

Does general haig
deserve the title the
butcher of the somme
essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The battle of the Somme was one of the most significant events in British war history. Over 57, 000 casualties were made on the first day. Many people believed that the battle symbolised all the horrors of warfare in World War One. There has been an ongoing debate whether Douglas Haig, Britain's commander-in-chief during the war, was right in leading many British men and even boys to their deaths. Haig had the responsibility of deciding if he would lose thousands of men's lives, and have a slight chance of winning, or to stay with the stalemate.

As General Haig was a military person he knew that lives are always going to be taken during a battle, but at this great quantity was it worth it? If his plan had worked would people be more forgiving about how many lives were lost? And if so many people believe, 'The Butcher of the Somme' is a correct name for him, then why are historians continuously revisiting the matter, and what exactly went wrong? The army was mostly made up of volunteers who showed extreme courage but were let down by their leaders.

We know for definite that Haig knew about the masses of barbed wire ahead of them and about the German dug outs being so deep underground and supported with concrete. The Germans had many advantages such as; being on a higher ground and they had a good defence system that Haig had underestimated. General Haig used the same tactics repeatedly which were obviously failing. The Germans were so used to the tactics of the British that they were never caught off guard. The British would fire at the Germans and once the artillery stopped the Germans knew that the British were coming to attack and they were ready for them.

Haig when he realised that his plan wasn't working, could've probably saved the battle by making a few adjustments, but he didn't. Many people believe that his tactics were outdated which he could've changed, he was arrogant believing that 'god was on his side' and shouldn't have used bombardments as they warned the Germans they were coming. General Haig has been given so much criticism after that battle, one of the criticisms were that he just threw men onto no-mans land without a second thought.

This is not entirely true, as he had tried to use tanks instead of men, but there was no break through. Politicians had been one of the groups to criticise Haig, but the General had claimed to have told them of how great the losses there would be and they had agreed. Haig was originally placed at an attack further north-west of Flanders, however when the Germans attacked at Verdun, all plans were to be changed. Then in the summer of 1916 Haig was officially made to lead the British into battle near the River Somme.

From this we now know, that the Battle of the Somme wasn't even originally the battle he was going to fight. After the battle Haig believed that he had completed the battles objectives, by killing some of Germany's best troops and they saved Verdun which was the main aim to achieve. Military historians believe that Haig did do a good job as he did the best he could with the resources he had, he was well qualified and did well with the tasks in hand and he shouldn't be compared to the generals of today as they are in completely different time and have different resources.

Ultimately the British won the war, which was the main priority, weather the Battle of the Somme helped or not. But the real question is was this all worth loosing thousands of lives and could the same results have been achieved without the enormous human sacrifice. It is easy now to look back and think that there must have been a better way to have dealt with the situation, but at the time it would have not been easy to have come up with a alternative solution.

We must judge General Haig with this in mind, but even back then there must've been some other way to have fought the battle without such a great loss. I believe that what happened in the summer of 1916 was wrong and could've been solved in a different way, but the title " Butcher of the Somme" is probably too harsh for General Haig as it is judging him by todays, knowledge and understanding. However, this is an argument that will go on continuously in history, and everyone will have different opinions.