

Does the great war
deserve to be called
great



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

I do not believe that the First World War was great because several million people lost their lives fighting for four years over for a few strips of land which were no more than a mile wide.

A lot of people who came back from the war were badly injured and lots had limbs missing, as the only treatment for wounds on limbs was amputation. The new weapons that were used meant people could be killed with horrific ease. The gas that was fired at the soldiers was not very difficult to avoid or to protect against but many soldiers were not trained or equipped to save themselves against the gas. Along time before the war started, Germany had planned what it would do if war was declared. The Germans had planned for a quick war that would not cost many lives on either side.

They named the plan " the Schlieffen plan" which described that France should be attacked first, using surprise attacks through Belgium with the aim of capturing the French capital Paris and forcing the French troops to surrender. They would leave some soldiers there and then march to Russia and fight the weak and untrained Russian army and then take Moscow. The plan was a good idea but it relied on everything having perfect consequences e. g. the Belgian people allowing the Germans through, and being able to take Paris very quickly, and the Russians not raising an army very quickly.

When the Germans advanced into Belgium they met quite heavy resistance from the Belgium army. Britain who had stayed neutral until this time declared war on Germany as they had signed an alliance to protect Belgium. A small British force landed in Belgium and attacked the German army and

slowed their advance, which gave France time to move its army to the Belgium border where they dug into trenches and that is where the war stayed for the next four years. The Germans had not expected the Russian army to mobilise very quickly but it managed to and the Germans had to send back troops to fight it.

The different armies tried new tactics with new weapons but they never managed to move the position of the trenches very far for four years. The soldiers were armed with rifles, bayonets, and grenades, which they used to defend their trench with and attack the enemy's trench. Before the troops attacked, the enemy trenches were bombed heavily by long range artillery guns, which smashed the barbed wire defences, and tried to kill as many of the enemy as was possible. As the soldiers attacked they were fired on by machine guns which fired from inside heavily defended bunkers. Thousands of soldiers were cut down every time they attacked. The picture "The Harvest of Battle" showed an endless line of injured soldiers walking back towards their trenches across no-mans land.

As this was the only source that showed injured soldiers, I cannot firmly believe that this is what happened as the artist was not a soldier who experienced the fighting so it is a secondary source. Sometimes before an attack gas was fired to try and poison the soldiers. The poem "Dulce et Decorum" by Wilfred Owen describes this in detail. Also in the film "All Quiet on the Western Front" it shows a man dying from inhaling the gas and it matches the description by Wilfred Owen. The film was a secondary source as the director put in whatever he wanted and was not in the fighting, but

Wilfred Owen was a primary source as he saw this happen to one of his friends so I believe the sources.

In the First World War new weapons and new tactics were used for the first time. But old men, who had no idea about how to fight using modern warfare, controlled the soldiers using them. In the film " Gallipoli" it showed how one Australian general sent thousands of soldiers to their deaths even though he had been told that they were being killed before they had gone five yards. The film was a secondary source as the director was not there. The picture and article from " The Punch Magazine" were pointing out that generals would send thousands to their deaths but never enter danger themselves. The sources were both secondary but they were correct.

I believe that The First World War did not deserve to be called great. Millions of people were left dead or wounded. The east of France was turned into a dead, boggy wasteland with the soil poisoned from the explosives. When the war ended there was no winner as no land had been gained and both sides had virtually equal losses.