

Topic: Europeans at the outbreak of the First World War

Level: B2

Time: 85 min

Aims:

- To review and consolidate the form, meaning and use of the past narrative tenses (past simple, past continuous and past perfect)
- To develop students' knowledge about the outbreak of the First World War in Europe

Introduction

This lesson uses information gaps to create a speaking activity in which students recount three different eyewitness accounts of the outbreak of war in 1914. Students work in groups of three, with each describing the experiences of a different person. The lesson then features study of the past tenses used in these three accounts, and students again compare notes in groups of three to check their answers.

The texts are based closely on authentic eyewitness accounts of the outbreak of war in 1914 from the Imperial War Museum's collection of podcasts: <http://www.1914.org/podcasts/podcast-2>

Preparation

Warmer – Speaking: describing the photos

For this task, print enough copies of the pictures from the PowerPoint file, '**Declaration of the First World War photos for Warmer.ppt**' so that each student has one photo (either Picture 1, 2, 3 or 4).

As an alternative, and to save copying and preparation time, you could just project the PowerPoint presentation and conduct the Warmer as a whole-class discussion.

There are **three different versions of the student worksheets** for Students A, B and C. Print an equal number of each so that each student has one set of the worksheets. For example, if you have 18 students, print 6 x Student A's worksheets, 6 x Student B's and 6 x Student C's.

Procedure**Warmer – Speaking: describing the photos (10 mins)**

The aim of this task is to lead students into the topic of the reading texts, brainstorm their knowledge about this topic and generate students' interest in what it must have been like to be alive at the time.

- Divide students into groups of four and give each student in the group one printed photo from '**Declaration of the First World War photos for Warmer.ppt**'. Tell them not to show their photos to other students.
- Ask students to describe the photos briefly to the rest of the group. Based on their descriptions only, ask them to guess any connections between these pictures and identify the historical events they represent.
- Get the answers from each group, trying to elicit 'war' as a possible theme.
- Note – when projected full-screen, each photo appears on its own without an explanatory caption. However, information is available in the 'notes' section of the PowerPoint file.
- The same text appears in the lesson plan on the following page.

Commentary on the photos**Picture 1 (slide 2)**

Crowds outside Buckingham Palace, London (home of the British royal family) on the day when war was declared in 1914. © IWM (Q 81832)

Picture 2

Austria-Hungary began mobilising its army on 26 July 1914. As shown here, many soldiers were excited about the prospect of war. But the Austro-Hungarian Army contained men of a number of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds, and not all of them were equally as enthusiastic. © IWM (Q 81808)

Picture 3

As the German Army advanced through Belgium in August 1914, tens of thousands of civilian refugees left their homes to escape the war. Over 1 million fled the country, many to the Netherlands, including these people leaving Antwerp at the beginning of October. Others made their way to France and Britain. © IWM (HU 052449)

Picture 4

As the individual European nations joined the war, most began by mobilising their reserve soldiers, the majority of whom had some form of military experience. Here, French reservists in Paris leave the Gare du Nord for their regimental depots where they will be issued with uniforms and equipment. © IWM (Q 081852)

Photographs 1–4 are from the collection of the Imperial War Museum in London.

Task 1 – Reading and note-taking: memories of the start of the First World War (10 mins)

- Divide the students into three groups of equal size (A, B and C).
- Distribute the worksheets: A to group A, B to group B and C to group C.
- Explain that the students are all going to read about how three different people experienced the outbreak of war in 1914, and that later they will tell their stories to the other students.
- Ask the students to read their text, and together with others in the same group, to complete the first column of the table.
- You don't need to conduct feedback after the students have done this.

Task 2 – Speaking and note-taking: memories of the start of the First World War (15 mins)

- Regroup the students into groups of three, so that each group has one Student A, one Student B and one Student C.
- Get them to ask and answer questions about the person they read about, and to complete the chart with the details.

Answers:

	Text A	Text B	Text C
Name of the storyteller	<i>Heinrich Beutow</i>	<i>Charles Chabot</i>	<i>Horace Calvert</i>
Place he lived in at the outbreak of war	<i>A small German town</i>	<i>Bangkok, Thailand</i>	<i>London</i>
How he heard about the beginning of the First World War	<i>from his teacher</i>	<i>from the French Embassy courier</i>	<i>from a big poster outside the newsagent's shop</i>
How he described people's reaction to war in his area	<i>There was huge enthusiasm at school. Soldiers, horses and guns were decorated with flowers. There was music and flags on the streets.</i>	<i>They were shocked and confused because the British were just having a party with their German and French friends.</i>	<i>People were excited. They were cheering outside Buckingham Palace and singing national songs. It was very patriotic.</i>

Task 3 – Choosing the right past tense (15 mins)

This task can be done individually or in groups.

- Ask the students to read the texts about the other two people that they heard about from their colleague in Task 2, then choose the correct tenses.
- There is no need to conduct feedback, as students will find out the answers from their colleagues in Task 4.

Task 4 – Checking the tenses (15 mins)

- Regroup the students, so that a Student A, a Student B and a Student C are sitting together. You could use the same groupings as in Task 2.
- Ask the students to check their answers to Task 3 by comparing with their colleague's original text (in Task 1).

Answers:

Text A

1. *were living*
2. *seemed*
3. *had started*
4. *broke out*
5. *were marching*
6. *were playing*
7. *were flying*
8. *was*

Text B

1. *broke out*
2. *were living*
3. *had just finished*
4. *were sitting*
5. *were sitting*
6. *was chatting*
7. *had seen*
8. *didn't know*
9. *continued*

Text C

1. *found out*
2. *was*
3. *was going*
4. *got*
5. *had declared*
6. *went*
7. *were cheering*
8. *were singing*
9. *had joined*

Task 5 – Grammar rules: past simple, past continuous and past perfect (5 mins)

- Having chosen the most appropriate tenses, this task gives students an opportunity to reflect on the rules underpinning the uses of the different past tenses.
- Ask the students to read the example sentences and choose the best description of the appropriate rule.

Answers

1. *Past continuous – b*
2. *Past continuous – b*
3. *Past perfect – a*
4. *Past simple – a*

Task 6 – Narrative story writing (15 mins)

- Brainstorm ideas as a class before getting the students to produce a piece of writing.