Before the Spark

Trace the pressures behind World War I

MWH.C.6.1.A "Describe complex and multiple causes of World War I, including militarism, nationalism, industrial and colonial competition, Europe's alliance system, and the instability created by the declining Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about militarism, nationalism, industrial competition, colonial competition, alliances, and weakening empires, then circle the event that sparked the 1914 crisis.

Why Europe Went to War

1. In the decades before 1914, European leaders expected war and prepared for it. Governments expanded armies, lengthened military service, and built battleships. Germany and Britain competed at sea, while factories made weapons on a vast scale. Industrial powers also sought overseas colonies for raw materials, markets, and prestige. Rival claims, including German and French disputes over Morocco, raised suspicion. Militarism made force seem useful, and industrial capacity gave states the means to fight longer, larger wars.

2. Nationalism sharpened tensions inside two weakening empires. Austria-Hungary governed peoples with different languages and political goals; some South Slavs wanted to unite with Serbia. The Ottoman Empire had lost much of its European territory, leaving rival states to contest land and influence in the Balkans. Russia supported Serbia, partly because of shared Slavic identity, while Austria-Hungary feared Serbian nationalism would encourage rebellion within its borders. On June 28, 1914, a Bosnian Serb nationalist killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo.

3. The assassination set off decisions shaped by older fears. Austria-Hungary, backed by Germany, issued demands to Serbia and then declared war. Russia mobilized to support Serbia; Germany declared war on Russia and France. Germany's invasion of neutral Belgium brought Britain into the war. Alliances and close partnerships turned a Balkan conflict into a wider fight, but they did not force every choice. Leaders acted amid nationalism, imperial rivalry, military plans, and uncertainty about the future of Europe's empires.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did industrial strength and competition for colonies each raise the risk of war?

2. How did the weakening of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire add to tensions in the Balkans?

3. How did support between countries help turn the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia into a wider war?

4. Why is it incomplete to say that the assassination alone caused World War I?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine the Sarajevo assassination never happened. In 60 to 80 words, explain why Europe might still have faced a major war. Connect at least three pressures from the passage, but do not claim war was certain.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details about militarism, nationalism, industrial competition, colonial competition, alliances, and weakening empires, then circle the event that sparked the 1914 crisis. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did industrial strength and competition for colonies each raise the risk of war?	**Factories could produce weapons for larger wars. Rival colonial claims increased suspicion between powers.**
2	How did the weakening of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire add to tensions in the Balkans?	**Austria-Hungary feared that Serbian nationalism would stir rebellion among South Slavs it ruled. Ottoman territorial losses left land and influence for rival states to contest.**
3	How did support between countries help turn the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia into a wider war?	**Germany backed Austria-Hungary, while Russia mobilized to support Serbia. Germany then declared war on Russia and France, and its invasion of Belgium brought Britain into the war.**
4	Why is it incomplete to say that the assassination alone caused World War I?	**It sparked the crisis, but older pressures such as nationalism, military buildup, imperial rivalry, and alliances also shaped leaders' decisions.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Even without the assassination, Europe could still have faced a major war, though war was not certain. Austria-Hungary feared Serbian nationalism because it might stir unrest among South Slavs under its rule. Russia's support for Serbia could have turned a later Balkan dispute into a clash with Austria-Hungary and its German ally. Meanwhile, military buildup and industrial arms production gave leaders powerful forces to use. Colonial rivalry added mistrust, making a peaceful settlement harder to reach.

Accept other accurate connections among at least three pressures. Responses should distinguish an increased risk of war from a claim that war was inevitable.