Topic: The main events of the First World War
Level: B2/Intermediate
Time: 60–80 minutes
Aims:
- To develop students’ ability to read for gist and detail
- To give practice of war-related vocabulary
- To develop students’ knowledge about the main events of the First World War

Introduction
The lesson is based on a timeline of the First World War, produced by the Imperial War Museum in London. Students will look at a map and some pictures from the First World War and through discussion they will build up their predictions about that period. They will then move on to practise their reading skills in a jigsaw reading on the key events of the First World War. This lesson also focuses on war-related vocabulary and gives students the opportunity to use these expressions productively in a writing task.

Preparation and materials
Print off enough copies of Student A Worksheets for half of the class, and Student B worksheets for the other half.
Warmer and Task 1
There is a PowerPoint file which you may wish to project in class for the Warmer and Task 1.

Procedure
Warmer – alliances in the First World War (10 min)
- Show the students slide 2 from the PowerPoint presentation. Tell them that the map presents a picture of Europe in the First World War. Get them to work in pairs and discuss the question in the Warmer.
- Distribute the student worksheets, with half the class receiving Student A worksheet, and the other half getting the Student B worksheet. For the time being, all the Student As can be together, and all the Student Bs can be together. The students will regroup (so that a Student A sits and speaks with a Student B) in Task 3.
- Ask them to read quickly their text, The Timeline of the First World War, to check their answers.
- Click again on slide 2 of the PowerPoint to show the answers.

Answers:
a. Britain: Serbia, Russia, France, Belgium  
b. Germany: Austria-Hungary, Turkey

Task 1 – discussing pictures (10 min)
- You can get students into groups of four for this activity.
- Show slide 3, and ask them to discuss what they can see in each picture.
- Show slide 4 for the answers.

Suggested answers: (first row) armistice; trenches; troops  
(second row) tanks; Zeppelin; refugees
The main events of the First World War
Lesson plan

Notes on the images

**armistice**: The painting by Olivier Herbert presents a view of a large, ornately decorated room in the palace at Versailles, with senior military personnel and politicians sitting around a large, rectangular table. Other military personnel sit at smaller tables that circle the large table.

**trenches**: Seeking protection from heavy rifle and artillery fire, the soldiers of the opposing armies dug trenches from the Belgian coast to Switzerland. Health issues arose as soldiers struggled to survive in extremely wet positions. This picture shows British soldiers doing maintenance work in a trench.

**painting of troops leaving a trench**: ‘Over the Top’ by John Nash is one of very few officially commissioned works depicting a specific and clearly identifiable action. The painting commemorates the 1st Artists’ Rifles involvement in an attack on the morning of 30th December 1917, at Welsh Ridge near Marcoing (south west of Cambrai). The unit was recalled from ‘rest’ in response to a German attack and hastily committed to action. The consequences were disastrous and the Artists’ Rifles suffered heavy casualties. In a sense, this action was typical of the hastily arranged and badly planned local counter-attack. Nash’s soldier figures climbing out of the trench, shoulders hunched over, walking out into the snow seem resigned to their fate. This battle experience profoundly affected the artist and his painting. The simplicity and directness of this image is a valuable visual complement to the historical accounts of the event to be found in the unit history and battalion war diary.

http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/20015

**tanks**: a British tank factory

**Zeppelin**: a German propaganda cartoon celebrating the success of Zeppelin attacks on Germany’s enemies

**refugees**: a French family escaping their homes in spring 1918

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**Task 2 – reading and vocabulary: filling the gaps (10 min)**

- Ask students to read their text again to complete the gaps 1–6 with the words from Task 1.
- Ensure that the students realise that they are filling the numbered gaps, not the blacked out pieces of text, which will be the focus of Task 3.

**Task 3 – questions and answers: identifying the hidden information (15 min)**

- **Get students into new pairs with one Student A and one Student B.** Focus their attention on the six blacked-out pieces of information in their texts. Tell them that they have different parts of their text removed and that what is blacked out in **Worksheet A** is given in **Worksheet B** and vice versa.
- Explain that they are going to find out the missing bits in their texts through asking each other questions.

**Answers:**

**Student worksheet A**: Sarajevo; Japan; British; London; Lenin; 11

**Student worksheet B**: Franz Ferdinand; France; Marne; sea; poison gas; Russian Communist
Task 4 – reading the timeline for detail (10 min)

- Encourage the students to do Task 4 from their memory only. They can discuss their answers in pairs first before checking them in the text.

  Answers: 1b  2a  3b  4a  5b  6b

Task 5 – war expressions (5 min)

- To revise some of the war-related expressions, ask the students to find the three synonymous expressions in the text. The years are provided to guide the students to the appropriate section of text.

  Answers: a. mobilise troops  b. declare war  c. cease firing

Task 6 – summary writing (20 min)

- Before moving on to this task, brainstorm with your students the key facts or events related to the First World War.
- Set up Task 6. Explained to the students that they have been asked to write a short article for a magazine summarising the main events of the First World War. Encourage them to use widely the war-related expressions they have learnt in this lesson.
- This could be set for homework.