



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT
STANDARD 10.5.2**

A War on Two Fronts

Specific Objective: Examine the principal theaters of battle, major turning points, and the importance of geographic factors in military decisions and outcomes.

Read the summaries to answer questions on the next page.

During World War I, the **Central Powers** (Austria-Hungary, Germany, the Ottoman Turks, and Bulgaria) faced enemies on both sides of their borders—France to the west, and Russia to the east. France, Russia, Great Britain, and Italy in 1915 were the **Allied Powers**. Fighting concentrated in these border areas, which became known as the **Western Front** and the **Eastern Front**. Germany's strategy, the **Schlieffen Plan**, was first to attack France through neutral Belgium, before Russia on the Eastern Front had a chance to gather its forces.

The Western Front

- After initial gains by the Germans, French and British troops were victorious at the **First Battle of the Marne** (September 1914). Germany realized that victory on the Western Front would not be quick and changed its strategy.
- Combat on the Western Front was marked by bloodshed and stalemate largely because of **trench warfare**, in which soldiers fought each other from deep, rat-infested trenches. By early 1915, 600 miles of trenches stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss Border. Soldiers lived in horrible conditions and faced threats from efficient modern weapons and poison gas.
- The **Battle of Verdun** and the **Battle of the Somme** each raged for months during 1916, and the **Battles of Ypres** took place between 1914 and 1918. Little ground was gained in these conflicts, but the human toll was staggering—each battle yielded more than 1 million casualties.

The Eastern Front

- Russia and the Serbs battled the Central Powers on the Eastern Front. There, Germany won a number of victories. At the **Battle of Tannenberg** (1914), Germany won a decisive victory over Russia. In 1915, the Central Powers continued to sweep through Russia and claimed victory in Poland; in 1916 they claimed victory in Romania.
- Russia was old-fashioned country fighting a modern war. Russian soldiers faced the well-armed Germans with little more than courage. The Russians had only one asset—numbers. For more than three years, the enormous Russian army tied up the German army in the East. Thus, Germany could never hurl its full fighting force on the West.

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Directions: Choose the letter of the *best* answer.

- 1 Why did Germany have a geographic disadvantage at the start of World War I?**
 - A It was a landlocked nation.
 - B It was bordered by enemies on two fronts.
 - C Its inland mountain ranges were nearly impassable.
 - D Its major rivers blocked the movement of troops.

- 2 Germany's Schlieffen Plan for military attack was to**
 - A first attack Russia with lightening speed before facing France in the West.
 - B attack France in the West before Russia in the East had a chance to mobilize.
 - C try to get the United States to align itself with Germany.
 - D engage both France in the West and Russia in the East at the same time.

- 3 After the Battle of the Marne in 1914, German forces realized that victory**
 - A would be theirs, as long as they stuck to the plan.
 - B on the Western Front would not be quick.
 - C against the West could only be won through trench warfare.
 - D in the East could only be achieved before the harsh Russian winter began.

- 4 Trench warfare in World War I was characterized by**
 - A a series of Russian victories.
 - B swift invasions and decisive attacks.
 - C heavy casualties and little territorial gain.
 - D tremendous German victories in the East.

- 5 During World War I, Russia's main strength was its**
 - A control of the seas.
 - B industrial production.
 - C large number of soldiers.
 - D military technology.

- 6 In November 2003, workers digging to build a highway near Ypres, Belgium, uncovered a network of shallow passages and found skeletons in World War I-era uniforms, newspapers, dishes and other items. The finding is most likely**
 - A an unmarked World War I grave along the Eastern Front.
 - B a World War I hiding place for civilians.
 - C a bunk site for World War I troops.
 - D a site of trench warfare.