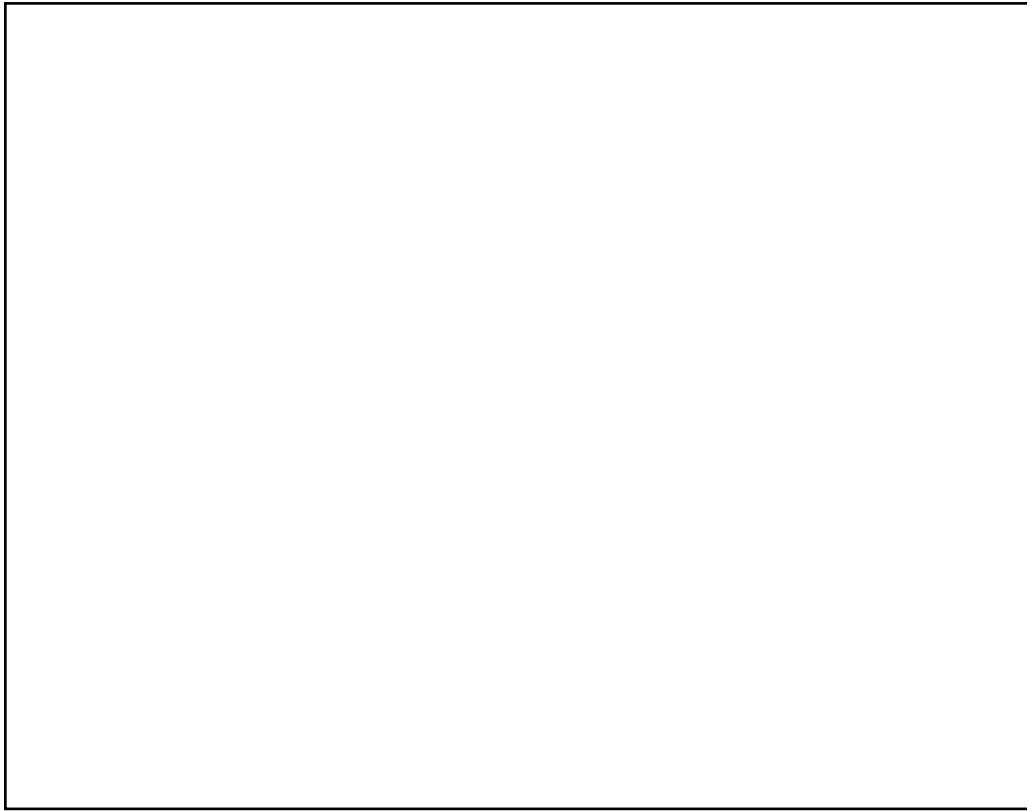


# Notes



## “They”

The Bishop tells us: ‘When the boys come back  
They will not be the same; for they’ll have fought in  
a just cause: they lead the last attack  
On Anti-Christ: their comrades’ blood has bought  
New right to breed an honourable race.  
They have challenged Death and dared him face to  
face.’

‘We’re none of us the same!’ the boys reply  
‘For George lost both of his legs and Bill’s stone blind;  
Poor Jim’s shot through the lungs and like to die;  
And Bert’s gone syphilitic: you’ll not find  
A chap who’s served that hasn’t found some change.’  
And the Bishop said: ‘The ways of God are strange!’

**Seigfried Sassoon**

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**Images:** MMI Photos and Google CC images



# EFTRE 2010: Challenging RE

Poverty and Social Inclusion as European Issues



## Battlefields Visits



# About World War I: The Great War

Called the “War to end all wars” the conflict between 1914 and 1918 ranged over most of the European mainland excluding Scandinavia and the Iberian peninsular and in the colonies of the combatants making this a truly world war. The starting point was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the 28th June 1914 the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Serbia but the expansionist policies of the great European Powers (Germany, Britain, France, Russia and Austro-Hungary) played a major role.



There were two main groups of combatants the German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires were opposed by the Triple Alliance of the British, French and Russia empires and later Italy and the USA. The conflict started with Schlieffen Plan in the West as Germany invaded Belgium and France and attacks by Russia in the East. The Western Front soon ground to a halt and all armies “dug in” into a stalemate which lasted for the next 3 years. In the East initial success by the Russians against the Austro-Hungarians soon turned to defeat and then in 1917 led to the Russian Revolution and the collapse of the Russian Empire and the end of the war in the East. After an initially successful German offensive in the West the British, French, Belgium and American troops drove the Germans back until an Armistice was agreed and the war came to an end at 11:00am on the 11th of November, the “eleventh hour of the eleventh month”.

Over 70 million military personal were mobilised and over 15 million people died in this tragic conflict, four major empires were smashed (the German, Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) and the map of central Europe extensively redrawn. In all countries the conflict was the bringer of great social and economic changes and the repercussion of defeat and the Treaty of Versailles were causes of the politics of the next 20 years culminating in the outbreak of war again in 1939.

Irrespective of the uniforms that we wore we were all victims [Harry Patch]

# Questions and things to consider

What are your impressions of the places you are visiting? Do you feel included, excluded or just an observer?

In what ways would you describe these places? What are the key words or phrases that you would use?

In one of the cemeteries choose a gravestone what do you image was that person's story?

How do the graveyards include / exclude? How are the remembered organised?

How is religion / belief shown or used in the memorials? What text is chosen what view of the divine is given?

What questions would you like to ask the people from this period of history?

How do we remember those who have died - and express this with children?

What images would you use with children to consider the issues?

What have you learnt that has surprised you?

How have these experiences compared to your own national history of this period?

What questions have been raised for you that you would deal with in RE?



All other expressions lie in a winter sleep, life is simply one continual watch against the menace of death; it has transformed us into unthinking animals in order to give us the weapon of instinct - it has reinforced us with dullness, so that we do not go to pieces before the horror, which would overwhelm us if we had clear, conscious thought - it has awakened in us the sense of comradeship, so that we escape the abyss of solitude - it has lent us the indifference of wild creatures, so that in spite of all, we perceive the positive in every moment, and store it up against the onslaught of nothingness

Erich Maria **Remarque**, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)

# In Flanders Field

In the reconstructed Cloth Hall in Ypres is the In Flanders Field Museum. Here you can experience the war in a number of ways. "Will ye go to Flanders" offers a journey alongside one of the people from the war period asking questions and watching video of "your" person. You can see the historical story of the war in Ypres; you can learn more about the whole war, and you can explore the idea of the artist in war as a witness and as a conscience.



## The Menin Gate

Almost as soon as the war was over, there were plans to build some kind of memorial in the Ypres area. One plan considered by the British Government involved the purchase of the entire ruins of Ieper, with a view to turning the whole town into a memorial to the British and Empire participation in the war. For the citizens, though, the ruins were still their home-town and they wished to return. The Belgian Government offered two sites to the British for their use as memorials - the ruined Cloth Hall and the Menin Gate site. The memorial



was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and was built in the face of considerable construction difficulties. It was opened in 1927, Blomfield's memorial

combines the architectural images of a classical victory arch and a mausoleum and it contains, inside and out, huge panels into which are carved the names of the 54,896 officers and men of the commonwealth forces who died in the Ypres Salient area and who have no known graves; though big the gate was not big enough and another 34,984 names are carved at Tyne Cot.

### On Passing the Menin Gate

Who will remember, passing through this Gate, the unheroic dead who fed the guns?

Who shall absolve the foulness of their fate, - Those doomed, conscripted, unvictorious ones? Crudely renewed, the Salient holds its own.

Paid are its dim defenders by this pomp;

Paid, with a pile of peace-complacent stone, The armies who endured that sullen swamp.

Here was the world's worst wound.

And here with pride 'Their name liveth for ever', the Gateway claims.

Was ever an immolation so belied as these intolerably nameless names?

Well might the Dead who struggled in the slime Rise and deride this sepulcher of crime.

**Seigfried Sassoon**

# Ypres

## The Ypres Salient

The town of Ypres sits in a bowl, or saucer, overlooked by shallow hills and ridges; it played a crucial part in the first war as it held up the German advance in 1914 and denied the German armies access to the channel ports. It was the last part of Belgium not captured by the invading armies and it became an important symbolically as the place where the Germans had been halted in their advances. Although the fighting in the region was continuous historians have divided the conflict up into five periods or battles:



- The First Battle of Ypres (1914)
- The First Battle of Ypres (1915)
- The First Battle of Ypres also known as Passendale (1917)
- The First Battle of Ypres also known as the Spring Offensive (1918)
- The Final Breakout (1918)

The military and civilian deaths in the Ypres region was roughly a million from 1914-18

## The Poppy

Poppies are common in this part of Belgium and seed well in rough ground and the Poppy became for the Western powers a symbol of the war the blood red colour also being symbolic. The Poppy was also immortalised in the poem by the Canadian surgeon John McCrae



In Flanders fields, the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below...  
We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields...

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands, we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields...

# Life in the trenches

Death was a constant companion to those serving in the line, even when no raid or attack was launched or defended against. In busy sectors the constant shellfire directed by the enemy brought random death, whether their victims were lounging in a trench or lying in a dugout (many men were buried as a consequence of such large shell-bursts).

Similarly, novices were cautioned against their natural inclination to peer over the parapet of the trench into No Man's Land. Many men died on their first day in the trenches as a consequence of a precisely aimed sniper's bullet.

Rats in their millions infested trenches. There were two main types, the brown and the black rat. Both were despised but the brown rat was especially feared. Gorging themselves on human remains (grotesquely disfiguring them by eating their eyes and liver) they could grow to the size of a cat.

Men, exasperated and afraid of these rats would attempt to rid the trenches of them by various methods: gunfire, with the bayonet, and even by clubbing them to death. It was futile however: a single rat couple could produce up to 900 offspring in a year, spreading infection and contaminating food.

Rats were by no means the only source of infection and nuisance. Lice were a never-ending problem, breeding in the seams of filthy clothing and causing men to itch unceasingly.

Even when clothing was periodically washed and deloused, lice eggs invariably remained hidden in the seams; within a few hours of the clothes being re-worn the body heat generated would cause the eggs to hatch. Lice caused Trench Fever, a particularly painful disease that began suddenly with severe pain followed by high fever. Recovery - away from the trenches - took up to twelve weeks. Lice were not actually identified as the culprit of Trench Fever until 1918.



# War cemeteries

## Tyne Cot



There are dozens of cemeteries around Ypres that mark for ever the places where fighting took place and men died. The British cemeteries are maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Tyne Cot Cemetery is the largest Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in the world with 11,871 soldiers buried

there (70% of them unknown). There is also a Memorial to the Missing on which are listed 34,888 names. The main thrust of the attack on the infamous village of Passendale (Passchendaele) took place in this area between October and November 1917.

Each white headstone is uniform in size and design and records - where known - the name, number, age and rank of the soldier at the time of his death.

**Tyne Cot**  
An die Front  
gingen sie  
wie lebende  
Helden  
und nun  
liegen sie  
auf Hügelspitzen  
wo nur  
Klapperrosen  
blühen...  
**Jan Theuninck**

## Langermark

The cemetery started as a small group of graves in 1915. Burials were increased here by the German military directorate in Ghent during 1916 to 1918. In the mid 1920s, when the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge and the Official German Burial Service in Belgium began to renovate the cemeteries



in Flanders, the cemetery was renamed Langemark-North. With the setting up of a register of German military cemeteries in Flanders in 1930 the cemetery was renamed as German Military Cemetery Number 123. It was officially inaugurated on 10 July 1932.

