

# **SARAJEVO 1914: CATALYST TO WORLD WAR**

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## **Process Paper**

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In the fall of 2012 our class began a study of World War I, beginning with Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August* and proceeding to Hew Strachan's *The First World War*. While doing research, we realized that many historians view the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand as the trigger to an onrush of events that became World War I, but what happened from there was more complicated. We decided to look at the assassination from the eyes of the nations' leaders and explain the plunge into war from that viewpoint.

We found an abundance of information on this subject through the library, Internet resources, documentaries and museum archives. We interviewed several professors: Mr. and Mrs. McGinnis taught high school AP history and college history courses for over 30 years and Manfred J. Enssle is a retired Colorado State University professor of history. After contacting numerous WWI museums, many university professors and the national archives of the United States, Britain, Germany, Austria, Russia and Serbia, we corresponded with researchers and curators from the National World War I Museum (Missouri, USA), the Musée de la Grande Guerre (France), the Canadian War Museum, and the Austrian and British national archives. The abundance of information our research produced made the process of determining pertinent information, finding reliable sources, and synthesizing our findings in a concise summary very challenging.

Next, we determined that a website would be the most effective way to present our topic, enabling us to take advantage of the multimedia coverage of the era. Dividing the website into three sections, each of us composed our own portions and edited each other's work. When we were not working together in person, we maintained close

communication via phone calls, Skype video calls and instant messaging to ensure unanimity and continual collaboration on content, multimedia selection and perfecting the text. We were also excited to build on our experience from last year's website, utilizing HTML coding to enhance the visual appeal.

Looking back over the past century, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo was one of the most influential turning points in recent history. The shots fired in Sarajevo in 1914 removed the first sword in the “heap piled as delicately as jackstraws,” hurtling Europe and the world into conflict and violence on an unprecedented scale (Tuchman 18). Although our thesis did not encompass the effects of the war ignited in Sarajevo, World War I “broke the empires of Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Turkey. It triggered the Russian Revolution and provided the bedrock for the Soviet Union; it forced a reluctant United States on to the world stage and revived liberalism. On Europe's edge, it provided a temporary but not a long-term solution to the ambitions of the Balkan nations. Outside Europe it laid the seeds for the conflict in the Middle East. In short it shaped not just Europe but the world in the twentieth century” (Strachan 339-340).

*Process Paper Word Count: 496*

*Entire Website Word Count: 1,184*