

Teacher name: _____

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Date: _____



World War 1 Reading Comprehension:

The First World War

The First World War, also known by other names such as The Great War or World War I, was a truly terrible event in our world's history. The conflict lasted four years, three months and fourteen days from 28th July 1914 until 11th November 1918. It is estimated that over ten million civilians and seven million military personnel died as a result of the war. Yet many more people (and indeed, animals) also became casualties of one of the greatest and most devastating wars in our history. The true cost of this war will never be known.

How Did It Begin?

There are many possible explanations for why the war began. The early 1900s were a difficult and tense time for many countries. However, it is commonly believed that it was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria on 28th June 1914 which triggered a dramatic series of events that eventually led to the outbreak of war.

On the Front Line

Fighting on the Western Front took place from trenches. They could be a terribly hostile place to be; smelly, muddy and often overrun with rats due to the open latrines (toilets). In order to boost morale, soldiers were encouraged to write letters to friends or play card games. Many soldiers wrote poems to describe their experiences.

A Great War?

The war's impact was massive and far-reaching, affecting citizens across the globe. As a result, it is known by many different names. For example:

- The Great War
- World War One (often abbreviated to WWI)
- The War of the Nations
- The War to End All Wars

Life at Home in Britain

Women played a crucial role in the war effort at home, starting new jobs previously worked only by men. They were called upon by the government to work on farms and in factories to fill the empty positions. When the need for shells intensified during 1915, large numbers of women were brought in to work at munitions factories. By 1918, over a million women were employed in some aspect of munition work. In addition, many women worked on the railways.

Wartime Communications

Methods of communication were very different one hundred years ago. As there were no mobile phones and wireless radios were still unreliable, armies relied upon animals. Dogs were trained to carry messages between trenches. In addition, homing pigeons were used, as they have been since Roman times, to deliver vital communications. Visual signalling methods sent messages across the front lines. The main types were flags, lamps and lights, and the heliograph (a flashing light which used Morse Code). Skilled signallers using the best silk flags could send up to 12 words per minute, which was considered fast!

Lest We Forget

Each November, we commemorate the lives of those who died by holding a two minute silence at school or on Armistice Day. At 11 a.m. on the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918, the armistice was signed and a promise to cease all fighting was made. 2018 is particularly special because it commemorates the centenary of the end of the war.

Did You Know...?

It took another six months of negotiation to achieve peace following 11th November 1918. Although the signing of the armistice resulted in a ceasefire, the war did not officially end until 28th June 1919 – exactly five years to the day after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand.

Glossary

- Armistice Day - Remembrance Day: the Sunday nearest 11th November
- assassination - murder
- ceasefire – a stop in fighting
- centenary – a celebration of one hundred years since an event
- civilians – ordinary people, not military
- commemorate – recall and show respect for
- homing pigeons – pigeons able to find their way home over great distances
- military personnel – for example, soldiers
- munitions - weapons
- trenches – long, narrow ditches on the Front Line



World War 1 Reading Comprehension: Questions

1. Which sentences describe the First World War? Choose two.

- A. It was an awful period in history.
- B. The war lasted three months.
- C. We will never know exactly how many people died.
- D. No animals were hurt.

2. What happened on 28th June 1914? Choose two.

- A. Ten million civilians died.
- B. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was killed.
- C. Archduke Franz Ferdinand started fighting.
- D. A dramatic series of events was triggered.

3. Fill in the missing word.

Many soldiers wrote _____ to describe their experiences.

4. Why do you think that women were brought into munitions factories in large numbers?

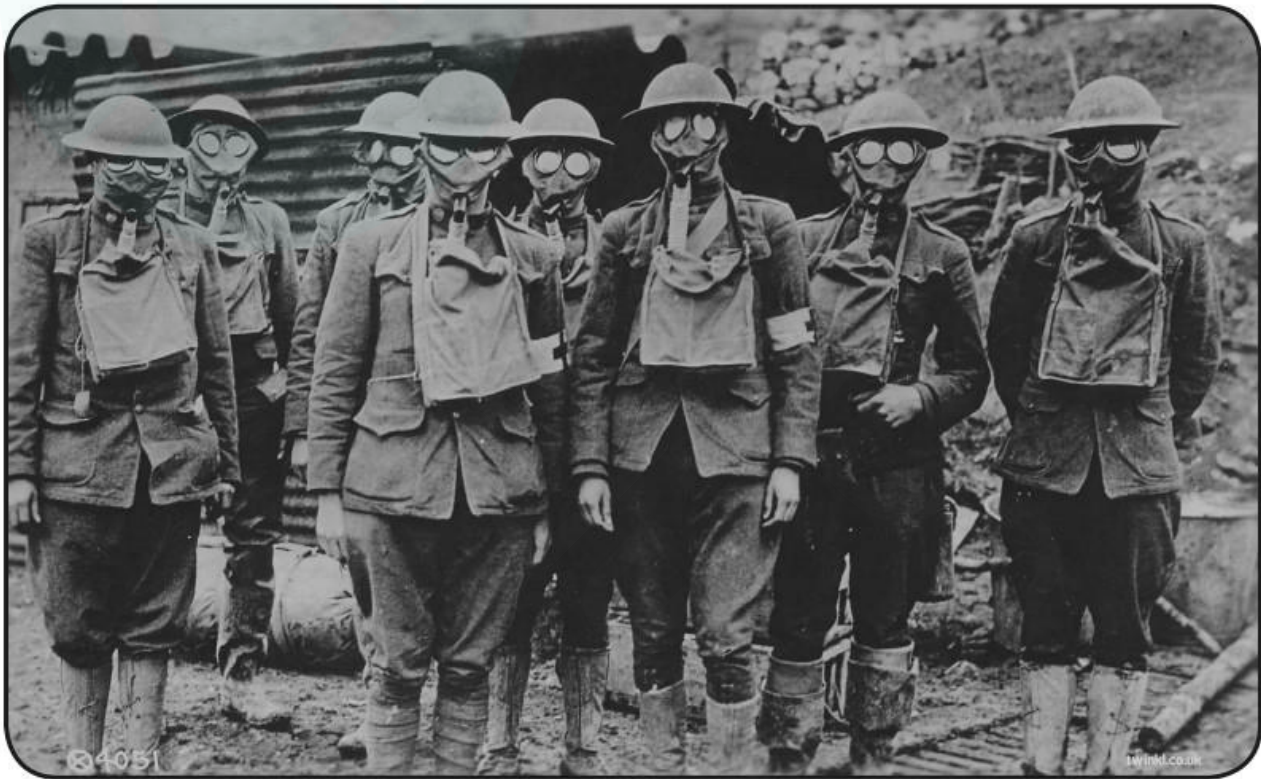
5. Which visual signalling method used Morse Code?

6. Describe how we commemorate the lives of those who died.

7. Explain why armies may have needed to boost soldiers' morale.

8. Many millions of people died. Why do you think it was called The Great War?

Pretend you are a soldier in War, complete the following post card to a loved one at home.



Date: _____

Dear _____

I know you must be worried about me but _____

Have you heard about _____

_____?

It is all anyone is talking about here. If you haven't heard about it, this is what happened. _____

Hope you are all keeping well at home.

Yours _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

City: _____

UNITED KINGDOM