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# World War One: Why It Started in 1914

KS4 HISTORY

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

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## A Powder Keg Waiting to Explode

By **1914**, **Europe** was like a powder keg ready to blow. Countries had built up huge armies, made secret alliances with each other, and competed fiercely for power and colonies around the world. **Great Britain**, **France**, **Germany**, **Austria-Hungary**, and **Russia** were all suspicious of each other and preparing for war.

Think of it like a school where different friend groups keep getting bigger and angrier with each other, making secret promises to stick together no matter what happens.

## The Spark: Archduke Franz Ferdinand's Assassination

On **June 28, 1914**, something happened that changed everything. **Archduke Franz Ferdinand**, the heir to the **Austro-Hungarian throne**, was shot and killed in **Sarajevo** by a man named **Gavrilo Princip**. This wasn't just a random crime—it was a political assassination that would trigger a domino effect across Europe.

## The Chain Reaction Begins

**Austria-Hungary** blamed **Serbia** (a country in the Balkans) for the assassination and declared war on them in **July 1914**. But here's where those secret alliances became deadly. **Russia** promised to defend **Serbia**. **Germany** had promised to back **Austria-Hungary**. **France** had promised to help **Russia**. And **Germany** knew that if it fought **France**, it would likely have to fight **Great Britain** too.

Think of it like a line of dominoes standing up in a row—knock the first one over, and each one falls into the next, causing a massive chain reaction nobody can stop.

## Why 1914 Mattered So Much

Within just a few weeks, **all the major powers of Europe** were at war. Countries that had been rivals for decades finally clashed. Young men from **Britain**, **France**, **Germany**, **Austria-Hungary**, and beyond were sent to fight in the **trenches**—long ditches dug into the ground where soldiers lived and battled.

The war that started because of one assassination in **1914** would last until **1918** and kill millions of people. It changed the world forever.