World War I: a timeline

5–10 September 1914
French and British armies halt the Germans in Belgium and France

1882
The Triple Alliance is formed between Germany, Italy and Austria–Hungary.

28 July 1914
Austria–Hungary declares war on Serbia

December 1915
The Anzacs withdraw from Gallipoli

15 September 1914
Trench warfare on the Western Front begins

4 August 1914
Britain declares war on Germany

| 1880 | 1905 | 1914 | 1915 | 1916 |

1907
The Triple Entente is formed between Britain, France and Russia.

1–4 August 1914
Germany declares war on Russia and France, and invades neutral Luxembourg and Belgium. World War I begins.

29 October 1914
Turkey enters the war on the side of Germany

25 April 1915
The Anzacs land at Gallipoli

28 June 1914
Archduke Franz Ferdinand (heir to the Austro–Hungarian throne) and his wife are assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia–Herzegovina

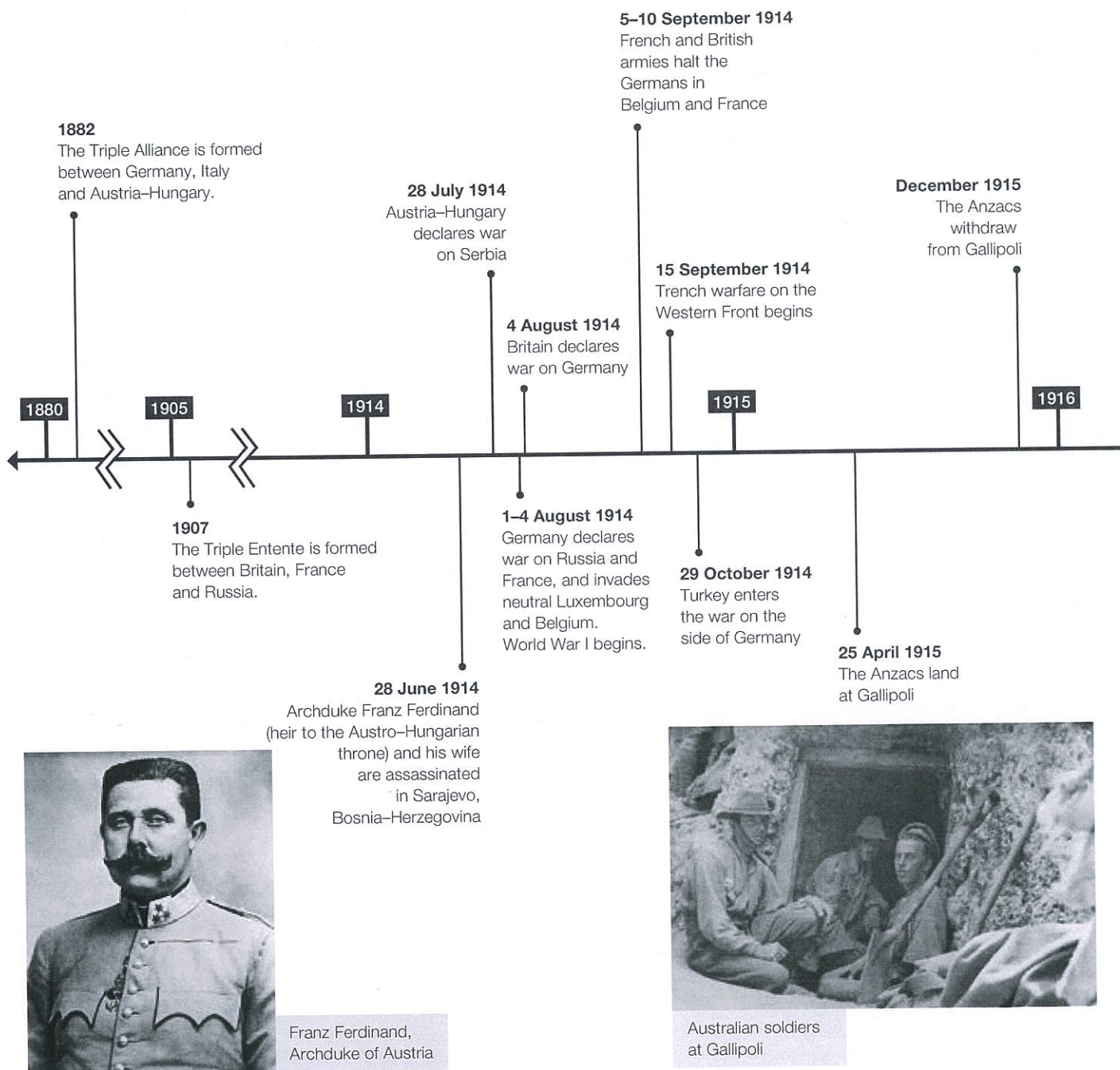

Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria
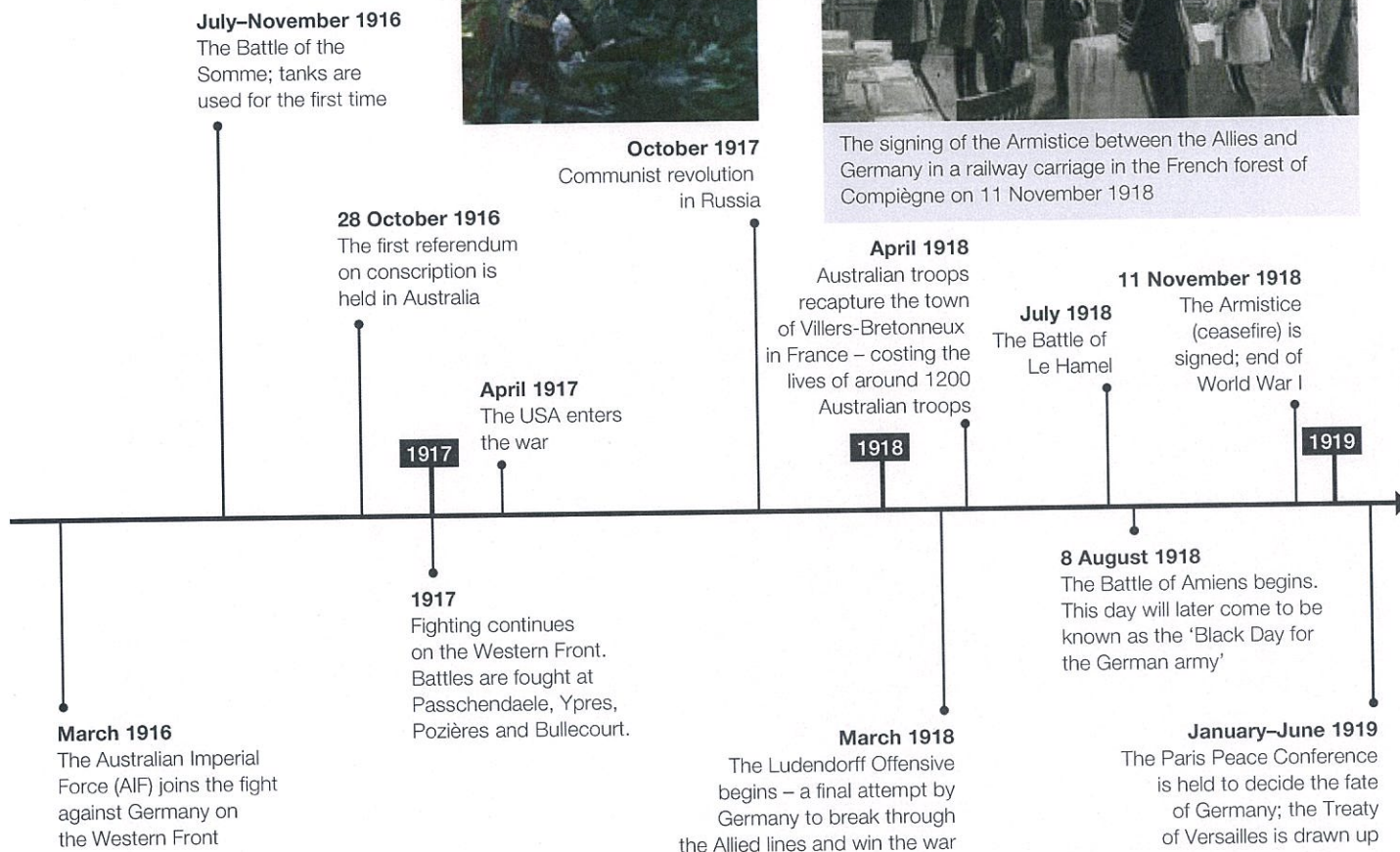

Australian soldiers at Gallipoli

Source 8.2   A timeline of key events leading up to, during and immediately after WWI.

A key moment in the Russian Revolution; the storming of the Winter Palace in 1917

The signing of the Armistice between the Allies and Germany in a railway carriage in the French forest of Compiègne on 11 November 1918

July–November 1916
The Battle of the Somme; tanks are used for the first time

October 1917
Communist revolution in Russia

28 October 1916
The first referendum on conscription is held in Australia

April 1918
Australian troops recapture the town of Villers-Bretonneux in France – costing the lives of around 1200 Australian troops

11 November 1918
The Armistice (ceasefire) is signed; end of World War I

July 1918
The Battle of Le Hamel

April 1917
The USA enters the war

`1917`

`1918`

`1919`

8 August 1918
The Battle of Amiens begins. This day will later come to be known as the 'Black Day for the German army'

1917
Fighting continues on the Western Front. Battles are fought at Passchendaele, Ypres, Pozières and Bullecourt.

March 1916
The Australian Imperial Force (AIF) joins the fight against Germany on the Western Front

March 1918
The Ludendorff Offensive begins – a final attempt by Germany to break through the Allied lines and win the war

January–June 1919
The Paris Peace Conference is held to decide the fate of Germany; the Treaty of Versailles is drawn up

Check your learning 8.1

Remember and understand

1 When did Britain declare war on Germany?
2 When did the USA enter the war?
3 On what day did World War I end?

Apply and analyse

4 Using the timeline, calculate how long the Gallipoli campaign lasted.
5 Conduct some research to discover why 8 August 1918 became known as the 'Black Day for the German Army'.

8.1 What were the causes of World War I?

Background to World War I

Source 8.3   An English recruitment poster from World War I

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 was the result of a complex interaction of tensions that had been building between countries in Europe for more than 20 years. National rivalries, jealousies over territory, competition over economic progress, competition over the size of armies and navies, and the race to colonise new parts of the world all contributed to the tension.

The last major war in Europe (the Franco–Prussian War) was fought between France and a number of independent German kingdoms. The war ended in 1871 when the French were defeated. As a result of their victory, the German states unified to form the German Empire (Germany). After unification, Germany attempted to limit France's power and secure its place in European politics by developing a system of alliances with other countries across Europe. This system changed the way in which many European countries interacted with each other and resulted in the development of two major alliances. All of the most powerful European countries belonged to one or the other of these alliances.

These countries believed that their alliances would act as a deterrent to war because if a member of one alliance was attacked by a member of the other alliance, all the members of both alliances would have to become involved. This became known as 'balance of power' politics.

Europe in the lead-up to war

In 1901, the situation in Europe appeared peaceful. Queen Victoria had occupied the British throne for over 60 years and many of her relations and descendants had married into royal houses all over Europe (see Source 8.4). As a result, many of the royal families of Europe were closely related. Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany and King George V were all first cousins (see Source 8.5). The wife of Tsar Nicholas II was also one of Queen Victoria's granddaughters.

In the lead-up to World War I, it seemed unlikely that close relations would become involved in armed conflict – let alone fight on opposing sides.

Europe seemed prosperous during this time. The **Industrial Revolution** had transformed Western Europe, with new production methods and advances in technology affecting almost every sector of society. Governments had made improvements in health care, sanitation and assistance for the poor. Roads, canals and railways were making trade and transport cheaper and more accessible. Literacy levels were also rising. On the whole, members of the middle classes across Europe had fought for greater political rights and now enjoyed a higher standard of living. The working classes had also won some basic rights, such as the right to vote in Britain after 1867.

However, this prosperity masked both international and domestic tensions. Despite their close family ties and relationships, there were jealousies among many of the

royal families in Europe. Issues such as the different rates of economic progress, the size of colonial empires and the development of weapons, armies and ships all caused rivalry between major European nations. For example, the rate of economic progress and improvements in the standard of living was unevenly spread across Europe. The Industrial Revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries led to many advances in Britain and Germany, but had little impact on the nations of Eastern Europe such as Austria–Hungary, the Balkan states and Russia. This contributed further to the rivalry between nations. Even in industrialised nations like Britain and Germany there was a huge gap between rich and poor. Many working-class families lived in cramped, unsanitary conditions or in urban slums. Women were still not allowed to vote in Europe, and new political movements divided people along class and ethnic lines. Many governments and people were afraid of the rising influence of radical political movements like **socialism** and **anarchism**.

So although Europe seemed to be peaceful before World War I, these rivalries and tensions bubbled away beneath the surface.

Source 8.4   Queen Victoria (seated front centre) photographed with members of her extended family in 1894. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany is seated front left.

Source 8.5   Tsar Nicholas II of Russia with his cousin King George V of England – their mothers were sisters.

Check your learning 8.2

Remember and understand

1   Which country was responsible for developing a system of alliances in the 1870s?

2   Why did European countries at the time believe that these alliances would help to prevent war?

3   Explain how it was that so many of Europe's royal families were related.

Apply and analyse

4   How would you summarise the social and political situation in Europe around 1900? Explain your answer.

Evaluate and create

5   Conduct some research into the meanings of socialism and anarchism. Why do you think governments in the early 1900s would have been afraid of the growing influence of these movements?