



PROJECT MUSE®

World War I

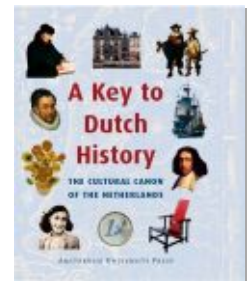
Published by

Slings, Hubert and Frits van Oostrom.

A Key to Dutch History: The Cultural Canon of the Netherlands.

Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

Project MUSE. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/76693>.



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1914 - 1918

World War I

War and neutrality

From 1914 to 1918 the “Great War” raged in Europe. The war did have consequences for the Netherlands, but the country was spared its horrors. In World War I, the Central Powers (Germany, Austria and Turkey) were opposed by the Allies (France, Great Britain and Russia). However, what it actually came down to was the soldiers of the two sides facing one another along kilometres of trenches. When shooting broke out, the soldiers could do little else than take cover from the exploding shells and hope for the best. They were even more powerless when they had to attack the enemy. As soon as they went over the top of the trenches, they were mowed down by the machine guns of the other side. The use of poison gas was something new in this war. Ultimately the war cost millions of lives.

When the United States joined the Allies in 1917, the balance was tipped in the Allies’ favour. In November of the following year the Central Powers surrendered.

During the war, the Netherlands had remained neutral, something that had been a principle of Dutch foreign politics for some time. The Dutch army was, however, mobilised to defend its own territory. Furthermore, the Netherlands had to deal with the peripheral effects of the war. Large numbers of Belgian refugees had to be taken in, in temporary camps, among other places. Unemployment rose due to the fall in international trade and the sinking (by torpedoes) of many merchant vessels. Food became scarce and rationing was introduced. In 1917 and 1918, despairing housewives plundered food stocks in Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

Many European countries experienced the upheaval of revolution during or after the war. In Russia, the Tsar was forced from the throne and executed, and the German and Austro-Hungarian empires were replaced by republics. In the Netherlands, radical political changes were implement-



ed during the war. In 1917 all men were granted the right to vote. After the war, in 1919, this was followed by universal suffrage for women. From 1919 onwards, the Netherlands was a fully democratic country: every adult man and woman had the right to vote in elections.



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Sub-topics

Primary education sector

Trench warfare; the Battle of the Somme
The "Potato Riot"
The concept of "neutrality"

Secondary education sector

The course of the war; decisive moments
Socio-political changes in authoritarian countries
(Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany)
Socio-political changes in democratic countries
(for example, Great Britain and the Netherlands)
The idea of "total war"
The causes of World War I and their effect on
World War II

Past and Present

Are all weapons acceptable in war? Consider the weapons
that were used in World War I in your answer
Compare international relations in Europe on the eve of
World War I with those of today

In the Treasure Chest

Letters and poems written by soldiers at the front
Gas mask

References

Places to Go

Ypres and its surroundings (south-western Flanders)
are worth visiting, particularly the In Flanders
Fields museum and the daily salute to the fallen,
"the last post"

Books for young people

D. Adams, *Oorlog in de loopgraven* (12+ info)
Ann Kramer, *Vrouwen en de oorlog* (12+ info)
Stewart Ross, *De Eerste Wereldoorlog* (12+ info)
L. Granfield, *In Flanders fields* (13+)
Michael Morpurgo, *Soldaat Peaceful* (13+)
Karel Verleyen, *De Eerste Wereldoorlog 1914-1918:
Alle grote gebeurtenissen van Serajevo tot Verdun*
(14+ info)

Background literature

Paul Moeyes, *Buiten schot: Nederland tijdens de Eerste
Wereldoorlog: 1914-1918*, Amsterdam 2001

Websites

www.wereldoorlog1418.nl
www.geschiedenisvoorkinderen.nl
eerstewereldoorlog.startpagina.nl
www.inflandersfields.be