**Trench Warfare and Technology Toolkit**

**I. Log into: firstworldwar.com**

**Click on “weaponry”**

**II. Letters from a soldier**

September 13, 1916

Dear Wife:

Just a line in answer to your most welcome letter. We have been on the go night and day, and you can’t write letters under a hell of a fire like we have had this last two weeks.

I can’t say I am too well myself. I am getting stiffened up like an old man, and no wonder as it is very wet here now and we have to sleep in it night and day, so you can bet what it’s like.

Well, I have some very bad news for poor Mrs. Richardson. Poor Charlie was killed on the 9th of September. I was by his side when he was killed and I don’t know yet how I escaped the same fate, but one thing, he didn’t suffer as he was killed instantly. A big shell called a nine point, weighing over one hundred pounds hit him so you can see he didn’t stand a chance.

Wishing you and the children the very best of health. I remain,

Your Loving Husband,

Frank

(adapted; <http://www.pastvoices.com/canada/> accessed online 6/8/2015)

**III. Excerpts from Novels**

***All Quiet on the Western Front***

One of the best known novels about WWI is *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It is the story of a young German soldier, I. Paul Baumer. Paul is not a hero, just an ordinary man caught up, with his classmates, in the horror of trench warfare. For Germany, the Western Front was a battle line drawn through Belgium, separating German and French troops. As you read, notice the sights and sounds of trench warfare.

“Bombardment, barrage, curtain-fire, mines, gas, tanks, machine-guns, hand-grenades – words, words, but they hold the horror of the world.

Our faces are encrusted, our thoughts are devastated, we are weary to death; when the attack comes we shall have to strike many of the men with our fists to waken them and make them come with us – our eyes are burnt, our hands are torn, our knees bleed, our elbows are raw.

How long has it been? Weeks – months – years? Only days. We see time pass in the colourless faces of the dying. We cram food into us, we run, we throw, we shoot, we kill, we lie about, we are feeble and spent, and nothing supports us but the knowledge that there are still feebler, still more spent, still more helpless ones there who, with staring eyes, look upon us as gods that escape death many times.

We see men living with their skulls blown open; we see soldiers run with their two feet cut off…a lance corporal crawls a mile and a half on his hands dragging his smashed knee after him…we see men without mouths, without jaws, without faces…. The sun goes down, night comes, the shells whine, life is at an end.

Still the little piece of convulsed earth in which we lie is held. We have yielded no more than a few hundred yards of it as a prize to the enemy. But on every yard there lies a dead man.”

(adapted from *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque)

***Three Soldiers***

“Chrisfield…could hardly hear the tramp of feet on the road, so loud was the pandemonium of the guns ahead and behind. Every now and then a rocket would burst in front of them and its red and green lights would mingle for a moment with the stars. But it was only overhead he could see the stars. Everywhere else white and red glow rose and fell as if the horizon were on fire.

As they started down the slope, the trees suddenly broke away and they saw the valley between them full of the glare of guns and the white light of star shells. It was like looking into a stove full of glowing embers…. In a battery near the road, that seemed to crush their skulls each time a gun fired, they could see the dark forms of the artillerymen silhouetted against the red glare. Stunned and blinded, they kept marching down the road. It seemed to Chrisfield that they were going to step any minute into the flaring muzzle of a gun.

At the foot of the hill, beside a little grove of uninjured trees, they stopped again….

Chrisfield lay down in the dry ditch, full of bracken, and dozed with his head on his pack. All about him were stretched other men. Someone was resting his head on Chrisfield’s thigh….

Something woke him. He was still with cold and terrified. For a moment he thought he had been left alone, that the company had gone on, for there was no one touching him.

Overhead was a droning as of gigantic mosquitoes, growing fast to a loud throbbing….Chrisfield got to his feet, his ears ringing. The column was moving on. He heard moaning near him in the darkness. The tramp of feet and the jingle of equipment drowned all other sound. He could feel his shoulders becoming raw under the tugging of the pack. Now and then the flare from aeroplane bombs behind him showed up wrecked trucks on the side of the road. Somewhere a machine gun spluttered. But the column tramped on, weighed down by the packs, by the deadening exhaustion.”

(excerpt from *Three Soldiers* by John Dos Passos, George H. Doran Company, 1921. 180,181)

**IV. War Poetry**

**DULCE ET DECORUM EST(1) by Wilfred Owen**

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,   
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,   
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs   
And towards our distant rest(2) began to trudge.   
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots   
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;   
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots(3)    
Of tired, outstripped(4) Five-Nines(5) that dropped behind.  
Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! – An ecstasy of fumbling,   
Fitting the clumsy helmets(6) just in time;   
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,   
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime(7) . . .   
Dim, through the misty panes(8) and thick green light,   
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.   
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,   
He plunges at me, guttering,(9) choking, drowning.   
If in some smothering dreams you too could pace   
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,   
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,   
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;   
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood   
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,   
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud(10)    
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,   
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest(11)    
To children ardent(12) for some desperate glory,   
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est   
Pro patria mori.(13)

Vocabulary

1.  DULCE ET DECORUM EST - the first words of a Latin saying. The words mean "It is sweet and right." The full saying ends the poem: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - it is sweet and right to die for your country. In other words, it is a wonderful and great honor to fight and die for your country.

2.  Distant rest - a camp away from the front line where exhausted soldiers might rest for a few days, or longer

3.  Hoots - the noise made by the shells rushing through the air

4.  Outstripped - outpaced, the soldiers have struggled beyond the reach of these shells which are now falling behind them as they struggle away from the scene of battle

 5.  Five-Nines - 5.9 caliber explosive shells

6.  Helmets -  the early name for gas masks

7.  Lime - a white chalky substance which can burn live tissue

8.  Panes - the glass in the eyepieces of the gas masks

9.  Guttering - Owen probably meant flickering out like a candle or gurgling like water draining down a gutter, referring to the sounds in the throat of the choking man, or it might be a sound partly like stuttering and partly like gurgling

10.  Cud - normally the regurgitated grass that cows chew usually green and bubbling. Here a similar looking material was issuing from the soldier's mouth

11.  High zest - idealistic enthusiasm, keenly believing in the rightness of the idea

12.  ardent - keen

13.  Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori - see # 1 above.

**V. WWI Statistics**

Personal Costs

* Over 9 million soldiers and sailors died.
* Over 21 million military personnel were wounded.
* A total of as many 42 million people died from war-related wounds, famine, and disease
* Hundreds of thousands of civilians were driven from their homes

Psychological Costs

* People lost faith that technological progress would always lead to positive change
* War had shown how technology could make killing more efficient

Economic Costs

* Farmers lost over 1 million head of livestock
* Over 600,000 buildings were destroyed or damaged
* Bridges, highways, tunnels, canals, railroads, and telegraph/telephone lines were destroyed
* Total cost for WWI was between $330 and $375 billion dollars.

**VI. Trench Warfare Pictures**

 