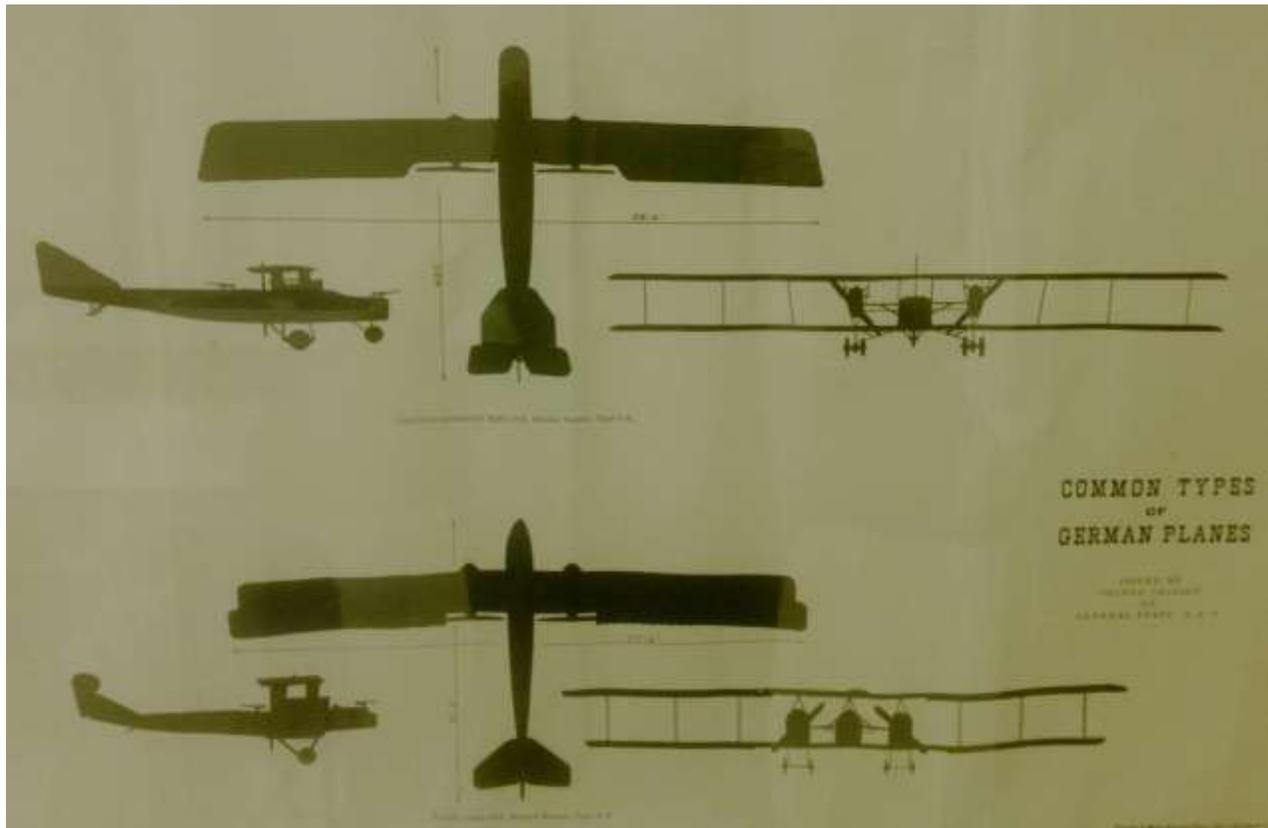




MacArthur Memorial Education Programs

Technology and World War I



Background

Coming at the end of what historians have termed the “long nineteenth Century,” a period that lasted from 1800-1914, World War I was an odd mix of old and new – a war of horse cavalry, aristocratic leaders, idealism, and tradition, but also a war of tanks, planes, submarines, and chemical weapons. These new weapons would forever change the face of warfare.

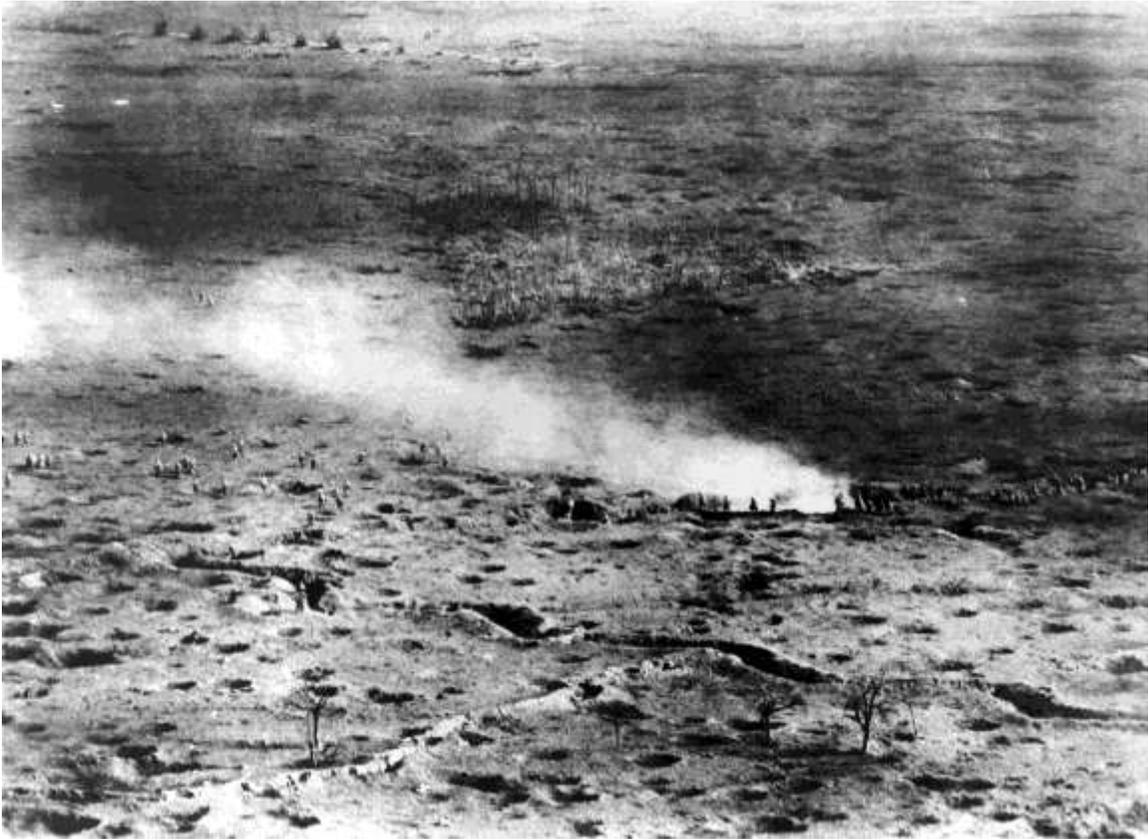
When the war started in 1914, many troops marched off to war in brightly colored uniforms, and horse cavalry units charged into battle. In the face of new weapons like machine guns and chemical weapons however, fancy uniforms and horse cavalry became more of a liability than an asset. Camouflage and trenches became part of the ordinary soldier’s life, and warfare also became more mechanized – with cars, tanks, trains, and planes playing more of a role in strategy and battle.

In the early years of the war, many military leaders failed to adapt to the new technologies, preferring to use the same old tactics that had won great victories in the Napoleonic and Franco-Prussian Wars. This failure to adapt to new weapons technology resulted in high numbers of casualties throughout the war.

Directions: Use the photos below to answer the questions.



1. World War I was fought using “trench warfare.” Based on the photos above, what do you think this term means?
2. What do you think life was like in the trenches? What led to your conclusion?
3. Why do you think soldiers used trenches during World War I? What are the advantages of trenches? Disadvantages? How would trenches affect mobility?



4. Locate the trench in the photo above. Another term often related to World War I is “no man’s land.” Looking at the photo above, what do you think this term means? What led you to this conclusion?

5. Which warfare technologies do you think led to the extensive use of trenches and created “no man’s land?” Why do you think these technologies would have led to the use of trenches?



1



2



3



4

6. Think about previous wars you have studied. What changes in warfare technology do you notice in the photographs that may not have been used in previous wars?

7. World War I was the first time chemical weapons were used. Which photo demonstrates this development? How do you think this technology changed warfare? What issues do we see with chemical weapons today?