Life in the Trenches

**DIRECTIONS** Imagine you are a soldier stationed on the Western Front during World War I, and write either a journal entry or a letter to your family or friends back home. Be sure to include information on all aspects of your life at the Front, including weapons, food, and what your daily life is like. Make sure to describe your surroundings and how it feels to be in battle. The excerpts below were written by soldiers serving on the Western Front (though trench warfare was not confined to the Western Front). Use them as inspiration along with the facts you have learned in class to inform your letter.

**Shells of all calibers** kept raining in our sector. The trenches had disappeared, filled with earth. The air was unbreathable. Our blinded, wounded, crawling, and shouting soldiers kept falling on top of us and died splashing us with their blood. It was living hell.

—French infantryman

**It is Christmas evening 1915,** our company is in the second line in the concrete bunkers. We worked ourselves into a sweat making this. Every sack of cement and sand must be dragged along. We lost a lot of comrades by enemy shrapnel. Now we are sitting in the bunker, our work has not been in vain. Snow is covering the earth, we are homesick for wife, children and sister.... Now it is Christmas for the second time in this war. Along the front line all is quiet, only some rifle bullets are crossing the air like lashes .... I have to look for a Christmas tree, without a tree there is no Christmas.

—Ernst Bergner, 143rd Infantry Regiment (Germany)

**The fighting troops of the front lines** see themselves mire[d] hopelessly in this hellish wasteland. Whoever lives through it thanks his good luck. The rest die as “heroes.” It is not easy to expect death almost daily. However, after a while I have gotten used to the idea of dying young. Strangely, it has a soothing effect and prevents me from worrying too much.

—Reinhold Spengler, 1st Bavarian Infantry Regiment (Germany)