



**CALIFORNIA CONTENT  
STANDARD 10.5.4**

***The Human Costs of  
World War I***

**Specific Objective:** Understand the nature of the war and its human costs on all sides of the conflict, including how colonial peoples contributed to the war effort.

**The War to End All Wars** World War I was called “the war to end all wars.” The destruction it caused was so extreme, people could not bear the thought of another war.

**Military Casualties** In the first three years, Europe lost more lives than it had in three hundred years of war before that. Deadly new weapons, such as the machine gun and the submarine, along with infection killed an estimated 8.5 million soldiers. About 21 million more were wounded. Trench warfare led to daily deaths from artillery. Poison gas caused many deaths and serious injuries.

	<b>Total Mobilized Forces</b>	<b>Killed or Died<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>Prisoners or Missing</b>	<b>Total Casualties</b>	<b>Casualty Rate</b>
<b>Central Powers*</b>	22,850,000	3,386,200	8,388,448	3,629,829	15,404,477	67.4%
<b>Allies**</b>	42,188,810	5,142,631	12,800,706	4,121,090	22,064,427	52.3%

\* Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey

\*\* 95% of troops were from Russia, the British Empire, France, Italy, the United States, and Japan. 1. Includes death from all causes. Source: U.S. Department of Defense

**Effects on Civilians**

- \_\_\_ The countries involved in World War I focused their total efforts on winning. Civilians worked to produce war-related materials. Many goods, especially food and fuel, were rationed.
- \_\_\_ Millions of civilians died from disease, starvation, and bombing and fighting on their own lands. The war destroyed their homes, farms, and towns.
- \_\_\_ The flu epidemic of 1918 traveled around the world, wherever soldiers fought. It killed more people than the war itself.
- \_\_\_ The Russian Revolution continued after the war ended. It resulted in millions of civilian deaths. Massacres were another source of high civilian casualties.

**Colonial Participation** One reason a European war, became a “World War” was the participation of colonial peoples. Great Britain used soldiers from India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and others. French colonies in West Africa, and German colonies in East Africa sent troops. Allied forces attacked German colonies in China, the Pacific islands, and Africa. Although some individuals defended their ruling countries eagerly, others fought because they were required to serve. After the war, those who survived returned home to find that, as colonial subjects, they were still second-class citizens.