



What Caused World War One and Why Was It So Deadly

KS3 HISTORY

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 4 min read

Why Did World War One Start?

World War One began in **1914** and lasted until **1918**. It started because of tensions that had been building up in **Europe** for years. Countries were competing for power, colonies, and respect, and they formed alliances (friendship agreements) with each other for protection.

The spark that started the war was the assassination of **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, the heir to the **Austro-Hungarian Empire**, in **June 1914**. A young man from **Serbia** killed him because he was angry about his country's situation. This single event triggered a domino effect: **Austria-Hungary** blamed **Serbia**, **Russia** supported **Serbia**, **Germany** supported **Austria-Hungary**, and soon **France** and **Britain** joined in. Within weeks, most of **Europe** was at war.

Think of it like a group of friends where everyone has made promises to help each other if there's trouble. When one friend gets into a fight, all their allies jump in automatically.

Why Was It So Deadly?

World War One was deadlier than any war before it because of new technology. Countries had invented **machine guns**, **poison gas**, **tanks**, and **artillery** (big guns) that could kill many people at once. Soldiers fought from deep ditches called **trenches**, facing enemies across open ground—a terrible place to be because there was nowhere safe to hide.

The **Western Front** (the main battleground in **France** and **Belgium**) barely moved for years, even though millions of soldiers died. Generals kept sending more men to attack, hoping to break through enemy lines, but the new weapons were so powerful that hardly anyone could advance. **Poison gas** was especially terrifying—it burned soldiers' eyes and lungs.

Think of it like trying to cross a busy motorway where cars are moving at full speed. No matter how many people try, most won't make it across safely.

By the time **World War One** ended, approximately **17 million people** had died—soldiers and civilians. The war changed the world and left countries angry and broken, which sadly helped cause **World War Two** just **20 years later**.