

What was the
importance of the
ypres salient during
wwi essay



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World war one was caused for various reasons, some greater than others.

The greatest cause for war was the fact that neither sides tried in anyway to prevent war. There was conflict between the two allies for a long time.

Germany had been prepared for war since 1905 when the Schlieffen plan was developed. This plan was developed because war had been anticipated for a long time and Germany knew that a two front war would be lost. The plan was to enter France through Belgium whilst a distraction had been created: The relinquish of The Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

There were various invasions which contributed to the start of war, the assassination of Franz Ferdinand was a great cause of war yet this would not even have been a feature if there was no conflict. War was officially declared on 3 August 1914 when Germany invaded France, previously Austria invaded Serbia on 28 July 1914 and on 1st August 1914 Germany invaded Russia. Finally we invaded Germany on 4 August 1914. A salient is a stretch of land that extends enemy front lines or a harder to defend area. The Ypres salient was a town which was famous for it's cloth, it was neutral and a small quiet town. Ypres was important early on because it was in the area where Britain sent in troops and supplies via boats, Germany also made the Shlieffen plan which relied greatly on the area as this was their access to France.

The Germans ended up in this area by taking action on the Schleiffen plan. Thos plan was formulated very early on, before the war started. Germany anticipated an oncoming war when the two allies were formed and because Germany was boxed in and were more probable to be attacked from nearly all angles. Germany would cause a distraction in France, they would

relinquish Alsace and Lorraine which would cause France to send all their armies there.

Germany would then send some of its troops through Belgium, which would be easy to defeat because they would be distracted. When this plan was put into action it failed because the Russian troops unexpectedly immobilised after six weeks, the German supplies ran out and they sent 60% of their troops through France. In Ypres the first, second and third battles of Ypres were fought in the area, the third battle of Ypres, also called the battle of Passchendaele. The area became very important to both sides of the war because if it was relinquished the morale of the people back at home would be lowered and the thousands upon thousands of death witnessed there would have been wasted. In a British trench map from 1916 of where Belleware park is now situated, just the frontline of the British trenches are illustrated because the extent of war is being hidden, if this was seen shock and horror would have been spread.

There were great struggles, hardships and pains faced and endured in the war. In the trenches the worst conditions occurred. Some of the problems faced were lice. Men would not wash for months, live in close quarters with fellow comrades; they would rarely change clothes, and rat and human diseases would spread.

A man would be covered in lice, constantly itching. Rats were attracted to the raw human flesh, dead bodies lying around would be eaten by rats. Along with rats comes disease, which would easily be spread with the amount of men living closely. Men in the trenches would stand in waist high

mud due to the lack of successful drainage systems life within the trenches were extremely boring and mundane, hardly any attacks waiting.

Trenchfoot would cause the foot rot and eventually fall off with days of it being immersed in mud. The boots and equipment worn were extremely heavy which gave the soldiers sore feet and made them tired. The rations given were unsuitable and miniscule, the diet of a soldier would involve bread so stale it was barely digestible, bully beef and biscuits, this was hardly appropriate for a man fighting in a world wide war. This suffering made it vital to achieve success in the area or it would have been in vain. Our British trenches were purposely made uncomfortable so that our soldiers had a motive to want to get out of them and fight. The conditions in the battle of Passchendaele caused three British soldiers to be killed for every two German soldiers.

Lloyd George named it the battle of mud. The drainage system of Flanders broke down and August was the rainiest month on record, tanks could not be used and Haig forgot his promise to call off the offensive if the first attack failed. The area of the Ypres salient was important to people in Britain because of the propaganda it would create if allies retreated. People would doubt our army and the point of the war if they knew the harsh truths of war. The battles in the area were symbols of morale for the whole of Britain.

The people of Britain were hopelessly lied to, we were told of the victory we had achieved and convinced of future success. The army got themselves further and further in trouble because the more that they fought, the better the victory the worse the defeat, there was more and more of a reason to

carry on fighting because the men that had died wouldn't have been worth it. The Ypres salient has become a memorial of WW1. There are many cemeteries commemorating the British army such as Tyne Cot. There is a grave for each man found to be dead in that area.

There are German cemeteries such as Langemark which differentiated greatly from the British cemeteries. There is a large area where thousands of bodies are buried. This is disrespectful, there are large black plaques with thousands of soldiers' names on them, instead of large white individual graves, and only a small number of soldiers had small black flat graves on the floor. The way that the German graves are presented represents the respect that Belgium regards they deserve, to see the graves you must look downwards which symbolises Belgium's respect towards them. They are as hidden as possible. They are on the floor as if in hell and the few trees are bare and tall, this creates a sense of loneliness.

The statues of German soldiers display destitute figures without any detail. The British cemeteries are magnificent; innocence is the main theme of the design. There is a large cross in the middle. On some graves is written "known unto God", these were the unidentified bodies. It is ironic that both sides of the war were fighting a holy war, both for the same reasons.

Ypres is a memorial because so many men meaninglessly died there. The importance of The Ypres Salient during WW1 was the amount of events that were held there. So many men died and endured barely liveable conditions for endless months or years which represents the futility of war.