

War Poets Collection



Changing Perspective

It is October 1916. The First World War has been raging for over two years.

The Battle of the Somme has just ended. It was intended to be the attack that broke the German Army and ended the war of attrition. It ended up being a means of easing pressure on the French at the Battle of Verdun. Over 600,000 men were killed or injured on the British and French side, and almost as many on the German side.

You are a respected newspaper reporter. Two newspapers have approached you to write an article on the Battle.

The Daily Supporter is fully behind the war. The Supporter wants you to write an article arguing that the War is necessary and that all young men should enlist, and use the Battle of the Somme as evidence of this.

The Daily Opponent is totally against the War. Too many local men have gone away and not returned. The Opponent wants you to write an article arguing that the war is pointless and that all young men should refuse to fight, and use the Battle of the Somme as evidence of this.

You must choose who you wish to write for. To help you, there is a table with two columns containing information about the Battle of the Somme. Four support the War and four oppose it. But (and here's the tricky bit) whichever newspaper you decide to write for you must choose two pieces of information from each column. Remember, wartime reporting isn't always about giving the facts. It is about making the people at home feel that everything is going really well, and creating a spirit where everyone pulls together to help out. To do this, a good wartime reporter must be able to change the information they have available.

Information 'for' the war	Information 'against' the war
The Battle of the Somme has laid the foundations for final victory	Over 57,000 men were killed or injured on the first day of the Battle alone
The Battle has greatly eased the pressure on the French at the Battle of Verdun	Young soldiers are dying in a hail of bullets whilst the generals sit miles behind the front line
The Battle has applied huge pressure on German resources with only one division in reserve	By August Field Marshal Haig thought that a breakthrough was unlikely, but still the Battle continued
After the Battle Germany saw Britain as a strong military force; before it Britain was only viewed as a naval force	The British and French advanced only five miles at the deepest point of penetration, at a cost of over 600,000 casualties to the British Empire and France

To help you:

Choose two bits of information from each column

Remember to choose two from each column when writing your article. You can change the meaning of the information if you like to help make your point. For example, if you are writing in opposition of the War you might take the information about general sitting miles behind the lines and say this is necessary if they are to understand all that is going on.

Why do people want to read what you are saying?

You can make people want to read your article by choosing an enticing headline. Headlines are a very important part of the article as they set the tone, introduce your perspective and need to instantly grab people's attention. Try these:

Generals sip champagne while our sons die

Population of a town killed on the first day

Final victory now in sight

Germans have no reinforcements left

Or make up one of your own. And make sure your introduction is equally exciting.

Keep in mind why you are writing the article

Make sure you are strongly for or against the War, depending on which newspaper you are writing for.

Getting some extra facts

You could do some online research. Just ask your teacher for help. Good places to start are:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Somme

<http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWsomme.htm>

Quoting people

Remember, it can really strengthen your argument if you quote someone to back you up. It could be a line from a Wilfred Owen poem or part of the speech of a famous politician of the time. Try and find some quotes online (just search for 'First World War' or 'Somme'):

<http://www.brainyquote.com/>

Picture this

Why not add a picture to add that little something extra to your article. You will find many online at the following sites:

The military collection of the Imperial War Museum is one of the largest in the world.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources>

The Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network (SCRAN) has an enormous digital collection of Scottish-related historical images. Many of them are related to the First World War. (Your teacher should have a password to allow you access to the full-sized images). <http://www.scran.ac.uk/>

