

## Technological advances

The tank was first used at the Battle of Flers in 1916. It was then used with less success at the Battle of the Somme. Although the tank was highly unreliable, it did a great deal to end the horrors of trench warfare and brought back some **mobility** to the Western Front.



The idea of the tank came from a development of **farming vehicles** that could cross difficult land with ease by using caterpillar tracks. The first 'tank' to have a **caterpillar track** was a vehicle designed by Wilson and Tritton called "**Little Willie**". This tank was then developed into "Big Willie". Tanks **terrified the enemy** the first few times they saw them.

By **1918** Britain and France had produced **6,506** tanks between them. Germany had produced just **20**. Tanks were effective when they were deployed properly and it took some time for the army to learn how to do this. The first really successful use of tanks came in the **Battle of Cambrai** in 1917. They made an unprecedented breakthrough over the German trenches. When they were working properly, they could **cross trenches or craters of 9 feet** (2.7 m) and **drive right through barbed wire**. However, World War I tanks could travel only at about a **walking pace** (4mph) at best. Tanks as an offensive weapons system would not come about until WW2.

## The British Blockade



German **U-boats** (submarines) attacked Allied merchant ships to try to starve Britain out of the war. **By June 1917, Britain had lost 500 000 tonnes of shipping to the U-boats**. Yet the British eventually stopped the Germans through the use of **horned mines** (large, round, metal containers packed with explosives that blew up submarines). **Block ships** were sent to block off U-Boat bases and prevent them leaving. The British also developed the **convoy system**. A group of merchant ships sailing together, protected by fast warships capable of sinking U-Boats. Not only did the British survive the U-boat threat, but they were **also able to cut Germany off from outside supplies**.

British naval ships spent the war **patrolling the North Sea, stopping and keeping hold of thousands of merchant ships** thought to be harbouring cargo bound for enemy shores.



**250,000 Germans died of starvation in 1917.** This weakened the German war effort. The average daily diet of **1,000 calories** was insufficient even for small children. Illnesses such as **scurvy and tuberculosis** from lack of food were common by 1917.

## German Mistakes

**The Russian Revolution** by a political party called the 'Bolsheviks', and then Russia's surrender to the Germans in 1917 (before the War was over) meant that the Germans became tied up in negotiations in the East. These **lengthy arguments disrupted planning for the German spring offensive** that was to begin on **21 March 1918**. **Over one million men were left in the east** to ensure that the Russians did what the Germans told them. **These forces were badly needed** on the Western Front.

The Bolshevik appeal for an end to the war in Russia was also welcomed in other countries who were **tired of war**. **It caused a wave of strikes** (where workers refuse to work until certain demands, like higher pay are met). Strikes meant that **vital supplies (such as ammunition or army boots) were not being manufactured and sent to the soldiers**.

Despite these problems, the German Army made huge advances in the first few days of the Spring Offensive, advancing up to 60 kilometres (38 miles). **But the campaign became bogged down**. The French counter-attacked in July, the British in August, and it was now clear that the Triple Alliance could not possibly win the war. Germany had lost the initiative, Austria-Hungary was on the verge of collapse and there was a **shortage of manpower**.

## The Arrival of the Americans

As the European powers waged war in 1914, America stayed out of it. But the sinking of the British passenger ship, the **Lusitania**, by a German submarine in **1915**, resulted in the deaths of **128 Americans**, and made the U.S. people want **revenge** against the "Huns." When it was revealed that **Germany had approached Mexico about an alliance** against the United States, they decided to go to war to support Britain on **April 6, 1917**.

The U.S. military only had about 370,000 men. That number swelled to 4.8 million by the end of WWI. The first U.S. troops **kept up the spirits** of the Allies at first, but by time the Germans launched their last desperate offensive, in the spring of 1918, **more than 300,000 American troops had landed in France**. By the war's end in November, the number of Yanks had swelled to **1.4 million**.

Led by **Major General John Pershing**, the **American Expeditionary Force (AEF)** supported many battles in France in **Spring 1918**. They arrived at the rate of 10,000 a day, at a time that the Germans were unable to replace their losses. The Americans played a role in the Allied final offensive by launching an attack on a German bulge in the lines near Verdun, France. **U.S. and French troops captured more than 25,000 prisoners**: Germany's back was all but broken.



## World War I casualties

	Total number of soldiers in army	Number of soldiers killed	Number of soldiers wounded
<b>Russia</b>	12,000,000	1,700,000	4,950,000
<b>France</b>	8,410,000	1,375,000	4,266,000
<b>Britain</b>	8,904,467	907,371	2,090,212
<b>Italy</b>	5,615,000	650,000	947,000
<b>USA</b>	4,355,000	126,000	234,300
<b>Japan</b>	800,000	300	907
<b>Romania</b>	750,000	335,706	120,000
<b>Serbia</b>	707,343	45,000	133,148
<b>Belgium</b>	267,000	13,716	44,686
<b>Greece</b>	230,000	5,000	21,000
<b>Portugal</b>	100,000	7,222	13,751
<b>Montenegro</b>	50,000	3,000	10,000
<b>Germany</b>	13,400,000	1,773,700	4,216,058
<b>Austria- Hungary</b>	7,800,000	1,200,000	3,620,000
<b>Turkey</b>	2,850,000	325,000	400,000
<b>Bulgaria</b>	1,200,000	67,500	152,390

### Which country had most casualties in the First World War?

Q1. Which five countries had the largest number of soldiers killed?

Q2. Which country do you think suffered the most from World War I? *Explain your answer.*