



# Living Through The War The Battle of the Somme



**Task One.**

Using the following information collate a fact file about the battle. Try to use the main questioning words and find out at least 10 things for your fact file.

WHO                      WHEN                      WHERE                      WHY                      HOW                      WHAT



The Battle of the Somme started in July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916. It lasted until November 1916.

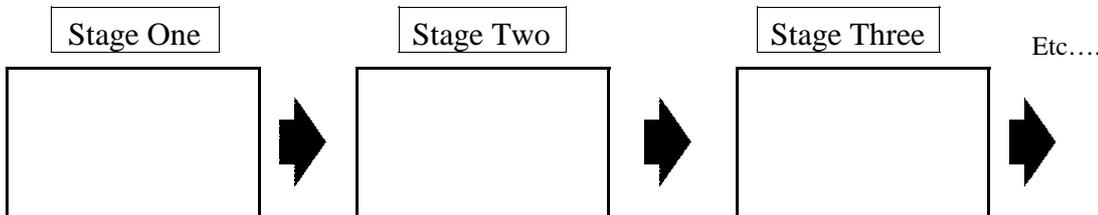
For many years those who lead the British campaign have received a lot of criticism for the way the Battle of the Somme was fought – especially General Sir Douglas Haig. This criticism was based on the appalling casualty figures suffered by the British and the French. By the end of the battle, the British Army had suffered **420,000** casualties including nearly 60,000 on the first day alone. The French lost **200,000** men and the Germans nearly **500,000**.

Ironically, going over the top at the Somme was the first taste of battle many of these men had, as many were part of "Kitchener's Volunteer Army" persuaded to volunteer by posters showing Lord Kitchener himself summoning these men to arms to show their **patriotism**.



**Task Two**

Using the following info and source produce a flow chart showing the different stages of the Battle of the Somme.



The battle at the Somme started with a weeklong artillery **bombardment** of the German lines. 1,738,000 shells were fired at the Germans. The logic behind this was so that the artillery guns would destroy the German trenches and barbed wire placed in front of the trenches.

In fact, the Germans had deep dugouts for their men and all they had to do when the **bombardment** started was to move these men into the relative safety of the deep dugouts. When the **bombardment** stopped, the Germans would have known that this would have been the signal for an infantry advance. They moved from the safety of their dugouts and manned their machine guns to face the British and French.

The Allied troops climbed out of their trenches and moved over no mans land towards the German front lines. Many were gunned down in no man's land. However due to the huge number of troops attacking the German line soldiers did get through. They were followed by cavalry. This was not a great success. The muddy conditions made horses a slow and riders easy targets. The man to man combat that followed was bloody and horrific.

By the end of the battle, in November 1916, the British had lost 420,000, the French lost nearly 200,000 men and the Germans 500,000. The Allied forces had advanced along a thirty-mile strip that was seven miles deep at its maximum.

## Images of the Battle



British soldiers going 'over the top' at the Somme



A British machine gun post at the Somme

Lord Kitchener was a supporter of the theory of **attrition** - *that eventually you would grind down your enemy and they would have to yield*. He saw the military success of the battle as all-important. However, it did have dire political and social consequences in Britain. Many spoke of the "**lost generation**". Many people found it difficult to justify the near 88,000 Allied men lost for every one mile gained in the advance.



### Task Three

Produce a First World War glossary. Add to it the following words and their meaning.

*Attrition*

*Lost Generation*

*Objective*

*Bombardment*

*Patriotism*

*Trench Warfare*

*No man's Land*

*Over the top'*

?

"The Daily Chronicle" published this report on the battle on July 3rd:

At about 7.30 o'clock this morning a vigorous attack was launched by the British Army. The front extends over some 20 miles north of the Somme. The assault was preceded by a terrific bombardment, lasting about an hour and a half. It is too early to as yet give anything but the barest particulars, as the fighting is developing in intensity, but the British troops have already occupied the German front line. Many prisoners have already fallen into our hands, and as far as can be ascertained our casualties have not been heavy.

However, those who fought there knew what really happened - if they survived:

The next morning (July 2nd) we gunners surveyed the dreadful scene in front of us.....it became clear that the Germans always had a commanding view of No Man's land. (The British) attack had been brutally repulsed. Hundreds of dead 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 if they were praying; they had died on their knees and the wire had prevented their fall. Machine gun fire had done its terrible work. George Coppard, machine gunner at the Battle of the Somme.



### Task Four

Read the two reports on the battle. Put the following headings and record five things that each reports say about the battle

Newspaper Article

Eye witness account

?

**EXTENSION** Which of the extracts do you trust the most? Why do you have this opinion?