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The First World War



The First World War, also known by other names such as The Great War or World War One, was an awful event in our world's history. The conflict lasted four years, three months and fourteen days from 28th July 1914 until 11th November 1918 and resulted in over seventeen million **casualties**.

Trench Warfare

For most of the war, armies were engaged in **trench warfare** on the Western Front. This front line stretched for many hundreds of miles in a continuous line of trenches. When ordered to, soldiers would climb up and charge towards the enemy. This was known as going 'over the top'. One of many examples of this was the Battle of the Somme. Its first day is believed to be, in numbers of **casualties**, the worst day in the history of the British Army.

Did You Know...?
Tanks were used for the first time in the First World War. They had a top speed of just 4 mph!

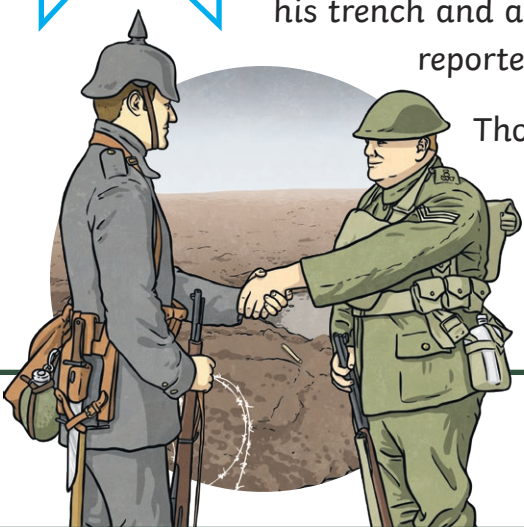
The Christmas Truce

The Christmas Truce

In December 1914, troops tired of fighting defied orders, crept out of their trenches and made a **truce**.

It was late on Christmas Eve when the guns stopped and the sound of carol singing could be heard from the German side of the trenches. Then, on Christmas Day, a British soldier kicked a football out of his trench and a football match started between sides. Germany reportedly won 3-2!

Those in command were angry about the **truce** and, as a result, by midnight on Christmas Day a flame was lit to show that the truce was over. The soldiers returned to their trenches. The fighting continued for another three and a half years.



The First World War

The Changing Roles of Women on the Home Front

The First World War had a huge impact on the changing roles of women at home in Britain. Before the war, some women had jobs as servants or maids, but it was more common for women to stay at home. However, once the men had gone to war, there were plenty of vacancies that needed to be filled in many different areas.

When the need for shells intensified during 1915, large numbers of women were brought in to work at munitions (weapons) factories. By 1918, over a million women were employed in munition work.



Land Girls was the name given to the women who worked on farms and on the land. Their roles were essential to make sure there was enough food. By the end of 1917, there were 23,000 women working in the Women's Land Army (WLA).



It is important to remember that in addition to paid employment, women were also running the household. This involved queuing for rations, sewing new clothes and mending old ones, gardening for home grown food and raising their children, often alone.



Did You Know...?

The poppy is a symbol of remembrance and was inspired by a war poem by John McCrae called 'In Flanders' Fields'. Many wild poppies grew on the battlefields after the war had ended.

Poppies and Remembrance

Each November, we **commemorate** the lives of the **casualties** of war by holding a two-minute silence at school or on Armistice Day, also known as Remembrance Day or Poppy Day.

The war ended on 11th November 1918.

In 2018, 11th November marks the centenary of the end of the First World War.

Glossary

casualty – A person killed or injured in a war or accident.

commemorate – To recall and show respect for.

trench warfare – A type of combat where enemies fight from long, narrow ditches.

truce – An agreement to stop fighting for a period of time.

Questions

1. How long did the First World War last? Tick **one**.

- ☐ Four years and fourteen months
- ☐ Four years, three months and fourteen days
- ☐ From 28th July 1914
- ☐ Until 11th November 1918

2. Which statements describing trench warfare are true? Tick **two**.

- ☐ The front line was hundreds of miles long.
- ☐ Armies were engaged on the Eastern Front.
- ☐ Soldiers climbed up and out of the trenches when ordered to.
- ☐ The only example of going over the top was at the Battle of the Somme.

3. Fill in the missing words.

_____ were used for the _____ time in the First World War.

4. **This front line stretched for many hundreds of miles in a continuous line of trenches.**

What does the word **continuous** mean in this sentence?

5. Find and copy the words that show the soldiers broke the rules to hold a Christmas truce.

6. Why do you think those in command were angry about the Christmas truce?

7. How did the role of women change during the war?

8. Explain the symbolism of the poppy.

Answers

1. How long did the First World War last? Tick **one**.

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- ☒ **Four years, three months and fourteen days**
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- ☒ **The front line was hundreds of miles long.**
- ☐ Armies were engaged on the Eastern Front.
- ☒ **Soldiers climbed up and out of the trenches when ordered to.**
- ☐ The only example of going over the top was at the Battle of the Somme.

3. Fill in the missing words.

Tanks were used for the **first** time in the First World War.

4. **This front line stretched for many hundreds of miles in a continuous line of trenches.**

What does the word **continuous** mean in this sentence?

Pupils' own responses, such as: It means a line that goes on and goes and does not stop.

5. Find and copy the words that show the soldiers broke the rules to hold a Christmas truce.

Defied orders

6. Why do you think those in command were angry about the Christmas truce?

Pupils' own responses that show an understanding of the differing experiences of the soldiers and the commanders.

7. How did the role of women change during the war?

Pupils' own responses that compare the different roles women had before and during the war for example, how they worked in roles such as servants or maids before the war and railway guards, bus ticket collectors and postal workers during the war.

8. Explain the symbolism of the poppy.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The poppy symbolises remembrance of war. It was inspired by a poem called In Flanders' Fields and also wild poppies grew on the battlefields after the war.

Trench Warfare

The First World War was different from previous wars. There were new tactical advances in technology and industry which changed the future of war. For example, this was the first large-scale use of aeroplanes and tanks in warfare.

We remember the war for its **trench warfare**, where the Western Front stretched for hundreds of miles in a continuous line of trenches from the English Channel to the Swiss border.

Soldiers spent much time in these trenches and, when ordered to, would climb out and charge towards the other side and the enemy troops. This was known as going 'over the top'.

The Christmas Truce

Whilst the First World War was a war of destruction and disaster, there were stories of hope and humanity. One such story was that of the Christmas **truce**, a famous and mythologised tale of a ceasefire between enemies. Propaganda from home promised that the war would be over by Christmas 1914. However, by December, the stalemate continued. Both sides had lost many casualties and were weary of war.



The First World War

The First World War, also known by other names such as The Great War or World War One, was a truly terrible event in our world's history. The conflict lasted four years, three months and fourteen days from 28th July 1914 until 11th November 1918. It is estimated that a total of over seventeen million **civilians** and military personnel died as a result of the war.

Glossary

civilian – A person not in the armed forces.

commemorate – To recall and show respect for.

espionage – The practice of using spies to obtain information.

trench warfare – A type of combat where enemies fight from long, narrow ditches.

truce – An agreement to stop fighting for a period of time.

The First World War

It was late on Christmas Eve when the faint sound of carol singing could be heard from the German side of the trenches. The British troops could also see small fir trees and brightly-lit lanterns decorating the German trenches.

The following day, soldiers met in No Man's Land to shake hands, exchange Christmas gifts and take photographs. They even played impromptu games of football. Alas, due to the generals' disapproval, the **truce** was called to an end.



The Changing Roles of Women on the Home Front

The First World War had a significant impact on the changing roles of women at home in Britain.

Prior to the war, some women had low-paid jobs in domestic service as servants for example, but it was more common for married women to stay at home, taking care of the family and the housework. However, once the men had gone to war, huge numbers of women were recruited into all sorts of areas of work. When the need for munitions, such as bombs, missiles, bullets and shells, intensified as the war went on, large numbers of women were brought in to work in munitions factories. The work was dangerous because women worked with toxic chemicals on a daily basis. One chemical, TNT, was used in bombs and working with this would turn the skin a yellow colour. This is how these women earned the nickname 'The Canary Girls'. By 1918, over a million women were employed in some aspect of munition work.

Land Girls was the name given to the women who worked on farms. They were part of the Women's Land Army (WLA). These roles were essential to make sure there was adequate food. By the end of 1917, there were 23,000 women working in the WLA. In addition, there were over 250,000 female farm labourers. It is important to remember that in addition to paid employment, women were also running the household.

Poppies and Remembrance

Each November, we **commemorate** the lives of the casualties of war by holding a two-minute silence on Armistice Day, also known as Remembrance Day or Poppy Day. The war ended on 11th November 1918. In 2018, 11th November marks the centenary of the end of the First World War.

Did You Know...?

- The poppy is a symbol of remembrance and was inspired by a war poem by John McCrae called 'In Flanders' Fields'.
- After the war ended, wild poppies grew all across the battlefields.

\$outer



Questions

1. Which word is most similar in meaning to conflict? Tick **one**.

- ☐ terrible
- ☐ technology
- ☐ war
- ☐ history

2. Which new equipment was used for the first time in the First World War? Tick **two**.

- ☐ tanks
- ☐ stalemate
- ☐ trenches
- ☐ aeroplanes

3. What does the phrase 'over the top' mean?

4. Fill in the missing words.

The British troops could also see small _____ and _____
decorating the German trenches.

5. **Alas, due to the generals' disapproval, the truce was called to an end.** What does the word **disapproval** mean in this sentence?

6. Describe how women's work roles during the First World War were different from prior to the war.

7. Explain why some munitions workers were known by the nickname, 'The Canary Girls'.

8. Explain the significance of 11th November 2018.

Answers

1. Which word is most similar in meaning to conflict? Tick **one**.

- ☐ terrible
- ☐ technology
- ☒ **war**
- ☐ history

2. Which new equipment was used for the first time in the First World War? Tick **two**.

- ☒ **tanks**
- ☐ stalemate
- ☐ trenches
- ☒ **aeroplanes**

3. What does the phrase 'over the top' mean?

It describes how, when ordered to, soldiers would climb up and out of the trenches and charge towards the other side.

4. Fill in the missing words.

The British troops could also see small **fir trees** and **lanterns** decorating the German trenches.

5. **Alas, due to the generals' disapproval, the truce was called to an end.** What does the word **disapproval** mean in this sentence?

It means the generals did not like, or agree with, the truce.

6. Describe how women's work roles during the First World War were different from prior to the war.

Pupils' own responses describing how before the war, women had low-paid jobs in domestic service and during the war they worked in many different areas which had been previously reserved for men such as farming and engineering.

7. Explain why some munitions workers were known by the nickname 'The Canary Girls'.

Pupils' own responses explaining how munitions workers worked with a toxic chemical, TNT, which would turn the skin a yellow colour.

8. Explain the significance of 11th November 2018.

Pupils' own responses that show an understanding of the date being one hundred years after the end of the First World War and that we hold a two-minute silence to remember the lives of the casualties of war.

The First World War

The First World War, also known by other names such as The Great War or World War One, was a brutal and horrifying event in our world's history. The conflict lasted four years, three months and fourteen days from 28th July 1914 until 11th November 1918.

It is estimated that a total of over seventeen million civilians and military personnel died as a direct result of the war, however many millions more suffered indirectly as a result of illness or famine.

Trench Warfare

The First World War was different from previous wars, with tactical advances in technology and industry changing the methods of combat. For example, this was the first large-scale use of aeroplanes in warfare, for example for **reconnaissance**. Tanks were also used for the first time – although they were primitive compared to their modern equivalents, with top speeds of only 4 mph.



Trench warfare, where armies from both sides fought from long, narrow ditches in the ground called trenches, was a key feature of this war. Soldiers spent much of their time in these trenches, locked in a **stalemate** with the enemy for many months at a time. However, when ordered to, they would climb out and advance through **No Man's Land** towards the other side. This was known as going 'over the top'.

Did You Know...?

- 'Lest we forget' is a commonly used phrase in war remembrance services. It is a plea not to forget past sacrifices made for our freedom today.
- Wild poppies spontaneously grew all across the old battlefields, symbolic of the bloodshed and tragedy of war.

The Christmas Truce

Whilst the First World War was a war of destruction and disaster, there were stories of hope and humanity. One such story was that of the Christmas **truce**, a famous and mythologised tale of a ceasefire between enemies.

Propaganda from home promised that the war would be over by Christmas 1914. However, by December, the **stalemate** continued.

The First World War

Both sides had lost many casualties and were weary of war. It was late on Christmas Eve when the faint sound of carol singing could be heard from the German side of the trenches. The British troops could also see small fir trees and brightly-lit lanterns decorating the German trenches.

The following day, soldiers met in **No Man's Land** to shake hands, exchange Christmas gifts and take photographs. They even played impromptu games of football. Alas, due to the generals' disapproval, the **truce** was called to an end.

The Changing Roles of Women on the Home Front

Women were required by the government to make a significant contribution to the war effort at home (known as the 'Home Front'). As more and more men departed for combat, the need for women to partake in what had previously been thought of as 'men's work' became increasingly important in order to keep the country running smoothly; indeed, the situation was desperate by the time **conscription** was introduced in 1916.

Consequently, the government used propaganda – such as in persuasive posters – to push women away from traditional roles and into work.

Women began work that was formerly reserved only for men. They started jobs as bank clerks, ticket collectors, postal workers, firefighters and police officers. Some of the work was very physical and required great strength; women led horse-drawn ploughs on farms or worked with heavy machinery in engineering.



centenary – The hundredth anniversary of a significant event, from the Latin centum meaning a hundred.

conscription – A law which states that if you are able to fight, you must fight.

munitions – Weapons such as bombs, missiles, bullets and shells.

No Man's Land – The name given to the area between two opposing trench lines.

reconnaissance – The military observation of an area to locate an enemy.

stalemate – A situation in which further progress seems impossible.

truce – An agreement to stop fighting for a period of time.

Did You Know...?

The Royal British Legion in the UK sells poppies.

The First World War

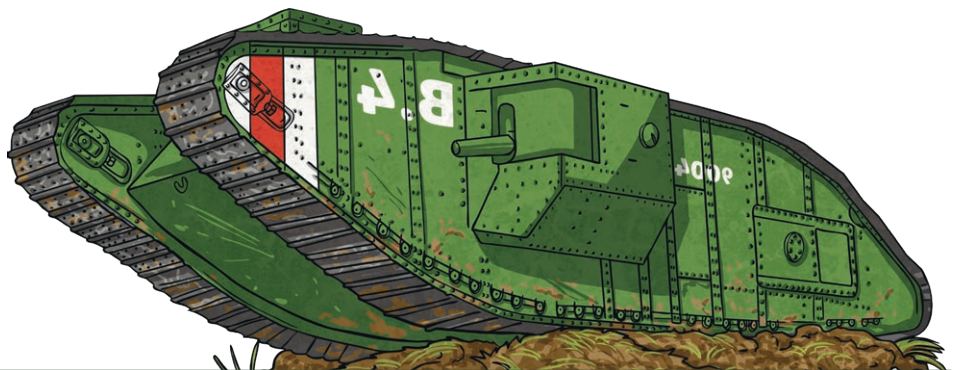


Despite this, they did not receive equal pay to the men. When the need for **munitions** intensified as the war went on, large numbers of women were brought in to work in **munitions** factories. The highly dangerous chemical TNT was used in bombs and working with this would turn the skin a yellow colour. This is how these women earned the nickname 'The Canary Girls'.

Lest We Forget

11th November 2018 marks the **centenary** of the end of the First World War. Each November, we commemorate the lives of the casualties of war by holding a two-minute silence on Armistice Day, also known as Remembrance Day or Poppy Day.

The women also experienced other side effects including: sickness, chest pains and skin sores. By 1918, over a million women were employed in some aspect of munition work. It is important to remember that in addition to paid employment, women were also running the household. This involved queuing for rations, sewing new clothes and mending old ones, gardening for home-grown food and raising their children, often alone.



Questions

1. In which year did the Great War end? Tick one.

- ☐ 1914
- ☐ 1916
- ☐ 1918
- ☐ 2018

2. It is estimated that a total of over seventeen million civilians and military personnel died. What does the word civilian mean? Tick one.

- ☐ A soldier
- ☐ An illness
- ☐ A conflict
- ☐ A person not in the military

3. Give two examples of how the First World War was different from previous wars.

4. **Tanks were... primitive compared to their modern equivalents.** Explain what is meant by the word primitive in this sentence.

5. Find a word which describes how tired both sides were by December 1914.

6. Describe what happened on Christmas Day 1914.

7. Explain why the Christmas Truce is a story of hope and humanity.

8. Explain why the government needed to use propaganda in the form of posters to recruit women to do 'men's work'.

9. In your own words, explain why the contributions that women made to the war effort were so significant.

10. **Lest we forget.** Why do you think this phrase is so important today?

Answers

1. In which year did the Great War end? Tick one.

- ☐ 1914
- ☐ 1916
- ☒ **1918**
- ☐ 2018

2. It is estimated that a total of over seventeen million civilians and military personnel died. What does the word civilian mean? Tick one.

- ☐ A soldier
- ☐ An illness
- ☐ A conflict
- ☒ **A person not in the military**

3. Give two examples of how the First World War was different from previous wars.

Tactical advances in technology and industry changed the methods of combat. It was the first large-scale use of aeroplanes and tanks.

4. **Tanks were... primitive compared to their modern equivalents.** Explain what is meant by the word primitive in this sentence.

Explain what is meant by the word **primitive** in this sentence. **Primitive means the tanks were very basic and slow compared to tanks nowadays.**

5. Find a word which describes how tired both sides were by December 1914.

weary

6. Describe what happened on Christmas Day 1914.

Pupils' own responses describing how on Christmas Day, soldiers met in No Man's Land and shook hands, exchanged Christmas gifts and took photographs. They also played games of football.

7. Explain why the Christmas Truce is a story of hope and humanity.

Pupils' own responses that show an understanding of the awfulness of war and how the actions of the enemy soldiers during the Christmas truce (e.g. playing football, singing carols, shaking hands) showed how human they were.

8. Explain why the government needed to use propaganda in the form of posters to recruit women to do 'men's work'.

Pupils' own responses that show that recruiting for work was increasing important following the departure of men (especially after conscription began) and that women's traditional roles had to change.

9. In your own words, explain why the contributions that women made to the war effort were so significant.

Women were needed to step in to what had previously been thought of as 'men's work' in order to keep the country running smoothly, in roles such as bank clerks, ticket collectors, postal workers, firefighters and police officers and also to manufacture munitions for the war.

10. **Lest we forget.** Why do you think this phrase is so important today?

Pupils' own responses that show an understanding of the need to remember the sacrifices that people in wartime made for our freedom today.