World War I
from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for U.S. History

Target audience – U.S. History learners
Time required – 15 minutes

Activity
Discover the key fronts of World War I and the impact of the United States’ involvement.

Social Studies Standards
C3: D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.
C3: D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

Learning Outcomes
• Students will identify the Allied Powers, Central Powers, Western Front, and Eastern Front.
• Students will identify and explain how U.S. involvement changed the course of World War I.

Map URL: http://esriurl.com/historygeoinquiry9

Ask
What were the two major alliances during WWI?

? Click the URL to launch the map.
? What were the two alliances during WWI? [Allied Powers and Central Powers.]
? With the Details button underlined, click the button, Show Contents of Map (Content).
? Click the button, Bookmarks. Select Europe, 1916.
? What geographic advantages did each alliance have? [The Central Powers divided the Allies and made transportation between the fronts difficult; the Allied Powers surrounded Germany and Austria-Hungary.]

Acquire
Where was WWI fought?

? Click on Bookmarks and choose the World War I Fronts bookmark.
? Click on Contents button and turn on the WWI Fronts layer.
? Click each front to answer the questions below.
? What were the major fronts of WWI? [Western, Eastern, and Italian.]
? Where was the Eastern Front? [East of Germany, inside Russia, and from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.]
? Where was the Western Front? [West of Germany, in France, and from the North Sea to Switzerland.]

Explore
Why was the Western Front important?

? Choose the Western Front bookmark.
? Turn on the two layers, Western Front and Capital Cities.
? How far was the front from Paris & London? (Use the Measure tool.) [60-70 and 125-150 miles, respectively]
? How far was the front from Berlin? [400-500 miles]
? Hover over the layer name, Western Front. Click the button, Show Legend.
   – By 1915, WWI had reached a stalemate, and each side dug trenches about 800 yards apart.
? In 1916, which countries had Western Front trenches? [Britain, France, Germany, and Belgium]
? Why were U.S. forces not along the Western Front? [The U.S. was neutral in 1915.]
   – The U.S. did not declare war on Germany until 1917, after the Zimmermann Telegram. The U.S. began sending troops to Europe in May of 1917. By 1918, more than 2 million U.S. forces were in Europe.
How did American forces help end WWI?

- Turn on the Allied Victories layer, and play the animation. Pause at the end, showing all the battles.
- What patterns do you notice with the locations of these battles? [They occurred between Paris and the Western Front and moved from west to east toward Germany.]
- Show the Allied Victories table, and sort END_DATE by descending order (see help box, below).
- Which battle occurred last? [The Meuse-Argonne Offensive was the last battle.]
- How long did this offensive last? [It lasted six weeks, from September to November of 1918.]
- The Armistice began on the “11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month” of 1918.
- How did U.S. involvement help bring WWI to an end? [The U.S. provided fresh troops and equipment, and helped end the Western Front stalemate.]
- Close the table.

What is the legacy of WWI?

- Turn off the layer, Allied Victories.
- Select the bookmark, Europe, 1916.
- Turn the Europe, 1920 layer off and on to show country boundaries before and after WWI.
- Which countries were divided up the most? [Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia were most divided.]
- What were some of the challenges that Europe faced after WWI? [Europe faced challenges like rebuilding, having economic recovery, and maintaining peace and order.]

MEASURE - DISTANCE

- Click the Measure tool.
- Select Distance, and then choose the unit of measurement.
- Click once to start measuring, click once to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.

SHOW TABLE AND SORT

- With the Details button underlined, click the button Show Contents of Map (Content).
- Hover over the layer name. Click the button, Show Table.
- Click the field name (the top row).
- Choose Sort Ascending or Sort Descending.

Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW?
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THEN TRY THIS...
- Create a density map to show the highest density of U.S. casualties along the Western Front.
- Create a 60-mile buffer around the Western Front to visualize how many countries were located within two to three hours of this major front.

TEXT REFERENCES

- American History: A Survey by Brinkley — Chapter 21
- The Americans by McDougal Littell — Chapter 10
- History Alive! The United States by TCI — Chapter 19

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these texts.