

What do our communities tell us about their war?

Every community that experienced war tells us something about that war. **Your task** is to explore your community and find what evidence there is of the war. Create a map to show where each element that you discover is.

But first you should read the summaries of each country’s experience of the war. This will help you know what to look for in your own community, and also what might exist in your partner community.

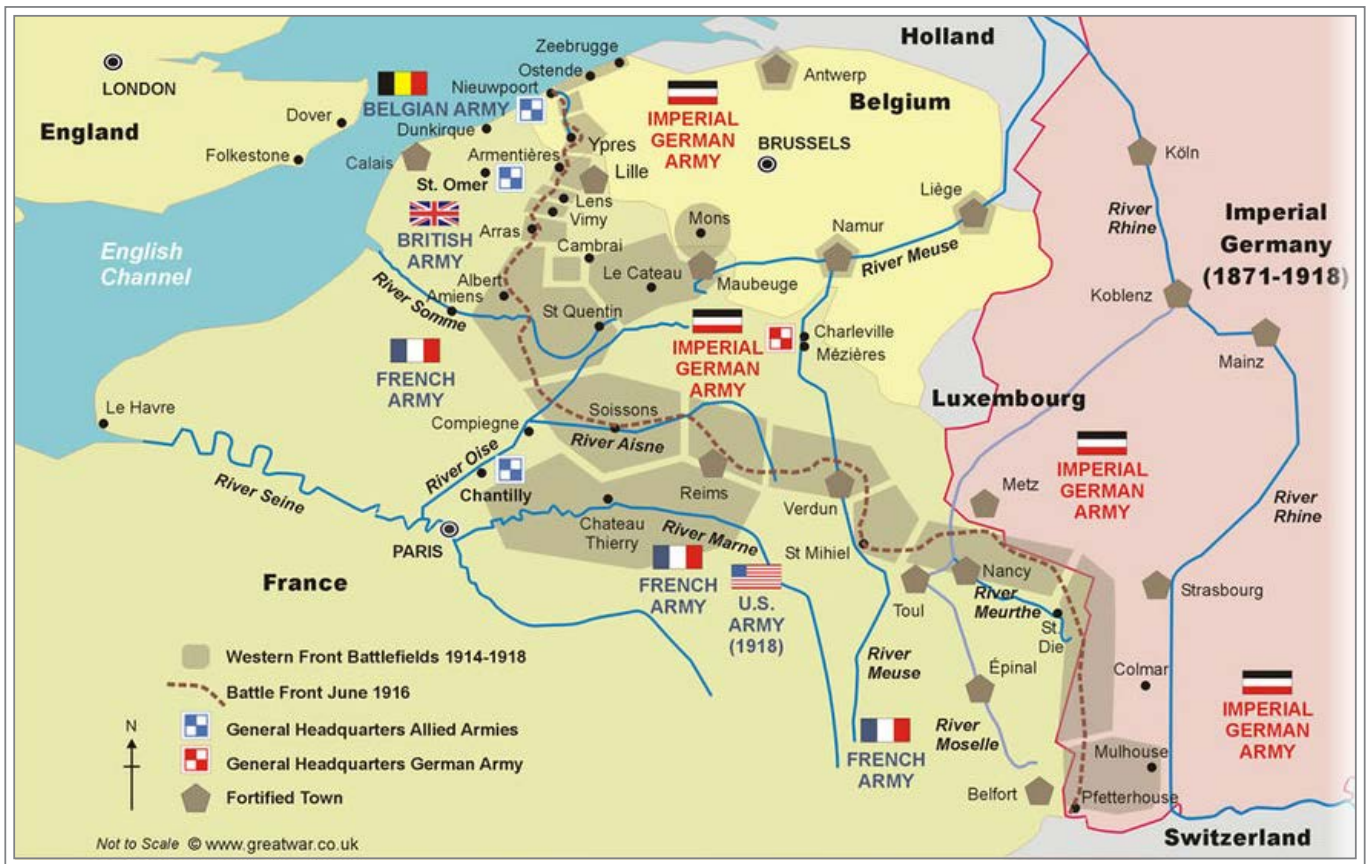
Then decide what that evidence is telling us. You can then send your results to your partner school.

- ① Read the **Three Nations and their War** information pages. Decide what you think the main similarities and differences will be between your community’s experience of the war and your partner community’s experience. You will be able to return to this list after you have completed your investigations and see how accurate your first expectations were.

MAIN SIMILARITIES EXPECTED	MAIN DIFFERENCES EXPECTED



MAP 1 Western Front – the armies



<http://trenchwarfareonthewesternfront.weebly.com/the-western-front.html>

NOTE: The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) served as part of the British forces.
 You may wish to print this map and refer to it as you work through the summaries.



A**AUSTRALIA**

Population (Millions)	4.5
Military deaths (From all causes)	59,330 to 62,081
Civilian deaths (Military action and Crimes against humanity)	
Civilian deaths (Malnutrition, disease)	
Total deaths	59,330 to 62,081
Deaths as % of population	1.32% to 1.38%
Military wounded	152,171

1914

- Australia is automatically at war when Britain declares war on Germany on 4 August.
- Australia organises a volunteer army (called the Australian Imperial Force, AIF) to go overseas.

1915

- Australian troops go to Egypt to train.
- Australian and New Zealand troops land on Gallipoli on 25 April. This becomes known as ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) Day and is seen as an important element of Australian national identity.
- ANZAC forces withdraw after failing both to defeat the Ottoman forces protecting the Dardanelles Strait and to open the sea route to Constantinople.

1916

- Most ANZAC troops are sent to the Western Front. They fight as part of the British Army, in the northern sector of the Western front.
- Reinforcements continue to join them there.
- The first major Australian battle is at Fromelles, in support of the fighting on the Somme to the south.
- Some of the Australian Imperial Force (mainly the Light Horse – mounted infantry) are sent to Egypt and become engaged in the battles against the Ottoman armies in the Sinai.
- On the home front the increasing number of casualties and falling number of recruits leads to a referendum on whether to introduce conscription. It is defeated.
- The casualty count, the sense that there is no end to the war in sight and the rising cost of living all contribute to weakening the initial overwhelming commitment to the war, and the campaign creates bitter divisions.

1917

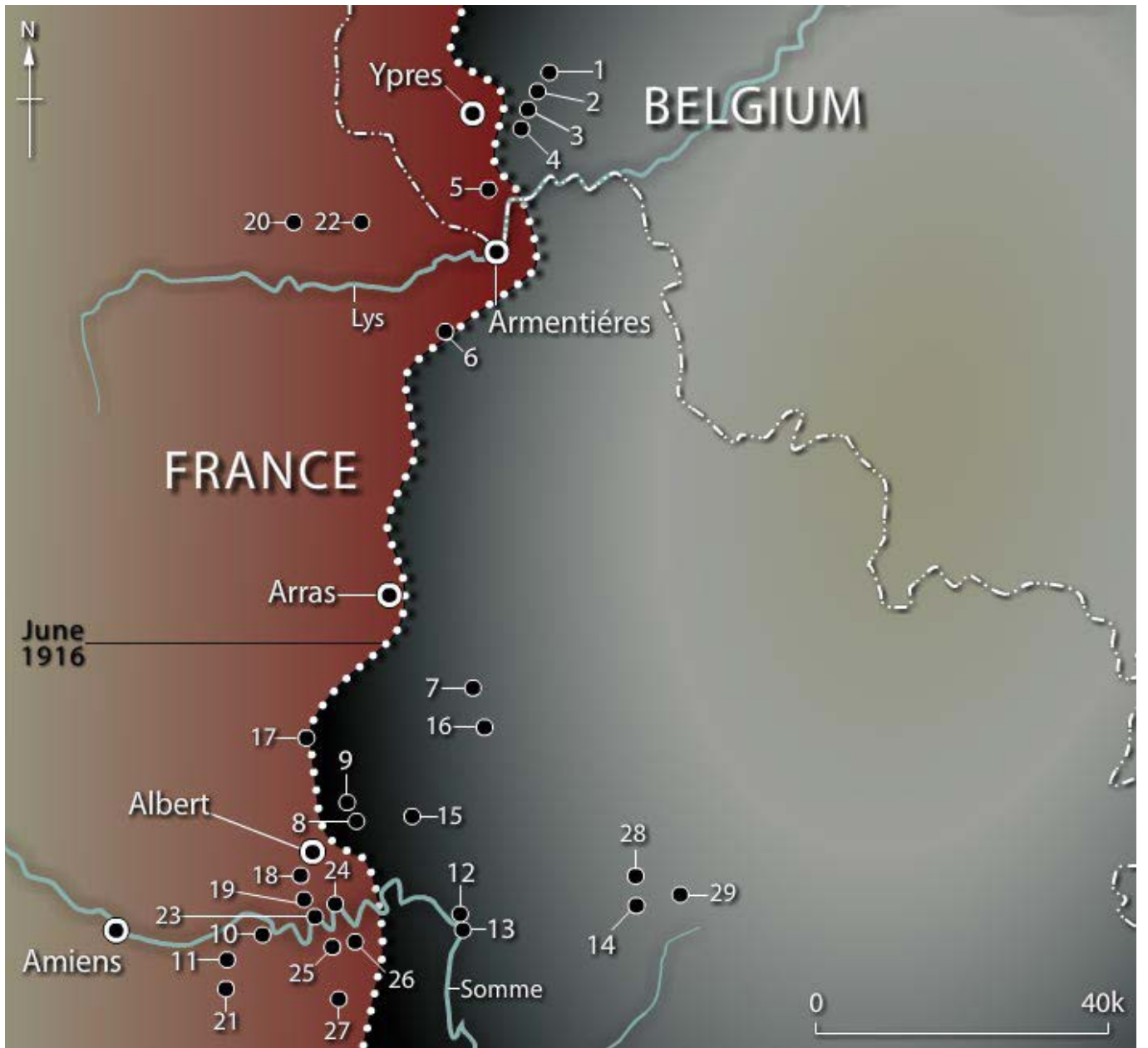
- The AIF continues to fight on the Western Front, with a smaller force in the Middle East.
- High casualties and low recruiting lead to another campaign to introduce conscription. It is defeated again after another divisive campaign.
- The issue is also a moral one about forcing citizens to go to war.

1918

- The AIF continues to fight on the Western Front, with a smaller force in the Middle East.
- The home front is becoming increasingly war weary.
- The AIF is part of the August Offensive that breaks the Germans and eventually forces them back past the Hindenburg Line defences from which they advanced in March. Military defeats and dissent at home lead Germany to seek an armistice.

1919

- The AIF returns to Australia.
- Many veterans enter the repatriation system upon their return to Australia.
- The construction of war memorials by local communities gathers pace with the war over and the soldiers returning. Often those who volunteered are named on the memorials as well as those who died.



NO	BATTLE LOCATION	DATE OF BATTLE	WHAT HAPPENED HERE
6	Fromelles	July 1916	The 5th Division suffers a disastrous defeat in the first major Australian operation on the Western Front.
8	Pozières	July–August 1916	1st Anzac Corps captures Pozières village and the heights beyond.
9	Mouquet Farm	August–September 1916	Australian defeat – After Pozières, 1st Anzac Corps fails to capture Mouquet Farm.
15	Guedecourt	November 1916	Rested after Pozières, 1st Anzac Corps returns to the Somme, making limited gains.
7	Bullecourt	April–May 1917	During the Battle of Arras, the first Allied attack on Bullecourt fails, the second succeeds.
16	Lagnicourt	April 1917	The Allies repulse a German counterattack between the First and Second Battles of Bullecourt.
5	Messines	June 1917	Allied victory – 3rd Divisions first major battle.
4	Menin Road	September 1917	Beginning of the Australian participation in 3rd Battle of Ypres – Allied victory.
3	Polygon Wood	September 1917	Allied victory at 3rd Battle of Ypres.
2	Broodseinde	October–November 1917	Allied victory, the third in a series of successes after the Battle of Menin Road.
1	Passchendaele	October–November 1917	Failed Allied attack in the final phase of 3rd Battle of Ypres.
17	Hébuterne	March–April 1918	4th Australian Division defensive victory.
18	Dernacourt	March–April 1918	Allied defensive victory south of Albert.
19	Morlancourt	March–June 1918	Between the Aisne and Somme Rivers 2nd, 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions in turn advance towards Morlancourt.
11	Villers-Bretonneux	April 1918	At the second battle of Villers-Bretonneux the Allies recapture the village.
21	Hangard Wood	April 1918	South of Villers-Bretonneux the Allies failed to capture Hangard Wood.
20	Hazebrouck	April 1918	1st Australian Division holds Hazebrouck against the German Sixth Army.
22	Merris	May–June 1918	1st Australian Division, in a series of small operations, recovers ground lost in the German offensive.
10	Le Hamel	July 1918	Brigades from 2nd, 3rd and 4th Australian Divisions capture Le Hamel.
27	Lihons	August 1918	1st Australian Division captures Lihons.
23	Etinehem	August 1918	13th Brigade (4th Division) captures Etinehem.
25	Proyart	August 1918	Several days after the commencement of the 8 August offensive, the Australian 10th brigade (3rd Division) captures Proyart.
26	Chuignes	August 1918	Australians capture Chuignes Ridge overlooking the Somme during the Second Battle of Albert.
24	Bray	August 1918	The Australians capture Bray as part of the general advance from 8 August.
12	Mont St Quentin	September 1918	2nd Australian Division captures Mont St Quentin.
13	Péronne	September 1918	South of Mont St Quentin, Péronne is taken by 5th Australian Division.
14	Bellenglise	September 1918	4th Division captures the Hindenburg Outpost Line in its last battle of the war.
28	Bellicourt	September 1918	The Australian Corps breaks through the Hindenburg Line.
29	Montbrehain	October 1918	The last phase of the Hindenburg Line breakthrough and the Australian infantry's last battle.

B**FRANCE**

Population (Millions)	39.6
Military deaths (From all causes)	1,357,000 to 1,397,800
Civilian deaths (Military action)	40,000
Civilian deaths (Malnutrition, disease)	300,000
Total deaths	1,697,000 to 1,737,800
Deaths as % of population	4.29% to 4.39%
Military wounded	4,266,000

1914

- France has strong border fortifications against Germany, but not Belgium. The French strategy is to force Germans to invade near Verdun, and then to surround and defeat them. The Germans actually come through neutral Belgium and try to seize Paris. The Belgians hold up the invading German Army for several days, allowing British and French forces to deploy and prevent the German advance on Paris from succeeding. Both sides develop defensive positions that stretch from the Swiss border to the North Sea. This line became known as the Western Front.
- The first Battle of Ieper (Ypres) sees the Allies hold the town, but the Germans hold the high ground on the nearby Flemish Ridge.

1915

- The Second Battle of Ieper in February sees the first use of poison gas.
- In May the French armies fight at Artois and Champagne.

1916

- February sees the start of the Battle of Verdun, one of the bloodiest of the war, with 160 000 French soldiers killed.
- In July the British and French attack on the Somme, to try and relieve pressure against Verdun.
- The opening day was disastrous for the British who suffered the largest number of casualties in a single day in their history.
- Australia's first major Western Front battle at Fromelles was similarly disastrous. More than 5,500 Australians became casualties in less than 24 hours.
- The campaign ended when winter weather made it impossible to continue.

1917

- The Germans pull back as much as 40 kilometres to the now-heavily fortified Hindenburg Line of defences. They destroy villages, farms, crops and wells along the way to delay an Allied advance.
- In April the French suffer huge losses again at Chemin des Dames. This leads to the mutiny of much of the French Army, until General Pétain responds to the soldiers' grievances and improves their conditions.
- From September to November a number of battles are fought as part of the Battle of Passchendaele (or 3rd Ieper), with huge British casualties — the memorial at Tyne Cot has 12 000 graves and the names of 35 000 whose bodies were never identified.

1918

- In March the Germans launch their last desperate offensive. They have been reinforced by troops from the Eastern Front following the collapse and surrender of Russia, and they want to attack before American troops arrive in large numbers after America's entry into the war in April 1917. The Germans advance up to 60 kilometres in places, passing through villages, fields and woods previously untouched by battles. They are able to shell Paris, using huge artillery pieces that can fire shells 120 kilometres.
- The Germans attack on the Aisne, take Chemin des Dames, and Soissons. Paris is only 50 kilometres away.





- The Germans are now exhausted, having suffered heavy casualties. They have advanced beyond their supply lines, supplies of ammunition are depleted and they have too few reinforcements. The offensive reaches its limit outside the strategically vital railway centre at Amiens.
- In April the Allies begin to push back. They now have more men, aeroplanes and artillery than the Germans, who are also suffering from the Allied blockade of supplies to Germany.
- In August the final Allied offensive of the war drives through the German defences and eventually forces the Germans back to the Hindenburg Line from which their offensive began in March.
- On 9 November the German Kaiser is overthrown and the new government of the German Republic signs an armistice in a railway carriage at Compiègne on 11 November.
- The war is over.

1919

- The Treaty of Versailles forces the Germans to pay reparations, return Alsace-Lorraine, to disarm and de-militarise. The French have access to the industrial wealth of the Ruhr area.
- The communities on the Western Front have to re-build, create memorials, care for the wounded and disabled, look after orphans, and help families devastated by the war.



C

BELGIUM



Population (Millions)	7.4
Military deaths (From all causes)	13,716 to 58,637
Civilian deaths (Military action and Crimes against humanity)	23,700
Civilian deaths (Malnutrition, disease)	62,000
Total deaths	99,416 to 144,337
Deaths as % of population	1.34% to 1.95%
Military wounded	44,686

1914

- Neutral Belgium is invaded by German forces seeking to push through the undefended border with France and on to Paris.
- The Belgian Army resisted because their country had been invaded and to allow the British and French to organise defences.
- The Belgians sacrifice their own farmlands around the Iser, flooding the area to slow down the German troops.
- The Belgian Government goes to Britain in exile.

1915

- German troops kill many civilians, destroy houses and towns. send prisoners back to Germany as war workers. An investigation condemns Germany for many war atrocities against the Belgian people.
- The Belgian Army takes part in the fighting against Germany, including in the area around Ieper.

1916–18

- Allied nations, including Australia, organise food and other aid for the Belgian people.
- The Germans encourage the Flemish independence movement, hoping to cause trouble in the Belgian Army between the different components, especially the Walloons and the Flemish.

1919

- Some Flemish people are arrested for collaboration with the Germans.
- The Belgian Government returns.
- Belgium gains some reparations – a small slice of territory in the south of the country (known as Eupen-Malmedy) from Germany, and control of former German colonies in Africa.

2 One of the main pieces of evidence by which a community tells us about itself is the local war memorial. Here are two examples of local war memorials, one in Australia, and one in France.

Look at each and see if you can find out what it is telling us. Look for symbols, words, names, places and dates to help you 'hear' what it is saying.

'Interrogating' a local memorial

AUSTRALIAN EXAMPLE

This symbol is...

These words tell me...

These names tell me...



War Memorial in Mortlake, western-district of Victoria.

The following words are inscribed:
IN REMEMBRANCE and a list of the 'fallen' from the district who died in World War 1.

FRENCH EXAMPLE

This symbol is...

These words tell me...

These names tell me...



War Memorial in Allonville France.

The following words are inscribed:
Ses enfants morts pour la PATRIE 1914-1918.

3 Now find what evidence of the war exists in your community.

Here are some examples that might exist. Your task is to find any, and record them. Map and photograph them and send your findings to your partner school. You will receive a similar result from them.

SOURCE	FRANCE/BELGIUM	AUSTRALIA
<p>WAR MEMORIALS</p> 	<p>What does your local soldiers' memorial tell you about the individuals who died, and when?</p>	<p>What does your local soldiers' memorial tell you about individuals who served? Who died, and when?</p>
<p>MONUMENTS</p> 	<p>Are there local monuments – such as demarcation stones, or statues to individuals or groups?</p>	<p>Are there windows or plaques in churches, or the local RSL, or plaques that record members of organisations such as churches, scouts, unions, businesses, local councils, who served?</p>
<p>CEMETERIES</p> 	<p>Who is buried there? How many, from what countries? When did they die — does this tell you when fighting was worst in the area? Do individual inscriptions tell you about the feelings and attitudes of the families to their dead loved ones?</p>	<p>Soldiers and nurses were not brought home for burial, but sometimes there may be inscriptions on family graves that include the name of a family member who died in the war. There are also sometimes graves of men who survived but died after the war, and whose service is recorded.</p>
<p>MUSEUMS</p> 	<p>What do objects, photographs, documents and explanatory text help you understand about the war experience of the soldiers, and of the local people?</p>	<p>The Australian War Memorial has a wealth of material online. Sometimes capital city and larger town museums include information and objects about the experience of local soldiers and nurses in the war.</p>
<p>LIBRARY</p> 	<p>Is there a local library that has special collections of files about the war and the local area?</p>	<p>Is there a local library that has special collections of files about the war and the local area?</p>
<p>PLACES</p> 	<p>Are there any names of buildings or streets that have a special connection with the war?</p>	<p>Are there any names of buildings or streets that have a special connection with the war?</p>
<p>LOCAL HISTORIES</p> 	<p>Is there a local history of the war that tells you about the people and the place and their experience of the war?</p>	<p>Is there a local history of the war that tells you about the people and the place and their experience of the war?</p>
<p>PEOPLE</p> 	<p>Are there local people, perhaps family members, who were told stories about this time by their families? Or there may be local historians who have studied the period, and can talk about it.</p>	<p>Are there local people, perhaps family members, who were told stories about this time by their families? Or there may be local historians who have studied the period, and can talk about it.</p>
<p>PHOTOGRAPHS</p> 	<p>Are there collections of photographs in books, local libraries, or online?</p>	<p>Are there collections of photographs in books, local libraries, or online? The Australian War Memorial and most State Libraries have special collections about their own state experiences.</p>