<h1 style="text-align:center">War at Sea:</h1>

Key words: blockades, submarines, *Lusitania*, naval mines, the battle of Jutland

The war at sea did not start immediately because the main part of the German navy withdrew to the ports.

British ships **blockaded** the German ports. The aim of the blockades was to stop food and supplies for Germany being delivered to German ports or ports belonging to neutral countries like the Netherlands and Scandinavia. The Navy blockades also prevented German ships from getting out to open sea where they could fight. The only weapon the Germans had against the Royal Navy (Britain) were the **U-boats, submarines**.

The German plan seemed to be to keep the British navy at sea. Occasionally, the German navy left port to attack British ships and to bombard towns within reach of their long-range guns.

As the war went on, **Germany** built large numbers of **submarines known as U-boats – (**abbreviation of **Unterseebooten)**. German Admiral Tirpitz realised that they were a deadly weapon against an island, as Britain was. They could stalk ships unseen, torpedo them and stop vital food, oil and raw materials from getting through. Britain, needing a great deal of imported food, would be **starved into surrender**.

Surprisingly, there were few great sea battles between 1914 and 1918. Both Britain and Germany had built up large, powerful fleets and battlecruisers before the war broke out, but when the war came, they were reluctant to place their great battleships at risk from new weapons, like mines and submarines. So, in fact, these ships played only a small part in the war. There was only one battle of any real importance, battle of Jutland.
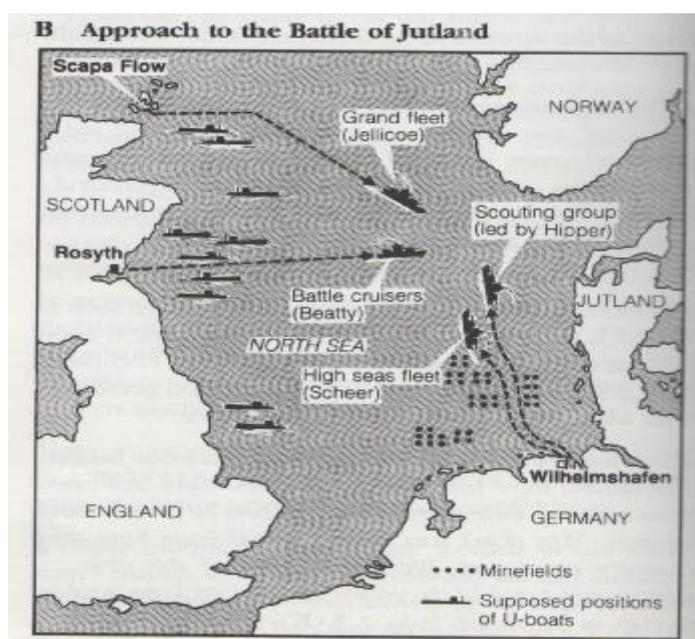
The Battle of Jutland (in Slovak Jutsko) **(May 1916):** major ship battle of the war. British Grand Fleet X German High Seas Fleet.

The Germans hoped to lure the British fleet out of their base at Jutland in Denmark and then unleash a massive attack. It is not easy to say which side was a winner. The fact is that both sides claimed victory.

The British ships were more severely damaged, but the Germans left the battle first. The British were able to resume their blockade, but for some people this was not enough. British Admiral Jellicoe was critised for being too cautious and letting the Germans escape.

The Battle of Jutland, results:

	Britain	**Germany**
Battleships and heavy cruisers	37 (6 lost)	21 (2 lost)
Destroyed and light cruisers	113 (8 lost)	72 (9 lost)
Heavy guns	272	200

Men killed	6097	2551

After Jutland German U-boats attacks on British shipping became more intense. … **In March and April 1917, 600 ships were sunk; one of four ships leaving Britain did not return and soon there was only a month´s supply of grain left**. … By April 1917 Britain only had 6 weeks´supply of wheat. Germany felt sure Britain was near defeat. However, Britain survived. Prime Minister David Lloyd George took big steps to solve the food crisis: The Navy began a **convoy system. Merchant ships travelled in groups with an escort of Royal Navy ships to protect them.** By this method, losses were cut to 1 % from 25 %. Another reason for Britain´s survival was that **by late 1917, after the USA entered the war**, the Allies were building ships faster than they could be sunk, and U-boats were being sunk faster than they could be built.

Lusitania: story of the liner

By early 1915 a new threat began to materialize: submarines. At first they were used by the Germans only to attack naval vessels, and they achieved only occasional – but sometimes spectacular – successes. Then the U-boats began to **attack merchant vessels** at times, although almost always in accordance with the old cruiser rules. Desperate to gain an advantage on the Atlantic, the German government decided to intensify their submarine campaign. In February **1915 Germany declared the seas around the British Isles a war zone**: from 18 February allied ships in the area would be sunk without warning. This was not wholly unrestricted submarine warfare since efforts would be taken to avoid sinking neutral ships.

The German Embassy in Washington had issued this warning on 22 April1915.

NOTICE!
TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on the ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

In May 1915, U-20 torpedoed and sank the liner *Lusitania* on the road from New York to Liverpool with 2150 passengers. 1000 people died, mostly civilians. About 100 of the dead were from the USA. Up to this point the USA was neutral, but after the sinking of Lusitania USA supported the Allies, and joined the war on their side in 1917. There was a great public outcry at the news, but the Germans justified their action. One side supported the view that innocent people died as a result of a cowardly act; the other side claimed that the Lusitania was carrying raw materials.

Submarine: is a watercraft capable of independent operation below the surface of the water. Although experimental submarines had been built before, submarine design took off during the 19th century. Submarines were first widely used in World War I. During World War I more than 5,000 Allied ships had been sunk by U-boats.
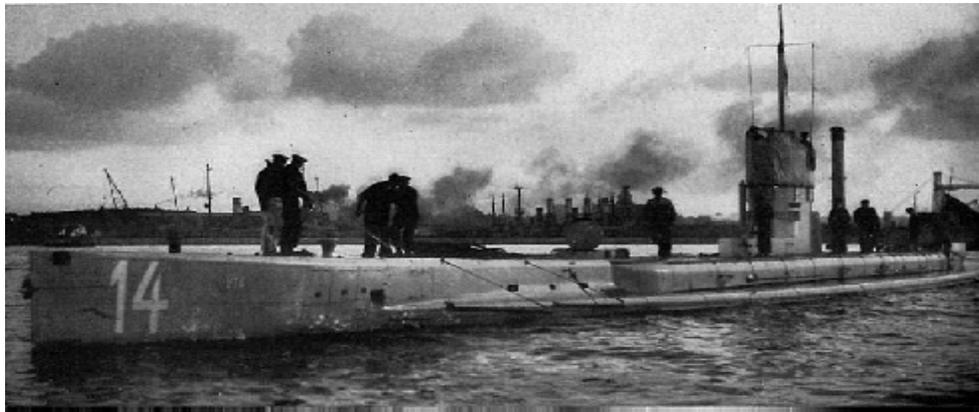
German U-Boat: Unterseebooten
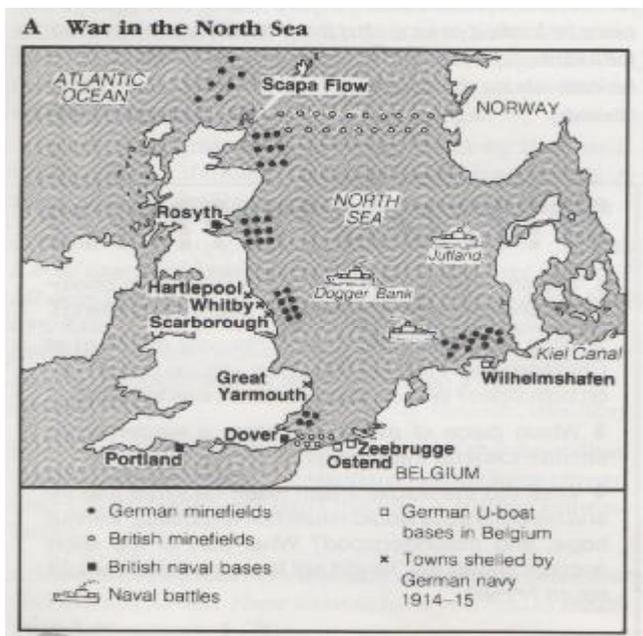
Naval mine: is a self-contained explosive device placed in water to destroy ships or submarines. Mines, anchored to the sea bed so that they floated just below the surface, were designed to explode on contact with the hull of any passing ship.

During World War I, mines were used extensively to defend coasts, coastal travel, ports and naval bases. The Germans laid mines in shipping lanes to sink merchant and naval vessels serving Britain. The Allies targeted the German U-boats in the Strait of Dover (between Calais and Dover) and the Hebrides (archipelago off the west coast of Scotland).

The total number of mines laid **during the whole of WWI was 235,000 sea mines**.

Underwater mines