment and the balance of European power are insignificant. Some of the catastrophes of past history, which have thrown back human progress for centuries, have been due to the reactions following on the sudden termination, whether in the course of nature or by the act of man, of temporarily favorable conditions which have permitted the growth of population beyond what could be provided for when the favorable conditions were at an end.

Quoted in Brian Tierney and Joan W. Scott, eds., *Western Societies: A Documentary History*, vol. 2. 2nd ed. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2000, pp. 376–78.

Document 18: Disillusionment

Renowned French writer Paul Valéry (1871–1945) voiced the postwar mood of disillusionment and a wounded European spirit in the following selections. The first was written in 1919, and the second is an excerpt from a 1922 speech at the University of Zurich in Switzerland.

We modern civilizations have learned to recognize that we are mortal like the others.

We had heard tell of whole worlds vanished, of empires foundered with all their men and all their engines, sunk to the inexplorable depths of the centuries with their gods and laws, their academies and their pure and applied sciences, their grammars, dictionaries, classics, romantics, symbolists, their critics and the critics of their critics. We knew that all the apparent earth is made of ashes, and that ashes have a meaning. We perceived, through the misty bulk of history, the phantoms of huge vessels once laden with riches and learning. We could not count them. But these wrecks, after all, were no concern of ours.

Elam, Nineveh, Babylon [ancient civilizations noted in the Bible] were vague and splendid names; the total ruin of these worlds, for us, meant as little as did their existence. But *France, England, Russia* . . . these names, too, are splendid. . . . And now we see that the abyss of history is deep enough to bury all the world. We feel that a civilization is fragile as a life. The circumstances which will send the works of [John] Keats [English poet] and the works of [Charles] Baudelaire [French poet] to join those of Menander [ancient Greek poet] are not at all inconceivable; they are found in the daily papers.

* * * * *

The storm has died away, and still we are restless, uneasy, as if the storm were about to break. Almost all the affairs of men remain in a terrible uncertainty. We think of what has disappeared, we are almost destroyed by what has been destroyed; we do not know what will be born, and we fear the future, not without reason. We hope vaguely, we dread precisely; our fears are infinitely more precise than our hopes; we confess that the charm of life is behind us, abundance is behind us, but doubt and disorder are in us and with us. There is no thinking man, however shrewd or learned he may be, who can hope to dominate this anxiety, to escape from this impression of darkness, to measure the probable duration of this period when the vital relations of humanity are disturbed profoundly.

We are a very unfortunate generation, whose lot has been to see the moment of our passage through life coincide with the arrival of great and terrifying events, the echo of which will resound through all our lives.

One can say that all the fundamentals of the world have been affected by the war, or more exactly, by the circumstances of the war; something deeper has been worn away than the renewable parts of the machine. You know how greatly the general economic situation has been disturbed, and the polity of states, and the very life of the individual; you are familiar with the universal discomfort, hesitation, apprehension. *But among all these injured things is the Mind.* The Mind has indeed been cruelly wounded; its complaint is heard in the hearts of intellectual man; it passes a mournful judgment on itself. It doubts itself profoundly.

Marvin Perry, Joseph R. Peden, and Theodore H. Von Laue, eds., *Sources of the Western Tradition*, vol. 2, *From the Renaissance to the Present*. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995, pp. 297–98.

Document 19: Losses, 1914–1918

World War I devastated the generation that came of age during the war. Fifteen million people—8 million military and 7 million civilian—died during the war. The Spanish influenza epidemic at the end of the war was equally disastrous and promoted by wartime strains. The following table shows the terrible human price paid by big and small nations alike.

Country	Total men mobilized	Combat deaths	Percentage of forces killed	Military casualties	Percentage of forces wounded	Civilian deaths	Total war dead	Percentage population killed
Austria-Hungary	7,800,000	1,200,000	15.4	7,000,000	90.0	300,000	1,500,000	5.2
Belgium	267,000	14,000	5.2	93,000	34.8	30,000	44,000	0.6
British Empire	8,900,000	947,000	10.6	3,200,000	35.2	30,000	977,000	2.4
Bulgaria	560,000	87,000	15.5	267,000	47.7	275,000	362,000	8.3
France	8,400,000	1,400,000	16.2	6,200,000	73.2	40,000	1,440,000	3.6
Germany	11,000,000	1,800,000	16.1	7,100,000	64.9	760,000	2,500,000	3.8
Greece	230,000	5,000	2.2	27,000	11.7	132,000	137,000	2.8
Italy	5,600,000	460,000	8.2	2,200,000	39.1	n.a.	n.a.	
Montenegro	50,000	3,000	6.0	20,000	40.0	n.a.	n.a.	
Portugal	100,000	7,000	7.2	33,000	33.3	n.a.	n.a.	
Rumania	750,000	336,000	44.8	536,000	71.4	275,000	611,000	8.1
Russia	12,000,000	1,700,000	14.2	9,200,000	76.3	2,000,000	3,700,000	2.4
Serbia	707,000	125,000	17.7	331,000	46.8	650,000	775,000	17.6
Ottoman Empire	2,900,000	325,000	11.4	975,000	34.2	2,200,000	2,500,000	10.1
United States	4,740,000	115,000	2.4	204,000	6.7		115,000	0.1

Steven Hause and William Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society.* Belmont, CA: West/Wadsworth, 1999, p. 800.

Chronology

1914
June 28: Austro-Hungarian archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated at Sarajevo.

July 6: Germany gives a "blank check" to Austria-Hungary to attack Serbia.

July 28: Russia mobilizes.

August 1: Germany declares war on Russia.

August 3: Germany declares war on France.

August 4: Britain declares war on Germany.

August 26: The Germans defeat the Russians on the eastern front at Tannenberg.

September 5: The German invasion is halted at the First Battle of the Marne.

November 1: Turkey enters the war on the side of the Central Powers.

1915
April 22: Poison gas is used in the German attack at the Second Battle of Ypres in Belgium.

April 25: Allied landings at Gallipoli (Turkey) begin.

May 7: The British liner *Lusitania* is sunk by a German submarine, leading to a crisis in German-American relations.

May 23: Italy enters the war on the side of the Allies.

1916
February 12–December 18: The French blunt the German assault at Verdun; both sides suffer huge casualties.

June 1–November 13: A costly British offensive on the Somme River gains little ground.

June 5: The Arab revolt against the Turks starts, aided by Britain's T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia).

December 7: David Lloyd George becomes British prime minister.

1917
January 31: Germany begins unrestricted submarine warfare.

March 12: The Russian czar abdicates.

April 2: President Woodrow Wilson asks U.S. Congress for a declaration of war against Germany.

April 6: Congress votes for war against Germany.

April 29: Mutinies begin in the French army.

October 24: The Italian army is routed at Caporetto by Austrian and German forces.

November 7: The Bolsheviks seize power in Russia.

1918
January 8: President Wilson announces his Fourteen Points for peace.

February 6: Women's suffrage is achieved in Britain.

March 3: The German-dictated Treaty of Brest-Litovsk confirms the Russian defeat in the east.

March 21: Germany's Ludendorff offensive begins on the western front.

May 28: The first American military action occurs at Catigny, France.

July 15: The Second Battle of the Marne stops the German drive; the final Allied counteroffensive begins on the western front.

October 9: Austria-Hungary leaves the war.

October 30: Turkey leaves the war.

November 9: Kaiser Wilhelm abdicates and Germany becomes a republic.

November 11: An armistice is signed at Compiègne, France, ending the war.

1919
January 18: The Paris Peace Conference begins.

June 28: The Treaty of Versailles is signed.

December 19: The U.S. Senate refuses to ratify the treaty.