



Events that led France into WWI

In 1871, Prussia defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War. France had to give Prussia some of its land—one whole region (Alsace and Lorraine, see map above) and two cities (Strasburg and Metz). France also had to redo its government. After the war, France's government was a parliament that had two houses: the senate where senators were appointed to serve and the chamber of deputies, where the people elected their representatives directly. There was also a president and a prime minister. This government was called the Third Republic.

At this time, most French people were still farmers who grew enough food for the entire country. France traded their surplus food and manufacturing products with other countries—although they did not have as much international trade as Germany or Britain.

In 1882, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy aligned to form the Triple Alliance. This Alliance meant that if any one of them was attacked by another country, the other two would help out in the fight. The French thought that Germany was a threat to their country and was going to take away more of its land. Britain also thought Germany was a threat. In 1904 they joined in a friendly agreement that said the two countries would help protect each other if the Triple Alliance attacked. Russia joined the group in 1907 because they were also afraid of Germany. Britain, France, and Russia called their group the Triple Entente (though it was called the Allies).

World War I FRANCE

Mini-Simulation

France started to build up the ships, planes and troops they would need if there was a war. The French Navy nearly doubled in size between 1910 and 1914. By 1914 they had 19 battleships with 14 more battleships being constructed. France was a world leader in making airplanes. In 1912, they had five squadrons of war planes; by 1914, they had 21 squadrons ready to go. The army was getting bigger, too. In January 1914, more than 800,000 men from France and its colonies were in the army. They had ground troops, cavalry units on horses, and artillery units with big cannons. That summer, France added 2,900,000 more men to the army. France was getting ready to fight a war.

Effects of WWI on France

Much of the fighting that happened during WWI was in France. More than 2.5 million people were driven from their homes by the fighting coming too near to their houses. Almost all of those houses were destroyed or badly damaged by the bombs and fighting. The war also damaged or destroyed pieces of everyday life for most of the people in France.

French Losses	Totals
Forest destroyed	1,857 square miles
Farms destroyed	8,000 square miles
Houses destroyed	300,000
Factories destroyed	6,000
School destroyed	1,500
Churches destroyed	1,200
Livestock animals killed	1,300,000

French soldiers were not the only people killed or wounded in the war. The fighting affected soldiers and non-soldiers (civilians) as well.

Total Number of:	People Living in France	Soldiers	Civilians Killed	Soldiers Killed	Soldiers Wounded
France	39,600,000	8,410,000	300,000	1,397,800	4,266,000

Part of what made WWI so horrible for the soldiers was the use of the WMD called mustard gas. This poison gas would kill anyone who did not get his gas mask on fast enough whenever a gas bomb exploded nearby. Also, mustard gas is heavier than air, so it sank down into the fox holes and other places the soldiers were hiding from the artillery shells and bombs. Many soldiers were injured or killed by mustard gas during WWI. In total, more than 1.2 million people were injured by poison gas attacks; nearly 100,000 of them died.

Effects of Mustard Gas

Country	Non-Fatal	Deaths	Total
France	182,000	8,000	190,000
Total	1,205,655	91,198	1,296,853

In addition to being costly in terms of lives lost, WWI was also expensive in terms of the money spent by the governments to run the war.

Allied Powers	Cost in Dollars in 1914-18
France	\$24,265,583,000
Total Allied Powers Costs	\$125,690,477,000

Questions to prepare for simulation to represent France’s perspective

1. How did the Franco-Prussian War affect France? How might this war affect France’s relationship with Germany afterwards?
2. Why would France start to increase the size of its military starting in 1910?
3. How might the destruction of property and loss of life in WWI affect France’s attitude at the peace conference? Why?
4. As a representative of the French government, what price would you suggest that France and the other countries pay in order to bring an end to the war and provide peace to Europe?