

# 100%

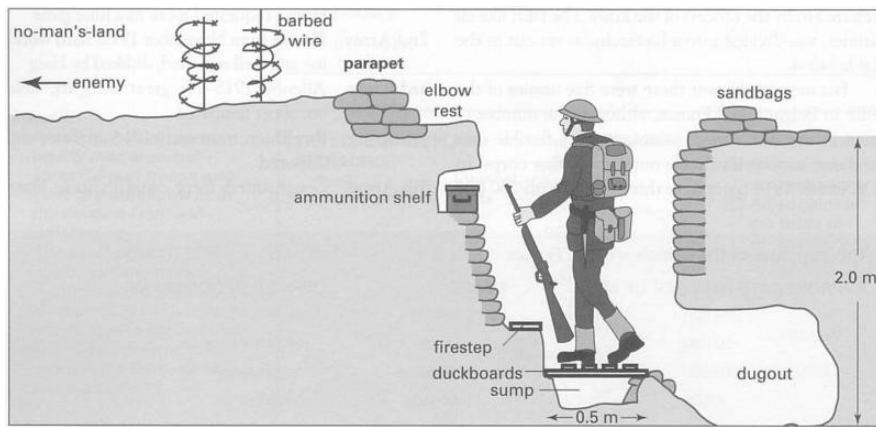
# Sheet

## The world at war: Was “boredom” the greatest enemy in the trenches?

### Background information

On the Western Front, the war was fought by soldiers in trenches. Trenches were long, narrow ditches dug into the ground where soldiers lived. They were very muddy, uncomfortable and the toilets overflowed. There were lines of German trenches on one side and lines of Allied trenches on the other. In the middle was no man's land, which soldiers crossed to attack the opposing side. Many men suffered mental breakdown or “shell-shock.”

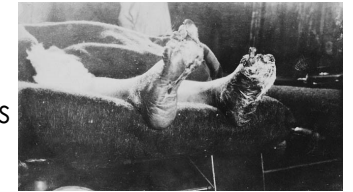
### Diagram of a trench



### Key knowledge 1:

#### What were conditions like in the trenches

- Trenches very quickly filled with water and became muddy
- Prolonged periods of time in damp conditions could lead to trenchfoot, often leading to amputation.
- Rat and lice infestations were a serious problem, spreading disease quite quickly
- Artillery barrages often caused collapses
- No mans land in front of the trenches was littered with mines and barbed wire



### Keywords

- Trench
- Gas
- Artillery
- Frontline
- Trenchfoot
- Rats

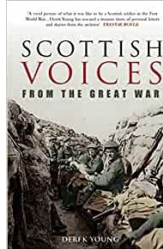
### Key knowledge 2:

#### What new weapons were used in WW1?

- Machine guns, such as the German MG-08 and the British Lewis gun inflicted huge casualties
- Poison gas, such as chlorine gas, burnt soldiers lungs
- Grenades and flamethrowers were used in fighting
- Tanks were deployed for the first time during WW1
- Artillery guns bombarded trenches day and night

### Secondary interpretation/ debate about period

“For much of the time, the **greatest enemy was boredom**. Soldiers spent about 60% of their time well away from the front line. They spent a lot of time in relatively comfortable surroundings, in farmhouses or cottages that had been taken over by the Army. Here they usually had access to good food, hot water and clean uniforms. While they were out of the front lines, soldiers had a lot of leisure time. Many took correspondence courses. Others organised football matches.”



- Derek Young, Historian

### Key knowledge 3:

#### What did soldiers eat?



### Key knowledge 4:

#### Why was the death toll so high?

- Machine guns inflicted huge casualties
- Poison gas
- Going “over the top” led to a large number of deaths
- Artillery explosions
- Poison gas blinded soldiers or burnt out their lungs
- Rats spread disease quickly