

World War I - Whose Fault Was It?

Name _____

Directions: 1) Silently read the arguments for each country. Feel free to highlight/annotate the text. Which arguments are the strongest? 2) Form a group of three or four students. You will be assigned a country to represent. With your group members, prepare arguments to defend your country against the accusation that World War I was your fault and prepare arguments to accuse other countries of starting the war. Use the worksheet provided to prepare your arguments.

SERBIA?



1. It was later discovered that although the assassination was carried out by the Black Hand, a chief member of Serbia's military had helped plan the crime. Today we call this state-sponsored terrorism!
2. Even though the Serbian officer's role was not known at the time, it was generally believed at the time that Serbian officials were involved.
3. Recently independent Serbia was stirring up nationalist movements that threatened to destroy the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Austria-Hungary was just trying to keep their country together.
4. Serbia had a chance to avoid a larger war by meeting all of Austria-Hungary's demands. The only reason they didn't do so was that they believed Russia would back them up.
5. Nations are responsible for the actions of their citizens. The assassination was carried out by a Serbian, so Serbia should be held responsible.

RUSSIA?



1. Russia believed that the Ottoman and A-H Empires were collapsing, and that there would be a war over who would occupy their land between a Pan-Slavic alliance and Germany. Many members of the Russian court felt they should enter and win this clash.
2. Russians felt they needed to win a war to restore their national respectability after a humiliating loss in the Russo-Japanese War.
3. Russia had lusted over Constantinople and the Dardanelles for centuries, as half of Russia's foreign trade travelled through this Ottoman region. War and victory would bring greater trade security.
4. The Tsar's advisers believed that if Russia didn't go to war it would be a sign of weakness which could lead to a revolution in Russia.
5. Russia supposedly mobilized to pressure A-H to hold back its attack, but they should have known that mobilization would be seen as an act of war.
6. Russia's support of Serbia escalated tensions with A-H. Without Russia's involvement, it could have remained a smaller conflict.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY?



1. A-H was desperate to project more of its crumbling power into the Balkans, where a power vacuum created by the decline of the Ottoman Empire had allowed nationalist movements to flourish.
2. A-H was particularly angry at Serbia, in which a Pan-Slavic nationalism was growing. Their goal was to end Serbian independence, thus strengthening their own position in the Balkans. The assassination gave them an excuse to act against Serbia.
3. The destruction of Serbia was deemed vital in keeping Austria-Hungary together, as there were nearly twice as many Serbs within Austria-Hungary as there were in Serbia (over 7 million, versus over 3 million).
4. A-H sent an extremely one sided set of demands to Serbia provoke a war – Serbia was never meant to actually agree to them. Furthermore, Serbia agreed to most of the demands, but Austria still rejected a chance at negotiation and pursued war instead.
5. The assassination wasn't the main issue. Franz Ferdinand wasn't even popular in Austria because he had 'only' married a noble, not a royal.
6. A-H was the first country to declare war—plain & simple!

FRANCE?



1. France felt it had been humiliated in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71, in which Paris had been besieged and the French Emperor had been forced to personally surrender with his army.
2. France was burning to restore its reputation and, crucially, gain back the rich industrial land of Alsace and Lorraine which Germany had won in the Franco-Prussian War.
3. The Balkan Crisis was France's best shot at teaming up with Russia in a war with Germany to take back Alsace and Lorraine.
4. France's decision to align with Russia set the stage for a larger, two-front war and was a prime contribution in forcing Britain into the war.
5. The French President and Prime-Minister were at sea and could not be communicated with while crucial decisions were being made.
6. Like Russia, France began mobilizing troops before the actual German declaration of war.



GERMANY?

1. Many members of the German military and government were convinced that a war with Russia was inevitable and that this war must be fought sooner, when it could be won, rather than later.
2. The German Empire was relatively young and lacked a key element that the other major empires had: colonial land. This craving for colonial land became known as them wanting 'A Place in the Sun'.
3. Germany was determined to keep Austria-Hungary alive as a viable ally to their south, and support them in a war if necessary.
4. If Germany had not given a 'blank check' of unconditional support to Austria-Hungary, the war could have been avoided. They used the assassination as an excuse to start the larger war they wanted.
5. Germany's desire for a global empire and a dominant navy in the years prior to the war had increased pressure on other countries, especially Britain, contributing to the atmosphere of tension among the Great Powers.
6. Germany's rapid declaration of war on two fronts showed their eagerness for war.

BRITAIN?

1. Although Britain had tried to stay out of European affairs and focus on its global empire, its global dominance is what led to other countries' (particularly Germany's) desperate need to 'catch up'.
2. Britain's naval arms race with Germany contributed to a tone of violence, and many British leaders began to feel that Germany's upstart aspirations would have to be forcibly slapped down.
3. Britain was worried that a Europe dominated by an enlarged Germany would upset the balance of power in the region.
4. Britain leaders felt obligated to aid France and Russia because if Britain remained out either her former allies would finish victorious but extremely bitter, or beaten and unable to support Britain.
5. Many British leaders believed that they had to be involved in the war to maintain great power status. As soon as war began, Britain also had designs on German colonies.
6. Britain ignored the Balkan conflict for too long. If they had made it clear to Germany that they would not tolerate a German invasion of France, Germany might have backed down.



Group Members: _____

Country Represented: _____

<i>What do you anticipate will be the strongest accusations against you?</i>	<i>How do you plan to defend yourself against this accusation?</i>	<i>What other countries do you plan to accuse?</i>	<i>What are your strongest arguments against this country?</i>
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	