Causes of World War 1 Debate

“The nations slithered over the brink into the boiling cauldron of war without any trace of apprehension or dismay... The nations backed their machines over the precipice... not one of them wanted war; certainly not on this scale.”

David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs* (1934)
Lloyd George was a minister in 1914 and Prime Minister during the war.

“There was no "slide" to war, no war caused by "inadvertence," but instead a world war caused by a fearful set of elite statesmen and rulers making deliberate choices.”

Book review in *The American Historical Review* of

Five weeks after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914, there was a world war. How did such a thing happen? As we have read in the *Long Fuse*, the path to the Great War was long and winding. In this debate, we will explore this idea further by passing and the buck, pointing fingers, and trying to figure out who really caused the First World War.

How it will work:
The class will be divided into 6 teams and each assigned one of the following countries:
- Austria
- Russia
- Germany
- France
- Serbia
- Great Britain

With their assigned topics, each group will explore the following:
- Role of their country in relation to the others in the outbreak of war
- Role of their country in relation to the others in the series of alliances that existed prior to the outbreak of the war
- The goals and ambitions of their country in relation to the other nations prior and during their initial involvement in the conflict

With the research completed each team will formulate an argument with the intent of proving their innocence in the conflicts escalation and just as importantly passing the blame to the real culprit (everyone else!). These arguments will be put forth during a formal in-class debate.

Debate Format:
**Opening: 4 Minutes**
Use this time to clarify your innocence in the war’s escalation, or at least that you were clearly in the right, or more importantly everyone else was clearly in the wrong. The point out how everyone else should be ashamed for actually starting one of the bloodiest periods of human history. Opening statements will be followed by Q/A from the other groups.

**Response: 4 Minutes**
Its time to once again to reassert your innocence and play down those empty attacks made by the other teams. Also, you might want to take a moment to once again point out that it was, in fact, their fault. Responses will be followed by Q/A from the other groups.

**Closing: 3 Minutes:**
All good things must come to an end, and this is you last chance to outline why while your country is closer to sainthood for your lack of involvement in the start of the war. Also you should mention why the other five nations should be hanging their heads in shame.
Sources:
Use these sources as well as the textbooks and other readings text readings to explore at various causes of the conflict:
http://www.firstworldwar.com/origins/index.htm
http://www.cusd.chico.k12.ca.us/~bsilva/projects/great_war/causes.htm
http://www.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lect15.htm
http://www.thecorner.org/hist/wwi/index.htm
http://hti.math.uh.edu/curriculum/units/2004/01/04/04.01.04.php

Fill out the following chart to begin to establish your position and outline your arguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Treaties/ Pacts the nation with the other nations</th>
<th>Role in the outbreak/ escalation of the conflict</th>
<th>Major goals for becoming involved (what did they want to gain)</th>
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