War Without Limits

Turning points and the reach of World War I

MWH.C.6.1.B "Summarize the significant events of World War I and why the conflict was considered a total war (e.g., use of industrial and chemical weapons, prolonged trench warfare…"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the names of the three battles, circle details showing how the war became a total war, and draw an arrow from each battle to a statement of its result.

From the Marne to the Armistice

1. In August 1914, Germany invaded Belgium and advanced toward Paris, hoping to defeat France quickly before turning east. In September, French and British forces stopped the German advance at the First Battle of the Marne. Germany's plan for a rapid victory in the west failed. Both sides then dug networks of trenches across the Western Front, where attacks often gained little ground. The fighting did not stay within Europe's borders: Britain and France drew soldiers and supplies from their overseas empires, while battles reached places such as East Africa and the Middle East. A European crisis had become a global war.

2. In 1916, Germany attacked Verdun, seeking to exhaust the French army. French forces held the city through months of fighting, but both sides suffered enormous losses. Verdun became a test of whether a nation could keep fighting despite staggering costs. That summer, Britain and France attacked German lines at the Somme to relieve pressure on Verdun and break the deadlock. The offensive failed to achieve a decisive breakthrough, though it forced Germany to divert troops and showed the destructive power of artillery, machine guns, and tanks. Chemical weapons, including poison gas, threatened troops elsewhere on the front; gas masks offered incomplete protection.

3. Total war demanded far more than soldiers in trenches. Governments directed factories to make weapons and shells, rationed scarce goods, and recruited civilian labor; civilians faced shortages and, in some places, attack. In 1917, German submarine attacks on ships helped bring the United States into the war. Russia left after revolution, allowing Germany to shift forces west in 1918. Yet the German spring offensive stalled; fresh American troops helped the Allies push German forces back. Germany agreed to an armistice on November 11, 1918. Victory depended on resources, workers, and allies across continents, not simply on one battle.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why was the First Battle of the Marne a turning point in Germany's plan for the war?

2. How did Verdun and the Somme each affect the fighting in 1916? Explain one result of each battle.

3. How did the Somme show both the limits and the destructive power of industrial weapons?

4. Why does the passage call World War I a total war? Use one example of its global reach and one example of civilian involvement.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label arguing which of the three battles best shows why World War I was a total war. Explain the battle's significance and connect it to two features of total war from the passage, including at least one effect beyond the battlefield.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.C.6.1.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the names of the three battles, circle details showing how the war became a total war, and draw an arrow from each battle to a statement of its result. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why was the First Battle of the Marne a turning point in Germany's plan for the war?	**French and British forces stopped Germany's advance toward Paris, ending its plan for a rapid victory in the west.**
2	How did Verdun and the Somme each affect the fighting in 1916? Explain one result of each battle.	**French forces held Verdun despite enormous losses. The Somme did not break the deadlock, but it forced Germany to divert troops.**
3	How did the Somme show both the limits and the destructive power of industrial weapons?	**Artillery, machine guns, and tanks showed great destructive power, but the offensive did not achieve a decisive breakthrough.**
4	Why does the passage call World War I a total war? Use one example of its global reach and one example of civilian involvement.	**The war drew soldiers and supplies from overseas empires and reached East Africa and the Middle East. Civilians worked in weapons factories and faced rationing and shortages.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Somme best shows why World War I was a total war. Britain and France attacked in 1916 to relieve pressure on Verdun and break the deadlock, but they did not win a decisive breakthrough. Instead, the offensive exposed the destructive power of artillery and machine guns, along with the use of tanks. Such weapons required factories, shells, and civilian workers far from the trenches. Governments also rationed scarce goods to support the war effort. The Somme therefore reveals a war shaped by industrial production and civilian sacrifice, not only by soldiers' attacks.

Accept any of the three battles if the label accurately explains its significance and connects it to two supported features of total war. At least one connection must describe an effect beyond the battlefield.