

What really caused the outbreak of WWI?

KS3 History-Lesson 6 of 6

Enquiry: Did the Assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

Mr Nicholas Hewitt



More than one cause?

You have studied many different **factors** that all are linked to the outbreak of war. In fact these **factors** are also linked to each other. For example, The Schlieffen plan was based on Germany fear's of the Triple Entente and the assassination of Franz Ferdinand was motivated by a nationalist movement. We will never be able to identify just one cause of an event as complex as WWI. In this sense we cannot simply say 'yes' or 'no', to whether The Archduke's murder caused the outbreak of war.



Trends and Triggers

You might like to think of certain causes as **underlying trends**, for example militarism. These did not mean a war would happen but they did make it significantly more likely that a small disagreement would become a major conflict. Other causes such as the assassination or the events of the July crisis, could be seen as **short term triggers**. Without these the war would simply not have begun, in the way, and at the time, that it did.



A hierarchy of causes?

A useful exercise when trying to decide on your own thoughts might be starting to **rank** the different causes we have studied. For example, could you make an **argument** to say that Alliance Systems were more likely to lead to war than Imperial Rivalries and the Moroccan Crisis? If so then you have the beginnings of a fantastic answer to this question and are becoming a young historian!



A.J.P Taylor

What do you think of A.J.P Taylor's argument about the role of Railway Timetables and how they are linked to mobilisation? Does this seem like a strange cause to identify, or is it just as reasonable as any other?



Right or Wrong?

History is a subject which relies on evidence such as **sources** and factual knowledge. However, historians use this evidence to construct **arguments**. Different historians might then use the same evidence to construct different arguments. This is because with something as complex as the events leading to WWI historians disagree on what were the most important causes. Completing this enquiry is about you forming your own **argument** about the causes of WWI. Becoming a historian is about continuing to do this, whilst also comparing your opinion to historians who have already written about the subject.

You have done an outstanding job, good luck making your decision!



Glossary

Factor: A cause of something, it produces the outcomes.

Trend: A longer term feature of a situation, which may make an event more likely.

Trigger: A shorter term, sudden cause of an event.

Hierarchy: An order of things, which shows their relative levels of importance.

Rank: The action of putting things in order of importance.

Sources: Documents which a historian uses to study the past, such as a letter written by The Kaiser.

Argument: In this context, a reasoned, well supported, answer to the enquiry question.



Comprehension Questions

1. Write one sentence on how each of the below factors made a war in Europe more likely:
 - a. Nationalism and Militarism
 - b. Germany and The Kaiser
 - c. Imperial Rivalry
 - d. The Schlieffen Plan and Alliance Systems.

Sentence starter: The Schlieffen Plan made a war more likely because...



The Big Question

Did the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

If you were writing an essay to answer this, you would need several paragraphs examining the importance of the different factors.

You would also need an introduction and conclusion, where you would explain to the reader which factor you thought was the most important and why.



The Big Question

Did the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

Introduction: *You could open by setting the scene, what happened in Sarajevo 28th 1914?*

Paragraph 1-*The July Crisis, you could explain how the blank cheque and actioning of Schlieffen created conflict.*



The Big Question

Did the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand lead to the outbreak of WWI?

Paragraph 2,3,etc.-Imperial Rivalries, did rivalries over empire make a conflict much more likely, how?

Conclusion: You could explain answer the question directly, e.g. yes the assassination led to the July Crisis. Or no, alternative factors meant a conflict was highly likely even before the assassination.

