



Resource E

4th August 1914 – The British Royal Navy imposed a blockade on German ports preventing German or neutral ships from bringing food, fuel or other materials into Germany.

28th August 1914 – A small raiding party of British ships attacked German vessels off the north-west German coast at Heligoland Bight. The British won the battle.

1st November 1914 – German ships defeated a British naval force in the Pacific off Chile at the battle of Coronel.

8th December 1914 – British ships defeated the last German naval force outside Europe in a battle off the Falkland Islands at the tip of South America.

16th December 1914 – A raiding party of German ships shelled the towns of Scarborough, Hartlepool and Whitby off the coast of Northern England. 137 people were killed but three German ships were damaged by British artillery defending the towns. The German ships managed to return to port, escaping Royal Navy ships.



4th February 1915 – The German government announced “unrestricted submarine warfare”. Its submarines (U-boats) would now sink any neutral ships trading with Britain without warning. The aim was to cut off supplies to Britain and force the country to negotiate peace or surrender. However, it risked war with the United States because many neutral ships trading with the British were Americans.

7th May 1915 – A German submarine sank the British liner Lusitania without warning, drowning nearly 2000 passengers, including 128 Americans. There were calls from furious Americans for the United States to join Great Britain, France and Russia against Germany and its allies.

December 1915 – The Germans had sunk only 4% of British and neutral shipping trading with Britain.

18th April 1916 – US President, Woodrow Wilson demanded an end to Germany’s policy of “unrestricted submarine warfare”. Not wishing to provoke a war with the US, the Germans changed their policy. In future a clear warning would be given before torpedoes were fired. The Germans had tried to strangle British trade from February 1915 to April 1916 with only 21 submarines.

31st May 1916 – The German and British Fleets fought a great battle in the North Sea at Jutland. Both sides claimed victory but the battle was more of a draw. The German Fleet remained trapped in port for the rest of the war. An American paper said “The German Fleet has assaulted its jailer (The Royal Navy) but it is still in jail.”



February 1917 – The German government announced that it would restart “unrestricted submarine warfare” again, this time with 300 submarines. The Germans knew this action would risk war with the United States but they intended to starve Britain into surrender before the Americans were ready to send troops to the Western Front. U-boats sank 86 ships in February trading with Britain.

March 1917 – German U-boats sank 103 ships trading with Britain.

6th April 1917 – President Woodrow Wilson of the United States declared war upon Germany and its allies. However, it was many months before the Americans sent any troops to Europe.

April 1917 – German U-boats sank 155 ships trading with Britain. The British only had 6 weeks food supply left before they would run out of food. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George insisted that the Royal Navy introduce a convoy system. In future, merchant ships travelled in groups protected by war ships, sailing in a zig-zag pattern. This made it much harder for U-boats to carry out an accurate torpedo attack.

November 1918 – Only 4% of British merchant ships were sunk by German U-boats.