



Compelling Question



Does military might lead to war or peace?

Bavarian Soldiers in 1913 Posing for a Photo

Online Collections Database, 1997.17.5, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.

**Recommended
Grade Levels**

8-12

Time Needed

1 90-minute class or 2 45-minute classes

<p>Standards</p>	<p>National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Framework Standards:</p> <p>D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.</p> <p>D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.</p> <p>D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical Argument.</p> <p>D2.His.16.9-12. Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.</p> <p>D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.</p>
<p>Standards Continued</p>	<p>Common Core English Language Arts State Standards & Literacy in History/Social Studies Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1.b Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, supplying evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level and concerns.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.</p>
<p>Staging the Question</p>	<p>To begin, host a discussion with students over the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would a person be more likely to pick a fight with someone they think looks stronger or weaker than them? • Is someone who goes out of their way to look strong more likely to pick a fight with others? • What makes nation look strong in the perception of other nations? • Would a bigger military deter nations from going to war against a nation? • Would having a bigger military encourage a nation to go to war with others? <p>Explain to students that historians have argued over the causes of World War I since its inception. Blame has been pushed around, causes have been changed and added to, and there is still room in the narrative for a discussion to pinpoint what really led to humanity's first war that spanned the globe. Introduce that they will be exploring primary and secondary resources to formulate an argument that answers the question: <i>Does military might lead to war or peace?</i></p>
<p>Background Knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers looking for more information about the Inquiry Design Model can learn more here. • Students should be aware of the First and Second Balkan Wars, including those who went to war and the outcomes. See the 1914-1918 Online International Encyclopedia of the First World War's entry on the Balkan Wars.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students should be introduced to the various arguments for the war's origins. In-depth study is not necessary and can be saved for after the inquiry, but general introductions will help provide context for more thorough arguments about the role of militarism. Examples argued among historians and history websites are listed below. Some of these are historical arguments, while others are modern. Those listed as singles imply that only that instance or action led to the war on its own:
Background Knowledge Continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MAIN (Militarism, Alliances, Imperialism, Nationalism) MANIAC (Militarism, Alliances, Nationalism, Imperialism, Assassination, Capitalism) MANIA (Militarism, Alliances, Nationalism, Imperialism, Assassination) DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Militarism, Economics) The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. The First and Second Balkan Wars. The alliance between Austria-Hungary and Germany.

Supporting Question	
Did militarism contribute to the start of WWI, and the eventual decision of the United States to join the war as well?	
Formative Performance Task	
Complete the graphic organizer to gather evidence to determine if militarism contributed to the start of WWI.	
Featured Sources	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Source A: <i>The Naval Race: Images of British and German Dreadnoughts</i>, National WWI Museum and Memorial, Imperial War Museums. Source B: <i>Prewar Standing Armies & Arms: Images from Various Militaries</i>, National WWI Museum and Memorial, Royal Collection Trust, & Imperial War Museums Source C: <i>1914 War or Peace</i>, Facing History Source D: <i>Why Britain is at War</i>, Imperial War Museums Source E: <i>Images of Children's Books and Games</i>, courtesy of the private collection of Richard Cheek, as illustrated in his book <i>The Books and Toys That Prepared Children for War, 1871-1918</i>. Source F: <i>The Zimmerman Telegram</i>, National WWI Museum and Memorial Source G: <i>Unrestricted U-Boat Warfare</i>, National WWI Museum and Memorial 	

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: Does military might lead to war or peace? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that responds to the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION Choose one nation from the Allied or Central Powers and imagine you are a citizen of that nation before the start of WWI. Write a letter to the leadership of that nation (pre-WWI) and express your concern for or support of militarism in the context of Europe at the time. Be sure to keep in mind what other nations were doing and that the war has not yet started.

Featured Source**Source A:** *The Naval Race: Images of British and German Dreadnoughts*, National WWI Museum and Memorial, Imperial War Museums.

Background: In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the British Royal Navy was considered the most powerful navy in the world. When Germany began to create a battle fleet, a naval arms race began. Starting in 1906, this race shifted to the building of dreadnoughts; massive, heavy armored, heavy gunned, steam turbine powered battleships developed originally by the British. This table shares the number of dreadnoughts owned by each navy before the war began. Below the table are images of two of these dreadnoughts. To learn more detailed information about the naval arms race between Great Britain and Germany, read [here](#).

Nation	Number of Dreadnoughts & Battlecruisers
Great Britain	34
Germany	19

- (1) Photo of British ship H.M.S. St. Vincent. She was the lead ship of her class of three dreadnought battleships.



(2) Photo of a squadron of German dreadnought class cruisers in a harbor.



CREDITS:

- (1) Photo of British ship H.M.S. St. Vincent. Online Collections Database, 1961.2.53, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.
- (2) The German Navy in the First World War. © IWM Q 87507. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205331229>. Imperial War Museums. Online.

Featured Source

Source B: *Prewar Standing Armies & Arms: Images from Various Militaries*, National WWI Museum and Memorial, Royal Collection Trust, & Imperial War Museums

Background: Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, European leaders put heavy emphasis on military strength. Most European nations kept massive armies through forced military service (**conscription**). Weaponry was also growing more advanced, with the advent of devastating battleships such as the dreadnoughts and new artillery. The French 75 (as seen in image 4 below) had a firing rate nearly three times faster than previous artillery guns, and included comparatively little recoil and a shield, both of which improved safety of the user. The table below shows the approximate sizes of European standing armies before the start of the Great War. These numbers are imprecise due to a reliance on reserve or nationalized security forces in most of these nations.

Nation	Total Land Forces	Type of Army
Austria-Hungary	450,000	Conscription
Belgium	186,000	Conscription
France	1,290,000	Conscription
Germany	1,900,000	Conscription
Great Britain	120,000	Volunteer
Russia	1,400,000	Conscription
Serbia	190,000	Conscription

Credit: Forces and Resources of the Combatant Nations in 1914, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/Forces-and-resources-of-the-combatant-nations-in-1914>

- (1) Pre-war photo of what appears to be an Austro-Hungarian machine gun detachment set up for street defense.



- (2) Photo of a “Trooping the Colour ceremony” taken in 1913. The ceremony features multiple groups of soldiers and mounted officers. In the center of the field is a large group of soldiers wearing bearskins (large fur hats) and playing instruments.



- (3) A military parade along Unter Den Linden, Berlin shortly before the First World War.



- (4) 1914 postcard of French 75 mm artillery in action.



CREDITS:

- (1) Photo of Austro-Hungarian machine gun detachment. Online Collections Database, 2019.47.2729, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.
- (2) Photo of a Trooping the Colour Ceremony. Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 2345514, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/search#/6/collection/2345514/trooping-the-colour>. Royal Collection Trust / © His Majesty King Charles III 2024. Online
- (3) Germany Before the First World War. © IWM Q 81727. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205022468>. Imperial War Museums. Online.
- (4) 1914 postcard of French 75 mm artillery in action. Online Collections Database, 1978.1.19, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.

Featured Source	Source C: 1914: War or Peace, Facing History & Ourselves
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Background: While many nations and their leaders believed in building up armaments, not everyone agreed. Some leaders and citizens were highly opposed and shared that opposition publicly. In addition, the reasons for wanting to build up militaries varied from nation to nation, and even person to person within those nations.

Read the following resource from Facing History & Ourselves:

[1914: War or Peace](#)

CREDIT:

1914: War or Peace. <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/1914-war-or-peace>. Facing History & Ourselves. 2024.

Background: This poster began printing in 1914 at the start of the Great War in Great Britain. Britain joined the war in August of 1914.

WHY BRITAIN IS AT WAR

1.-TO SAVE HER GOOD NAME

Austria quarrelled with Serbia. Germany made that an excuse to attack France. France is our friend, so we could not stand idly by. Germany and Britain had by treaty promised Belgium safety and independence. Germany broke this treaty by making war on Belgium. Belgium asked our help. Had we refused to help Belgium our name for honour would have been gone.

2.-TO SAVE HER LIFE & HER EMPIRE

The German Emperor wants to "wipe out" France, strip Britain of Trade and Colonies and trample your rights and liberty into the mud, as he has done to the Belgians. In six months, if you don't wake up, you will be starved into slavery and have to take tamely any insults or ruin the German Emperor puts on you. Millions of determined and unscrupulous German soldiers are in France only 20 miles from England, and any disaster to our Navy may let them come over here. They will give you no quarter and no mercy.

3.-TO SAVE THE FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE IN ALL EUROPE

In Germany the Emperor rules, the people have no power, there is no free speech. The military class does what it likes. If Germany wins, the progress of the people, the cause of freedom and equal justice and fair play for you will be gone for hundreds of years. If your case is bad now, Germans will make it ten times worse. You have a chance now, but you will have no hope if Germany wins.

The Russians are helping us. But, remember, Germany is very rich and strong and has made careful plans to crush first France and then Britain and defeat the Russians too. You can take no risks for your wives' and childrens' sake.

Our Colonies have seen at once what this war means. They have few people but are sending large numbers of men, enough to shame us.

Life perhaps seems to go on as usual. Do not be deceived, this is the most deadly peril Britain has ever met. You must strain every nerve or you will be crushed under the German boot.

**FIGHT THEN - FOR YOUR LIFE
FIGHT - FOR YOUR HONOUR
FIGHT - FOR FREEDOM
FIGHT - FOR MANKIND**

EXTRACTED FROM **"THE TIMES"**

IWM

CREDIT:

Why Britain is at War. © IWM Art.IWM PST 0948. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/27859>. Imperial War Museums. Online.

Featured Source

Source E: *Images of Children's Books and Games*, courtesy of the private collection of Richard Cheek, as illustrated in his book *The Books and Toys That Prepared Children for War, 1871-1918*.

Background: The images below come from four different nations, and all were included among popular children's books and toys.

Germany: This plate is from *Militarisches Bilderbuch: Soldaten-Spiel und -Leben* by Franz Bonn.



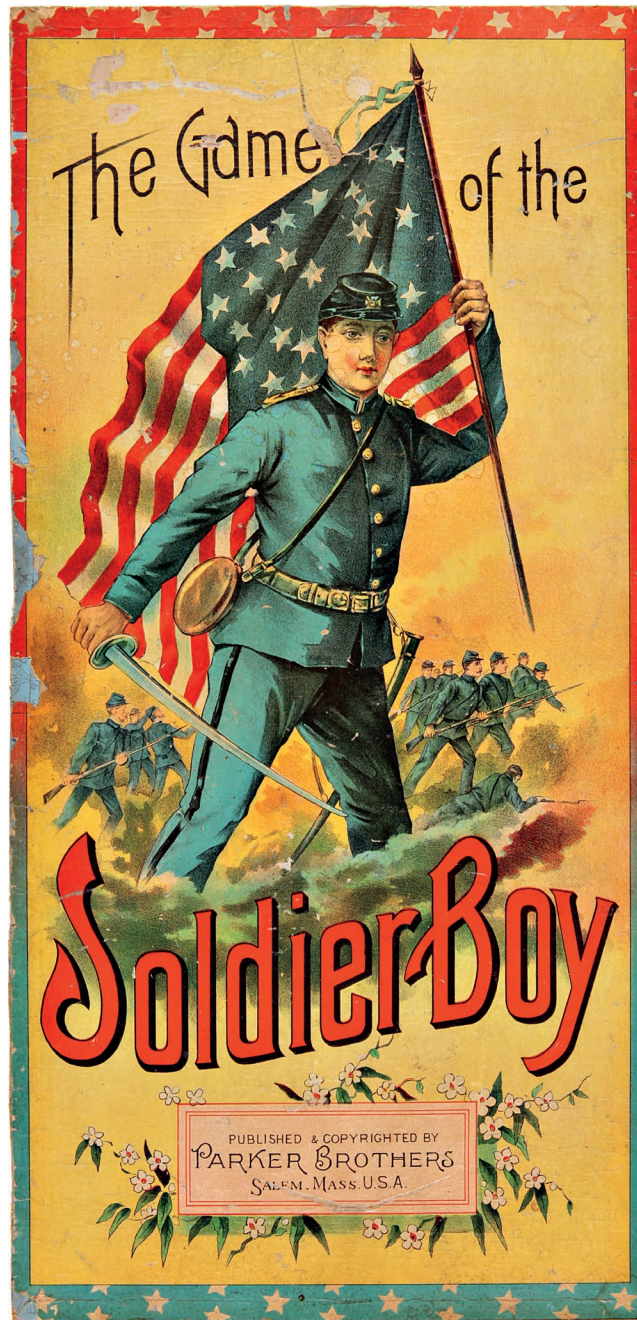
France: This two-page spread "A-E" from Alphabet militaire by Louis Vagne



Great Britain: Double plate "I-M" from The Soldier's Alphabet, Aunt Louisa's Toy Books



United States: This image is the cover of "The Game of Soldier Boy", 1889



CREDIT

Images courtesy of the private collection of Richard Cheek, as illustrated in his book *The Books and Toys That Prepared Children for War, 1871-1918*.

Featured Source	Source F: <i>Zimmerman Telegram</i>, National WWI Museum and Memorial
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Background: The United States did not join the war initially. From the outbreak of war in 1914, until April 6, 1917 when Congress voted to declare war on Germany, the U.S. claimed to stay neutral.

Read the following article from the National WWI Museum and Memorial:

[Zimmerman Telegram](#)

CREDIT

Zimmerman Telegram. <https://theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/zimmermann-telegram>. National WWI Museum and Memorial. 2024.

Featured Source	Source G: <i>Unrestricted U-boat Warfare</i> , National WWI Museum and Memorial
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Background: The United States did not join the war initially. From the outbreak of war in 1914, until April 6, 1917 when Congress voted to declare war on Germany, the U.S. claimed to stay neutral.

Watch the following videos from the National WWI Museum and Memorial:

[Unrestricted U-boat Warfare](#)

CREDIT

Unrestricted U-boat Warfare. <https://theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/unrestricted-u-boat-warfare>. National WWI Museum and Memorial. 2024.