Life in the Trenches: A First World War Historical Account

Learning objective: To write a structured historical recount from the perspective of a soldier during the First World War, using accurate terminology and emotive language.

Use the prompts below to help you structure your recount. Remember to include historical facts such as the conditions of trench life, the use of rations, and the daily routines soldiers followed. Use the word bank to help your sentences flow effectively.

The grey light of dawn crept over the edge of the trench, revealing a landscape that had been transformed into a churned sea of mud.

Word bank: in the meantime · subsequently · on the other hand · due to the conditions · nevertheless · dreadful · monotonous · rations · dugouts · no-man's-land · stalemate · camaraderie

1. Introduction: Briefly describe the location and the atmosphere of the trench. Start with: 'Life in the trenches was far different from anything I had ever experienced before because...' (2 marks)

2. Daily Routine: Describe the tasks a soldier performed during a typical day. Start with: 'Each day followed a strict routine; beginning with stand-to at dawn, we would...' (3 marks)

3. The Conditions: Explain the physical environment, including the mud and the weather. Start with: 'The environment was incredibly challenging, particularly when...' (3 marks)

4. Food and Rations: Mention what the soldiers ate and how they managed. Start with: 'Meal times were often brief, consisting mainly of hard biscuits and tinned meat known as...' (2 marks)

5. Reflection and Camaraderie: Conclude by describing the importance of friendship and morale. Start with: 'Despite the hardship, the bond between the soldiers remained strong as we...' (2 marks)

Extension challenge: Research a specific invention used during the First World War, such as the periscope or the tank, and write an extra paragraph explaining how it changed the way soldiers fought.