



LESSON 6.1.2 | READ | Schools of Thought – Causes of World War I — Mary Price

PURPOSE

The assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria triggered World War I. The assassination was the spark that ignited the conflict. Would the conflict have ended right where it began, in Bosnia, if deeper currents did not propel the European powers on to war? Why did European countries make devastating war on one another? Both the economic power of the countries of Europe and their rivalry for world influence produced serious divisions and mutual suspicions among them. Scholars disagree on the causes of World War I. What were the forces

at play? Let's examine as we analyze this question by considering the following schools of thought on causes of the war in Europe.

ATTACHMENT

- Schools of Thought | Causes of World War I

PROCESS

Read Schools of Thought: Causes of World War I for a general overview of each school of thought. Select one or two which seem most credible to you. Note that historians disagree on which school is most valid. Narrow the choice down to one school of thought and seek like-minded students to form a fishbowl discussion group. Be prepared to defend your position against other groups and questions from your teacher.



READING | Schools of Thought: Causes of World War I — Mary Price

BACKGROUND

World War I was one of the first events in modern history that was both concentrated in time and global in scope. And it was a hugely important turning point in world history. Consider the world scene in 1914, the year the war broke out.

Europe was divided into a number of sovereign nation-states, but it still constituted a single cultural community in some respects. Even though there were many different church denominations, Christianity gave Europeans some generally shared ideas about the supernatural, morality, and destiny. European states had different sorts of governments. France and Portugal were the only republics. Most countries were monarchies, many of them constitutional monarchies such as Great Britain, some autocracies such as Russia. People could travel quite easily from one European country to another, and no one had to show a passport. People traveled widely within Europe, especially using the railway networks that linked most countries together. Europeans spoke a variety of languages, no common one. But French served as a language of diplomacy and scholarly exchange throughout Europe.

Everyday culture was quite similar all across Europe, especially in the cities. There, people tended to dress alike, eat many of the same foods, and enjoy the same art and music. The unity of civilization in Europe might be symbolized by the architecture of three sorts of public buildings. One was the railway station, which represented European communication and industry. The second was the town hall, which typified public participation in government. The third was the opera house, which symbolized common culture in the fine arts. These types of structures looked quite alike wherever one traveled in Europe.

In 1914, the industrial nation-states of Europe dominated most of the world. Three powers—Britain, France, and Germany—controlled about 80 percent of the world's inhabited surface. Those three powers also possessed about half of the world's industrial might. Their merchants controlled half the world's international trade.

So why did European countries make devastating war on one another? Both the economic power of the countries of Europe and their rivalry for world influence produced serious divisions and mutual suspicions among them—even though their affluent populations attended the same operas. National groups that did not have their own states, or not one that included the territories they wanted, expressed their nationalism loudly. These groups were concentrated in eastern Europe: Poles, Ukrainians, Croatians, Serbs, Czechs, and others. Tensions were growing between the sovereign states. There was general agreement in the early twentieth century that boundaries in Europe were to be regarded as fixed. One state was not supposed to covet the territory of other states.

Within Europe an ominous arms race was picking up. Germany, which became a unified sovereign state in 1871, was a new power on the scene. Germany's rapid rise as an industrial and military power caused alarm, especially for France and Britain. All the European powers informally agreed that whenever a conflict threatened to break out between two of them, the powers would gang up on the side of the underdog and the crisis would be defused that way. But Europe had no regular machinery for settling international disputes. Neither the League of Nations nor the United Nations yet existed. ►



Shifts and adjustments in the balance of power ended, and Europe divided into two solid alliance blocks: Germany and Austria-Hungary on one side, Britain, France, and Russia on the other.

The incident that precipitated World War I was in itself a small one: the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary, was traveling in the town of Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. While his carriage was driving through the streets, a Serbian terrorist shot him. Serbian revolutionaries regarded Austria as the special enemy of the little country of Serbia. From this incident unrolled a series of events that nobody managed to control and that led directly to the outbreak of the war in August 1914. Austria made demands on Serbia. Russia was an ally of Serbia and therefore started mobilizing its army. Germany then mobilized as well because it felt it had to stand by Austria, its ally, against Russia. Finally, France and Britain, Russia's allies, mobilized too. Germany invaded France and tried to knock it out of the war fast, but the army got bogged down in Belgium and northeastern France. This is where the trench lines were dug. This was the Western Front. The rigid alliance system made it almost inevitable that a local quarrel could become a European war, and that is what happened. And because of the involvement of European countries with their own colonies and with other countries in Africa, Asia, and America, it became a world war. Japan, China, Italy, and the US all came into the war eventually on the Allied side. Turkey joined the Central Powers. Before the war was over, more than thirty countries with a combined population of 1.4 billion people were involved.

Scholars disagree on the causes of World War I. What were the forces at play? Let's examine:

NATIONALISM

Those who believe that nationalism was the main cause of World War I think that it was propelled by such factors as the desire of Slavic peoples to free themselves from the rule of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and the desire of Austria-Hungary, in turn, to crush rising spirits of nationalism among ethnic groups within the empire. Serbian nationalists were especially militant, Serbs within the empire demanding unification with the small Kingdom of Serbia. In the Middle East, nationalists in Arabic-speaking lands sought independence from the Ottoman Turkish empire. Nationalist groups in Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Poland called for separation from the Russian empire. Russia also promoted Pan-Slavism in the Balkans, encouraging fellow Slavic-speaking peoples in their quest to throw off Austria-Hungary's rule. The peace treaties following the war led to the birth of a number of states (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Turkey, and others) ruled by a dominant nationalist ethnic group. This shows that nationalism was in fact the major causative issue of the war.

THE BALANCE OF POWER AND IMPERIALISM

This causative factor is summarized in a world history textbook by Jerry Bentley and Herbert Zeigler:

"Aggressive nationalism was also manifest in economic competition and colonial conflicts, fueling dangerous rivalries among the major European powers. The industrialized nations of Europe competed for foreign markets and engaged in tariff wars, but the most unsettling economic rivalry involved Great Britain and Germany. By the twentieth century Germany's rapid industrialization threatened British economic predominance. . . British reluctance to accept the



relative decline of British industry vis-à-vis German industry strained relations between the two economic powers.

Economic rivalries fomented colonial competition. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European nations searched aggressively for new colonies or dependencies to bolster economic performance. In their haste to conquer and colonize, the imperial powers stumbled over each other, repeatedly clashing in one corner of the globe or another. . . .

Virtually all the major powers engaged in the scramble for empire, but the competition between Britain and Germany and that between France and Germany were the most intense and dangerous. Germany, a unified nation only since 1871, embarked on the colonial race belatedly but aggressively, insisting that it too must have its “place in the sun.” German imperial efforts were frustrated, however, by the simple fact that British and French imperialists had already carved up most of the world. German-French antagonisms and German-British rivalries went far toward shaping the international alliances that contributed to the spread of war after 1914.”

Source:

Jerry H. Bentley and Herbert F. Zeigler, Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 973-74.

INTERESTS OF INDIVIDUAL NATIONS

Whatever else may have triggered World War I, it must be remembered that nations do not send their sons to die on the battlefield simply because they have signed onto alliances. Nations uphold or ignore alliances based on their own self-interests. To be sure, each of the combatants believed they had interests that had to be protected and pursued and therefore something to be gained by going to war:

- Russia - It saw itself as the Protector of the Slavs and

claimed that Austria-Hungary treated Serbs and other Slavic-speaking groups unfairly. Russia also sought ready access to the Mediterranean Sea, but this involved sailing through Ottoman territory.

- The Ottoman Empire - It had been losing territory since the eighteenth century and sought to preserve its integrity and great power status.
- Germany - It shared history and culture with German-speaking Austria, which created a powerful bond between the two states. It also wanted to secure the Rhineland, with its important resources, and to ward off French desires to seek revenge for the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in 1870.
- Italy - It wanted to strengthen its position as world power and gain more colonies. Italy switched its alliance from the Central Powers to the Allied Powers in 1915 on promises of getting colonies.
- France - It looked upon Germany as an aggressor and wished to get back the territories it had lost to that power following the Franco-Prussian War of 1871.
- Serbia - It wanted to bring all Serbs in the Ottoman and Austrian empires into the Kingdom of Serbia.

ARMS BUILDUP

The Triple Alliance and Triple Entente were supposed to be peace-keeping alliances, designed as deterrents to prevent any power from ganging up on any of the others. A prospective aggressor would know that if it declared war against any member of the opposing alliance, all members of that alliance would come to the attacked member’s defense. While the system of alliances aimed to keep the peace, however, the opposing members were plotting against each other. This was accompanied by a buildup of arms sometimes described as a powder keg. If the army and navy stockpiles had not existed, both alliances would have needed at least



a year to mobilize and build defenses. A year might have been enough time to make them stop and select a more reasonable course. Even today, those who demand reduction of armaments in the world use the same argument. Jerry Bentley and Herbert Zeigler emphasize the naval arms race:

“Germans and Britons convinced themselves that naval power was imperative to secure trade routes and protect merchant shipping. Moreover, military leaders and politicians saw powerful navies as a means of controlling the seas in times of war, a control they viewed as decisive in determining the outcome of any war. Thus when Germany’s political and military leaders announced their program to build a fleet with many large battleships, they seemed to undermine British naval supremacy. The British government moved to meet the German threat through the construction of super battleships known as dreadnoughts. Rather than discouraging the Germans from their naval buildup, the British determination to retain naval superiority stimulated the Germans to build their own flotilla of dreadnoughts. This expensive naval race contributed further to international tensions and hostilities between nations.”

Source:

Price, Mary. "The Causes and Consequences of World War I: 1900-1920." World History For Us All. PDF.



LESSON 6.1.3 | WATCH | Crash Course World History #36 Archdukes, Cynicism, and World War I

PURPOSE

In this video, you will learn about the causes of World War I, which at the time was supposed to end all wars. You will examine the military arms race and alliances that occurred prior to the war. You will also analyze the type of combat employed during the war, the deadly combination of new technology and outdated war tactics, the experiences of soldiers, the after effects of the war, and the cost of it. Millions of lives were lost because of the war, as were traditional ideas of war's nobility and heroism.

LINK

- [Crash Course World History #36 – Archdukes, Cynicism, and World War I](#)

Watch the video on your own time, either at home, on your phone, or in the library.

PREVIEW

In which John Green teaches you about the war that was supposed to end all wars. Instead, it solved nothing and set the stage for the world to be back at war just a couple of decades later. As an added bonus, World War I changed the way people look at the world, and normalized cynicism and irony. John will teach you how the assassination of an Austrian Archduke kicked off a new kind of war that involved more nations and more people than any war that came before. New technology like machine guns, airplanes, tanks, and poison gas made the killing more efficient than ever. Trench warfare and modern weapons led to battles in which tens of thousands of soldiers were killed in a day, with no ground gained for either side. World War I washed away the last vestiges of 19th century Romanticism and paved the way for the 20th century modernism that we all

know and find to be cold and off-putting. While there may not be much upside to WWI, at least it inspired George M. Cohan to write the awesome song, "Over There."

PROCESS

As with all of the videos in the course, watch the video before class. Remember that John speaks quickly and you may benefit from having the captions turned on. If you missed something, have your teacher pause or rewind the video. As you watch the video, begin to consider the opportunities nations have to not mobilize and declare war. Because of the alliance system, is there a cultural belief that war is good and necessary for strengthening nations? What was the cost of war? How did it change people's perception of war?



LESSON 6.1.3 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Think about the following questions as you watch the video.

1. Other than the obvious, why is World War I considered a tragedy?

2. So what was the immediate cause of the war?

3. How long were the trenches used on the Western Front of the war?
How much land did the trenches cover?

4. How many people were killed and wounded in the war?

5. What was the most efficient killer in World War I?



6. What two American technologies made their debut in the war?

7. How destructive was WW I and what were the causes of this destruction?

8. What were the conditions like for the soldiers in World War I?

9. What ended the war and what were the results?

LESSON 6.1.3 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following question to make connections across different concepts and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. About halfway through the video, John mentions the idea that people make history and are also made by history. What do they think he means by this?



LESSON 6.1.4 | READ | Battle of the Somme Accounts

PURPOSE

The Battle of the Somme was a definitive campaign of the First World War. Unprecedented casualties resulted from intense trench warfare and new military technologies. In this lesson, students analyze and compare three different accounts of the battle's first day - one from a British journalist who paints a rosy picture of the Allied offensive and two from combatants that provide starkly different portraits of the event.

ATTACHMENTS

- Battle of the Somme Accounts
- Battle of the Somme Graphic Organizer

PROCESS

Your teacher will provide you with copies of the Battle of the Somme documents or you will download the accounts. You will also be provided with the accompanying graphic organizer. As a class, we will read Document A: *The Daily Express* together and complete that corresponding portion of the graphic organizer. After completing Document A, read and complete Documents B and C on your own. Use evidence from all three accounts to complete the final claim portion of the worksheet. Share and discuss responses once everyone is completed. Be prepared for a discussion.



READING | Battle of the Somme Accounts – Document A: The Daily Express

First Push of the Big Push Begins

Special Account of the Fighting In Our New Offensive

By John D. Irvine, “Daily Express” Special Correspondent

WITH THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE FIELD, JULY 1 (NOON).

The great day of battle broke in sunshine and mist. Not a cloud obscured the sky as the sun appeared above the horizon – in the direction where the German trenches lay. But, anon, a purple haze crept up which grew in intensity, as the morning advanced, and the view of distant objects was veiled in obscurity.

The night passed quietly in our trenches. The enemy was submitting in silence to the ordeal of our terrific gunfire. No doubt he knew that it was the prelude to a great event, and that whatever might be his powers of retaliation later, for the time being he must be content to wait and endure.

From a ridge a little to the west of Albert, overlooking the town and commanding a wide view of the beautiful undulating country, I witnessed the last phase of the bombardment which preceded the advance. It was six o'clock (summer time) when we arrived there. The guns had been roaring furiously all through the night. Now they had, so to speak, gathered themselves together for one grand final effort before our British lions should be let loose on their prey.

The sound was that of a raging pandemonium, and one felt almost inclined to sympathise with the soldier who remarked to a comrade:--“Pity the poor German devils in the trenches who are copping this lot.” “Serve ‘em right,” was the reply. “I hope they’ll be sorry now they started this war.” The mist at first was too thick to note through the telescope the falling

of the shells. For half an hour we heard nothing but the ceaseless crashing and booming of our guns, great and small, and saw nothing but the flashes of fire from their muzzles.

BURSTING SHELLS.

Presently, however, the haze began to roll away, and it was possible to observe the bursting of our projectiles. Within the orbit of our observation we saw the falling continuous showers on the German positions in and around Fricourt and Mametz, Thiepval, and further towards the north-east, in front of Braysur-Somme. Great clouds of thick, black smoke borne on a slight south-westerly breeze drifted across the German positions with the bursting of our heavy shells—an obscurity which incidentally was of help later to our men, who advanced from the trenches with the sun in their faces.

The concentration and accuracy of our fire could not have been surpassed, and incidentally witness may be borne to the extreme usefulness of the new British trench mortars, which discharge twenty-five rounds per minute, and are the most trustworthy agents in the destruction of wire and other obstacles. The quiescence of the enemy in the midst of the inferno raging about his ears by this time was getting quite remarkable, though the surmise deepened that he was merely “lying low” to suit his own particular purposes. Now and then he scattered shrapnel westward, but he appeared to be in a state of indifference even with regard to our aeroplanes, which were making continuous excursions



across his territory and bringing back useful information to our side. At seven o'clock eight of our planes, flying at a high altitude, paid him a visit. Shots were fired at them, but one could see from the location of the little flying clouds which marked where the shrapnel had burst that no damage had been done. Not a single German flying man was to be seen at any time during the morning.

FIRE SLACKENS.

A perceptible slackening of our fire soon after seven was the first indication given to us that our gallant soldiers were about to leap from their trenches and advance against the enemy. Non-combatants, of course, were not permitted to witness this spectacle, but I am informed that the vigour and eagerness of the first assault were worthy of the best traditions of the British Army. I have myself heard within the past few days men declare that they were getting fed up with the life in the trenches, and would welcome a fight at close quarters. Thus it may be taken as certain that our men entered into the grand assault in the true spirit of a sane and cheerful manliness. Death might come or suffering, but the soldier reckons not concerning these things; he hears only the call of duty and he does it.

We had not to wait long for news, and it was wholly satisfactory and encouraging. The message received at ten o'clock ran something like this: "On a front of over twenty miles north and south of the Somme we and our French allies have advanced and taken the German first line of trenches. We are attacking vigorously Fricourt, La Boisselle, and Mametz. German prisoners are surrendering freely, and a good many already fallen into our hands."

Several of the earlier batches of prisoners spoke of the complete success of our barrage fire in keeping them insulated in their trenches. They said also they had suffered severely from lack

of food and water. One of our staff officers tells me that the advance of the French army was magnificent. "The men went forward," he said, "as calmly and deliberately as on the occasion of a peace parade."

8 P.M.

I have just returned from the front line of some of the most desperate points of the battle. Let me say at once that the day's operations are entirely satisfactory to ourselves and our allies. There have been a few disappointments, but, on the whole, they have been more than counterbalanced by unexpected gains. We have ploughed deep into the German lines. The Germans evidently realize what they are "up against," and are fighting grimly inch by inch. While there is every reason to believe that the secret of our plan of campaign has been rigidly excluded from their ken, all the evidence points to the fact of their complete preparedness, and though our success may be assured, a speedy ending to the battle is not at the moment to be looked for.

The taking of the first-line trenches referred to in my previous message was in some places comparatively easy—almost a walk-over. It was only when our men bit deeper into the enemy's defences that they were brought face to face with difficulties; but their indomitable pluck and perseverance have triumphed over what have been in some cases almost superhuman obstacles. Details of positions gained will be found in the official despatches from headquarters, but I may say that along the line between the Ancre and the Somme we have achieved our principal successes. La Boisselle, which we captured early in the day, we hold securely, and while the important position of Fricourt was still holding out at four o'clock this afternoon it was in process of being surrounded. We also have practically surrounded Beaumont Hamel, and at any moment it may fall into our possession. ►



Counter-attacks by the enemy have been everywhere repulsed, except at Serre, where the Germans suddenly launched a desperate offensive and our troops had to fall back a short distance. The fighting there continues, and at the moment the position is somewhat obscure. Montauban, a point of considerable importance, is ours. Mametz was early wrested from the enemy, and our success there is being consolidated. Heavy fighting is proceeding at Gommecourt.

BRILLIANT EXPLOIT.

The taking of Mametz was the result of a brilliant exploit, in which the South Staffords, the Manchesters, and the Gordons were concerned. The first-line trenches of the Germans had been completely battered in by our artillery fire. On entering the village the Gordons were badly "hung up" against a strong place. The enemy was holding out in a position he has christened Danzig Alley, and from here he directed his attack against the Highlanders. The supporting line which came to their assistance was met with high-explosive barrage fire, but eventually the village came completely into our possession and the retreating Germans suffered heavy casualties.

Round Owillers, La Boisselle, and Thiepval a fight of extraordinary intensity developed during the afternoon. Early in the day our men pushed through the village of Thiepval, when suddenly Germans, who had been hiding in deep dug-outs, emerged into the streets and led a furious attack, in which all sorts of bombs and other weapons were employed. The combat was extended and was still raging furiously when I left the neighbourhood late this afternoon. The Germans were then shelling the entire area and raining an inferno of all sorts of shells, including "black jacks," "woolly bears," shrapnel, and missiles that sent up clouds of green smoke. Our own artillery was making most effective reply. It was a big "strafe" on both sides, and as I looked on the incessant rain

of bursting projectiles it seemed hard to understand how anything in the shape of human life could survive so terrible an ordeal.

COMPLETE PREPAREDNESS.

All along the line of front which it has been possible for me to traverse I have seen nothing but the most gratifying evidence of our complete preparedness. On roads leading to and from the battlefield were to be seen transport vehicles of every description, with horses and men and all the materials necessary to the prosecution of a great enterprise of war. Yet there was a complete absence of confusion or congestion. Our organisation now, whatever faults it may have had in the past, is standing the test of our present effort. I passed many Red Cross vehicles full of wounded men. The toll of blood to-day has been fairly heavy, but I am glad to be able to state from reports received that it is by no means excessive, having regard to the magnitude of the day's operations. Happily, there is a large proportion of slightly wounded cases, and I have seen many gallant lads with arms slung up or bandages about their heads shouting from the comfortable security of the Red Cross transport that they are not downhearted, and that they are proud to have "done their bit." Slightly wounded men with whom I have conversed are animated by the cheeriest confidence. Said one of them: "We have given it to the Huns in the neck to-day, and there's more to come." And this is typical of the spirit of our men. At two places I have seen German prisoners taken by our troops. Some of the men I saw belonged to the 109th and 110th Reserve Regiments. For the most part they were stalwart, well-set-up fellows. In the course of a brief conversation two of them assured me that the effect of our bombardment prior to the launching of the assault had been terrific. They had been in the front line of trenches, and while they had a reserve supply of food our barrage fire had prevented them getting any water. ►



Their machine guns, they said, had been erected by being placed in deep dug-outs and were brought up and used against our troops when they advanced.

A significant feature of the day has been the quiescence of the enemy's aeroplanes. They scarcely have been seen at all, whereas our machines have been continuously engaged in observation work. The funk of the Fokkers is a subject of general comment. We brought down two of them last night.

The splendid support we have received from our French allies is, of course, so far as my knowledge goes, hearsay, but everybody says it has been magnificent. It is suggested that the great struggle begun should for historical purposes be described as "the battle of the Somme."

Source:

John D. Irvine, "Special Account of the Fighting in Our New Offensive," The Daily Express, July 3, 1916.



READING | Battle of the Somme Accounts — Document B: British Soldier

The next morning we gunners surveyed the dreadful scene in front of our trench. There was a pair of binoculars in the kit, and, under the brazen light of a hot mid-summer's day, everything revealed itself stark and clear. The terrain was rather like the Sussex downland, with gentle swelling hills, folds and valleys, making it difficult at first to pinpoint all the enemy trenches as they curled and twisted on the slopes.

It eventually became clear that the German line followed points of eminence, always giving a commanding view of No Man's Land. Immediately in front, and spreading left and right until hidden from view, was clear evidence that the attack had been brutally repulsed. Hundreds of dead, many of the 37th Brigade, were strung out like wreckage washed up to a high-water mark. Quite as many died on the enemy wire as on the ground, like fish caught in the net. They hung there in grotesque postures. Some looked as though they were praying; they had died on their knees and the wire had prevented their fall. From the way the dead were equally

spread out, whether on the wire or lying in front of it, it was clear that there were no gaps in the wire at the time of the attack.

Concentrated machine gun fire from sufficient guns to command every inch of the wire, had done its terrible work. The Germans must have been reinforcing the wire for months. It was so dense that daylight could barely be seen through it. Through the glasses it looked a black mass. The German faith in massed wire had paid off.

How did our planners imagine that Tommies, having survived all other hazards - and there were plenty in crossing No Man's Land - would get through the German wire? Had they studied the black density of it through their powerful binoculars? Who told them that artillery fire would pound such wire to pieces, making it possible to get through? Any Tommy could have told them that shell fire lifts wire up and drops it down, often in a worse tangle than before.

Source:

George Coppard, With a Machine Gun to Cambrai, 1969.



READING | Battle of the Somme Accounts – Document C: German Soldier

Wild firing slammed into the masses of the enemy. All around us was the rushing, whistling, and roaring of a storm: a hurricane, as the destructive British shell rushed towards our artillery which was firing courageously, our reserves and our rear areas. Throughout all this racket, this rumbling, growling, bursting, cracking, and wild banging and crashing of small arms, could be heard the heavy, hard and regular Tack! Tack! Of the machine guns. . . That one firing slower, this other with a faster rhythm – it was precision work of fine material and skill – and both were playing a gruesome tune to the enemy, whilst providing their own comrades and the men manning the automatic rifles a high degree of security and reassurance.

The machine gunners, who lived a privileged life at quiet times and were envied for being able to avoid jobs such as carrying heavy mortar round forward, were earning their pay today. Belt after belt was fired, 250 rounds – 1,000 – 3,000. 'Pass up the spare barrels!' shouts the gun commander, 'or shoot yourself!' The cooling water turns to seething steam with the continuous firing. In the heat of the battle, the steam overflow pipe slips out of its fixing on the water jacket. With a great hiss, a jet of steam goes up, providing a superb target for the enemy. It is the greatest good fortune that they have the sun in their eyes and we have it at our backs. The enemy closes up nearer. We fire on endlessly. There is less steam. A further barrel change is urgent. The cooling water has almost steamed away. 'Where's the water?' bawls the gunner. 'Get the mineral water out of the dugout!' 'There's none left Untreoffizier!' It all went during the bombardment.

The British keep charging forward. Despite the fact that hundreds are already lying dead in the shell holes to our front, fresh waves keep emerging from the assault trenches over there. We have got to fire! A gunner rushes into the crater with the water container and urinates into it. A second pisses into it too – quick refill! The British have closed to grenade throwing range and hand grenades fly backwards and forwards. The barrel change is complete, the water jacket refilled. Load! Hand and rifle grenades burst close to the weapon. Just keep calm, get the tangle sorted out and load! Speak loudly, slowly, and clearly to yourself. 'Forward! – Down! – Back! (Working parts forward – Belt on – Working parts back). The same again! Safety catch to the right! Fire! ...Tack! – Tack! Tack! – Tack!...Once more rapid fire slams into the clay pit of our front. High pillars of steam rise from all the machine guns. Most of the steam hoses have been torn off or shot away. Skin hangs in ribbons from the fingers of the burnt hands of the gunners and gun commanders! Constant pressure by their left thumbs on the triggers has turned them into swollen, shapeless lumps of flesh. Their hands rest, and though cramped, on the vibrating weapons.

18,000 rounds! The other platoon weapon has a stoppage. Gunner Schwarz falls shot through the head over the belt he is feeding. The belt twists, feeds rounds into the gun crookedly and they jam! Next man forward. The dead man is removed. The gunner strips the feed mechanism, removes the rounds and reloads. Fire; pause; barrel change; fetch ammunition; lay the dead on the floor of the crater. That is



the hard unrelenting tempo of the morning of 1st July 1916. The sound of machine gun fire can be heard right across the divisional front. The youth of England, the finest regiments of Scotland bled to death in front of Serre. The weapon which was commanded by Unteroffizier Koch from Pforzheim and which was stationed directly on the Serre MAilly road fires off the last belt! It has fired no fewer than 20,000 rounds at the British!"

Source:

Otto Lais, "A Machine-gunner in Iron Regiment 169," date unknown, originally published 1935.



NAME _____

COURSE _____

TIME _____

WORKSHEET | The Battle of the Somme – Graphic Organizer

Read the accompanying documents and complete the chart for each.

	DOCUMENT A	DOCUMENT B	DOCUMENT C
Who wrote it? When? What type of source?			
What is the author's tone? (include 1-2 examples)			
Did the author witness the events he describes?			



NAME _____

COURSE _____

TIME _____

WORKSHEET | The Battle of the Somme – Graphic Organizer

Read the accompanying documents and complete the chart for each.

	DOCUMENT A	DOCUMENT B	DOCUMENT C
Who won the first day of the battle? How?			
Is this source trustworthy? Why?			
Use evidence from the three documents to write a paragraph addressing the question: Who won the first day of the Battle of the Somme?			