

Below is a description of what life was like for soldiers living in the trenches during World War One. Read it carefully then answer the questions below it, using complete sentences.

Life in the Trenches

Life in the trenches was cold and dirty. This was because there was never enough food, there was no way of keeping warm, no real shelter from rain and no proper toilets. The smell of human waste, of filthy soldiers unable to wash for weeks on end and of the rotting bodies of dead men lying out in 'No Man's Land' between the trenches was unbearable. Almost all of the soldiers had head and body lice because they could not keep themselves clean.

The trenches were infested with rats which fed on the bodies of dead soldiers. These rats had grown huge and fat because they were so well fed. The rats often attacked wounded or sleeping soldiers. The rats carried diseases.

The trenches were full of water and mud. The soldiers might spend weeks on end standing up to their knees in freezing mud. Many soldiers got an illness called 'trench foot' from this; their feet swelled up and began to rot.

Because they never knew when the enemy might attack, the soldiers had to be on guard most of the time. The soldiers got very little sleep.

The enemy fired explosive shells and mortar bombs without warning. The enemy sometimes fired shells full of poison gas. The soldiers had to stay alert at all times if they wanted to avoid being killed. Enemy snipers killed any soldiers who did not stay under cover.

Questions:

- 1 What was life in the trenches like? Why was this?
- 2 What three things made the smell unbearable?
- 3 Why did almost all the have lice?
- 4 What infested the trenches? Why had they grown fat?
- 5 Of what were the trenches full?
- 6 What happened to soldiers who got trench foot?
- 7 Why did the soldiers have to stay alert?