

## 2 War Consumes Europe

### TERMS & NAMES

- Schlieffen Plan
- Central Powers
- Allies
- Western Front
- trench warfare
- Eastern Front

### MAIN IDEA

One European nation after another was drawn into a large and industrialized war that resulted in many casualties.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Much of the technology of modern warfare, such as fighter planes and tanks, was introduced in World War I.

**SETTING THE STAGE** The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, was the spark that ignited a giant blaze. This single terrorist act set off a chain reaction within the alliance system that would result in the largest war Europe—and the world—had ever seen.

## The Alliance System Collapses

By 1914, Europe was divided into two rival camps. One alliance, the Triple Entente, included Great Britain, France, and Russia. The other, known as the Triple Alliance, included Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

Austria-Hungary's declaration of war against Serbia set off a chain reaction within the alliance system. The countries of Europe followed through on their numerous and complex pledges to support one another. As a result, nearly all the nations of Europe soon were drawn into the war.

**A Chain Reaction** In response to Austria's declaration of war, Russia, Serbia's ally, began moving its army toward the Russian-Austrian border. Expecting Germany to join Austria, Russia also mobilized along the German border. Czar Nicholas II of Russia told the Kaiser that the maneuvers were just a precaution. Yet to Germany, Russia's mobilization amounted to a declaration of war. On August 1, the German government declared war on Russia.

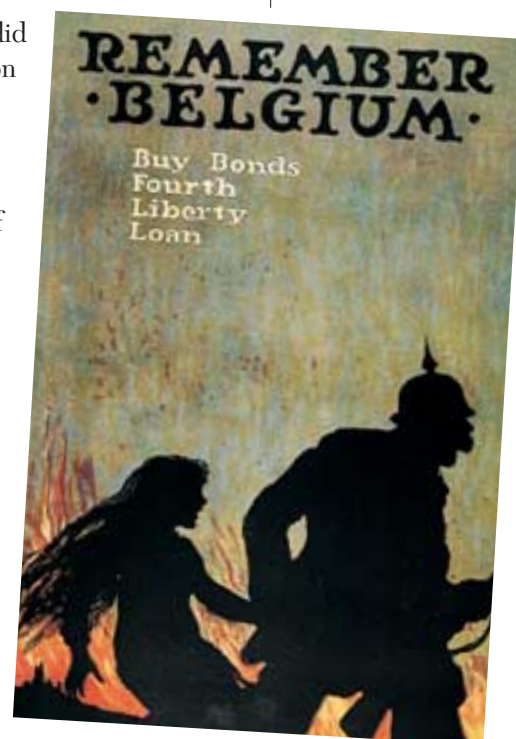
Russia looked to its ally France for help. Germany, however, did not even wait for France to react. Two days after declaring war on Russia, Germany also declared war on France. Much of Europe was now locked in battle.

**The Schlieffen Plan** Germany quickly put its military plan into effect. The plan was named after its designer, General Alfred Graf von Schlieffen (SHLEE-fuhn). In the event of a two-front war, Schlieffen had called for attacking France and then Russia. The general had reasoned that Russia—with its lack of railroads—would have difficulty mobilizing its troops. Under the **Schlieffen Plan**, a large part of the German army would race west, to defeat France, and then return to fight Russia in the east.

Speed was vital to the German plan. The French had troops all along their border with Germany. Thus, the Germans knew that breaking through would be slow work. There was another route, however: France's northern border with Belgium was unprotected.

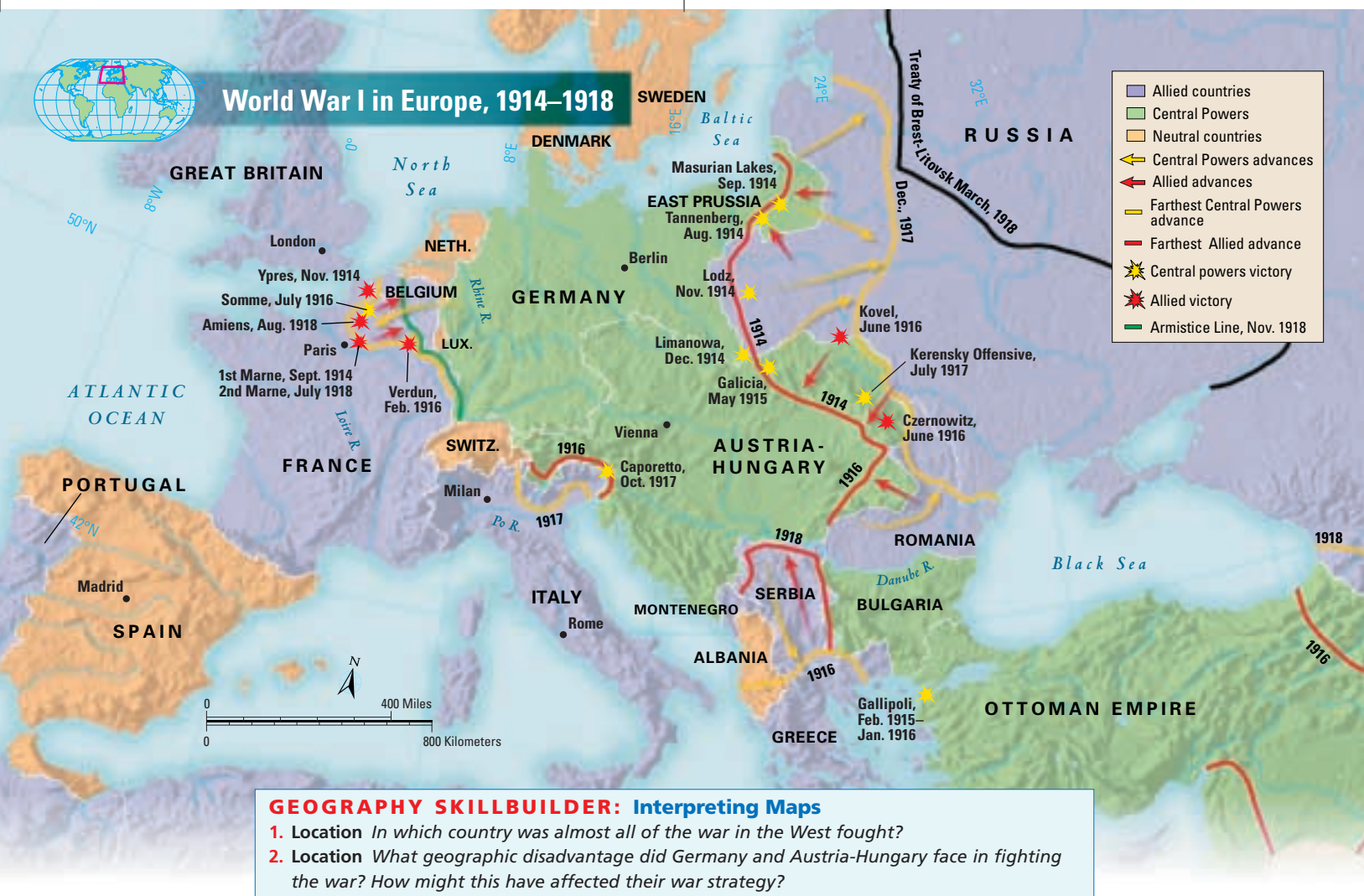
Germany demanded that its troops be allowed to pass through Belgium on their way to France. Belgium, a neutral country, refused. Germany then invaded Belgium. This brought Great Britain into the conflict. The British had close

This war poster shows a German soldier dragging off a woman during the invasion of Belgium. The image was intended to stir public outrage over the attack.



### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

**A. Making Inferences** Why was speed so important to the Schlieffen Plan?



### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Location** In which country was almost all of the war in the West fought?
- Location** What geographic disadvantage did Germany and Austria-Hungary face in fighting the war? How might this have affected their war strategy?

ties with Belgium, one of their nearest neighbors on the continent. Outraged over the violation of Belgian neutrality, Britain declared war on Germany on August 4.

**European Nations Take Sides** By mid-August 1914, the battle lines were clearly drawn. On one side were Germany and Austria-Hungary. They were known as the **Central Powers**, because of their location in the heart of Europe. Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire would later join the Central Powers in the hopes of regaining lost territories.

On the other side were Great Britain, France, and Russia. Together, they were known as the Allied Powers or the **Allies**. Japan joined the Allies within weeks. Italy, which at first was neutral, joined the Allies nine months into the war. Italy claimed that its membership in the Triple Alliance had been a defensive strategy. The Italians felt that the Germans had made an unprovoked attack on Belgium. Therefore, the Italians argued, they were not obligated to stand by their old ally.

In the late summer of 1914, millions of soldiers marched happily off to battle, convinced that the war would be short. Only a few people foresaw the horror ahead. One of them was Britain's foreign minister, Sir Edward Grey. Staring out over London at nightfall, Grey said sadly to a friend, "The lamps are going out all over Europe. We shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

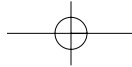
### Background

Before the war, the Central Powers were part of the Triple Alliance, and the Allies were known as the Triple Entente.

## A Bloody Stalemate Along the Western Front

It did not take long for Sir Edward Grey's prediction to ring true. As the summer of 1914 turned to fall, Germany's lightning-quick strike instead turned into a long and bloody stalemate, or deadlock, along the battlefields of France. This deadlocked region in northern France became known as the **Western Front**.





### Vocabulary

**intelligence:** secret information, especially such information about an enemy.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### B. Recognizing

**Effects** Why was the Battle of the Marne so significant?

**The Conflict Grinds to a Halt** Early on, Germany's Schlieffen Plan worked brilliantly. By the end of August, the Germans had overrun Belgium and swept into France. By September 3, German units were on the edge of Paris. A major German victory appeared just days away. The French military then came into possession of intelligence that told them the exact direction the German army was about to take.

On September 5, the Allies attacked the Germans northeast of Paris, in the valley of the Marne River. Every available soldier was hurled into the struggle. When reinforcements were needed, more than 600 taxicabs rushed soldiers from Paris to the front. After four days of fighting, the German generals gave the order to retreat. "It was an inspiring thought," a British officer later wrote, "that the time had now come to chase the German." By September 13, the Germans had been driven back nearly 60 miles.

Although it was only the first major clash on the Western Front, the First Battle of the Marne was perhaps the single most important event of the war. The defeat of the Germans left the Schlieffen Plan in ruins. A quick victory in the west no longer seemed possible. In the east, Russian forces had already invaded Germany. Germany was going to have to fight a long war on two fronts. Realizing this, the German high command sent thousands of troops from France to aid its forces in the east. Meanwhile, the war on the Western Front settled into a stalemate.

**War in the Trenches** By early 1915, opposing armies on the Western Front had dug miles of parallel trenches to protect themselves from enemy fire. This set the stage for what became known as **trench warfare**. In this type of warfare, soldiers fought each other from trenches. And armies traded huge losses for pitifully small land gains.

Life in the trenches was pure misery. "The men slept in mud, washed in mud, ate mud, and dreamed mud," wrote one soldier. The trenches swarmed with rats. Fresh food was nonexistent. Sleep was nearly impossible.

The space between the opposing trenches won the grim name "no man's land." When the officers ordered an attack, their men went "over the top" of their trenches into this bombed-out landscape. There, they usually met murderous rounds of machine-gun fire. Staying put in the trench, however, did not ensure one's safety. Artillery fire brought death right into the trenches. "Shells of all calibers kept raining on our sector," wrote one French soldier. "The trenches disappeared, filled with earth

Along the Western Front, soldiers battled one another from trenches dug out of the earth. Here, a British soldier peers out of the trench at "no man's land."

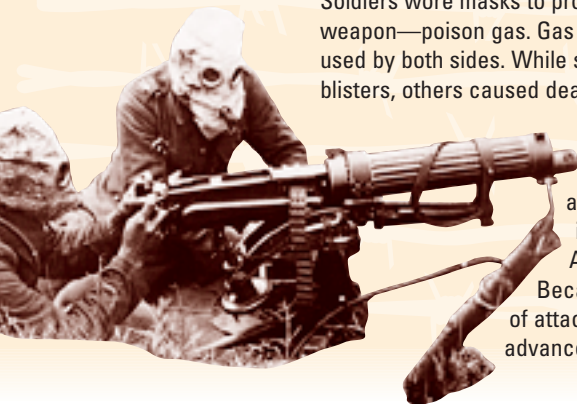




## The New Weapons of War

### Poison Gas

Soldiers wore masks to protect themselves from a horrible new weapon—poison gas. Gas was introduced by the Germans but used by both sides. While some gases caused blinding or severe blisters, others caused death by choking.



### Machine Gun

The machine gun, which fires ammunition automatically, was much improved by the time of World War I. As a result, it saw wide use in combat. Because the gun could wipe out waves of attackers and make it difficult for forces to advance, it helped create a stalemate.



### Tank

The tank was an armored combat vehicle that moved on chain tracks. It was introduced by the British in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. The early tanks were slow and clumsy. They eventually improved, and thus aided the Allies in their war effort.

... the air was unbreathable. Our blinded, wounded, crawling, and shouting soldiers kept falling on top of us and died splashing us with blood. It was living hell.”

The Western Front had become a “terrain of death.” It stretched nearly 500 miles from the North Sea to the Swiss border. A British officer described it in a letter:

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Imagine a broad belt, ten miles or so in width, stretching from the Channel to the German frontier near Basle, which is positively littered with the bodies of men and scarified with their rude graves; in which farms, villages and cottages are shapeless heaps of blackened masonry; in which fields, roads and trees are pitted and torn and twisted by shells and disfigured by dead horses, cattle, sheep and goats, scattered in every attitude of repulsive distortion and dismemberment.

VALENTINE FLEMING, quoted in *The First World War*

Military strategists were at a loss. New tools of war—machine guns, poison gas, armored tanks, larger artillery—had not delivered the fast-moving war they had expected. All this new technology did was kill huge numbers of people more effectively.

The slaughter reached a peak in 1916. In February, the Germans launched a massive attack against the French near Verdun. Each side lost more than 300,000 men.

In July of 1916, the British army tried to relieve the pressure on the French. British forces attacked the Germans northwest of Verdun, in the valley of the Somme River. In the first day of battle alone, more than 20,000 British soldiers were killed. By the time the Battle of the Somme ended in November, each side had suffered over half a million casualties.

What did the warring sides gain? Near Verdun, the Germans advanced about four miles. In the Somme valley, the British gained about five miles.

#### Background

In war, a casualty is anyone killed, injured, captured, or considered missing in action.

## The Battle on the Eastern Front

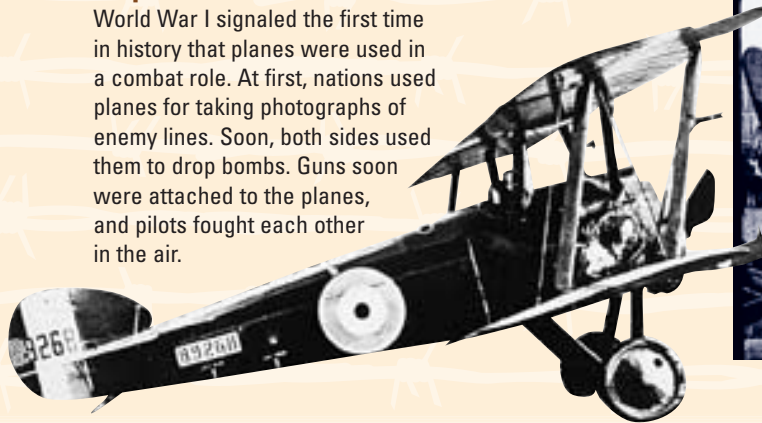
Even as the war on the Western Front claimed thousands of lives, both sides were sending millions more men to fight on the **Eastern Front**. This area was a stretch of battlefield along the German and Russian border. Here, Russians and Serbs battled Germans, Austrians, and Turks. The war in the east was a more mobile war than that in the west. Here too, however, slaughter and stalemate were common.

**Central Powers Gain the Advantage** At the very beginning of the war, Russian forces had launched an attack into both Austria and Germany. At the end of August 1914, Germany counterattacked near the town of Tannenberg. During the four-day battle that followed, the Germans crushed the invading Russian army and drove it into full retreat. Germany regained East Prussia and seized numerous guns and horses from the enemy. More than 30,000 Russian soldiers were killed.



## Airplane

World War I signaled the first time in history that planes were used in a combat role. At first, nations used planes for taking photographs of enemy lines. Soon, both sides used them to drop bombs. Guns soon were attached to the planes, and pilots fought each other in the air.



## Submarine

In 1914, the Germans introduced the submarine as an effective warship. German submarines, known as U-boats, eventually waged unrestricted warfare on Allied ships. The submarine's primary weapon was the torpedo, a self-propelled underwater missile.

Russia fared somewhat better against the Austrians. Russian forces defeated the Austrians twice in September 1914, driving them deep into Austria. Not until December of that year did the Austrian army—with German assistance—manage to turn the tide. In a 17-day battle near Limanowa, Austria defeated the Russians and drove them eastward. Two weeks later, the Austrian army pushed the Russians out of Austria-Hungary.

**Russia's War Effort Weakens** By 1916, Russia's war effort was near collapse. Unlike the nations of western Europe, Russia had yet to become industrialized. As a result, the Russian army was continually short on food, guns, ammunition, clothes, boots, and blankets. Moreover, the Allies were unable to ship supplies to Russia's ports. In the north, a German naval fleet blocked the Baltic Sea. In the south, the Ottomans still controlled the straits leading from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

The Russian army had only one asset—its numbers. Throughout the war the Russian army suffered enormous battlefield losses. More than 2 million Russian soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured in 1915 alone. And yet the army continually rebuilt its ranks from the country's enormous population. For more than three years, the battered Russian army managed to tie up hundreds of thousands of German troops in the east. Thus, Germany could not hurl its full fighting force at the west.

Germany and her allies, however, were concerned with more than just the Eastern or Western Fronts. As the war raged on, fighting spread beyond Europe to Africa, as well as to Southwest and Southeast Asia. In the years after it began, the massive European conflict indeed became a world war.

### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

#### C. Synthesizing

Why was Russia's involvement in the war so important to the other Allies?

## Section 2 Assessment

### 1. TERMS & NAMES

Identify

- Schlieffen Plan
- Central Powers
- Allies
- Western Front
- trench warfare
- Eastern Front

### 2. TAKING NOTES

Using a chart like the one below, write the immediate reason why each nation declared war on the other.

War Declaration	Reason for Declaration
Germany on Russia	
Germany on France	
Britain on Germany	

### 3. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

How was war on the Western Front and Eastern Front different? How was it the same?

#### THINK ABOUT

- trench warfare
- which nations fought on each front
- war casualties

### 4. THEME ACTIVITY

#### Science & Technology

Draw a political cartoon showing the effects of the new technology on warfare. Include a caption that expresses the point of the cartoon.



## Aviation

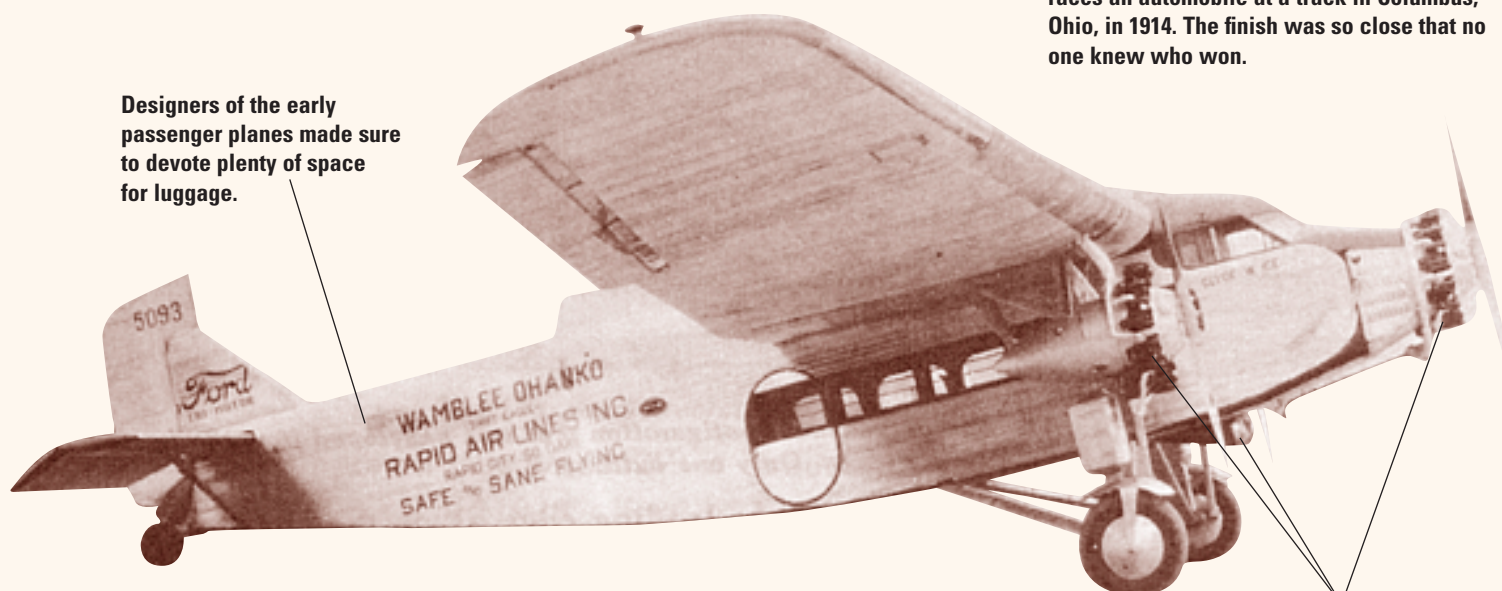
World War I introduced plane warfare. And with it came daring dogfights and legendary pilots. Two such pilots were America's Eddie Rickenbacker and Germany's Baron Manfred von Richthofen, better known as the Red Baron. In a larger sense, however, the war ushered in an era of great progress in the field of aviation. In the warring nations' quest to dominate the skies, they produced thousands of planes and continually worked to improve engine designs. After the war, these nations converted their war planes to commercial use. They also began designing larger, stronger planes for civilian transport. The age of air travel had begun.

By 1926, passenger airlines were operating in Europe, Africa, Australia, and North and South America. Built in 1928, the Ford Tri-motor model, shown below, was one of the better-known American passenger planes of the time.



On the eve of World War I, planes were still considered a novelty. Here, an early plane races an automobile at a track in Columbus, Ohio, in 1914. The finish was so close that no one knew who won.

Designers of the early passenger planes made sure to devote plenty of space for luggage.

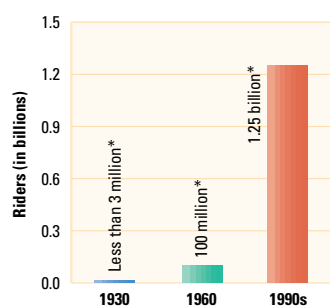


The three-motor system gave the plane greater power. It became the prototype for many later models.



The Tri-motor carried about 10 passengers. Temperature control, however, was still many years away. Passengers often bundled up in coats to keep warm.

### Annual Ridership



\*estimated

Source: *The World Book Encyclopedia*

### Connect to History

**Clarifying** What role did World War I play in the advancement of aviation technology?

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R3

### Connect to Today

**Investigating** Find out about any one of today's more advanced aircraft, such as the Concorde, or the latest military jet or commercial airplane. Write a brief report about the craft's most advanced and interesting features. Present your report to the class.