

Conditions in the Trenches.

Life in the trenches was pretty difficult. In this lesson, you are going to show that you understand what the conditions were like, as well as thinking about the struggles of the front-line soldiers.

Task One.



Using prior knowledge, make a list of all of the possible hazards faced by a soldier in the trenches. Pick out the correct hazards from this list:

- Rats
- Spiders
- Shrapnel
- Intense cold
- Lice
- Malaria
- Intense heat
- Exhaustion
- Snipers
- Shellshock
- Nuclear attack
- Mustard gas attack
- Being hit with a spade

Obviously, soldiers wanted people back home to understand the conditions they were living through, so they wrote letters.

Task Two.

Imagine you are a front-line soldier. Write a letter to your mum or wife, explaining what you have been doing and how the war is going.

Unfortunately, officers censored letters that were sent home. They took out information that could help the Germans, as well as negative comments about food, conditions and the state of the war, to keep up the spirits of people in Britain.



Task 3.

Read through this letter written by a soldier. You need to edit out any information that is not allowed for the reasons mentioned above.

Cross out with a pencil all of the sentences that you cannot include. Then copy out what is left of the letter into your book.

25th June 1916.

My dearest Rose,

I have been on the front line near Beaumont Hamel for a couple of weeks now. There is a rumour that we are due to launch a massive attack on the Germans soon. Two extra battalions of men have joined us already.

It seems strange to think that each day might be my last. Only last week, a young lad on sentry duty had his brains blown out by a sniper. At least I haven't long before I am due some leave. I am missing you and the kids very badly. I hope you are all keeping well.

You can't imagine what it's like to be stuck in these trenches for days on end. The main problem is the rats. There are so many of them, due to the food supply- all of the dead bodies lying around! I am keeping my spirits up, however, as the food isn't bad and we have plenty of cigarettes. We all keep each other amused with lots of laughing and joking- the rest of the lads are great.

Well, that's it for now. I hope to see you soon. I can't wait for this stupid war to be over. Is it all worthwhile? I know I'm fighting for king and country, but try telling that to all of my mates who have died.

Yours ever loving,

Jim.

Extension task.

Using your own ideas, based on the work so far, answer these questions:

1. Do you think the German trenches would have been as bad? Why?
2. How do you think the officers felt about restricting the truth?
3. What do you think the people at home would have done if they had known the truth?
4. If there were a war today, would people actually suffer these same conditions? Explain your answer.