

YOU'RE IN THE WARS NOW

In *The Wars* you play a squad of French soldiers enmeshed in the Continental War. Your missions lead you to occult mysteries. Your investigations allow you to confront and destroy the enemy forces and alien beings marauding their way across Europe.

Your game begins several years into the war, in 1947. The enemy presses hard on France and the other nations of the Loyalist alliance.

Bone-weary and shell-shocked, you don't think much about the broader causes behind the war. The great game between nations matters little when you're shivering in a ditch, hoping the things dropping from the sky are allied paratroopers and not jelly-encased weeping mines.

The indifference you feel toward the greater scheme of the conflict goes beyond your focus on the here-and-now of daily survival. In those rare moments when you do try to contemplate the events leading up to the war, your head begins to throb and thud. The harder you try to pierce through the mental fog, the duller your perceptions become. If you didn't know better, you'd conclude that some vast, malign intelligence plays mankind for puppets, taking delight as great nations destroy themselves in a meaningless war, conducted for alien amusement.

Pah! How absurd. You must be hungry. Are there uneaten rations still in your pack?

Your GM will tell you which nations belong to the Loyalist alliance. You will also learn which nations make up the enemy side, and what they call themselves. If you already played *YKRP*'s *Paris* sequence, you may spot some connections between the previous characters' choices and the configuration of the current struggle.

Character Creation

As your GM guides you through the steps of character creation, keep the following in mind:

The General abilities Fighting and Composure remain key to survival. Here they are joined by Battlefield, the ability you'll be testing when evading the many impersonal hazards of war, from bombardments to grenades to aircraft falling out of the sky

right where you happen to be standing. Consider taking 6-8 points in each.

Other new abilities, Morale and Scrounging, allow (among other things) one character to refresh the Composure and Battlefield abilities, respectively, of other players. Your characters will last longer if a couple of players invest points in these.

Embracing the Premise

In a typical scenario, a superior officer played by the GM assigns the squad a military mission, communicating orders to your Lieutenant. As you head off to fulfill that objective, you also discover a supernatural mystery. Solving that mystery may be necessary to complete the mission. Or you might deem an investigation essential for other reasons. Either way, the story never punishes you for dealing with occult events as you encounter them. Somehow, you will also always be able to complete your putative mission—or at least, face no ill consequences when forces outside your control lead to its failure.

You may be tempted, especially if playing the Lieutenant, to take the role of the skeptical no-nonsense soldier who brooks no interference with orders as they are given, foolish superstitions be damned. Though this can be fun to play up to a point, your task as player is to make sure your character moments don't stop the group from getting to the fun part, the weird mystery you're investigating. Sure, have fun huffing and puffing and blustering, but always grudgingly relent and allow the story to progress. Balance what your *character* would do in the abstract against what you, the *player*, know has to happen for everyone to follow the premise and enjoy the session.

Weird War

This is not a mid-century martial conflagration from history as you know it. The strange ships, aircraft, and armored vehicles of the Continental War range across Europe as if loosed from a Jules Verne nightmare. Physics as we know it? Let's say that someone in the background, wearing a mask possibly, has been messing with the fundamental math of the universe.

Ornate art-nouveau decorations cover your rifles and sidearms. You might think the weapons would work better if all of these flanges and filigrees were broken off. For some inexplicable reason any such field modifications leave them worse than before.

Instead of treaded tanks, the terrifying armored vehicles of ground warfare are the **stalkers**, metal-clad, bulbous pillboxes mounted on either four or five articulated legs. Equipped with cannons, flamethrowers, and machine guns, their arrival spells terror or jubilation, depending on whether they belong to the enemy or are on your side and thundering to your last-minute rescue.

Overhead you hear the buzzing of a **dragonfly**. This helicopter equivalent consists of a glassed-in cockpit divided into twin bubbles recalling the eyes of its eponymous insect. A segmented body section houses up to eight soldiers. Combat dragonflies strafe the ground with fore and aft machine guns. The dragonfly's four wings flap up and down, granting it flight in either vertical or horizontal mode. Each wing consists of a wrought iron frame into which dozens of stained glass panels are fitted. These panels are made from levitation glass, a Carcosan technology.

Fixed-wing fighter planes are known as **vampires**, as the scollops on their wings remind one of bats. Most feared models include the Addhema (France), Varney (England), Nosferatu (Germany), Vourdalak (Russia), and Laiotă (Turkey).

Naval ship classes match those of history as you know it—except for the rumored dreadnought, an aircraft carrier with legs said to be able to scale mountain ranges. Everyone hopes the French version will get off the drawing board before the enemy perfects its own model. Ships carry a variety of weird weapons, from the **cackler** to the **Hali cluster**.

The weird equipment that most defines your existence as a foot soldier is not a weapon but a piece of communications gear, the boîtenoire. In a reality where radio and television have yet to be discovered, this typewriter-like device provides wireless, two-way, near real-time contact between soldiers and their distant commanders. To send a message, the operator types on its Dvorak keyboard, hitting the red send button on the side of the unit when finished. A buzzer inside the unit sounds when it receives an incoming message. The operator then places a sheet of paper in the roller and hits the button. The unit prints out the message using keys striking a ribbon, as per a normal typewriter.

French Infantry Ranks

Enlisted Ranks:

- Private (Soldat de deuxième classe, Soldat de première classe)
- Corporal (Caporal, Caporal-chef)

Non-Commissioned Officers:

- Sergeant (Sergent, Sergent-chef)
- Adjutant (Adjutant, Adjutant-chef; performs the duties of a Lieutenant without the opportunities for advancement)
- Chief Quartermaster (Maréchal des logis-major)

Junior Officers:

- Second Lieutenant (Sous-lieutenant)
- Lieutenant
- Capitaine (commands a company)

Senior Officers:

- Commandant
- Lieutenant-Colonel
- Colonel (commands a regiment)
- Generals
 - Brigadier General (Général de brigade; commands a brigade)
 - Division General (Général de division; commands a division)
 - Corps General (Général de corps d'armée; commands a corps)
 - Army General (Général d'armée; runs the whole shebang)