

**GREAT WAR
(1914-1918): ENGLAND:
CAUSES OF THE WAR**



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Description

By an in-depth analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain England's role in driving the continent towards war in 1914 (including Parliament's foreign policy decisions that drove the UK away from Germany and towards France), the British reaction to the crisis in the Balkans that fateful summer and what Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey meant when he uttered the now famous statement about the "lamps going out all over Europe."

Subjects

English / Language Arts, European History, World History, World Geography

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Houses of Parliament
- Windsor
- Imperial War Museum, London

Essential Questions

- What factors in general drove Europe into the Great War, a war that no one, and yet everyone, seemed to want by early August 1914?
- What was England's role in driving the European continent towards war in 1914?
- Who were the major characters involved in Britain's decision to enter the Great War?

Academic Summary

In the span of four short days in the heat of summer in 1914, the entire world held its collective breath while everything that Europe knew about itself came crashing down. The Great War was beginning, a war that no one, and yet everyone, wanted. Over the next four years, millions of men would give the ultimate sacrifice in the trenches of France for ideas that most never really understood. Millions more would forever be scarred, both physically and mentally, by the horrors of war. In the end, the terrors of a new type of warfare, that of the trench system, unthinkable only a generation earlier, would permanently ingrain themselves on a collective consciousness. During and after the war, new political, social and intellectual philosophies would arise to challenge old ideas. Ironically, the war never had to happen, at least not on the scope that it came to be. Any one of the major powers could have backed out before it ever started. Some hesitated, but in the end, the web of alliances which had been forged over the years leading up to the struggle was simply too much for anyone to overcome. Students here will understand the basic ideas behind England's role in driving the continent towards war (including Parliament's foreign policy decisions that drove the UK away from Germany and towards France), the British reaction to the crisis in the Balkans that fateful summer and what Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey meant when he uttered the now famous statement about the "lamps going out all over Europe."

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the events surrounding the causes of the Great War in general and in Britain's decision to join the Allied side in particular.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the major figures involved in driving England into the Great War, including but not limited to
 - a. George V – King of England and Emperor of India 1910-1936
 - b. Herbert Henry Asquith – Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1908-1916
 - c. David Lloyd George – Prime Minister of the United Kingdom 1916-1922
 - d. House of Saxe-Coburg vs. House of Windsor (UK royal family)
 - e. Sir Edward Grey – UK Foreign Secretary 1905-1916
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how political and patriotic rhetoric and images helped sway the English public into yearning for war by 1914.
4. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how the opening of the Great War is seen as a watershed event in both English and European history.

Procedure

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: When might war be justified? Give concrete examples. (10 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed below. (10 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Brief overview of road to World War I and the major characters involved. (20 min)
- Video – The Great War: On the Idle Hill of Summer (40 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the primary sources and articles on the opening of the Great War in England, taking notes as appropriate. (30 min)
Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles for homework the night before class to prepare for class discussion.
- Group Activity – Discussion on the causes of the Great War and the major characters involved in driving Europe into a general conflict in 1914, the propaganda used by the British government during the crisis and the British public's response to the call for war. (30 min)

III. Closure

- Exit Ticket / Assessment – Short Essay / DBQ: Sir Edward Grey, UK Foreign Secretary is quoted as giving the following statement on the eve of Britain's declaration of war against Germany in 1914... "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our life-time." Evaluate and analyze the statement above. What did Grey mean? What caused the "lamps" to go out? Was Britain justified in going to war over Belgium in 1914? How did the British people react to the opening of war?

Extension

On tour: Cenotaph, Whitehall London

While on tour, you will visit Parliament, the seat of British government, where the decision to enter the Great War was made by the House of Commons. A short distance away down Whitehall is the Cenotaph, a memorial to the British soldiers from both world wars and the site of the annual National Service of Remembrance, held at 11:00 AM on Remembrance Sunday, the closest Sunday to 11 November every year. Students will have the opportunity to see for themselves where Londoners have gathered for the last 90 years to remember their honored dead and where the monarch lays poppy wreaths every year. Remind them to look for the images of poppies everywhere in London.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- iwm.org.uk/centenary
“First World War Centenary” – Imperial War Museums. Articles, primary sources, films, photographs and podcasts on the Great War – great resource for teachers and students.
- 1914.org/podcasts/podcast-2-outbreak-4-august-1914-2/
“Podcast 2: Outbreak: 4 August 1914” – First World War Centenary, led by Imperial War Museums.
- passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_united_kingdom/london
On the Road: London – city facts on London from Passports Educational Travel
- passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/the_benelux_countries/country_profile
On the Road: Country Profile: The Benelux Countries from Passports Educational Travel
- www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/MOGeorgeV.htm
“King George V: Biography” – Spartacus Educational.
- firstworldwar.com/bio/grey.htm
“Who’s Who: Sir Edward Grey” – Firstworldwar.com, a multimedia history of World War I.
- wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/The_Daily_Telegraph_Affair
Interview of the Emperor William II on 10/28/1908 from the London Daily Telegraph – WWI Document Archive at Brigham Young University.
- firstworldwar.com/source/lloydgeorgespeech1917.htm
“Primary Documents: Speech by David Lloyd George on War’s Origins, 1917” – Firstworldwar.com.
- wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaties_and_Documents_Relative_to_the_Neutrality_of_the_Netherlands_and_Belgium
Treaties and Documents Relative to the Neutrality of the Netherlands and Belgium – WWI Document Archive at Brigham Young University. Commonly known as the Treaty of London, 1839 – it is the justification for England’s declaration of war in 1914 against Germany.
- historyteacher.net/APEuroCourse/PowerpointPresent/TheRoadToWW1.ppt
“The Road to World War I” PowerPoint – by Susan Pojer (AP European History teacher at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, NY) who manages the website Historyteacher.net (great primary source images and maps).
- punch.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/World-War-1-Punch-Cartoon-Selection-See-Galleries-for-Complete-Set/G0000PUPKpuccn.8/I00002v9es4eSEks
Punch Magazine cartoon titled “A Plain Duty” (A Message from Britannia to Holland), 1914.
- teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video) – great 2 minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes – from Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA – highly recommended for teachers.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXhiagFG8KE>
“The Great War: On the Idle Hill of Summer” – this 40 minute video, produced by the BBC in 1964 as part of a 26 episode documentary series, shows life in Great Britain during the summer of 1914 on the eve of war.
- [youtube.com/watch?v=qY3Sb8xiQ_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY3Sb8xiQ_c)
“The First World War: Part 1: Race to Arms” – this 50 minute episode, produced in the UK in 2003 as part of a 10 part mini-series, does a great job of explaining the basics of the lead up to the Great War.

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/austria/great-war-austrian-ultimatum-to-serbia
Great War – Serbian Front: Austrian Ultimatum of 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/england-and-the-great-war-causes-of-the-war-1914
Great War – Lights Going Out in 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/england-and-the-great-war-wilfred-owen
England and the Great War – Wilfred Owen: Dulce et Decorum Est
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/great-war-clemenceau-views-at-versailles
Great War – France: Clemenceau’s Aims at Versailles
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/great-war-battle-of-the-somme
Great War – Battle of the Somme 1916
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/battle-of-verdun-1916
Great War – Battle of Verdun
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/great-war-first-battle-of-the-marne-1914
Great War – First Battle of the Marne 1914
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/germany/great-war-schlieffen-plan
Great War – Germany: The Schlieffen Plan
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/russia/great-war-eastern-front-treaty-of-brest-litovsk-1918
Great War – Eastern Front: Treaty of Brest-Litovsk 1918

Key Terms

See above for key characters in the *Road to the Great War*.

- Belgium
- British Empire
- *The Daily Mail* of London
- Domestic policy
- Dreadnaughts
- Foreign policy
- German Reich
- Great War
- Parliament
- *Punch* Magazine
- *The Times* of London
- Treaty of London 1839

