
Name: _____ Date: _____

The Great War: 1916

(p. 19, 24-25)

1) Describe the 3 major battles:

Verdun	The Somme	Jutland

2) Complete the work section on p. 25.

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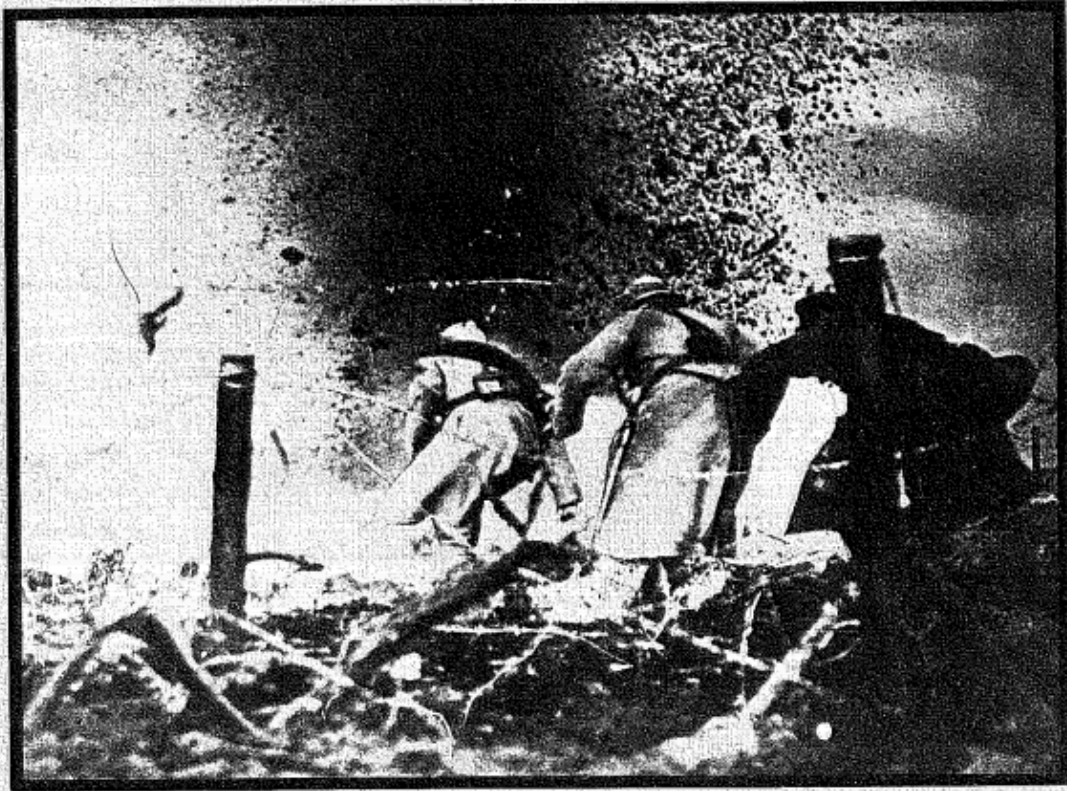
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THREE

NINETEEN SIXTEEN



Some of the 315,000 Frenchmen who died at Verdun

The names of three battles sum up the year 1916 – Verdun, the Somme, and Jutland.

At the start of 1916 the Central Powers were in a stronger position than the Allies. The Germans were still holding the Western Front while the Russians were in headlong retreat in the east. This allowed **General Falkenhayn**, Germany's supreme commander, to bring half a million more men from Russia to fight on the Western Front.

The Allied commanders on the Western Front, **General Joffre** and **Sir Douglas Haig**, still believed they could break through the German lines. They agreed that together they would make their biggest attack yet – on the area around the River Somme in France. Thinking that they had plenty of time to prepare the attack, they began to train and equip 105,000 men for an advance on both sides of the river.

But General Falkenhayn also had a plan, and he put

his into operation first. Falkenhayn believed he could win the war by focussing his attacks on one small area of the Western Front. The place he chose was the city of Verdun where a great French fortress stood. The fortress of Verdun was a symbol of France's strength, and Falkenhayn knew that the French would defend it to the last drop of their blood. He aimed, as he put it, to 'bleed France white' at Verdun.

The story of 1916 is very much the story of these two plans. For France was indeed 'bled white' at Verdun while, on the Somme, Britain lost almost a whole generation of men in one of the worst slaughters of history.

Britain lost something else in 1916. For over a hundred years her Navy had been the most powerful in the world. But after the battle of Jutland, the only great sea battle of the war, the Royal Navy lost its supremacy. Britannia no longer 'ruled the waves'.

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THE HOME FRONTS

Most people in Europe were enthusiastic about the war when the fighting began. While men rushed off to join the army, the civilians who stayed at home were infected by war fever. Crowds in every country waved flags, sang patriotic songs, gave money for the war effort, and eagerly read every detail about the battles in their newspapers. By the end of 1916, however, civilians were losing their enthusiasm, for the war was changing their lives in ways they had never expected. Let us see what happened to the civilians in Britain.

War restrictions

The war reduced everybody's freedom. **The Defence of the Realm Act** (or **DORA** as people called it) allowed the government to do almost anything it wanted. It could take away a person's land or censor the newspapers, it could arrest 'troublemakers' or buy goods at rock bottom prices. People hated some of the restrictions that DORA put on them. For example, pubs had to close in the afternoons, the beer was watered down and customers were not allowed to buy rounds of drinks, because the government believed that workers were taking too many of their meal breaks in pubs. DORA was even used to change time. In 1916, everybody had to put their clocks forward one hour so that there would be more daylight during working hours.

Conscription was another way in which people lost some of their freedom. **The Military Service Acts** of 1916 stated that all men between the ages of 18 and 51 had to serve in the armed forces. The people who hated this most were **conscientious objectors (COs)** – people who believe that fighting is wrong, for whatever reason. These 'Conshies' or 'Cuthberts', as they were nicknamed, had to go before special tribunals, or courts, to ask to be excused from military service. The courts turned down most of their requests as they thought that being 'soft' on the COs would encourage other men to refuse to fight. Anyway, most people thought the COs were just cowards.

In fact, thousands of COs did heroic war work that did not involve fighting. Many Quakers served as ambulance men in the front lines and won medals for their bravery there.

Food shortages

It was not only restrictions on their freedom that changed the lives of civilians. They were also affected by food shortages. As you have found out, Britain and Germany were trying to starve each other into

surrender by sinking each other's supply ships. By 1916, British housewives were having to queue at shops, prepare meatless dishes and use less food in their cooking. In Germany the hunger was far worse. The harvest there had been bad and the winter was bitterly cold. For millions of Germans the only food available was turnips. Thousands of them died during the terrible 'turnip winter' of 1916.

The price of war

Many civilians had their lives changed by the deaths of their loved ones in the fighting. During the four years of the Great War an average of 1500 men were killed every day. After great battles, whole pages of the newspapers were filled with the names of the dead. Every morning, families opened the newspapers in anxiety, praying that the name of a husband or brother or son would not be there in the lists. This naturally made many people less enthusiastic about the war.

Some civilians were finding by 1916 that they themselves risked being killed in the fighting, even though they were far from the battlefields. People on Britain's North Sea coast were killed by shells from German warships in 1914 and 1915, while London was bombed by *Zeppelin* airships and later by *Gotha*



German women scavenging for food scraps

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German women scavenging for food scraps

aeroplanes. In all, 1117 people lost their lives in German air raids on Britain.

Women at war

One of the biggest changes that the Great War made to civilian life was in the number of women who went out to work. So many men were needed for the fighting that there were not enough left to work in the factories. At first women worked mainly in the munitions factories, doing the dangerous job of making shells and explosives. Not only did they face the constant risk of accidental explosion, but also damage to their health. The acid fumes in high explosives harmed their lungs and turned their skins bright yellow.

From 1916 onwards, women also began to work on buses and trams, in the police force, delivering coal, ploughing fields, making machinery, nursing, and so on. Before the war most women workers were in domestic service, earning low wages for long hours as maids or cooks. Their new jobs gave them better pay, and that meant more freedom to dress and behave in the way they chose.

More important, before the war was over, women over the age of thirty were given the right to vote. It was the first step towards gaining equal rights with men.



Women at work loading sacks of coke at the South Metropolitan Gas Works in London

Work section

A. This is a list of some of the things that DORA forbade British people to do. Choose four of them and explain why you think these restrictions were introduced.

1. Talk about naval or military matters in public places.
2. Spread rumours about military affairs.
3. Trespass on railways or bridges.
4. Use code when writing letters abroad.
5. Light bonfires or fireworks.
6. Fly kites.
7. Buy binoculars.
8. Melt down gold or silver.
9. Feed bread to dogs, poultry, horses.
10. Ring church bells.

B. Study this poster which appeared in early 1916.

1. What was the Military Service Act, 1916?
2. Explain the meaning of the terms Local Tribunal and Certificate of Exemption.
3. a) What are your opinions of Conscientious Objectors?
b) How would you have treated young men who refused to fight?

C. Study the photograph of women working in a coke depot.

1. What kind of work might they have been doing before the war?
2. What advantages might there be in this kind of work that women did not have in pre-war jobs?

D. Make notes on *The Events of 1916* before going any farther. You can copy the revision guide on the next page or, if you prefer, use it as a framework for notes of your own.

MILITARY SERVICE ACT, 1916

From now on when the Act applies will on Thursday, March 2nd, be deemed to have notified for the period of the War unless he is exempted or excepted.

Any man who has adequate grounds for applying to a Local Tribunal for a

CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION UNDER THIS ACT

Must do so **BEFORE**
THURSDAY, MARCH 2

Why wait for the Act to apply to you?

Come now and join of your own free will.

You can at once put your claim before a Local Tribunal for exemption from being called up for Military Service if you wish.

ATTEST NOW

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