WORLD WAR I PART 4 OF 9 · AGES 11–16

THE ALLIES VS THE CENTRAL POWERS

The two sides of World War I compared: members, alliances, geography, sea power, empires and how their war ended.

The Allies	The Central Powers
MAIN MEMBERS	
France, the British Empire, Russia, Serbia, Belgium and Japan in 1914; Italy from 1915; the USA from 1917	Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1914, the Ottoman Empire from late 1914 and Bulgaria from October 1915
BEFORE THE WAR	
France and Russia allied in the 1890s. Britain's agreements with France (1904) and Russia (1907) formed a looser Triple Entente	Germany and Austria-Hungary allied in 1879. Italy joined them in 1882 but stayed out in 1914 and switched sides in 1915
GEOGRAPHY	
Spread around the edges of Europe and across the world, linked by sea routes	One block of land from the North Sea to the Middle East, but fighting on several fronts at once
AT SEA	
The Royal Navy kept control of the seas, and its blockade cut the food and materials reaching Germany	U-boats sank merchant ships. Unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917 helped bring the USA into the war
PEOPLE FROM EMPIRES	
About 1.5 million men in the Indian Army, African and Asian troops in the French army, and forces from the Dominions	Ottoman armies fought at Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine; Germany was cut off from its colonies by sea
HOW IT ENDED	
Victory, though Russia made peace in March 1918. The Treaty of Versailles names 27 Allied and Associated Powers	Bulgaria, the Ottomans and Austria-Hungary stopped fighting in autumn 1918; Germany signed the Armistice on 11 November

Sides could change

Italy switched sides in 1915, Russia left in 1918, and the USA fought as an 'associated power' rather than a full ally. Each country followed its own interests.

NEXT IN THE SERIES

5. World War I by the Numbers

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