

Mini-Q's in World History

Volume 3, Unit 7

What Was the Underlying Cause of World War I?

MINI-Q™ LESSON PLAN

NOTE: Time required to do a Mini-Q varies greatly with skill level, grade, and DBQ experience. Time range is generally two to five 45 minute class periods.

1 to 2 DAYS: 45 – 90 minutes

Step One: Hook Refer to the Step One teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Read the directions aloud. The purpose is to get students engaged, talking, and wanting to do the Mini-Q.

Step Two: Background Essay Refer to the Step Two teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Students can write out answers to the BGE questions or the questions can simply be discussed.

Step Three: Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing The task of recognizing and defining key words in the question is a crucial habit of mind. The second task of pre-bucketing based on clues in the question is an important categorization skill.

2 DAYS: 90 minutes

Step Four: Document Analysis Model Document A with the whole class, showing the kind of thinking and detail you expect in student answers to the Document Analysis questions. Working in pairs or groups of three, students proceed to examine the remaining documents, writing answers to the Document Analysis questions, or alternatively, filling out the Document Analysis Sheet located in the Toolkit. Conclude by asking volunteer pairs to present the remaining documents to the class by going through the Document Analysis questions and discussing their answers.

1 DAY: 45 minutes

Step Five: Bucketing and Chickenfoot Have students complete the bucketing and chickenfoot work page. This step will help students clarify their thesis and road map. Then do a Thrash-out.

1 DAY: 45 minutes (Optional)

Step Six: Essay Writing Conduct an in-class Writing Workshop. You may want to use the Outline Guide Sheet or the Guided Essay in the Toolkit. The Guided Essay is especially helpful for students needing extra support.

MINI-Q™ LESSON PLAN: CLEAN VERSION OPTION

If students are ready, use the Clean Version of the Mini-Q, which requires them to handle more of the analysis on their own. Estimated time to complete is 2 to 3 class periods.

What Was the Underlying Cause of World War I?

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Reynold's Newspaper, London, March 9, 1913.

Overview: In the summer of 1914 Europe went to war with itself. It was a war that many expected to be short. In fact, it lasted more than four long, terrible years, taking the lives of millions of combatants and civilians. In some cases, entire high school graduating classes of young English, French, German, and Russian soldiers died fighting one another along the Western and Eastern Fronts. In this Mini-Q you will investigate several of the causes that led to this tragedy.

The Documents:

- Document A: European Alliances, 1914 (map)
- Document B: "The Crime of the Ages" (cartoon)
- Document C: Growth in Armaments, 1890 –1914 (chart)
- Document D: The Hammer or the Anvil, 1899
- Document E: "The British Octopus" (cartoon)
- Document F: Colonial Possessions (chart)

A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

Hook Exercise: What Was the Underlying Cause of World War I?

Directions: Wars have been fought throughout history. The list below presents different reasons for going to war. Check whether you agree or disagree that the reason given is a good one. Feel free to make notes. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts.

	Agree	Disagree	Notes
1. Our nation is attacked by a foreign military.	☐	☐	
2. A nation with whom we have a mutual defense alliance is attacked.	☐	☐	
3. Our President is assassinated by a terrorist from an unfriendly nation.	☐	☐	
4. Our President tells us that a country is planning an imminent attack on us.	☐	☐	
5. A country has just had a fundamentalist revolution and is sending fighters into oil-producing nations in the region.	☐	☐	
6. An unfriendly nation has just successfully tested a nuclear weapon in violation of a signed UN agreement.	☐	☐	
7. A US naval vessel is sunk in a foreign harbor by government agents from that country.	☐	☐	

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What Was the Underlying Cause of World War I?

At the turn of the 20th century Europe was feeling pretty darned good. It controlled empires that circled the globe. Its technology was unsurpassed. Its art and music were the envy of the world. In 1900, Europeans believed the world was their oyster.

But this feeling was not to last. By the end of 1918, after four long years of war, European confidence was badly shaken. Ten million soldiers had died; another 20 million had been wounded. Empires that had lasted for centuries lay in tatters. Writers wrote of broken dreams. Europe had entered the Great War riding on a song. Now, in November of 1918, no one was singing. What had gone wrong?

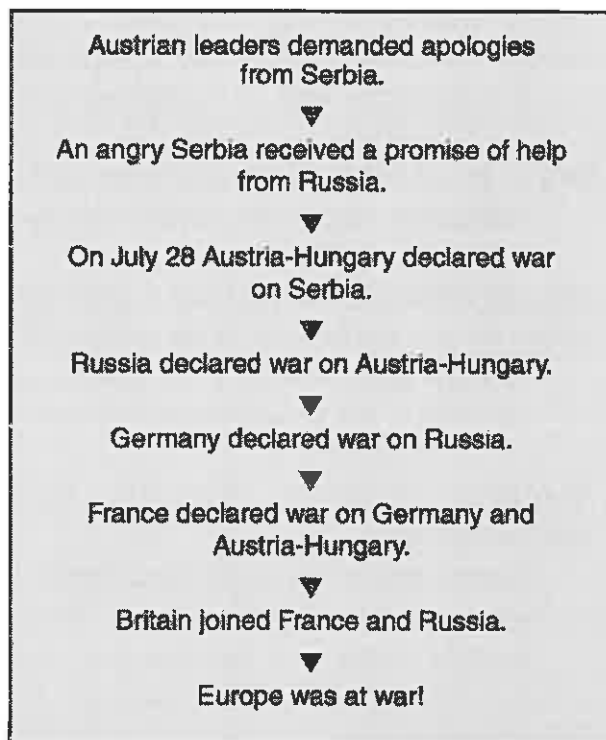
In the late 19th century European leaders believed that by creating a **balance of power** they could prevent such a horror. The idea was that if the major powers of Europe – countries like England, France, Russia, and Germany – were balanced in strength, no one country could dominate the rest. War could be avoided.

But Otto von Bismarck, the Chancellor of Prussia who led the unification of the German states, did not like the fact that Germany was sandwiched between Russia and France. To counter this uncomfortable situation, Bismarck created an alliance with Austria-Hungary and Italy. He did try to reassure Russia and England, but after 1890, France, Russia, and Great Britain formed their own **entente**. The great players were picking sides.

The tension between countries was matched by tension within countries. Especially in southeastern Europe, in an area known as the **Balkans**, the spirit of **nationalism** and independence ran high. Some **ethnic** groups revolted. The region was a powder keg. All it lacked was a **spark** to set it off. That spark was provided by a Serbian nationalist group called the Black Hand. They wanted independence from their mother country, Austria-Hungary. Their solution? Assassinate the Archduke of Austria when he came to visit.

On the morning of June 28, 1914, the Archduke's car was fired upon by one of the Serbian assassins. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were killed. The Black Hand hoped the assassination would trigger a rebellion in the region against Austria. But this spark in the Balkans soon flamed out of control. One thing led to another and soon all of Europe was at war.

Four long years and 10 million lives later,



Europe looked for answers. What had gone wrong?

This Mini-Q contains six documents. It does not pretend to cover all the underlying causes of World War I. (Nationalism, for example, is not included.) Using the documents, your task is to identify and describe each of three important causes of the war and then answer the question before us: *What was the underlying cause of World War I?*

Background Essay Questions

1. What is meant by the phrase “In 1900 Europeans believed the world was their oyster”?
2. World War I lasted four years. What were the war years?
3. The population of Chicago is about 3,000,000. How does that compare to the total number of dead and wounded in World War I? (Give your answer as a fraction.)
4. Why might a balance of power prevent war?
5. Otto von Bismarck once said that a great war might someday be caused by “some damned foolish thing in the Balkans.” Was he right? Explain.
6. How did the assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary lead to war between Russia and Germany?
7. Define these terms:

balance of power

entente

Balkans

nationalism

ethnic

spark

Timeline

- 1858** – Full British rule of India begins.
- 1865** – End of American Civil War
- 1871** – Franco-Prussian War (France v. Germany)
- 1912 - 1913** – The Balkan Wars
- 1914** – Beginning of World War I (also known as the Great War)
- 1918** – End of World War I
- 1919** – Versailles Peace Treaty
- 1939** – Beginning of World War II

Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

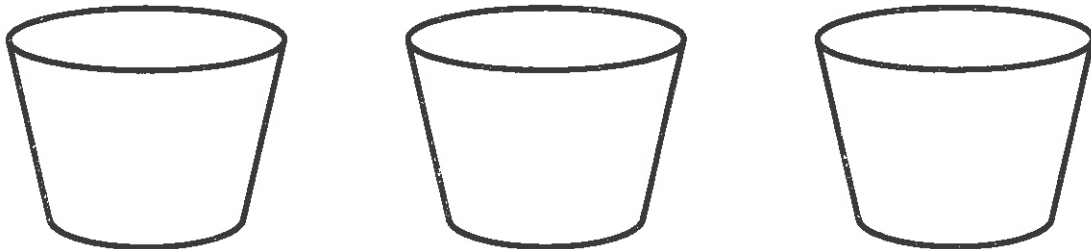
Understanding the Question

1. What is the analytical question asked by this Mini-Q?
2. What terms in the question need to be defined?
3. Rewrite the question in your own words.

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Pre-Bucketing

Directions: Using clues from the Mini-Q question, consider possible analytical categories and label the buckets.



Document A

Source: Map created from various sources.

European Alliances, 1914.

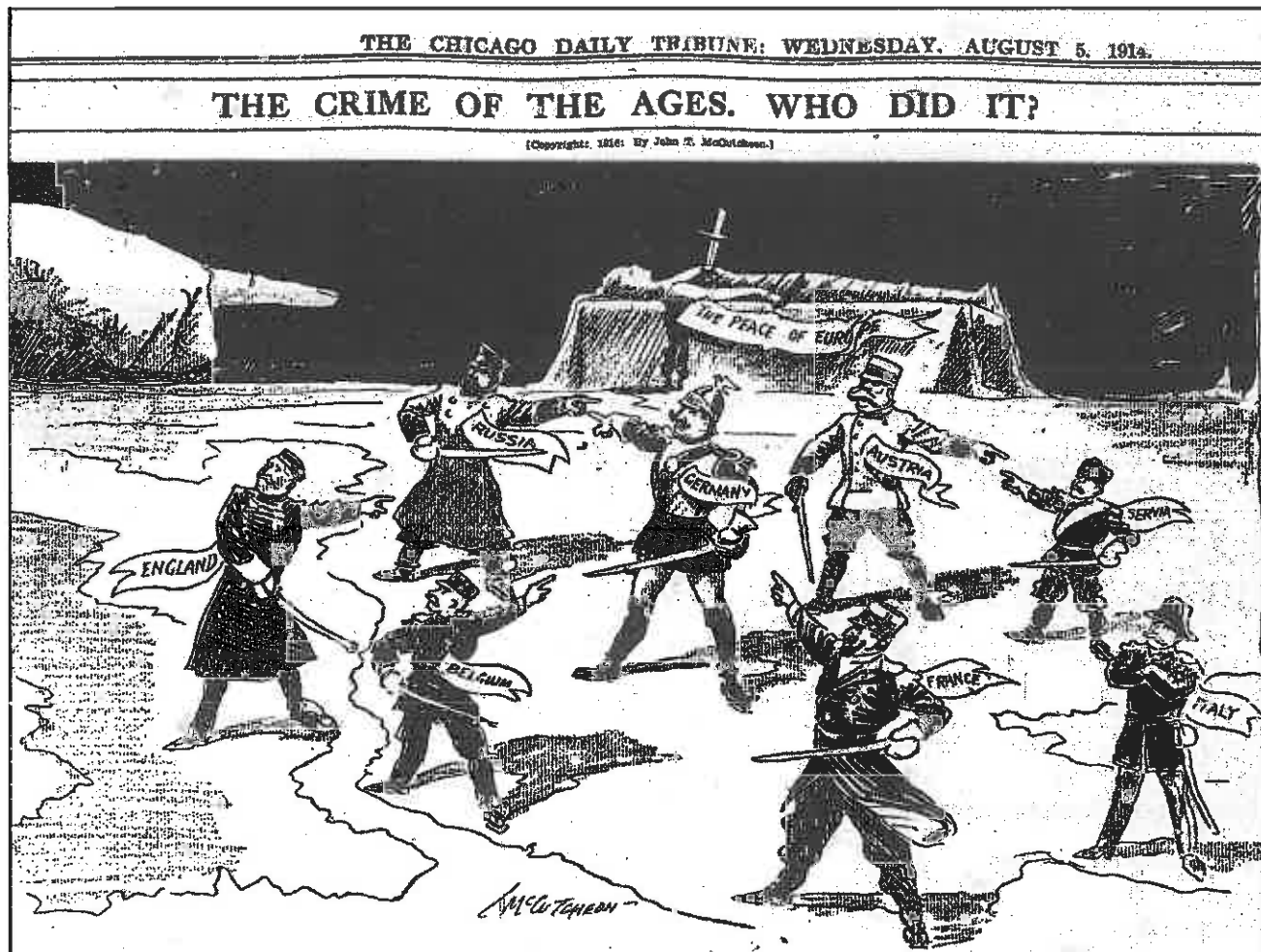


Document Analysis

1. The map shows the alliance arrangement in Europe in 1914. In what year did World War I begin?
2. What countries made up the Triple Alliance? What countries made up the Triple Entente?
3. Germany worried about one day having to fight a war on two fronts or two different borders. According to the map, was this fear justified?
4. Italy would switch sides in 1915. Whom did this hurt?
5. Russia had a special ethnic tie with Serbia because both countries had Slavic populations. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in July 1914. Use the map to explain how this could lead to widespread war.

Document B

Source: John T. McCutcheon, artist, *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1914.

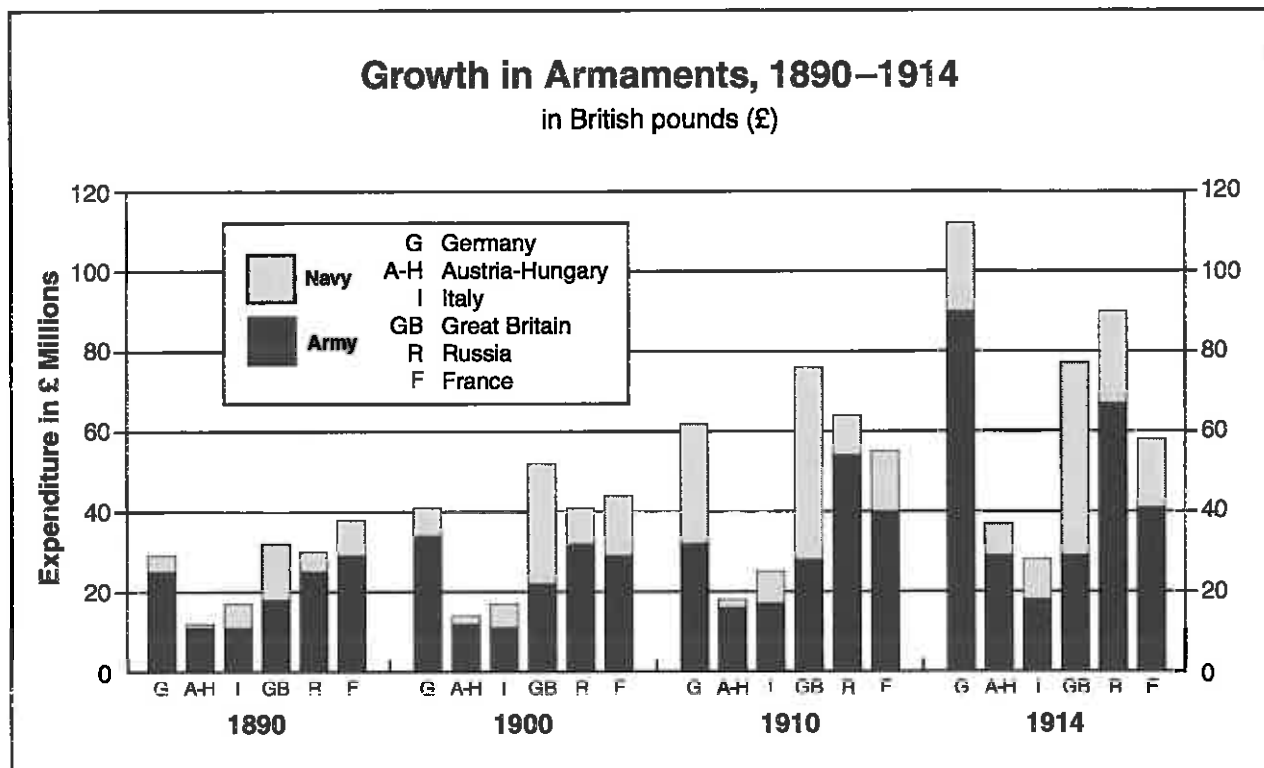


Document Analysis

1. How soon after war broke out was this cartoon published?
2. What is the name and nationality of the cartoonist? Knowing this, what can you infer about his point of view?
3. What is the "Crime of the Ages"?
4. What does the hand in the upper left corner represent?
5. Can this cartoon be used in any way to argue that alliances were a cause of WWI?

Document C

Source: Adapted from *The London Times History of the World*, new edition edited by Richard Overy, 1999.



Note: By 1914 the Entente Powers could field 2.23 million men, Germany and Austria-Hungary 1.2 million.

Document Analysis

1. In millions of British pounds, how much did Germany and Austria-Hungary spend in 1890? In 1914?
2. How much did Great Britain, Russia, and France spend in 1890? In 1914?
3. Which nation spent the greatest percent on its navy? Why would it do that?
4. Is there evidence in the chart to support the argument that an arms build-up (militarism) was an underlying cause of World War I? Explain.
5. How can an argument be made that an arms build-up might lead to peace? Explain.

Document D

Source: Bernhard von Bülow, German Chancellor, spoke these words in a speech before the Reichstag (German congress) on December 11, 1899.

The Hammer or the Anvil

In our nineteenth century, England has increased its colonial empire – the largest the world has seen since the days of the Romans,... the French have put down roots in North Africa and East Africa,... Russia has begun its mighty course of victory in Asia,... We don't want to step on the toes of any foreign power, but at the same time we don't want our own feet tramped by any foreign power.... We don't ever again want to become ... the 'slaves of humanity.' But we'll only be able to keep ourselves at the fore if we realize that there is no welfare for us without power, without a strong army and a strong fleet. The means, gentlemen, for a people of almost 60 million – dwelling in the middle of Europe and, at the same time, stretching its economic antennae out to all sides – to battle its way through in the struggle for existence without strong armaments on land and at sea, have not yet been found. In the coming century the German people will be a hammer or an anvil.

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Document Analysis

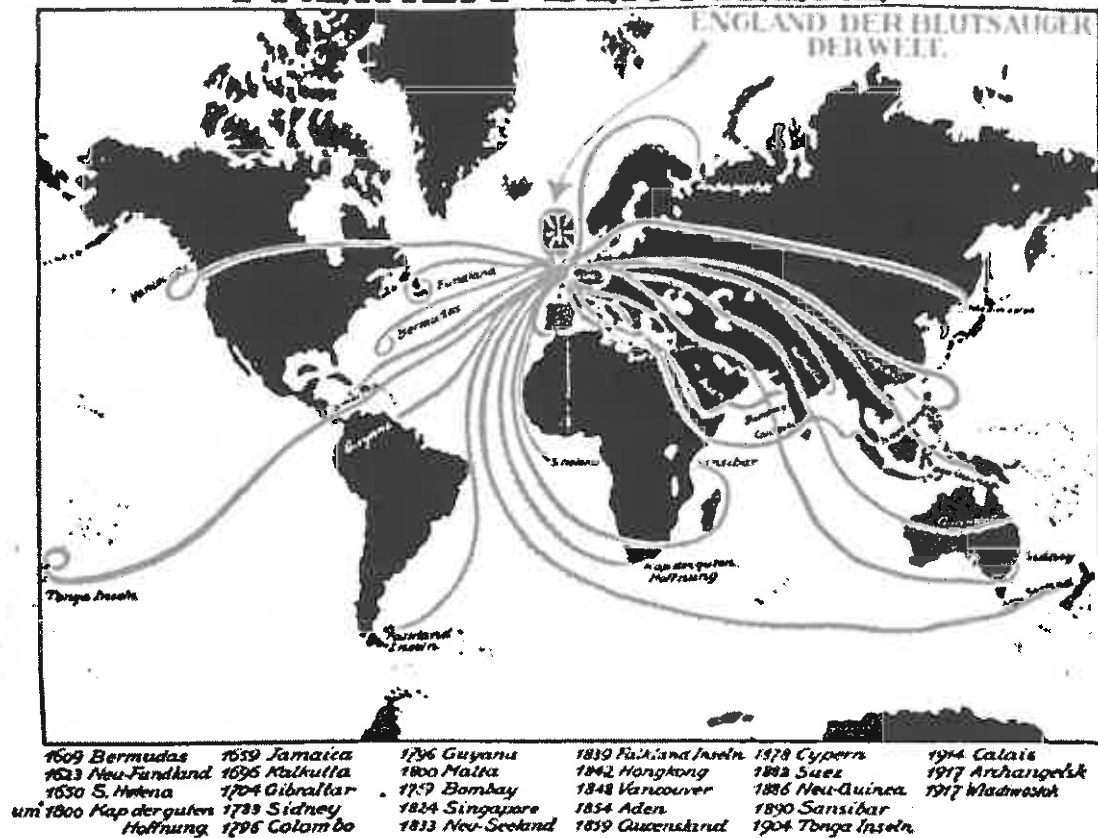
1. Why is von Bülow worried about England, France, and Russia?
2. What is an anvil? What does von Bülow mean when he says Germany will be “a hammer or an anvil”?
3. Judging from the document, who is Germany likely to “hammer”?
4. One half-century earlier, the Englishman Charles Darwin introduced his idea of evolution, which was based on the idea of survival of the fittest. Do you think von Bülow believed in this idea? Explain.
5. How can you use this document to make an argument that the arms build-up was a more important underlying cause than the network of alliances? How could you counter this argument?

Document E

Source: German propaganda cartoon, 1917, GE104A, Poster Collection, Hoover Institution Archives.

The British Octopus

FREIHEIT DER MEERE.



Freiheit Der Meere = Freedom of the seas

England Der Blutsauger der Welt = England, the bloodsucker of the world

Document Analysis

1. In what language, and in what year, was this cartoon created?
2. Translate each of the following:
Freiheit der Meere
England der Blutsauger der Welt
3. What is the main point being made by the cartoonist?
4. In Document C, examine British naval expenses in 1914. Do the Germans have reason to worry about freedom of the seas? Explain.
5. What does this document suggest is an underlying cause of World War I? Explain.

Document F

Source: Adapted from Colin Nicolson, *The First World War, Europe 1914–1918*, Essex, England, Pearson Education Limited, 2001.

Size of Colonial Empires in 1913		
	Area (sq. miles)	Population of Colonies
Britain	12,740,000	400,000,000
France	4,440,000	56,000,000
Germany	1,139,000	12,000,000
Belgium	927,000	15,500,000
Italy	579,000	1,600,000
USA	125,000	10,000,000
Austria-Hungary	0	0
Russia	0	0

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Document Analysis

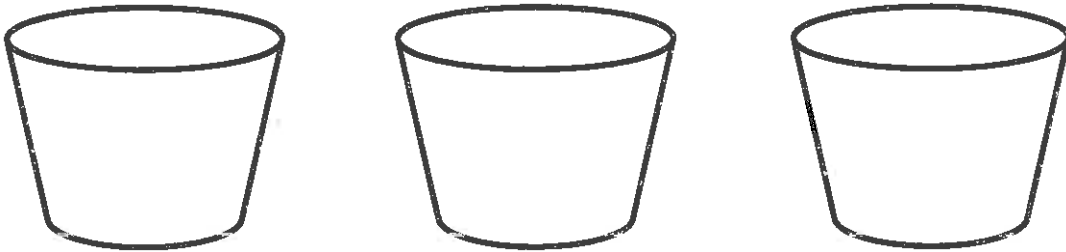
1. What was the total area of British colonies in 1913?
2. What was the combined area of colonies held by the nations of the Triple Entente? What was the combined area of colonies held by Germany and Austria-Hungary?
3. How could colonies help a mother country economically?
4. How could colonies help a mother country militarily?
5. How can you use this document to argue that imperialism (colonization) was one underlying cause of World War I?
6. How can you use Documents E and F to argue that imperialism was more important than alliances and arms build-up as the underlying cause of World War I? How could you counter this argument?

Bucketing – Getting Ready to Write

Bucketing

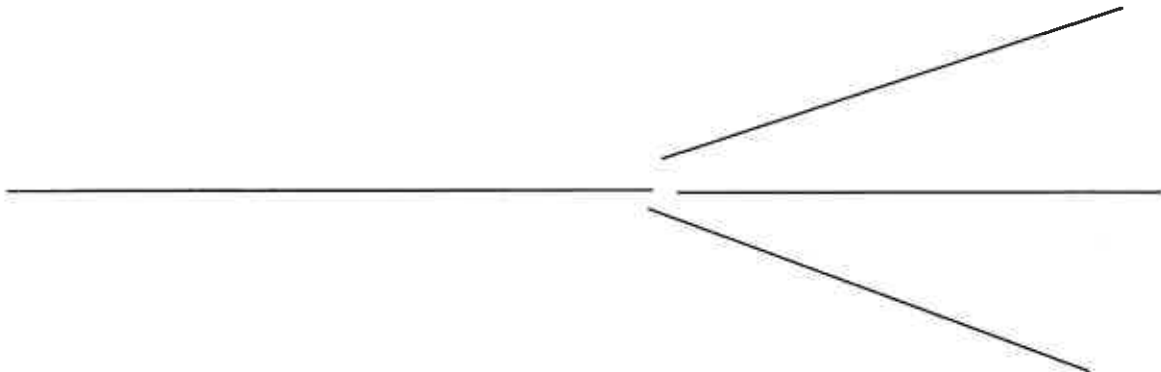
Look over all the documents and organize them into your final buckets. Write bucket labels under each bucket and place the letters of the documents in the buckets where they belong. You can put a document into more than one bucket (multi-bucketing), but you need a good reason for doing so. Remember, your buckets are going to become your body paragraphs. In this particular Mini-Q, you may want to organize your buckets so that the most important underlying cause is in the last bucket (paragraph).

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Thesis Development and Road Map

On the chickenfoot below, write your thesis and your road map. Your thesis is always an opinion that answers the Mini-Q question. The road map is created from your bucket labels and lists the topic areas you will examine in order to prove your thesis.



From Thesis to Essay Writing

Mini-Q Essay Outline Guide

Working Title

Paragraph #1

Grabber

Background

Stating the question with key terms defined

Thesis and road map

Paragraph #2

Baby Thesis for bucket one

Evidence: Supporting detail from documents with document citation

Argument: Connecting evidence to the thesis

Paragraph #3

Baby Thesis

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #4

Baby Thesis

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #5

Conclusion: "Although" statement followed by convincing restatement of main idea

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Student Mini-Q Lined Paper

Lined paper for student response.



Student Mini-Q Lined Paper

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