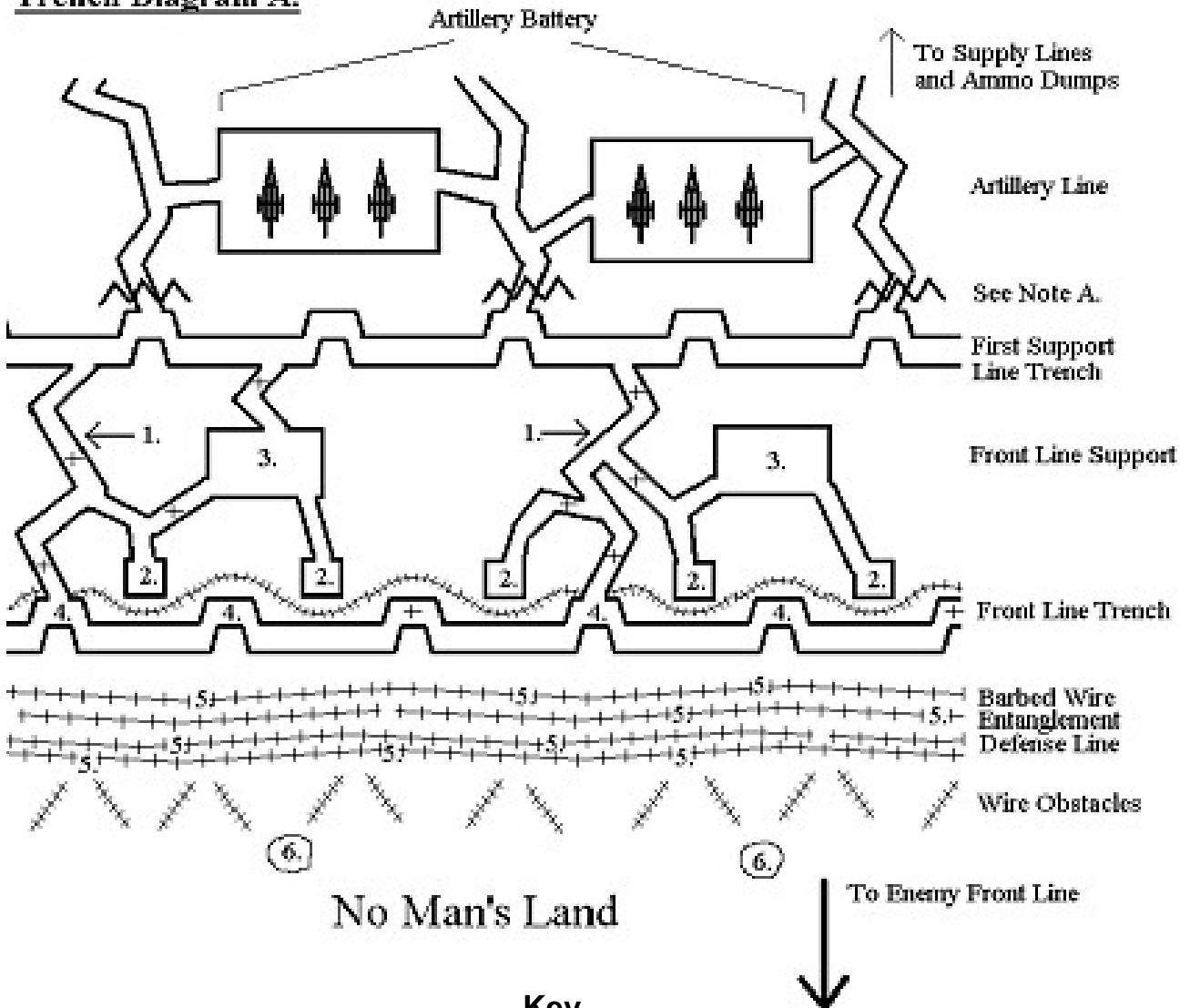


What is a Trench?

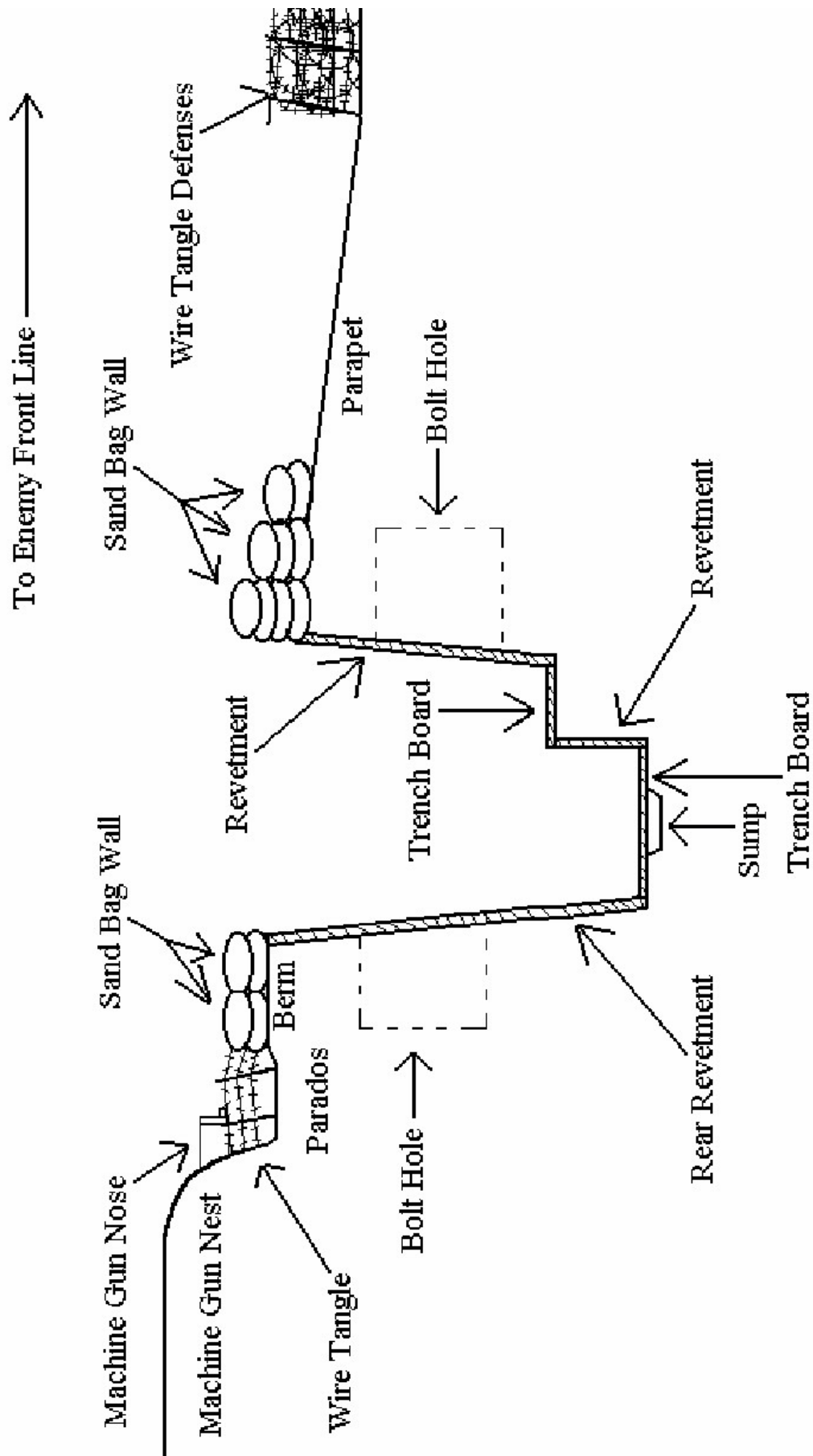
Trench warfare characterised much of the fighting during World War One, particularly along the Western Front. Trench systems were complicated with many interlinking lines of trenches.

Trench Diagram A.



- Key**
- 1. Communication Trench
 - 2. Machine Gun Nest
 - 3. Underground Bunker
 - 4. Traverse
 - 5. Wire Break
 - 6. Listening Post
 - + Trench Block

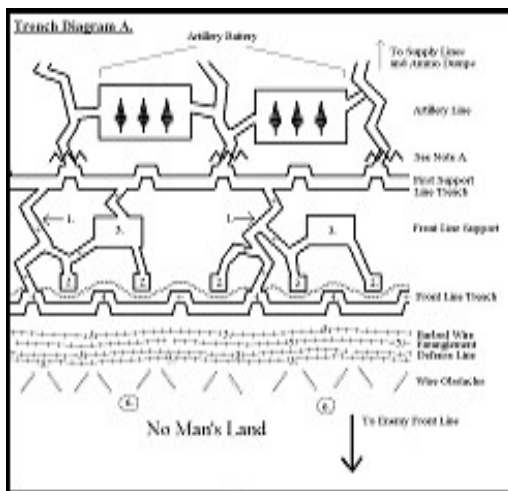
Trench Diagram B.



Trenches

1. Read the following extract from 'German Deserter's War Experience' then list words to describe what it was like to be in a trench in World War One.

It was dark, and it rained and rained. From all directions one heard in the darkness the wounded calling, crying, and moaning. The wounded we had with us were likewise moaning and crying. All wanted to have their wounds dressed, but we had no more bandages. We tore off pieces of our dirty shirts and placed the rags on those sickening wounds. Men were dying one after the other. There were no doctors, no bandages; we had nothing whatever. You had to help the wounded and keep the French off at the same time. It was an unbearable, impossible state of things. It rained harder and harder. We were wet to our skins. We fired blindly into the darkness. The rolling fire of rifles increased, then died away, then increased again. We sappers were placed among the infantry. My neighbour gave me a dig in the ribs."

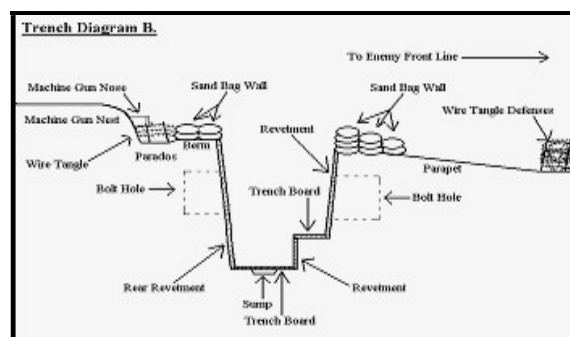


2. Look at trench diagram A. Examine it and answer the following questions.

- What links the front line and support trenches?
- Why are blocks placed in trenches?
- Why are machine-guns placed just behind the front line? Why are they so close to the bunkers?
- Why is there wire between the front trench and the machine-guns?
- Look at the barbed wire in No-Man's Land that is at angles to the front trench and also look at the position of the machine-guns. Why is the wire at such an angle?

3. Look at trench diagram B. Examine it and answer the following questions

- What prevents bullets striking a soldier's chest when he is on the trench board (fire step)?
- What is the purpose of the sump? What was normally placed over it?
- Barbed wire entanglements were often 40 yards (36m) from the front trench. Considering the types of weapons used on the Western Front, what would be their main defensive function?



Life in the Trenches



The trench, when we reached it, was half full of mud and water. We set to work to try and drain it. Our efforts were hampered by the fact that the French, who had first occupied it, had buried their dead in the bottom and sides. Every stroke of the pick encountered a body. The smell was awful. *Private Pollard*

The stench of the dead bodies now is awful as they have been exposed to the sun for several days, many have swollen and burst. The trench is full of other occupants, things with lots of legs, also swarms of rats.

Sergeant A Vine

No washing or shaving here, and the demands of nature answered as quickly as possible in the handiest and deepest shell-hole. *Guy Chapman*

The other one said to me "Chas, I am going home to my wife and kids. I'll be some use to them as a cripple, but none at all dead! I am starving here, and so are they at home, we may as well starve together." With that he fired a shot through his boot. When the medics got his boot off, two of his toes and a lot of his foot had gone. But the injuring oneself to get out of it was quite common. *Charles Young*



The other soldiers in the hut took their shirts off after tea. They were catching lice. We had never seen a louse before, but they were here in droves. The men were killing them between their nails. *Henry Gregory*

All we lived on was tea and dog biscuits. If we got meat once a week we were lucky, but imagine trying to eat standing in a trench full of water with the smell of dead bodies nearby. *Richard Beasley*

If you have never had trench feet described to you. I will tell you. Your feet swell to two or three times their normal size and go completely dead. You could stick a bayonet into them and not feel a thing. If you are fortunate enough not to lose your feet and the swelling begins to go down. It is then that the intolerable, indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and even scream with the pain and many had to have their feet and legs amputated. *Sergeant Harry Roberts*

Activity


Imagine that you are a soldier fighting in the trenches. Write a letter home describing the conditions in the trenches.



These feet have trench foot and frostbite caused by standing for hours in a freezing waterlogged trench. To avoid this condition soldiers were told to change their socks regularly, wear waterproof footwear or gumboots and cover their feet with whale oil.

Trench Definitions

Match the words on the left with the definitions on the right then copy into your glossary.

Communications Trench 

A block of barbed wire and wooden obstacles to stop any enemy soldier from advancing through the trench system.

Sandbags 

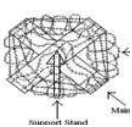
A break in the barbed wire to allow soldiers out into no man's land

No Man's Land 

An underground shelter. Often used for storage

Sump 

A channel at the bottom of the trench to allow water to drain away.

Trench Block 

Trenches between the front line trenches and the support trenches, used by messengers to relay messages to the front line and back and for telephone wire to be strung up to the front line

Wire Break Xx xxx

The area between the opposing sides' front lines.

Bunker 

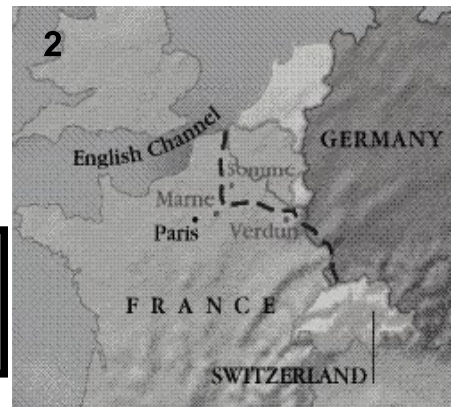
A bag filled with sand to protect the trench from flooding and the men from bullets.

Battle of the Somme – July – November 1916 – a picture history



1

1. General Haig – the man who planned the Battle of the Somme



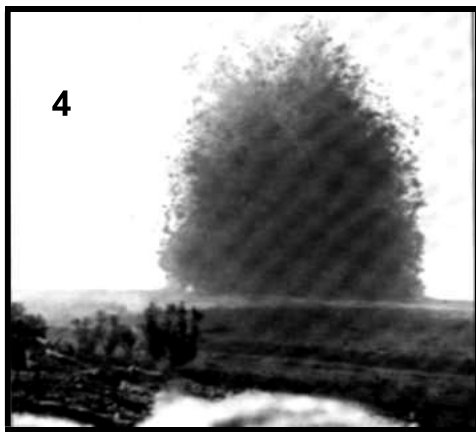
2

2. The battle line stretched some 25 miles

3. British troops on their way to the Somme. 750,000 men were sent to the Battle of the Somme



3



4

4. At 7.20 am 40,000 pounds of explosive was detonated under a German machine gun position at Beaumont Hamel.

5. The bombing had not destroyed the barbed wire.



5



6

6. By the end of the first day 60,000 British soldiers were dead.



7

By the end of the battle the British had advanced 8km.

7. Tanks were first used at the Battle of the Somme



Battle of the Somme



Battle of the Somme Activities

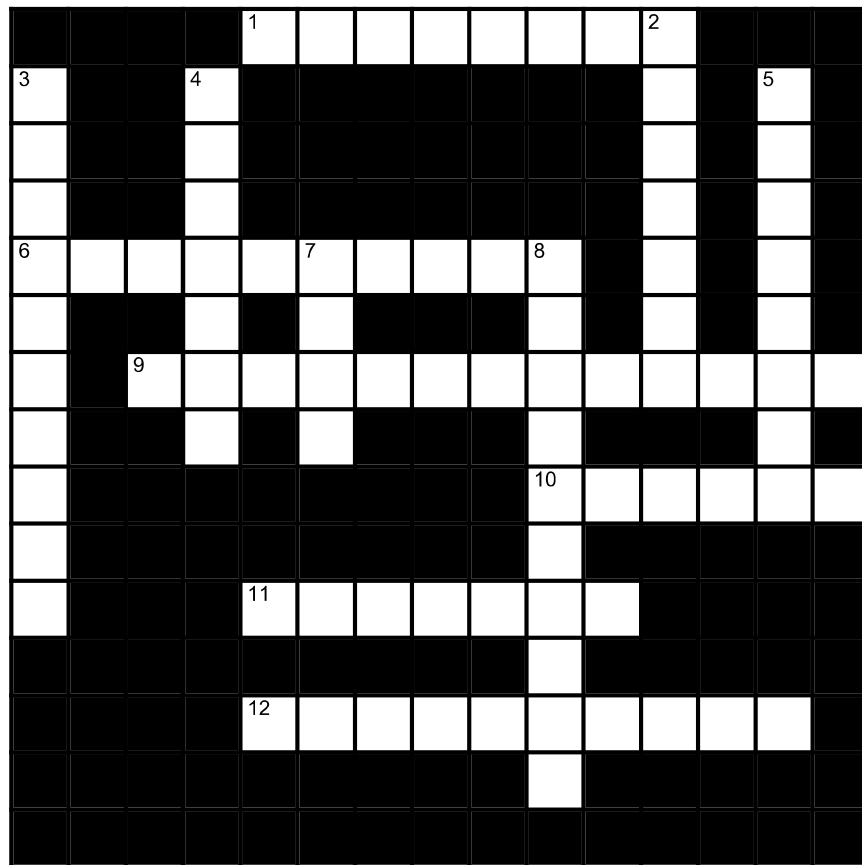
Curriculum Level 4

1. Write a description of the events of the Battle of the Somme including the types of weapons used.
2. Draw a line down the centre of your book. Make a list of the things that caused the most loss of life in the left column. Could anything different have been done? Put your ideas in the right column.

Curriculum Level 5, 6

1. Consider the mistakes made at the Battle of the Somme both by Generals and soldiers on the ground. Make a bulleted list.
2. Imagine you are a world war one General. You have to win the Battle of the Somme. Re-write the Battle of the Somme paying attention to what actually happened and describing what alternative steps you would take to minimise loss of life.

Trench Crossword



Across

- 1 Get on this to shoot (4,4)
- 6 Area between opposing front lines (2,4,4)
- 9 Trench between front and support trench (13)
- 10 Underground storage area (6)
- 11 Used for protection (4,3)
- 12 Cutters needed to get through this defence (6,4)

Down

- 2 The front wall of a trench (7)
- 3 Caused by standing in water (6,4)
- 4 The back wall of a trench (7)
- 5 Trench hiding place (4,4)
- 7 Drainage channel (4)
- 8 Wood at the bottom of the trench (4,6)

Trenches Wordsearch



COMMUNICATION
 MACHINEGUN
 NOMANSLAND
 ARTILLERY
 DUCKBOARD
 FIRESTEP
 SUPPORT
 SANDBAG
 PARAPET
 BUNKER

TRENCHBLOCK
 BARBEDWIRE
 TRENCHFOOT
 FRONTLINE
 TRAVERSE
 BOLTHOLE
 DEFENCE
 PARADOS
 TRENCH
 SUMP