

ACTIVITY 5.1 The causes of World War I

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORICAL SKILLS

- > Use chronological sequencing to demonstrate the relationship between events and developments in different periods and places
- > Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument

Long-term causes of World War I

Tension had been growing between European countries for some years in the lead-up to 1914. European countries had been competing with each other to build bigger empires, particularly in Africa. The competition for colonies caused several conflicts.

	Population of country	Population of colonies	Area in square km of colonies
Great Britain	40.8 million	390 million	27 million
France	39.6 million	63 million	11 million
Germany	63 million	15 million	2.5 million
Austria	50 million	None	None
Russia	139 million	None	None

Source 1 Empires of European countries in 1914

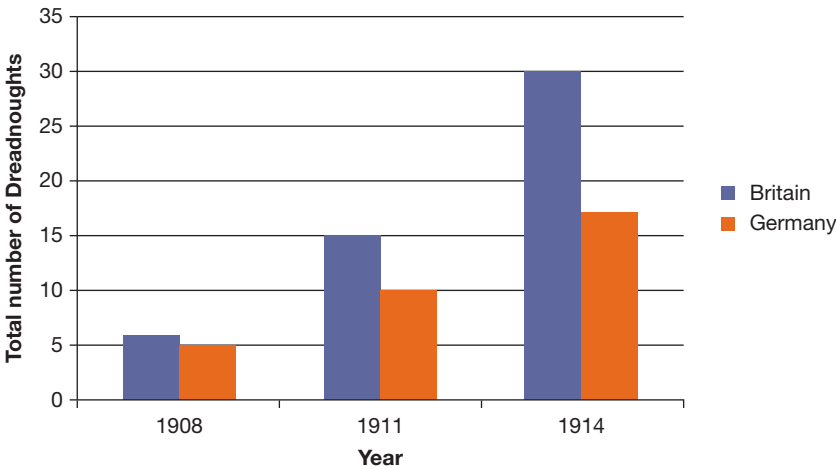
- 1 Which European country had the largest Empire in 1914?

The major European countries competed with each other not only over the size of their empires, but also over the size of their armies. Between 1870 and 1914, military spending increased by 300%. After 1871, all the major European nations except Britain also introduced conscription, which meant that all men over the age of 18 were forced to serve a minimum period in the army.

Country	Soldiers	Money spent in millions
Britain	750 000	50 000 000
France	1 500 000	40 000 000
Germany	8 250 000	60 000 000
Austria	650 000	22 500 000
Russia	1 250 000	15 500 000
Italy	750 000	10 000 000

Source 2 European military spending and the size of their armies, 1913–1914

By 1900, Britain had also developed the strongest navy in the world, which it needed in order to control its huge overseas empire. When Germany started to build up its own navy, Britain became suspicious. Germany and Britain began competing as to who could build the most 'Dreadnoughts', which were a very fast, powerful and heavily armoured type of battleship.



Source 3 Graph showing the total number of Dreadnoughts in the possession of Britain and Germany in the lead-up to World War I.



Source 4 A picture taken of The Royal Navy’s HMS *Dreadnought*. It made such an impact when launched in 1906, that battleships built after her were referred to as ‘Dreadnoughts’.

2 Using Sources 2 and 3, explain what is meant by the term ‘arms race’, and why and how the main European powers began to increase the size of their armed services between 1900 and 1914.

Another source of tension was the alliances that had formed between different countries. In an alliance, each member promises to help the others if there is a war. By 1907, the six major European nations had formed themselves into two alliances:

- The Triple Alliance (Germany, Italy and Austria–Hungary)
- The Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia. Russia also supported Serbia, which was strongly opposed to Austria–Hungary)

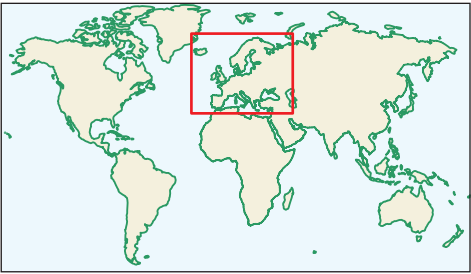
With all these tensions, many people expected that there would be a war in Europe at some stage. Britain, France, Germany and Russia had all made plans in case a war broke out.

Germany had always believed that war with Russia was extremely likely. If war did break out, Germany assumed that France would also attack as France was both an ally of Russia, and keen for revenge on Germany after being defeated in a previous war (the Franco–Prussian War). If this happened, Germany would face a war on two fronts. Germany wanted to avoid this at all costs. Thus they developed the Schlieffen Plan. The idea was to smash through Belgium to defeat France rapidly, and then turn to the eastern front for a major attack on Russia. Germany believed that this was a good plan because the Germans assumed:

- it would be easy to defeat France quickly (within six weeks)
- Russia would take at least 6 weeks to mobilise its army
- Belgium would not resist any German attack.



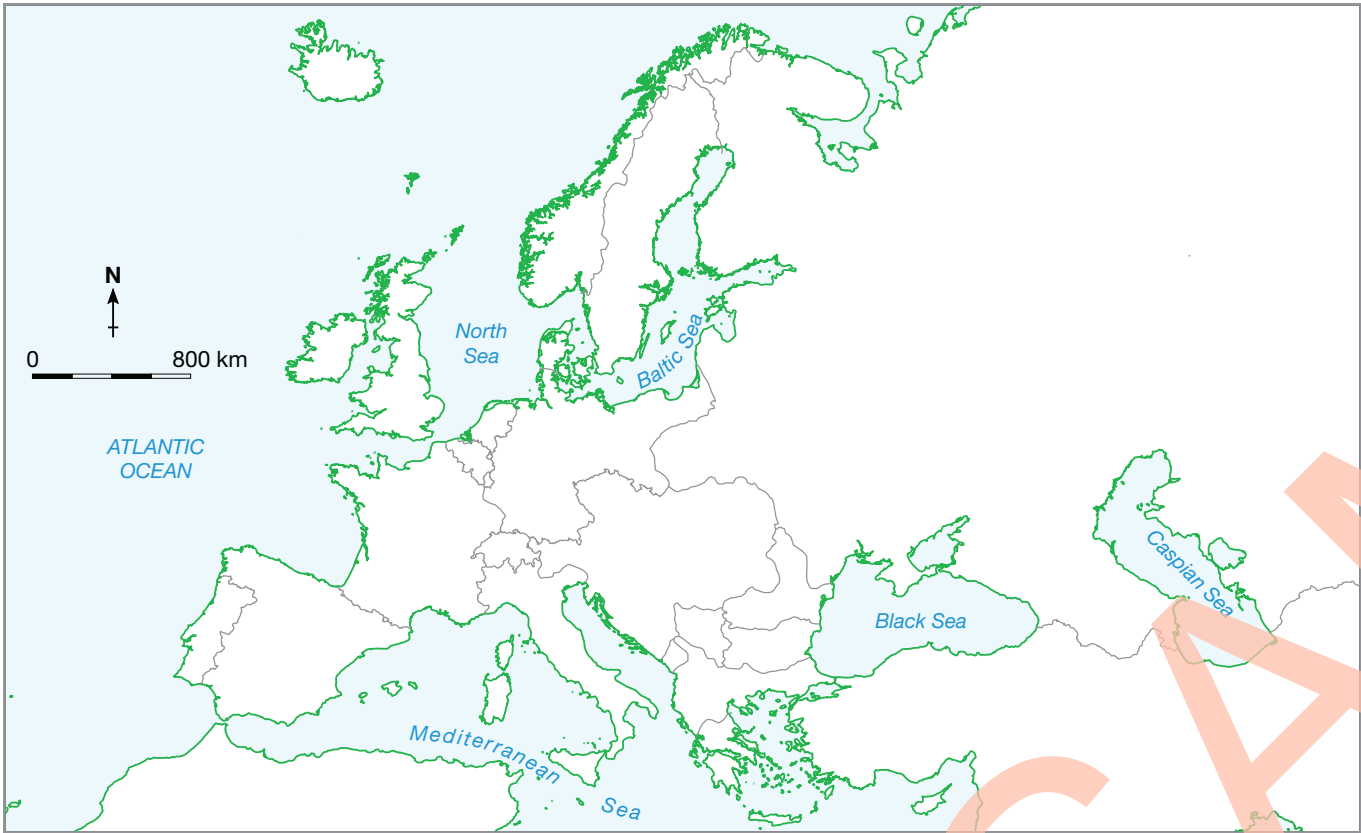
Source 5 The Triple Alliance—Germany, Italy and Austria–Hungary—smoke a pipe of peace around a powder keg



3 Colour in Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria–Hungary and Italy to show which alliance they belonged to. Use two different colours and make sure you complete the key below.

Then, draw in some arrows to show Germany’s Schlieffen Plan.

- The first arrow should begin in Germany, go through Belgium and into France to represent the first stage of the Schlieffen Plan. Label this arrow ‘1’.
- Then draw a second, thicker arrow from Germany into Russia. Label this arrow ‘2’ to represent the second stage of the Schlieffen Plan.



KEY

- ☐ The Triple Alliance
- ☐ The Triple Entente

Short-term causes of World War I

On 28 June 1914, the heir to the Austro–Hungarian throne—the Archduke Franz Ferdinand—and his wife were murdered in Bosnia by some young Bosnian Serbs. This triggered a chain of events which moved the world into war:

- Austria–Hungary blamed Serbia for the murder of Franz Ferdinand and his wife.
- Because Serbia was supported by Russia, Austria–Hungary sought support from Germany before declaring war on Serbia.
- Germany encouraged Austria–Hungary to declare war on Serbia, which they did on 28 July 1914.
- Russia made it clear that they would support Serbia.
- France, as an ally of Russia in the Triple Entente, made it clear that they would stand by Russia.
- On 30 July 1914, Tsar Nicolas II ordered the Russian army to mobilise.
- On 1 August 1914, because Russia had mobilised and threatened Germany, Germany declared war on Russia. France mobilised in support of its ally Russia.
- Germany then decided to activate its Schlieffen Plan, where they would defeat France first through the small state of Belgium.
- On 2 August 1914, Germany demanded access for its army through Belgium.
- Belgium rejected the demand.
- On 3 August 1914, Germany declared war on France and German troops crossed the Belgian border.
- Britain had a long-standing alliance with Belgium. Because Germany had invaded Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914.



ASSASSINAT DE L'ARCHIDUC HÉRITIER D'AUTRICHE
ET DE LA DUCHESSE SA FEMME A SARAJEVO

Source 6 An illustration in *Le Petit Journal* (Paris) depicts the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo, 1914.

4 Describe some of the tensions which had been forming between the major European nations in the years leading up to 1914, and how these tensions contributed to the outbreak of war.

5 What specific incident in 1914 triggered the chain of events which led to the beginning of World War I?

6 Why did Germany attack Belgium in August 1914?

ACTIVITY5.2

Enlistment, recruitment and conscription

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM
HISTORICAL SKILLS

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Identify the origin, purpose and context of primary and secondary sources

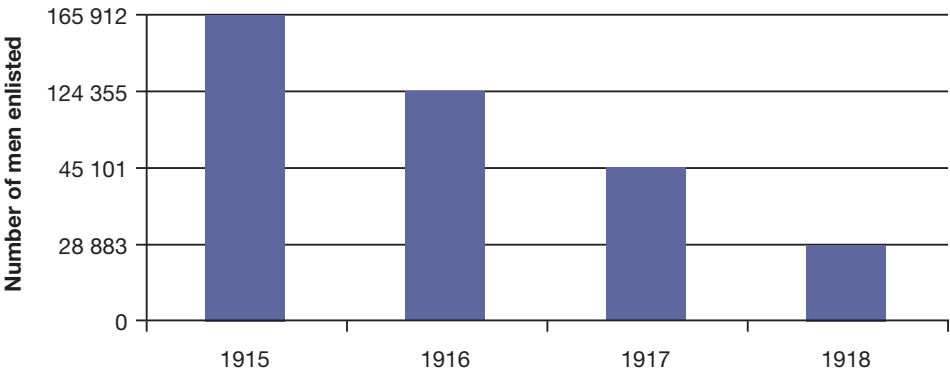
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Evaluate the reliability and usefulness of primary and secondary sources

When Britain declared war on Germany, Australia, as part of the British Empire, was also obliged to enter the war. Prime Minister Joseph Cook said in August 1914:

...Whatever happens, Australia is part of the Empire, right to the full. When the Empire is at war, Australia is at war.

To meet this obligation, the Australian army required rapid expansion and did this by calling for volunteers. Initially, men flocked to enlist (join). Many men saw participation in the war as an exciting way to prove their moral courage and as a noble sacrifice. Everybody expected the war to be over very quickly. But as the war dragged on and the number of deaths and casualties emerged, volunteer numbers began to drop.



Source 1 Enlistments in the First Australian Imperial Force, 1915–1918

1 Why do you think there was a progressive reduction in the number of voluntary enlistments over the period 1915 to 1918?

As the number of enlistments declined, governments tried to pressure men to enlist through propaganda and campaigns which either encouraged or shamed men into enlisting. This process of asking people to enlist so as to increase the size of an army is called ‘recruitment’.

In Australia, recruitment became an issue by about 1916 when the Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes returned from a visit to Britain and the Western Front. Over 27 000 Australian soldiers had just been killed within the first five weeks of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916. Hughes believed that Australia needed at least 7500 men to enlist per month if Australia was to maintain its fighting strength. To achieve this, he believed we needed to introduce ‘conscription’ (a policy of forcing men to go to war). This triggered a major debate. In October 1916, Australians were asked to vote for or against conscription in a referendum. By a very narrow margin, the Australian people voted against conscription. Another referendum on conscription was held in December 1917, and once again, the Australian people voted against it, and conscription for overseas service in World War I was never introduced.

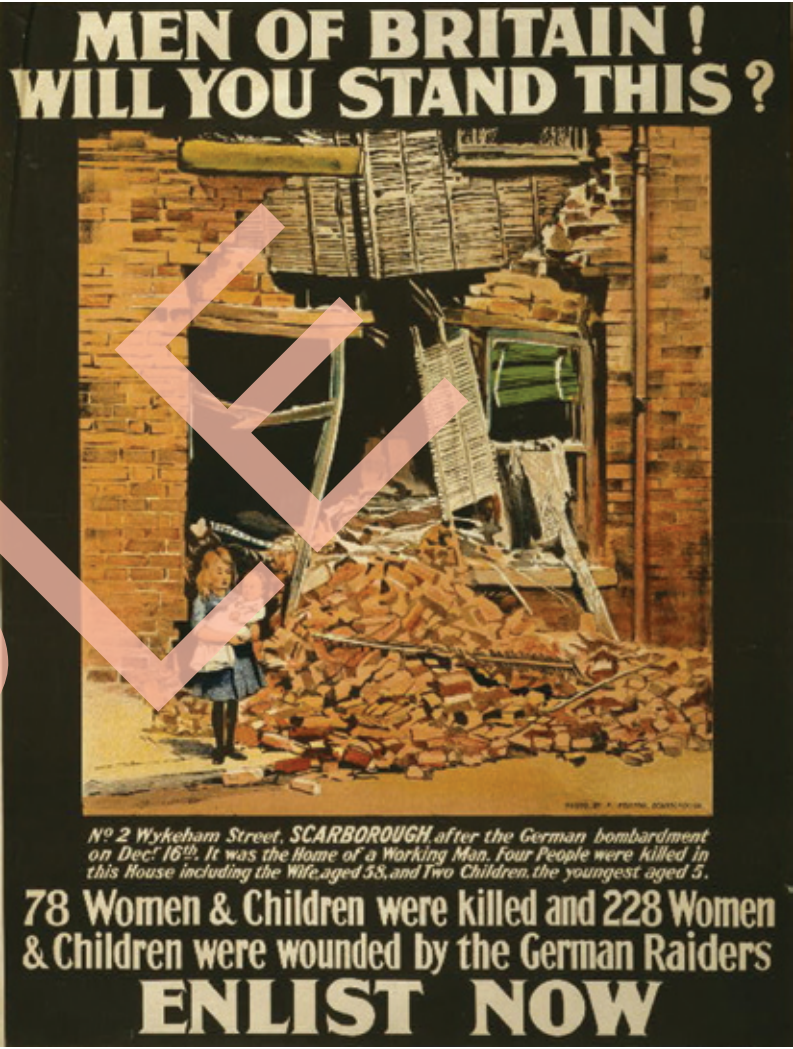


Source 2 ‘Who’s absent? Is it you?’ poster, 1915. The central figure is John Bull, the personification of Britain much as Uncle Sam is of the United States

- 4
- How useful would Source 2 be in explaining methods used by the British Government to encourage volunteers for the army?
-

Following is a range of examples of recruitment and conscription propaganda from Britain and Australia during World War I. Analyse each source, and then answer the questions which follow.

- 2
- What emotions does the poster in Source 2 appeal to?
-
- 3
- What methods are used by Source 2 to encourage recruitment?
-



Source 3 ‘Men of Britain! Will you stand this?’, 1915

- 5
- What emotions does the poster in Source 3 appeal to?
-
- 6
- What methods are used by Source 3 to encourage recruitment?
-
- 7
- How useful would Source 3 be in explaining methods used by the British Government to encourage volunteers for the army?
-

8 How are the methods and messages used in Source 3 different from Source 2?



Source 4 'Australia has promised Britain 50,000 more men', 1915 (AWM ARTV00021)

9 What emotions does Source 4 appeal to?

10 What methods are used by Source 4 to encourage recruitment?

11 What emotions does Source 5 appeal to?

12 What methods are used by Source 5 to encourage recruitment?



Source 5 Norman Lindsay - The Last Call c.1914–1918 (AWM ARTV05395)

13 Compare Source 5 with Source 4. How are the two sources different in tone?

ACTIVITY 5.3 Places where Australians fought

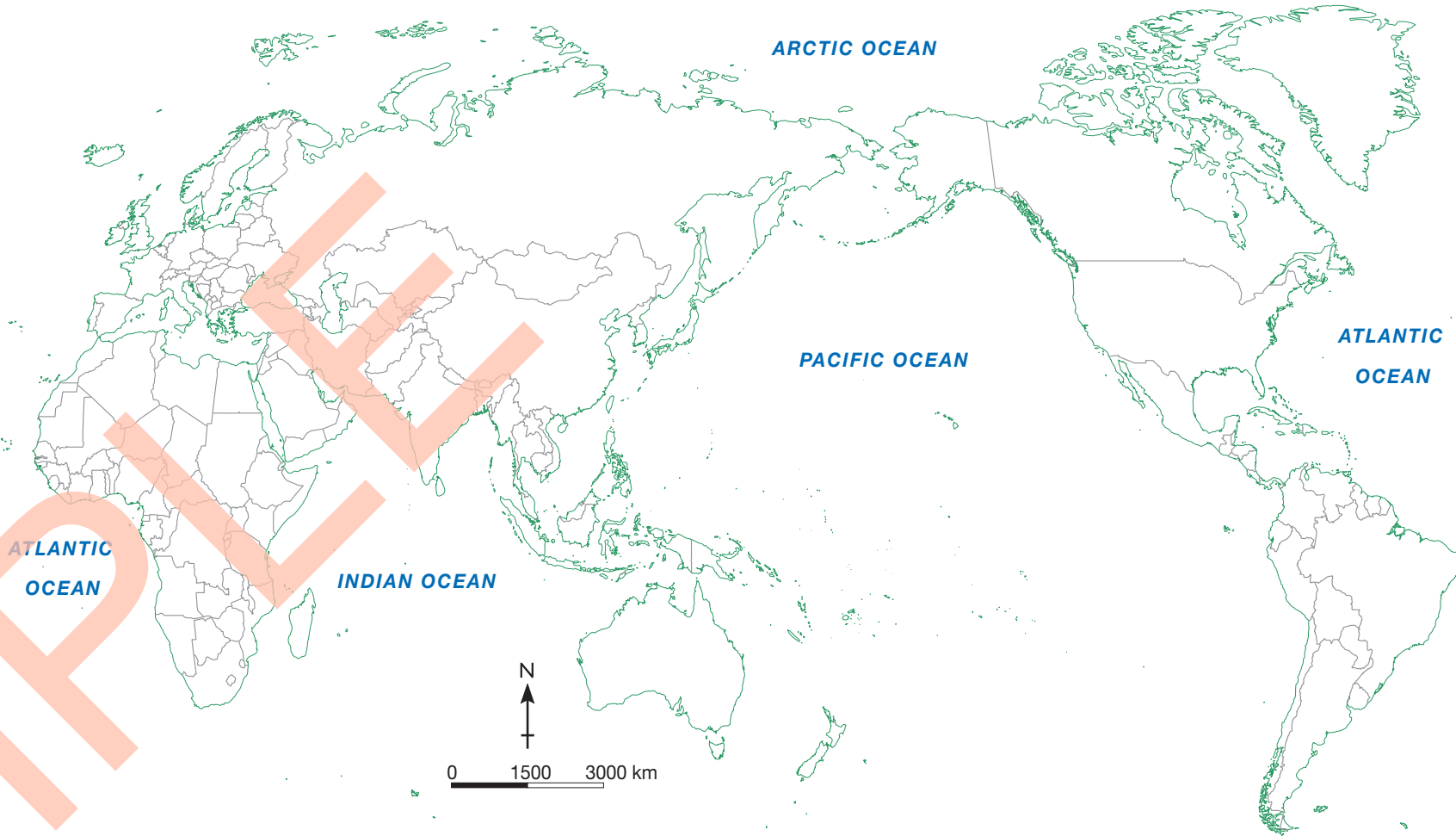
AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Identify and select different kinds of questions about the past to inform historical inquiry
- Identify and locate relevant sources, using ICT and other methods
- Select and use a range of communication forms (oral, graphic, written) and digital technologies.

- Australian troops fought in many locations during World War I.
- In September 1914, Australian forces captured some German settlements and possessions in New Guinea, Nauru, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.
 - In November 1914, the first Australian and New Zealand troops headed for Egypt. Here, they spent a scant three or four months in training. They were formed into an army corps and given the name ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps).
 - Between April and December 1915, the Anzacs fought together at Gallipoli, in Turkey.
 - Following the failure of the Gallipoli campaign, the Anzac troops were moved to the Western Front, the long battlefield which stretched over 760 kilometres from the English Channel to the Swiss border. They fought here from March 1916 to November 1918.
 - Australian troops also fought against Turkey in Palestine and Syria.



Source 1 A group of Australian soldiers at Rabaul, New Britain island, in the German-controlled Bismarck Archipelago, c.1916 (AWM H01652)



The Battle of the Somme Date of battle: Number of Australian troops killed:	Villers Bretonneux Date of battle: Number of Australian troops killed:	Messines Date of battle: Number of Australian troops killed:	Bullecourt Date of battle: Number of Australian troops killed:
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- On the map of the world above, shade in places where Australian troops fought during World War I. Use the information on the previous page to help you.
- Conduct some internet research to find out where and when each of the following significant battles were fought, and how many Australian troops died in each battle:
 - The Battle of the Somme
 - Bullecourt
 - Messines
 - Villers Bretonneux

Use your atlas to locate these places and mark them with a cross on the map above. Draw an arrow from the cross to one of the boxes below the map. Write in each box the date of the battle as well as the number of Australian troops who died as a result.

ACTIVITY 5.4 Trench warfare

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM HISTORICAL SKILLS

- Identify and analyse the perspectives of people from the past
- Process and synthesise information from a range of sources for use as evidence in an historical argument
- Develop texts, particularly descriptions and discussions that use evidence from a range of sources that are referenced

Many people had expected World War I to begin and end quickly with one major battle. The British and French believed that they would then be able to move into Germany and capture Berlin. The Germans on the other hand believed that they would be able to move into France and capture Paris. Instead, when they met on the Western Front, the war reached a ‘stalemate’. This means that neither side could advance. This was because both sides were so evenly matched. They both had huge armies of millions of men, modern transport systems such as railways to transport all these men to the battlefield, and modern factories to supply them huge quantities of ammunition.

For the next four years they both built complex lines of trenches—deep pits or ditches which were around 2 metres deep by 2 metres wide. Soldiers lived in these trenches, and attacked each other by climbing up and over the trench wall and into the ‘no man’s land’ towards the enemy line.

This was very dangerous. Both sides placed large amounts of barbed wire in the area in front of their trenches to slow down the advancing soldiers. Both sides also had machine guns and could mow down any approaching enemies. Both sides also used artillery to pound the enemy’s trenches with hundreds of shells. These artillery bombardments caused more deaths than any other weapon. Many other weapons were also introduced as the war progressed to try and break the stalemate, including poison gases, grenades and tanks.



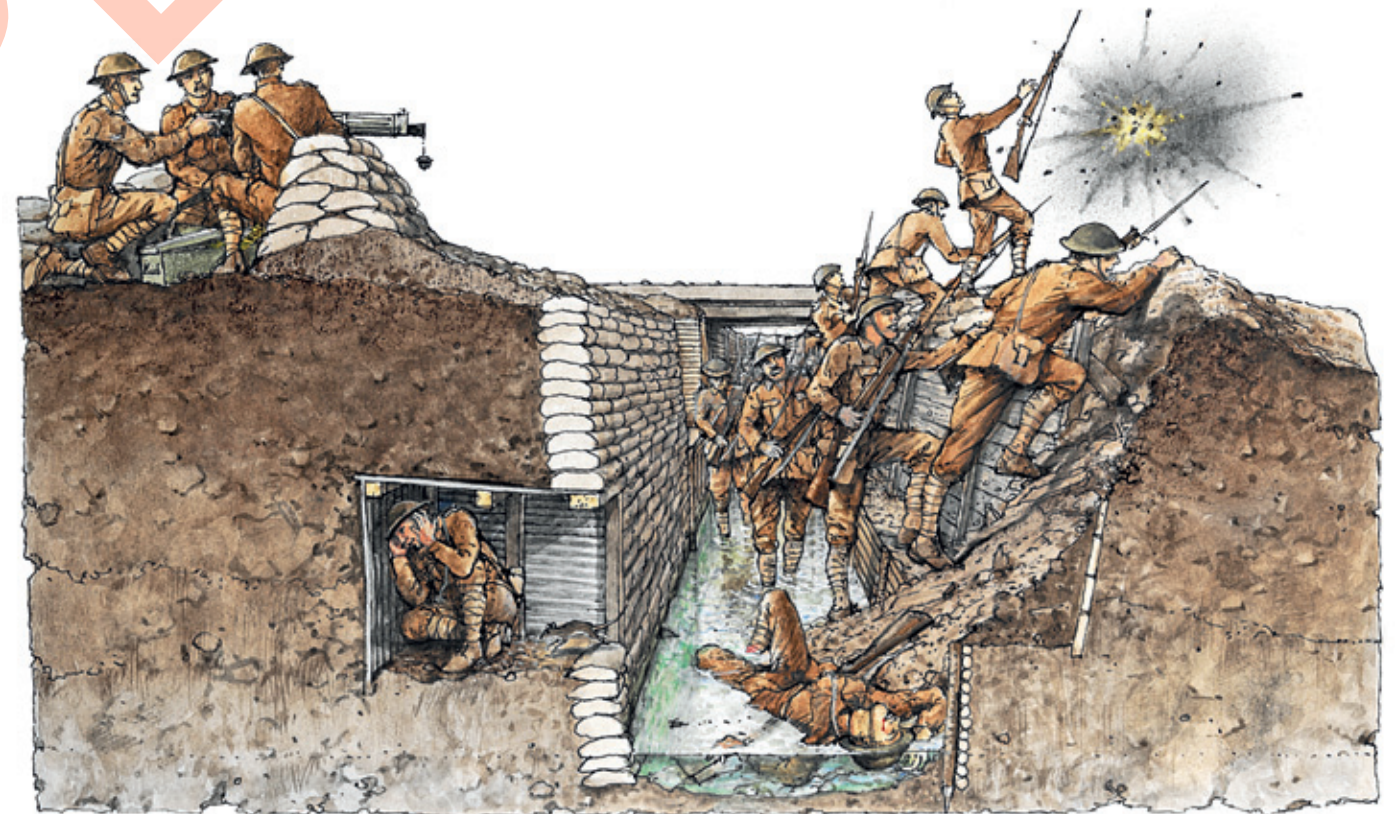
Source 1 A member of the 28th Battalion fires a trench mortar in a front-line trench, Gallipoli (AWM C02423)

Life in the trenches

The Allies used four types of trenches. The ‘front-line’ trench was usually about a kilometre from the Germans’ front trench. Further behind this front-line trench was the ‘support’ trench, with men and supplies to assist those on the front line. Further behind again was the ‘reserve’ trench, with more emergency supplies and men. Smaller ‘communication’ trenches connected all the trenches and allowed for the movement of messages, supplies and men. Soldiers took turns being in the front-line trenches. Sometimes they would be there for 8 days, then have 4 days in the support trenches. However, during major battles, soldiers could be in the front line for much longer.

The conditions in the trenches were horrific. There was a constant smell of rotting corpses and sewage; the soldiers were infested with lice, and the trenches were infested with rats. In wet weather, the trenches filled up with water, and many soldiers suffered from ‘trench foot’, a condition caused by standing in water for hours or days.

Soldiers were aware that conditions could change at any time. Artillery from the enemy meant that death and injury could come at any time, leaving smashed and dismembered bodies and wrecked trenches.



Source 2 A cross-section of a trench. Often standing ankle-deep in mud and slime, soldiers suffered ‘trench foot’ and other medical conditions

Enormous noise. Continuous explosion. A deserted landscape. Complete immobility of everything. Men were eating, smoking, doing odd jobs but no one was fighting. A few were peering in periscopes or looking through loopholes. I tried, but could see nothing but upturned empty fields. Then suddenly there was a terrific crash which flung me yards. I picked myself up and did my best to laugh. Nearby a man lay with a tiny hole in his forehead and close to him another limped with blood pumping out of his leg. They were both carried away. A casualty was not a matter for horror but for replacement. I regarded the incessant bombardment as temporary and expected every moment to see men going over the top to put the guns out of action. Nothing happened, however. That was how I first saw war.

Source 3 R.H. Mottram, from *Three Personal Records of the War*

The cold crept under our clothes, our fingers and joints ached with it; it seemed to congeal our blood and kill the very marrow of the bones. Fires of any kind were impossible so we were obliged to rely on stamping and arm flapping. It was several weeks before I regained conscious possession of my toes.

Source 4 N. Ellison, quoted in *Death's Men* by Denis Winter



Source 5 Allied soldiers in the trenches during the Battle of Passchendaele on 1 November 1917.

1 Use the text and sources included above to write 3 diary entries from the perspective of a soldier which describe life in the trenches during:

- a calm period
- a bombardment
- the lead-up to ‘going over the top’.

