

A letter from the trenches

The task: Write a letter home describing what life is like in the trenches during The First World War.

You can write about:

- friends that have been wounded
- friends that were killed
- barbed wire
- the mud
- machine guns
- rats
- trench foot
- the smell
- your location
- soldiers
- your superiors
- the food
- the bombing
- your feelings

A LETTER HOME.



British soldiers in the trenches waiting for the order to advance. One of them is making use of the opportunity to write a letter to the old folks at home.

Abergavenny Chronicle, 28th
May 1915,
A Letter Home

More useful information about this theme can be found in the [Life on the Western Front](#) pack available from Hwb.

Sending letters home

Life on the fighting fronts could be both tough and boring, and one way of battling the boredom was to communicate consistently with friends and family by sending and receiving letters and parcels from loved ones.

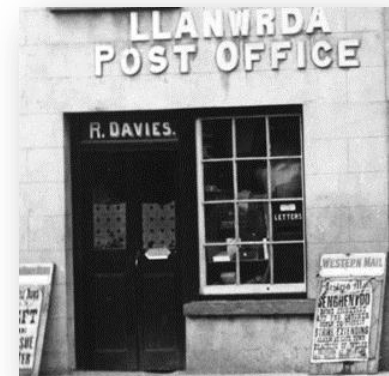
1. Soldier or sailor sends a letter home.



2. The letter is read and amended by a censorship officer.

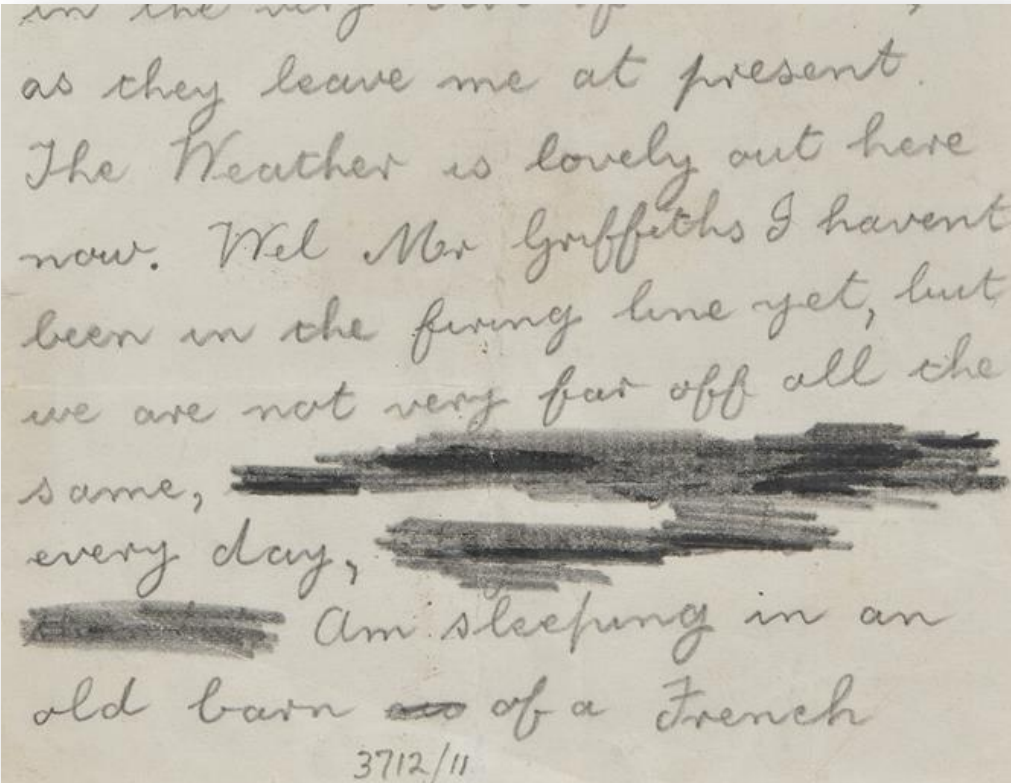
as they leave me at present.
The weather is lovely out here
now. Well Mrs Griffiths I havent
been in the firing line yet, but
we are not very far off all the
same, [redacted]
every day, [redacted]
[redacted] Am sleeping in an
old barn of a French
3712/11

3. Family or friends receive the letter back home in Wales.



What is censorship?

Censorship is when something that is produced is seen by someone else and that person deletes any part that they want to prevent from being revealed.



Censorship officers read every letter that was sent home during the war and deleted or ripped parts out of letters to keep secrets.

A censored letter from France written by David Davies to Mr. Griffiths, 29 May 1916.



Why were letters censored?

The British forces did not want the enemy to discover any information that they could find valuable such as:

- Locations
- Tactics
- How the soldiers felt

A stamp to show that the censor has passed this postcard.



The censors ensured that any information that could be useful to the enemy was removed from communications in case the enemy did manage to intercept messages.

Why were letters censored?

Another reason to censor letters was to conceal the truth about the horrors of war from people in Britain.



The government believed that the number of men joining the armed forces would decrease if letters home described exactly what was happening on the front line.

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed.

I am quite well.

I have been ~~admitted into hospital.~~
{ sick } and am going on well.
{ wounded } and hope to be discharged soon.

I am being sent down to the base.

I have received your { letter dated _____
telegram „ _____
parcel „ _____

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you
{ lately.
{ for a long time.

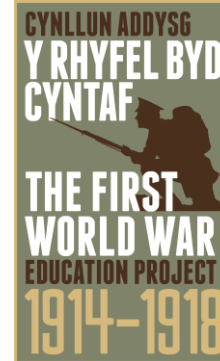
Signature {
only. }

Date *W. 1918*

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

(92688) Wt. W2497-293 2,000m. 11/15 J. J. K. & Co., Ltd.

D/D - CES 1/2.



©Glamorgan Archives

Some soldiers sent these cards home. They did not have to write anything and only needed to cross out the sentences that they did not want to use.

What would be censored?

- Complaining about officers or generals
- Complaining about the weather
- Location of soldiers
- Information about the number of soldiers in their trench
- Information about how many guns and weapons they had
- Battle plans
- The names of soldiers that were wounded or had died
- Descriptions of how soldiers were killed

Puddles of rain on the battlefield, 1918



©Encyclopedia Britannica

Censoring a fake letter

Underline anything that should be censored in this letter in red and anything that is fine in green

26 May 1916,

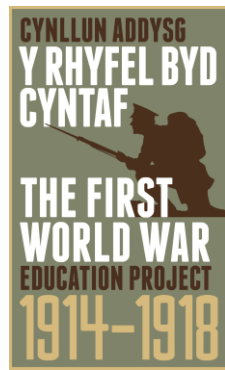
Somewhere in France

Dear Mam,

I hope everyone is fine at home. The weather in Albert, France is nice at the moment, but there are a lot of muddy puddles that have been here for months and some of the boys are suffering badly from trench foot. There are a lot of rats around the trenches which makes it difficult to sleep.

I haven't seen any fighting yet, but I'm sure I will soon. 500 of us are going into battle for the first time next week. We have got a tank for our next attack and William Jones is very excited! We are quite happy at the moment. I'll write again soon.

Bye for now,
Owen Morgan



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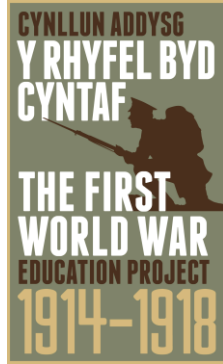
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Your turn!

- Write a letter home describing what life is like in the trenches during The First World War
- Exchange your letter with someone in the classroom
- Imagine that you are a censorship officer during the First World War.
- Underline anything that would be censored in red and anything that would be passed in green.
- Explain your reasons for your choices in censoring.

