**Causes of WW1**

There were many factors that led up to the start of World War I in Europe. A lot of these factors were rooted in the deep history of the old powers of Europe including Russia, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Britain. The real causes of World War I included politics, secret alliances, imperialism, and nationalistic pride. However, there was one single event, the [assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Austria](http://www.ducksters.com/history/world_war_i/assassination_of_archduke_ferdinand.php), which started a chain of events leading to war.

**Alliances and Politics**
In the years leading up to the war, the nations of Europe were constantly jockeying for power and making alliances. Germany made an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy in 1881. These countries all agreed to protect each other in the event they were attacked by France. However, Italy then went and made a secret alliance with France saying they would not aide Germany.

In response to Germany's alliances, France and Russia established an alliance in 1892. In 1904, Britain and France signed an agreement. The Triple Entente was formed between France, Britain, and Russia in 1907. Germany felt that this powerful alliance surrounding them posed a real threat to their existence and power in the region.

**Imperialism**
Imperialism is when a country expands its influence and power into a large empire. Some European countries, such as France and Britain, had created large worldwide empires and had become very rich. Other European countries, such as Russia and Germany, wanted to create their own vast empires. This caused competition and conflict between many of the countries throughout the world.  In 1914, the situation in Europe was tense. Secret alliances, internal politics, and the desire to grow empires had built up distrust and dislike between many of the European powers. All it would take was one international event and Europe would be at war.

**Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand**
On June 28, 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was assassinated in Sarajevo. The Austria government believed that the assassination was organized by the Serbian government. They also saw this as an opportunity to regain control of Serbia.

**Declarations of War**
Austria-Hungary issued a number of harsh demands on Serbia, threatening to invade if Serbia did not comply. They gave them 48 hours to respond. When Serbia's response fell short of the demands, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28th. Austria-Hungary had hoped they could quickly take over Serbia and that Serbia's ally, Russia, would not risk a major war in order to help Serbia. However, they figured wrong. Russia immediately began to mobilize its troops and prepare for war. In response, Germany, Austria-Hungary's close ally, declared war on Russia on August 1st. A few days later, Germany declared war on France and invaded Belgium. Britain then declared war on Germany and World War I had begun.

**The Last Battles and Armistice**
In August of 1918, the Allied commanders on the western front decided to go on the offensive. Starting on August 8th, a series of battles were fought called the Hundred Days Offensive. These battles included the Battle of Amiens, the Second Battle of the Somme, and several battles along Germany's Hindenburg Line. The Germans were pushed out of France and were forced to retreat back into Germany. By the end of the Hundred Days Offensive, the German forces were exhausted and running out of food and supplies. On November 11, 1918 they requested an armistice. An armistice is when both sides agree to stop fighting while a peace treaty is negotiated. The Allies agreed to the armistice and at 11 AM on November 11, 1918 the fighting in World War I came to an end.

**Treaty of Versailles**
The Treaty of Versailles was signed between the Allied Powers and Germany on June 28, 1919. This officially ended World War I. The treaty was extremely harsh on Germany. It forced Germany to "accept the responsibility for causing all the loss and damage" of the war. Germany was forced to disarm, give up land to France, and to pay reparations of 132 billion Marks (around $442 billion in 2014 money).

**League of Nations**
As part of the Paris Peace Conference, an organization called the League of Nations was formed. The League of Nations was formed in an effort to establish world peace. Its member countries hoped to prevent wars by helping to settle disputes between countries. The League also aimed to establish fair labor conditions, improve global health, control the global arms trade, and protect minorities in Europe. The League was officially founded by the Treaty of Versailles and had 42 founding member countries.