

HISTORY · Y4–Y6

# World War 1 (1914–1918)

Knowledge Organiser — Y4–Y6

## Key vocabulary

1

### Alliance system

Before WW1, European countries had formed two main alliances: the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy) and the Triple Entente (France, Russia, Britain). This meant a conflict between two countries pulled in many others.

2

### Assassination of Franz Ferdinand (June 1914)

The trigger for WW1. Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated in Sarajevo by Gavrilo Princip. Austria-Hungary blamed Serbia, activating the alliance system.

3

### Western Front

The main combat zone in Belgium and northeast France. Characterised by trench warfare — opposing armies dug trenches and faced each other with relatively little movement.

4

### Trenches

Long, narrow ditches dug by both sides. Conditions were terrible: mud, rats, shell shock, disease, extreme cold. Men often spent weeks in trenches without relief.

5

### No Man's Land

The ground between the two opposing trench systems. Extremely dangerous — filled with barbed wire, shell craters, and unburied bodies.

6

### Shell shock

The psychological trauma caused by the shock and horror of trench warfare. Now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Initially not recognised as a legitimate medical condition.



7

**Armistice (11 November 1918)**

The agreement to stop fighting. Signed at 11am on the 11th day of the 11th month. WW1 ended.

*Example: Remembered every year on Remembrance Day*

**facts about WW1**

Scale, loss, and legacy

- DURATION: 4 years, 3 months, 2 weeks (July 1914 – November 1918)
- CASUALTIES: approximately 17 million deaths (military and civilian); 20 million wounded
- BRITISH EMPIRE FORCES: over 8 million served from Britain and the Empire (including India, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the Caribbean)
- THE HOME FRONT: women took on roles previously held by men; rationing introduced; factories converted to munitions production
- TECHNOLOGY: first large-scale use of machine guns, poison gas, tanks, and aircraft in warfare
- LEGACY: redrew the map of Europe; led directly to the rise of fascism and WW2; changed attitudes to war; 'the war to end all wars' (which it wasn't)
- REMEMBRANCE: two minutes' silence at 11am on 11 November; the red poppy; the Cenotaph in London

