

World War I DBQ

Directions: The following question is based on the accompanying Documents 1-12. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise. Your teacher may provide additional instructions and advice to use when answering the question below.

Prompt: Identify changes in warfare that occurred during the First World War (1914-1918) and analyze the varying attitudes and responses to these changes.

Historical Background: During the nineteenth century, most European wars were limited in both casualties and duration. World War I dramatically changed that. Total war was practiced and several new battlefield tactics were developed that resulted in enormous loss of lives.

Document 1

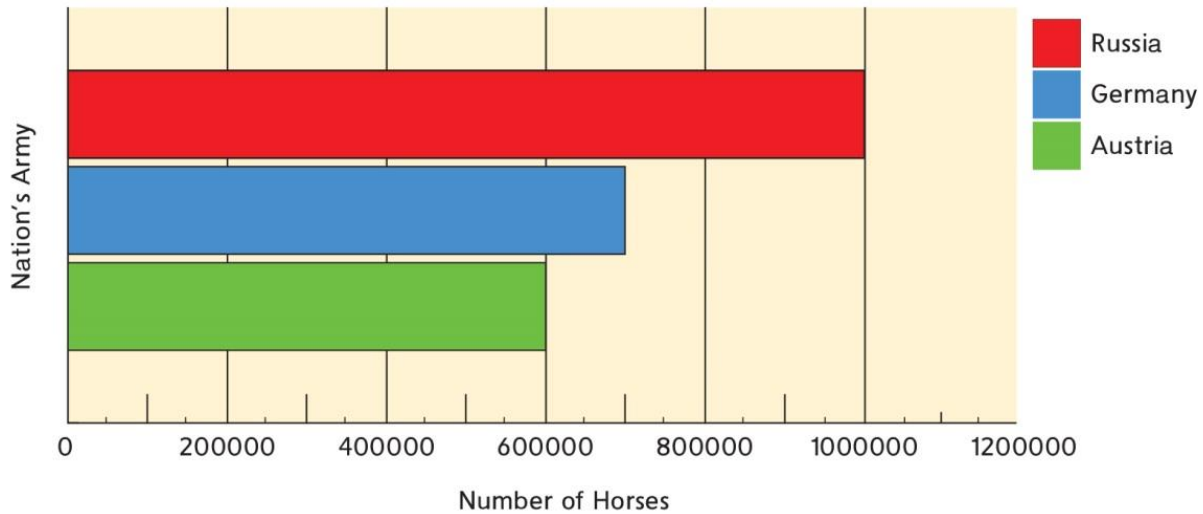
Source: Rupert Brooke, British poet who joined the navy at the start of WWI, poem, *The Dead*, 1914.

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.
Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

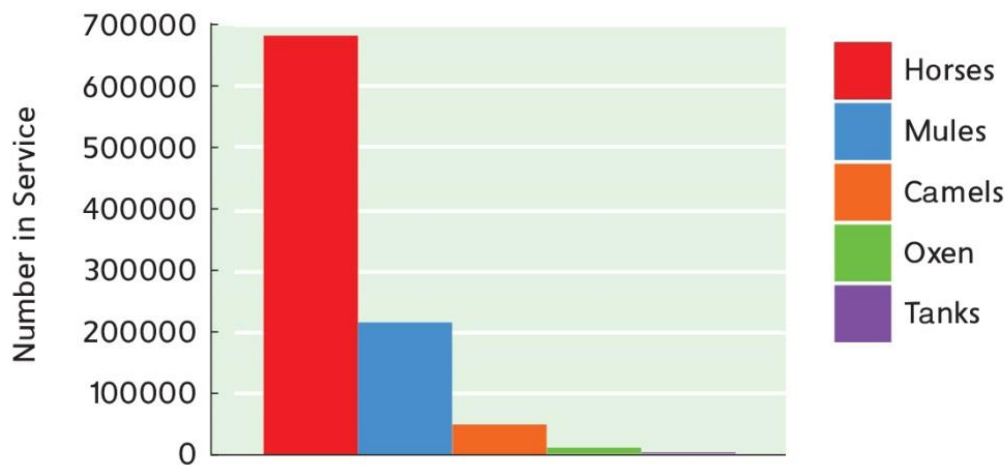
Document 2

Source: Graphs referring to the use of animals by the military.

Number of Horses Used by Armies, 1914



In Service to the British Military, 1916



Document 3

Source: Fritz Kreisler, Austrian soldier, *Four Weeks in the Trenches, The War Story of a Violinist*, 1915.

In the western area of the theater of war,... such trenches become an elaborate affair, with extensive underground working and wing connections of lines which almost constitute little fortresses and afford a certain measure of comfort. But where we were in Galicia at the beginning of the war, with conditions utterly unsteady and positions shifting daily and hourly, only the most superficial trenches were used. In fact, we thought ourselves fortunate if we could requisition enough straw to cover the bottom. That afternoon we had about half finished our work when our friend the [Russian] aeroplane appeared on the horizon again. This time we immediately opened fire. It disappeared, but apparently had seen enough, for very soon our position was shelled. By this time, however, shrapnel had almost ceased to be a source of concern to us and we scarcely paid any attention to it. Human nerves quickly get accustomed to the most unusual conditions and circumstances and I noticed that quite a number of men actually fell asleep from sheer exhaustion in the trenches, in spite of the roaring of the cannon about us and the whizzing of shrapnel over our heads.

Document 4

Source: Anonymous Account of French troops being gassed at Ypres, April 1915

Utterly unprepared for what was to come, the [French] divisions gazed for a short while spellbound at the strange phenomenon they saw coming slowly toward them.

Like some liquid the heavy-coloured vapour poured relentlessly into the trenches, filled them, and passed on.

For a few seconds nothing happened; the sweet-smelling stuff merely tickled their nostrils; they failed to realize the danger. Then, with inconceivable rapidity, the gas worked, and blind panic spread.

Hundreds, after a dreadful fight for air, became unconscious and died where they lay - a death of hideous torture, with the frothing bubbles gurgling in their throats and the foul liquid welling up in their lungs. With blackened faces and twisted limbs one by one they drowned - only that which drowned them came from inside and not from out.

Document 5

Source: Official German Press Report citing French use of chemical weapons at Ypres in April 1915, published June 1915.

For every one who has kept an unbiased judgment, the official assertions of the strictly accurate and truthful German military administration will be sufficient to prove the prior use of asphyxiating gases by our opponents.

On April 16th the French were making increased use of asphyxiating bombs. But let whoever still doubts, consider the following instructions for the systematic preparation of this means of warfare by the French, issued by the French War Ministry, dated February 21, 1915:

Remarks concerning shells with stupefying gases:

The so-called shells with stupefying gases that are being manufactured by our central factories contain a fluid which streams forth after the explosion, in the form of vapours that irritate the eyes, nose, and throat.

There are two kinds: hand grenades and cartridges. . . .

Here we have a conclusive proof that the French in their State workshops manufactured shells with asphyxiating gases fully half a year ago at least.

Document 6

Source: Paris Mail*, *The First Battle of Ypres: An Anniversary Report*, October 1915.

Today we celebrate the triumphal but bloody anniversary of the first battle of Ypres. We have lived through vivid, valorous months and years, we have watched battle after battle, terrible, intense, full-fraught with significance; and we have not even yet, in the vortex of events, realized how supreme was the crisis through which we passed....and how frightfully our fate trembled in the balance.

... The climax of the furious battle was reached on October 31st, and the culminating hour was that between 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock. It was then that the German hordes seemed for a moment to have triumphed, it was then that the stroke of genius of General FitzClarence sent the right men to the right point at the right time.

The peril passed; the line steadied; and thereafter all the declamation of the Kaiser, all the assaults of the Prussian Guards, could not shake the deathless army that fought its greatest fight on the Flanders battlefield for the keys of France and of England.

*Parisian newspaper

Document 7

Source: Richard Haigh, British tank commander, *Life in a Tank*, written during World War I.

Although one is protected from machine-gun fire in a tank, the sense of confinement is, at times, terrible. One does not know what is happening outside his little steel prison. One often cannot see where the machine is going. The noise inside is deafening; the heat terrific. Bombs shatter on the roof and on all sides. Bullets spatter savagely against the walls. There is an awful lack of knowledge; a feeling of blind helplessness at being cooped up. One is entirely at the mercy of the big shells. If a shell hits a tank near the petrol tank, the men may perish by fire, as did Gould, without a chance of escape. Going down with your ship seems pleasant compared to burning up with your tank. In fighting in the open, one has, at least, air and space.

Document 8

Source: Paul von Hindenburg, German general, report on the Battle of Cambrai, 1917.

The English attack at Cambrai for the first time revealed the possibilities of a great surprise attack with tanks. We had had previous experience of this weapon in the spring offensive, when it had not made any particular impression. However, the fact that the tanks had now been raised to such a pitch of technical perfection that they could cross our undamaged trenches and obstacles did not fail to have a marked effect on our troops.

The physical effects of fire from machine-guns and light ordnance with which the steel Colossus was provided were far less destructive than the moral effect of its comparative invulnerability. The infantryman felt that he could do practically nothing against its armoured sides. As soon as the machine broke through our trench-lines, the defender felt himself threatened in the rear and left his post.

Document 9

Source: Wilfred Owen, British poet who served in the army, Anthem for Doomed Youth, c. 1917.

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,
...And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Document 10

Source: Captain Manfred von Richthofen, Prussian nobleman and fighter pilot known as the Red Baron, *The Red Battle Flyer*, 1918.

In Russia our battle squadron did a great deal of bomb throwing. Our occupation consisted of annoying the Russians. We dropped our eggs on their finest railway establishments. . . . The aeroplanes were ready to start. Every pilot tried his motor, for it is a painful thing to be forced to land against one's will on the wrong side of the Front line, especially in Russia. The Russians hated the flyers. If they caught a flying man they would certainly kill him. That is the only risk one ran in Russia for the Russians had no aviators, or practically none. If a Russian flying man turned up he was sure to have bad luck and would be shot down. The anti-aircraft guns used by Russia were sometimes quite good, but they were too few in number. Compared with flying in the West, flying in the East is absolutely a holiday.

Document 11

Source: Excerpt from *The History of the Great War, Based on Official Documents, Medical Services, Surgery of the War, Volume* , Edited by Major General Sir W. G. MacPherson, 1922.

The greatest wastage from trench foot occurred on the Western Front in France and Flanders, and the affection was also a cause of serious wastage in Gallipoli and Macedonia. In the winter of 1914-15, cases of trench foot were returned under a variety of names, such as "frost-bite," "chilled feet," "effects of exposure," "N.Y.D. feet," [Not Yet Diagnosed - Feet] or simply as "feet cases." The term "trench foot" does not appear to have been generally adopted until the end of that winter. As might be expected the highest incidence occurred amongst the rank and file of the infantry, the officers suffering to a less extent than their men. ...New divisions suffered heavily at first through want of experience in dealing with the conditions in the trenches.

Document 12

Source: Fritz Haber, Nobel Prize winning chemist and leader in development of chemical weapons, c. 1920s.

During peace time a scientist belongs to the World, but during war time he belongs to his country.