

Armistice Day

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, Germany signed an armistice that had been prepared by Britain and France. After more than four years of terrible fighting and loss of life, the First World War was over. Germany, led by Kaiser Wilhelm II, had lost to Britain, France and their allies. But at the beginning of 1918 it looked as though it was going to be a different story.



- 1 Sit down with the children and show them the series of pictures overleaf. Ask the children the following questions and discuss them:
How does this story make you feel? Can you explain why?
- 2 The First World War was a terrible war, but ask the children if they can talk about other wars, in history or going on today.
What does this make you think and how does it make you feel?
- 3 You can introduce vocabulary, such as "armistice", "abdication", "Kaiser", the German emperor.

Additional supporting activities about the war can be found in the Remembrance Day section on iChild.

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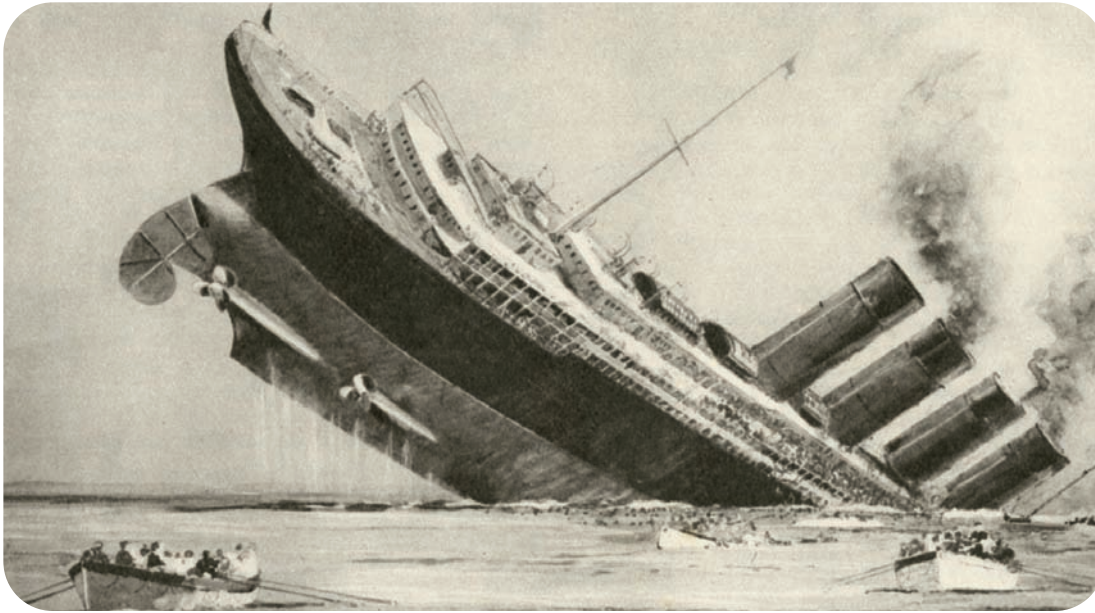


Early in 1918, Germany and her allies, including Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, thought that victory could be in sight.

The year before, Russia had left the war (because of the 1917 Russian Revolution - but that is a completely different story).

Losing the Russians left Britain and France weaker, and Germany stronger.

But other events had happened which would change the tide of the war.



Early in 1915, Germany announced “unrestricted warfare” (meaning that they would make war) on all ships who entered the waters around Britain.

In March 1915, the Germans sank an American ship (the William P. Frye), and on 7 May they torpedoed the

British Lusitania, killing 1,198 passengers, including 128 American citizens. The Americans were furious, so Germany agreed to stop their “unrestricted warfare” and make sure passengers were safe before sinking unarmed ships. But in November, they sank an Italian ship, killing 272 people, including 27 Americans.



In 1917, Germany went back on their agreement, and said they would resume unrestricted warfare in war-zone waters.

The Americans broke off diplomatic relations.

America, a country which was not yet 150 years old, was to play a vital role in the First World War.

In February 1917, a German U-boat stopped the American ship, the Housatonic. The commander of the U-boat told the Housatonic's captain, "You are carrying foodstuffs to an enemy of my country, and though I am sorry; it is my duty to sink you." The captain persuaded the Germans to let the Americans escape, but the Housatonic was then torpedoed.



The Americans had had enough. The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, went to Congress (the American government) to ask for permission to declare war on Germany. On 6 April 1917, the President's request was granted.

American troops began arriving on French soil in June 1917. Their arrival would change the course of the war.



Verz. v. O. Herkt.

As 1918 marched on, German hopes for victory were fading.

In October 1918, the desperate naval high command ordered one last major North Sea battle. The plan was for two German destroyer ships to attack the British and French coastlines, forcing them to fight back. Once in the open, they would be surrounded by all the German U-Boats and the rest of the Kaiser's fleet. According to the German naval boss, Admiral Reinhard Scheer, this was "an honourable battle, even if it became a death struggle".



The German soldiers and sailors did not see this as an honourable battle, but as a suicide mission. They rebelled against their orders.

The Kiel Mutiny, as it became known, spread swiftly. German Workers' councils in cities throughout Germany demanded reforms, including the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II.



On 7 November 1918 the Bavarian king (Ludwig III) fled to Austria in fear of his life. He then abdicated.

On 9 November 1918, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany abdicated.

Two days later, on 11 November, at 11am, Germany signed the Armistice.

A war that had lasted over four years, cost more than 16 million human lives and millions of animals lives, seen terrible battles with thousands slain in one day - was over.

We remember the signing of the armistice as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day. Remembrance Sunday is held on the second Sunday in November, when we commemorate the fallen in all wars.