

CHAPTER 29

GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION
The Battle of the Somme

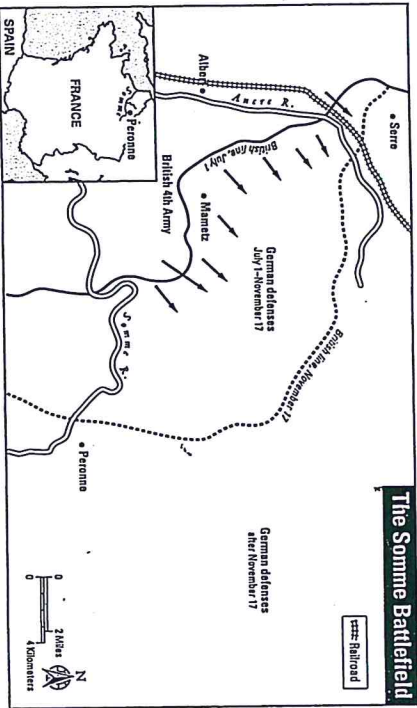
Section 2
 Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

French vacationers have long enjoyed the Somme River as it flows gently through a countryside filled with rolling hills, thick forests, and rich farmland. However, during World War I, on July 1, 1916, the British Fourth Army fought a battle against the German army that transformed this valley into a barren and charred wasteland.

The Battle of the Somme was a typical World War I engagement filled with uncreative military strategy and trench warfare at its worst. The British decided to first destroy German defenses to the east with a massive artillery bombardment. After the shelling, approximately 100,000 soldiers would advance toward German positions now substantially destroyed. Then, after the British had overcome the initial German defenses, two cavalry divisions would be sent in to finish off the Germans. One British commander even assured his men that after the artillery assault, "they could advance with sloped arms, smoking their pipes, and come to no harm."

The British plan hinged on their ability to destroy German defenses with the artillery bombardment. However, the Germans had dug themselves deep into the ground. The Germans knew that the British had to stop their own artillery before the attack. When the English artillery did stop, the Germans emerged from the trenches with their weapons and shattered the approaching British army with a stream of grenades and machine guns. As historians Tonia and Valmai Holt have written, the German machine guns "cut down the ripe corn of British youth."

The British suffered about 60,000 casualties on July 1, including more than 20,000 deaths. In all on that first day, the British captured only about a half-mile of land from German forces. When the battle ended months later on November 17, the British had gained only six and a half miles of land at the cost of about one million total casualties on both sides.



The Great War 7

Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. What benefits might the railroad tracks give to the British Fourth Army?

 2. Explain how the British planned to attack the Germans at the Somme.

 3. Where in France was the Somme battlefield located?

 4. Which French city shown on the map changed back from Germany to Britain?

 5. Compare the July 1 and November 17 British lines. Where were the most gains against German forces made?

 6. Describe the valley of the Somme River as it looked before the battle.

 7. What was the outcome of the battle for the British?

- What do you think primarily caused the massive British casualties on July 1?

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PRIMARY SOURCE
The Zimmermann Note
Berlin, January 19, 1917

Section 3 On January 19, 1917, Arthur Zimmermann, the German foreign secretary, sent the following coded telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico. British intelligence agents decoded the telegram and passed it on to the U.S. government. How do you think Americans reacted when this telegram was published on March 1?

On the first of February we [Germany] intend to begin submarine warfare unrestricted. In spite of this it is our intention to keep neutral the United States of America.

If this attempt is not successful we propose an alliance on the following basis with Mexico: That we shall make war together and together make peace. We shall give general financial support, and it is understood that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona. The details are left for your settlement.

You are instructed to inform the President of Mexico of the above in the greatest confidence as soon as it is certain there will be an outbreak of war with the United States, and we suggest that the President of Mexico on his own initiative should communicate with Japan suggesting adherence at once to this plan; at the same time offer to mediate between Germany and Japan.

Please call to the attention of the President of Mexico that the employment of ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.

Zimmermann.
From Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, vol. II, (New York: Crofts, 1947), 308.

Discussion Questions

Analyzing Issues

1. According to this telegram, what did the German government decide to begin on February 1, 1917?
2. What did Zimmermann propose if the United States went to war with Germany during World War I?
3. *Making Predictions* If this telegram had not been intercepted by British agents, what do you think might have happened? Cite evidence from your textbook to support your opinion.

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BUILDING VOCABULARY
The Great War

A. *Matching* Match the description in the second column with the term or name in the first column. Write the appropriate letter next to the word.

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 1. militarism | a. the battlefields of northern France in World War I |
| 2. Western Front | b. system in which a government limits the amounts of items people can buy |
| 3. Eastern Front | c. Wilson's plan for achieving a just and lasting peace after World War I |
| 4. trench warfare | d. a type of warfare in which opposing armies fight each other from parallel trenches |
| 5. propaganda | e. a stretch of battlefield along the German and Russian border in World War I |
| 6. total war | f. war in which countries devote all their resources to the war effort |
| 7. rationing | g. policy of glorifying war and keeping an army prepared for war |
| 8. Fourteen Points | h. one-sided information designed to persuade |

B. *Completion* Select the term or name that best completes the sentence.

- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Kaiser Wilhelm II | armistice | Georges Clemenceau | Treaty of Versailles |
| Schlieffen Plan | Woodrow Wilson | self-determination | League of Nations |
1. The President of the United States during World War I was _____.
 2. The guiding principle behind the Fourteen Points was _____, which meant allowing people to decide for themselves under what government they wished to live.
 3. The _____ was an international association whose goal was to keep peace among nations.
 4. The harsh peace settlement dictated by the Allies at the end of World War I was the _____.
 5. An agreement to stop fighting is called an _____.
 6. The German battle strategy that called for attacking and defeating France in the west and then rushing east to fight Russia was called the _____.

C. *Writing* Write a paragraph summarizing the causes of World War I and identifying the two sides using the following terms.

Triple Alliance Triple Entente Central Powers Allies