

World war i soldier essay sample

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Second Battle of the Marne

It was in the summer of 1918 that Germany would commence their battle against the Allied Forces in what would become known as the Second Battle of the Marne, which would be the last major German offensive of World War I (Michael Duffy, 2009). It was this battle that would mark Germany's last attempt of turning the tables of the war in their favor, though it was destined to lead to their ultimate downfall (Michael Duffy, 2009).

It would begin on July 15th, 1918 and continue until August 5th of the same year; bringing about a plan devised by German Chief of Staff, Erich Ludendorff, in an effort to attack the allied forces in Flanders by means of luring them into the Marne from Belgium (Michael Duffy, 2009). It was on July 15th, 1918 that 23 German divisions would battle against the French forces in a location east of Reims, while 17 other German divisions would attack French forces to the west (Michael Duffy, 2009).

Ludendorff aimed to split the French forces in half, though he had grievously miscalculated the additional 85, 000+ American and British troops that would accompany the French Army east of Reims; leaving the victory of battle in the hands of the Allied forces before midday of July 15th (Michael Duffy, 2009). Meanwhile, the German skirmish in the west held a higher level of promise and successfully broke through French forces; allowing German forces to establish a defensive stance after crossing the Marne at Dormans (Michael Duffy, 2009).

On July 17th; German General Karl Von Einem would attempt to break through a second wave of Allied forces, which consisted of French

Commander De Metz's Army and a secondary line of American, Italian, and British troops (Michael Duffy, 2009). Despite Einem's efforts, the German forces would fail to succeed; bringing about the reaction of Allied Supreme Commander Ferdinand Foch, who would launch a massive counter-offensive attack against Einem's forces on July 18th, 1918 (Michael Duffy, 2009).

After battling for two days; German forces would retreat, on July 20th, from the battle and attempt to regain their momentum for another round of fighting on August 3rd (Michael Duffy, 2009). The second battle would commence at the Aisne-Vesle rivers and lead to the eventual halt of Allied forces on August 6th, whereupon the German forces would entrench themselves until Ludendorff postponed the Flanders offensive indefinitely (Michael Duffy, 2009). A Closer Look

With the outline of the Second Battle of the Marne and Germany's ultimate defeat by Allied forces explained; one must take a closer look at exactly how such a battle would be fought by the skirmishing forces, both in the manner of tactic, location, method, and use of weaponry.

World War I was hoped to have been a short-lived event; pushed along by quick territorial gains and a swift victory for one side or the other, though this would simply not be the case at all. In fact; the majority of World War I's battles would take place in the trenches, which would cover hundreds of miles on both sides of the enemy line (Michael Duffy, 2009). The construction of trenches would bring with them the promise of death, depression, poor hygiene, food contamination, vermin infestations, and illness (Michael Duffy, 2009).

Among all of the factors that trenches would produce; trench rats would find their place at the top of the list, bringing about the fear and disdain in many soldiers of the trenches. Rats would feast upon the corpses of the dead; plucking out eyes and livers, while also spreading infection and contamination throughout the trenches by soiling food sources (Michael Duffy, 2009). The bodies of dead soldiers gave off the smell of rotting flesh and decomposition, while doing much to deteriorate the morale of fellow soldiers. The constant threat of attack crippled the composure of soldiers, leaving many to tremble amongst the fumes of sulfur, mud, and the coppery smell of blood. To make matters worse; soldiers would become riddled with lice and nits, which would bring about the development of Trench Fever among many soldiers (Michael Duffy, 2009).

The symptoms of Trench Fever would begin with severe body pains and lead to high fevers among the infected; leaving soldiers ill for nearly three months if they survived the trenches (Michael Duffy, 2009). Another development in the trenches would come in the form of Trench Foot, which is caused by a lack of foot hygiene and prolonged water exposure, developed in the form of fungal infections and would become gangrenous; leading to foot amputations in many cases (Michael Duffy, 2009).

The establishment of a “No Man’s Land” would quickly be developed in the area’s between Allied trenches and German trenches; effectively marking an area of “death on impact”, where soldiers would be shot on sight (Michael Duffy, 2009). The creation of a “stand to” would task soldiers with guarding

the trench rims against enemy raids at dawn, which would later be referred to as the “ Morning Hate” by many soldiers (Michael Duffy, 2009).

Other common tasks would include the refilling of sand bags, trench duckboards, trench draining, and latrine preparations. Free time was spent attending to rifle cleaning, reading, personal hygiene, and general boredom; given freedom of movement was severely restricted by the presence of enemy snipers during the day (Michael Duffy, 2009). As dusk began to fall; soldiers would perform another “ stand to” as they did at dawn, which would then be followed with the tasks of ration re-supplies, water collection, and the assignment of sentry guards (Michael Duffy, 2009).

When it came to weapons; the common American infantrymen was the Lewis light machine gun, while Scout Snipers would zero in on the Lee-Enfield Bolt-Action Rifle, which allowed for accuracy up to a distance of 600 meters (The New York Times, 2012).

For a factor of dominance in the sky; the Farman MF-7 Longhorn/MF-11 Shorthorn (The Virtual Aviation Museum, 2006), Voisin Type-8 (Smithsonian Institution, 2012), and Handley Page bomber aircrafts would be developed for use by the Royal Flying Corps, French Army Air Service, and Royal Naval Air Service (U. S. Centennial of Flight Commission, 2012).

Armored enforcement would come in the form of the “ Little Willie” tank, which was approved for use by the Landships Committee, and featured room for 10 soldiers, a two-pound main gun, and the ability to move at a whopping four miles an hour (A&E Television Networks, LLC., 2012).

Other weapons designed for mass destruction would include the frag grenade, flame thrower (Center for Military History, 2012), and the use of mustard gas for use against entire groups of personnel. It was clearly evident that the imagination of hate had no boundaries, no sense of humanity, and absolutely no discretion. Wrapping Things Up

WWI was nothing short of hellish; launched from the death of a single individual, and fought at the hands of several countries. The impact of WWI would prove to be horrendous to all countries involved, and many that weren't; leaving the motivations of territorial furtherance, hate, and ambition as the driving force for international violence. Soldiers would become entrapped in their own tools of precaution and safety, the elements of nature and survival would lead many more soldiers into an ironic end, and all for the purpose of economic stability, revenge, and international image.

The evolution of armored warfare would begin as leaders sought improved methods of weaponry; giving way to the creation of the first armored tank (A&E Television Networks, 2012), the development of improved small arms and explosives, and the integration of improved aircraft into the area of war (Smithsonian Institution, 2012).

In the end; Germany would be left with a sense of bitter defeat, while the Allied nations would return to waves of anguish, loss, and the development of an even deadlier situation than the Great War of 1914.

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