

# The battle of the somme paper



1. Uses sources 15. H, 15. I to explain why the British suffered such huge losses on the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

From three sources I am trying to find out why the British suffered such a huge loss on the first day of 'the battle of the Somme'. Sources 15. I and 15. J are both written by British soldiers, 15. H is written by a German soldier. Source 15.

H suggests a few reasons why the British suffered such a huge loss on the first day of the Somme. Firstly Germans had a lot of machine guns, which they could set up easily and was their main firepower. The average machine gun at that time could fire around 400 rounds a minute, so this could be very easy for the Germans to instantly kill and take out British men coming towards them. The British thought that they had killed all the Germans, but because the enemy trenches were deep and well dug out, the German soldiers were not visible. So, British soldiers just walked at a steady pace and in an open space without any protection, so they were then shot down straight away.

Also, the Germans let the British soldiers walk 100 yards before they shot them, I think this was because that way, they would make a more accurate shot. Another thing what the British very stupidly did, was to send rows of infantry out at once, so they lost a lot of men that way. Another bad and silly reason on the British side was that, Britain assumed too much about the Germans and underestimated them, this cost a lot of men's lives. Source 15.

I was written by a British soldier. This source gives quite a lot of valid reasons for why there was such a loss on the first day of the battle of the

Somme. There was a lot of dust and noise, which could have done serious damage to the eyes and ears and that would be one less man to fight. The noise will have come from all the firepower, like artillery, machine guns and shells.

Soldiers would get very ill, by sheer lack, of sleep and would be so tired, they would collapse. To add to the tiredness, soldiers would become sleepy and drowsy, with drinking too much Rum (alcohol). Soldiers, for example Harden, just went across no mans land, oblivious that people were being killed around him. They may have affected mentally by everything, like with shell shock. Also, at the end of the source, it says, " they dared not stop".

This may mean that they were being made to fight on till the death or they mentally just couldn't stop. A sergeant in the 1st Somerset regiment had written source 15. J, which suggests some reasons for the loss of so many on the first day of the Somme. From this source, it sort of says that the British didn't really think about their tactics a lot and just went straight into it, and got knocked down one by one. Men were starting their work at 7am in the morning and being relieved to the reserve trenches.

This was at 11pm, so that is 15 hours, so they are bound to be extremely tired and ill from that, also its not as if it's easy work, is it? Also, once they have a had a hard days work like that, they would have to overcome getting back to the trenches, so that means going through allsorts. For example dead bodies (corpses), shooting holes in the ground caused by the shells and heavy artillery. Soldiers could possibly get caught on the barbed wire, in

which was placed nearly everywhere in no mans land. In the source, it said " My clothes were torn to ribbons by barbed wire.

" So, if it were that easy to rip your clothes, it would be very simple to tear a leg. 2. In what ways does the German account (15H) agree or disagree with British account (15J)? The German account, which was source 15. H agrees with the British account on some things, which is source 15. J.

They are both punctual and start their days attack at 7: 30am. But later on in the source, it says, " We were roused at 7am for roll call." So they may have arisen at different times, but the attack on each other, was at 7: 30 am. Also, both sources agreed that the British infantry soldiers were everywhere all lined up, left to right and moving towards the German trenches. The two sources agreed that when the first line of British soldiers had reached the German front line, machine guns opened fire.

From the sources, I can see that they agree being in a battlefield, with machine guns going off everywhere, that it would have been a terrible experience. The machine guns were very quickly, pulled out of the German trenches and dugouts, from source 15. H, it says, " the rattle of machine guns and rifle broke out." Both sources agreed that British soldiers were falling to the ground, one by one and very quickly. Source 15.

J says, " Men were falling, like ninepins and source 15. H says, " All along the line, men could be seen throwing their arms up and collapsing." This shows that, all those British soldiers were dying in the battlefields was a well known and seen thing among British and German troops. However, the sources do

disagree on some matters. Which is understandable, because both sources would have like to have made it sound good towards their side. Source 15.

H said, " steady easy pace." But source 15. J said that the first line had nearly reached the German line. So, one source 15. J said that they got there pretty quick, but source 15. H, said that's they are going at a good steady pace.

Source 15. J said that only machine guns came out, but rifles also broke out. In the British source 15. J, it said everything was working smoothly, but as we know, in source 15. H, the Germans were waiting for the British.

3. Source 15. I is taken from a novel. How does this make a difference to its value as a source of information about the Battle of the Somme? Source 15. J is a novel, which I think makes it a less reliable source, which is because of a few reasons. I think 15.

J, is a primary source, this is because the author Daniel George, was writing this on the 1st July 1916, this was the first day of the Battle of the Somme. As he is a British soldier, it is more probably, that it will be biased towards the British and the allies. As it says in bold at the top of the source. " From the novel Gonmecourt by Daniel George of the Queen's Westminster Rifles." This show that it was a personal account of what was really going on at the Somme, from his point of view. So, because it was a personal account, his experience may have been different other soldiers at the Somme.

This source was written in 1916, about the battle of the Somme, to inform people about it and to entertain them, because it is a novel. I think it was

being written, when he was fighting in the war at the Somme. Also, because it's a novel and is telling a story, it will be more dramatic, so things will be enthused and exaggerated, For example, " They must go on. On, on!" 4.

a. Use sources 15. K and 15. M to produce an analysis of the casualty figures of the Battle of the Somme. As I can see from source 15.

K, catastrophic amounts of people were killed on the first day of the somme, total of 57, 500 British men. But 419, 654 soldiers, in which were killed in the whole battle. (As you can see from source 15. M.) All together 19, 240 soldiers died on the day of the Somme. A total of 2152 British soldiers were pronounced missing, but you could presume that's they were also dead.

There were a total of 204, 253 allies casualties during the Battle of the Somme, (source 15. M). The German loss was 335 soldiers more than Britain, with a casualty toll of 419989, soldiers A total of 2468 officers suffered casualties and 55, 032 other ranked soldiers, either died, wounded, taken prisoner or missing. The pie chart below shows the totals of different casualties: 4.

b. Explain the three aims given by Haig in 15N. Do you think that these aims justify the casualties? Explain your answer. Sir Douglas Haig was a British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshall. Haig thought that the Battle of the Somme was a great victory for the British and the allies, regardless of how many noble soldiers were killed in the tragic battle. By the third week of November, Haig's three main objects had been achieved.

Verdun had been relieved. Strength of the enemies had been worn down.

Also, all the German forces had been held on the Western front. I quote from source 15.

N (a speech by Sir William Haig) “ The attainment of all three of them affords ample compensation for the splendid efforts of our troops.” I do not think these aims justify Haig’s speech. During the battle, 419654 British soldiers were killed. All these men, just for three aims, that probably didn’t have any influence on Britain and the allies winning the war.

From source 15. L, I can see that the allies only gained approximately 12 miles, out of all that fighting. Compared with all the land gained by Britain and the allies, when Germanys plan of the Lundendorff offensive failed.