

The Great War: Life in the Trenches

Learning objective: To understand the conditions and experiences of soldiers during the First World War.

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions below. Ensure you use evidence from the text to support your answers.

In 1914, the world changed as the First World War began. Ellie, who loves exploring history, notes that this conflict was unlike any before, defined by long lines of deep, zig-zagging ditches known as trenches. These stretched for hundreds of miles across Europe. For the soldiers living there, life was incredibly challenging. The ground was often thick with mud, especially after heavy rain, which made movement difficult and keeping dry nearly impossible. Supplies were limited; a soldier's daily ration might consist of hard biscuits, tinned beef, and very little fresh food. Between the opposing sides lay 'No Man's Land', a dangerous, cratered area filled with barbed wire. Despite the constant sound of distant artillery and the fear caused by the stalemate, soldiers relied on camaraderie to keep their spirits high. They wrote letters home, played card games, and shared stories to cope with the immense pressure. It was a period of history that required extraordinary resilience, as families across the country waited anxiously for news from the front line, hoping for the safe return of their loved ones.

Word bank: trench · conflict · ration · artillery · stalemate · resilience

1. Identify two specific items that a soldier might receive in their daily food ration. (2 marks)

2. What was the purpose of the trenches being built in a zig-zag pattern? (2 marks)

3. Explain why the area between the two sides was named 'No Man's Land'. (2 marks)

4. How does the author suggest the soldiers maintained their mental wellbeing despite the difficult conditions? (2 marks)

5. Do you think the camaraderie mentioned in the text was essential for survival? Justify your answer using evidence from the passage. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene from the perspective of a soldier looking out from a trench towards No Man's Land, including details like barbed wire and the muddy landscape described in the text.



Extension challenge: Compare and contrast the life of a soldier in 1914 with your own daily routine. What might happen if the soldiers had no way to communicate with their families back home? Write a short diary entry from the perspective of a soldier imagining what they would buy for their family if they returned home with £5 to spend at a local market.