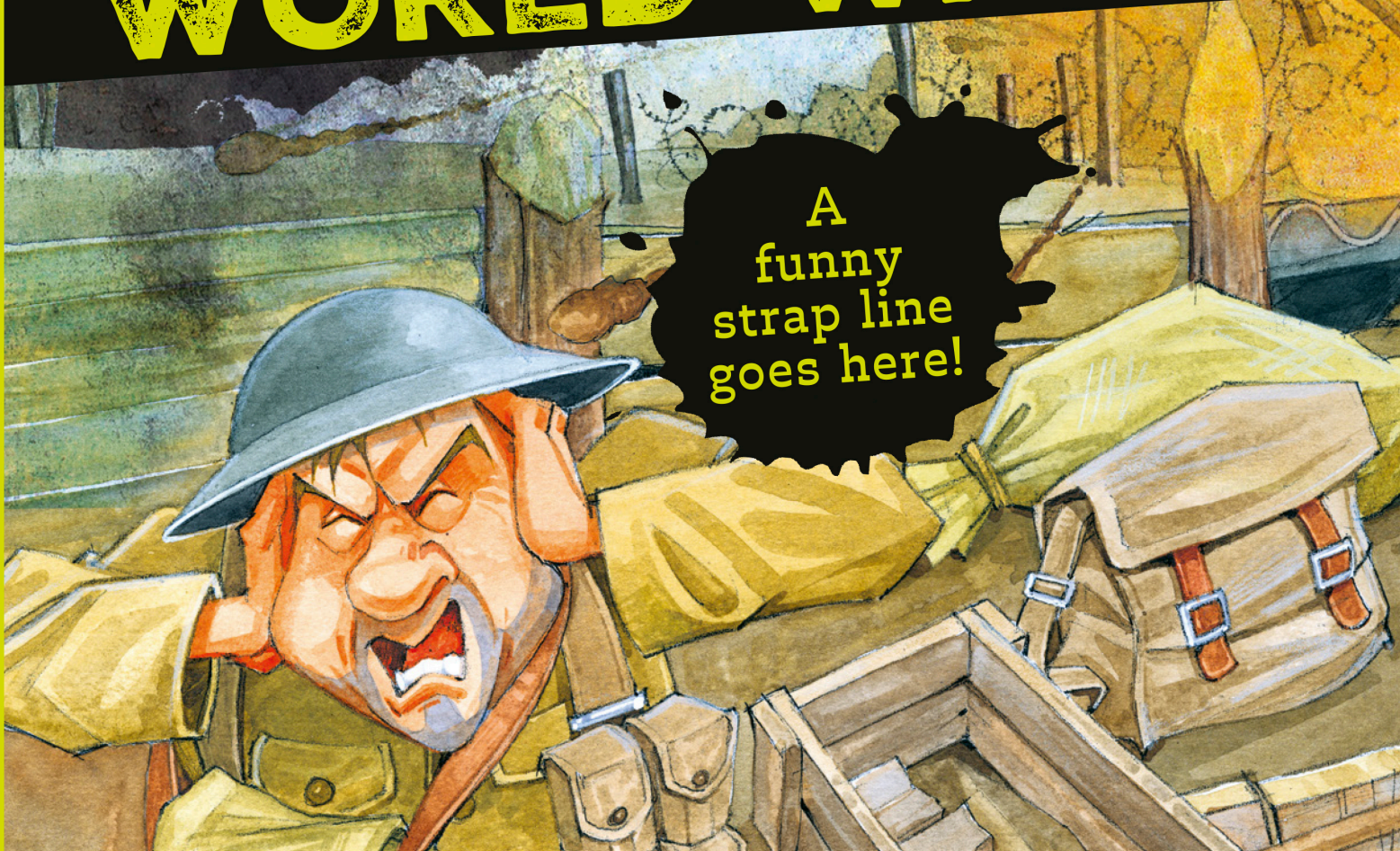


You  
**Wouldn't**  
Want to...

BE IN THE

**TRENCHES IN**

**WORLD WAR 1**



Written by Alex Woolf • Illustrated by David Antram



# Joining up

Even though you're under age, you join the queue at the local recruiting centre and try to enlist with the army. When it's your turn to be interviewed, the recruiting sergeant asks for your age. You tell him and he says 'Clear off, son. You can't join up unless you're 18 and can't fight until you're 19. Come back tomorrow and see if you're the right age.' So you return the next day and give your age as 19. Then you hold up your right hand and swear to fight for king and country. The sergeant winks and hands over your first day's wages. You realise that the army is so desperate for soldiers, it's prepared to bend its own rules.



## Taking the oath

Recruits have to swear loyalty to king and country.



## Fighting physique

You can't join up unless you're at least 5 foot 6 inches with a chest size of 35 inches.



## Your country needs you

Lord Kitchener's impressive moustache and pointing finger are responsible for recruiting millions.



## Handy hint

If your parents won't let you join up, sign on with a false name. That way they won't be able to track you down.



## Caps and helmets

At the start of the war, soldiers wore peaked caps made of cloth. But the alarming number of deaths from head wounds led the authorities to issue Allied soldiers with steel helmets from 1915. German troops had to wait until 1916 to get the same protection.

## Uniform and equipment

British soldiers wear woollen khaki uniforms with belts, packs and pouches made of a strong material called webbing.

# The cold and the wet

Autumn turns to winter with no sign of an end to the war. There is constant rain. Trenches become rivers and frequently collapse. The rains have caused the latrines to overflow into the trenches, spreading disease. Some soldiers prefer to risk death by sleeping outside the trenches.

When on sentry duty, you're forced to stand in a freezing, waterlogged trench for hours on end without being able to remove your wet socks or boots. Your feet have gone numb and the skin is turning blue. You have trench foot! Luckily for you, it's treated before it goes gangrenous. Otherwise it might have had to be amputated.

## Change your socks.

Soldiers can avoid trench foot by drying their feet and changing their socks at least twice a day. But that's easier said than done in a waterlogged trench!



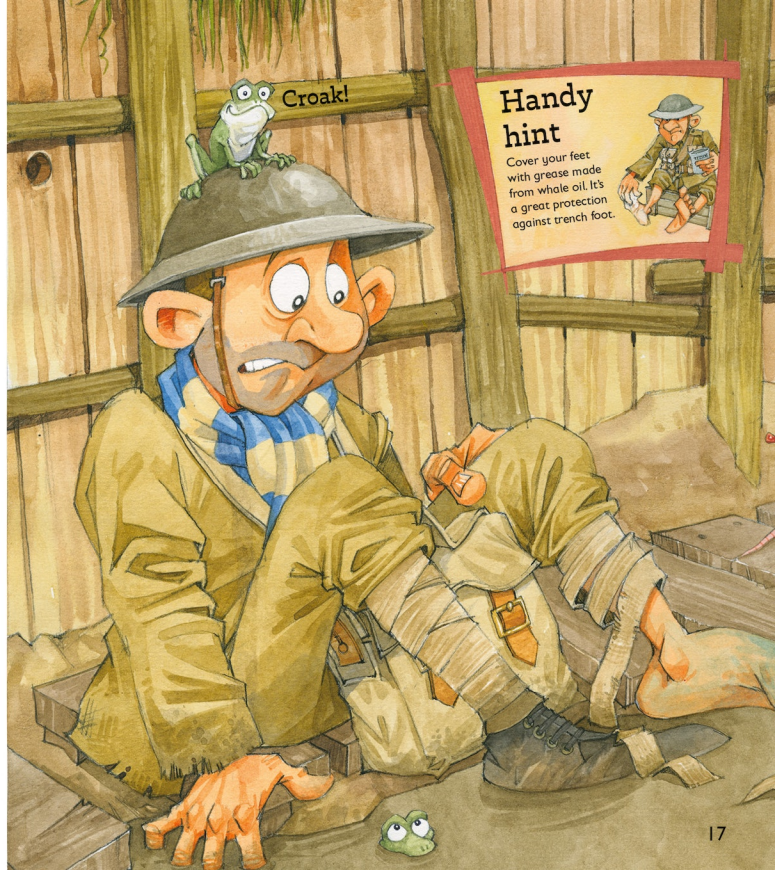
## Dysentery

is a problem because of the lack of proper sanitation. Also, drinking water is often in short supply, so soldiers must depend on impure water collected from shell-holes.



## Frostbite

can be a real hazard in winter. Soldiers are advised to strip off and smear their bodies in animal fat for insulation.





# No-man's-land

You are selected as part of a patrol to venture into no-man's-land to discover information about the enemy. You must take control of a shell-hole in front of the enemy trench so you can spy on them. Your patrol goes out at night, crawling forward on your stomachs, faces blackened with burnt cork, trying to avoid getting caught in barbed wire. The Germans send up a flare and fire on your patrol. You dive for cover into the shell-hole and then must spend hours lying there silently in the mud, pretending to be dead.

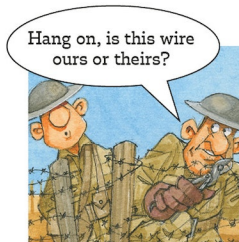


## Night raids

Men are often sent into no-man's-land at night on spying missions or to capture enemy soldiers for interrogation.

## Light flares

To stop British night patrols, the Germans use light-shell rockets. The flare blazes brightly for up to a minute, giving defending troops a chance to fire at the patrol.



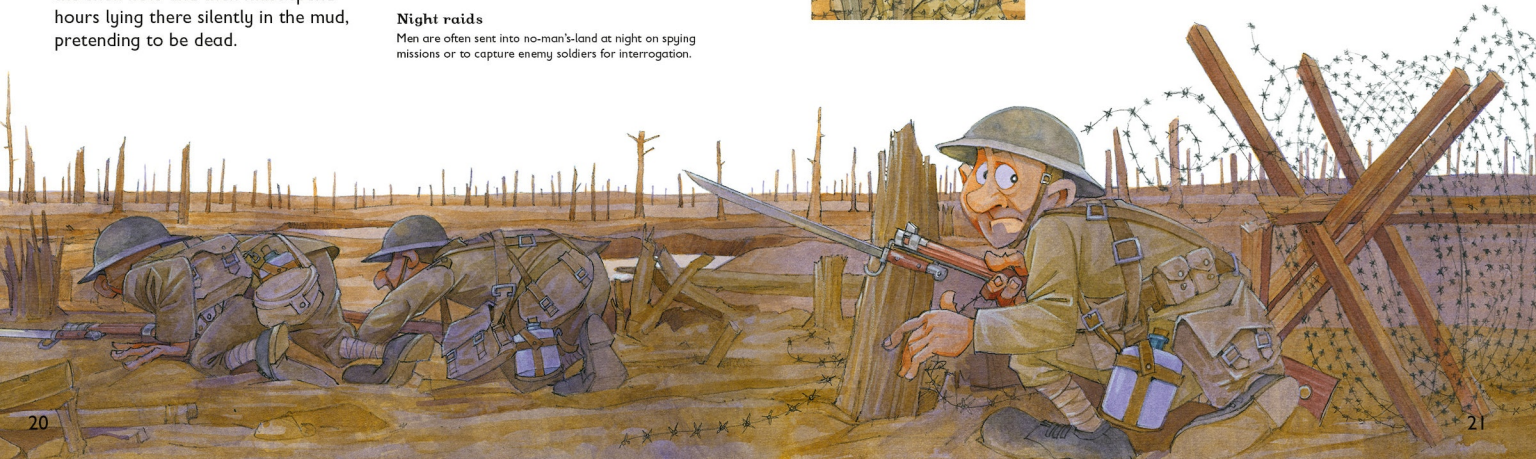
## Handy hint

If sent on a night raid, take silent weapons such as knives, clubs, knuckledusters and hatchets.



## Barbed wire

is placed in front of trenches to foil enemy infantry attacks. Night parties are sent out to repair these defences or cut the enemy's wire.

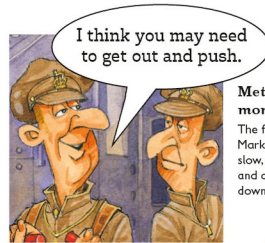




# Tanks, tunnelling and other terrifying tactics

In their desperation to break the deadlock on the Western Front, military leaders on both sides turn to new methods. In September 1916, you see huge, strange-looking machines trundling slowly towards the German front lines – it's your first sighting of tanks, and they terrify you and your comrades as much as they do the

Germans. You learn later that for those driving the tanks, the experience isn't exactly pleasant either. Tanks are hot and noisy inside and, since they lack springs, the crew are thrown around like peas in a can. But on the right terrain they prove very effective at breaking through German lines.



I think you may need to get out and push.

## Metal monsters

The first British Mark I tanks are slow, cumbersome and often break down.

## Aircraft

are crude and unreliable. Pilots fly in cramped cockpits and there is no room for a parachute.



Time to bale out. Now where's my...? Oh.

## Subterranean saboteurs

Miners are employed to dig tunnels under no-man's-land and place mines beneath enemy trenches.



## Handy hint

To detect enemy tunnelling, drive a stick into the ground and hold the other end between your teeth to feel any vibrations.



## Creeping barrage

With this tactic (below), introduced in 1916, artillery fire moves forward in stages, just ahead of advancing infantry. The timing has to be just right to avoid killing friendly soldiers.



## Gas attack!

You see a yellow-green cloud drifting towards you. Get your gas mask on quick! Chlorine gas causes a slow death by suffocation.