

A Letter from the Trenches

You wrote about:

- No Man's Land
- Barbed wire
- Mud
- Machine Guns
- Lice
- Rats
- Home
- Gas and Gas mask
- Weapons
- Soldiers
- Rations (food)
- Bombing/ Artillery
- Trench foot...



Censorship

What is censorship?

Censorship is when written material is read and checked by another person. The censor deletes any sensitive or secret parts.

Also, Government restrictions on speech or writing.

What sort of things could be censored?

Newspapers

Websites

Letters

Music

Film

TV



Censorship during World War One

Censorship allowed the government to;

- protect secrets (e.g. battle plans, where troops are, etc)
- cover up mistakes or bad news
- prevent opposition to the war
- control peoples' opinions (Propaganda)

In World War I censorship was very heavy, as the government did not allow anyone to talk about or support ideas that could undermine the war effort or could give information to spies.

Censorship also kept morale up because only good news was reported.



Why were letters censored?

Military Information

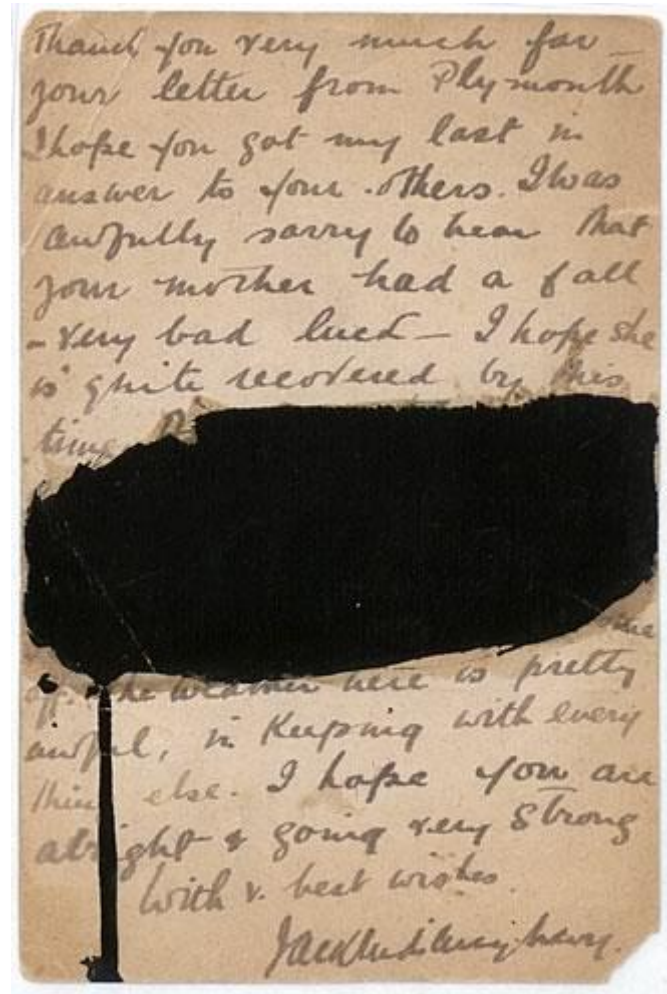
Censorship is important during wars to stop the enemy uncovering secret information and plans if they capture the letters.

British soldiers fighting in World War One wrote many letters home to their families.

All these letters had to be censored.

Officers censored letters using a black marker, pen, or scissors.

They blacked or cut out anything they thought might help the enemy.



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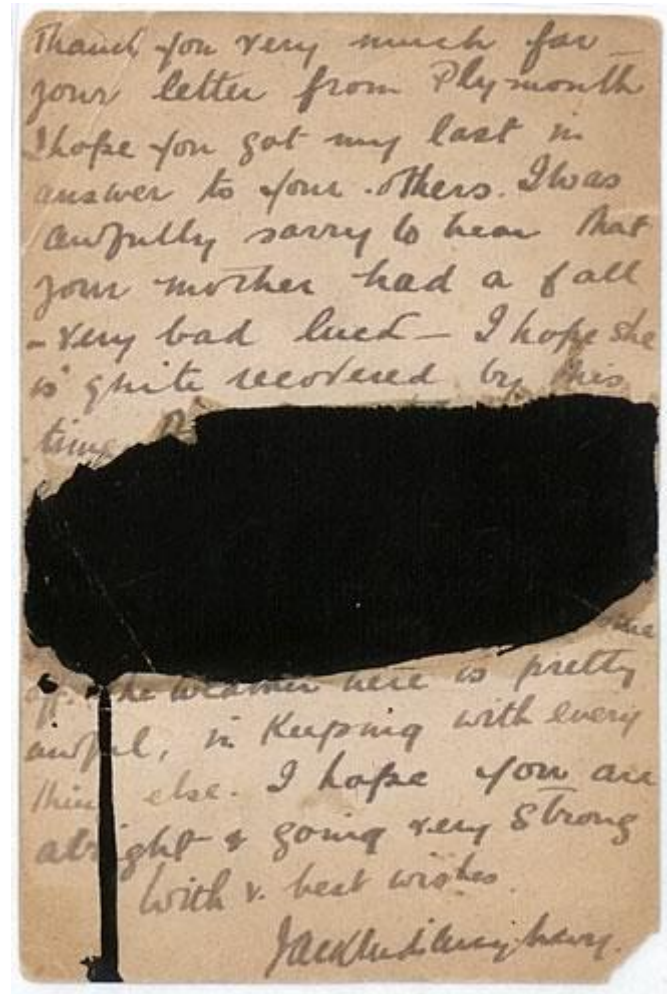
Morale

Letters were censored because they did not want the soldier's families and people at home to know what it was really like in the war.

The army needed people to join up and so did not want people to think that being on the front was as bad as it was.

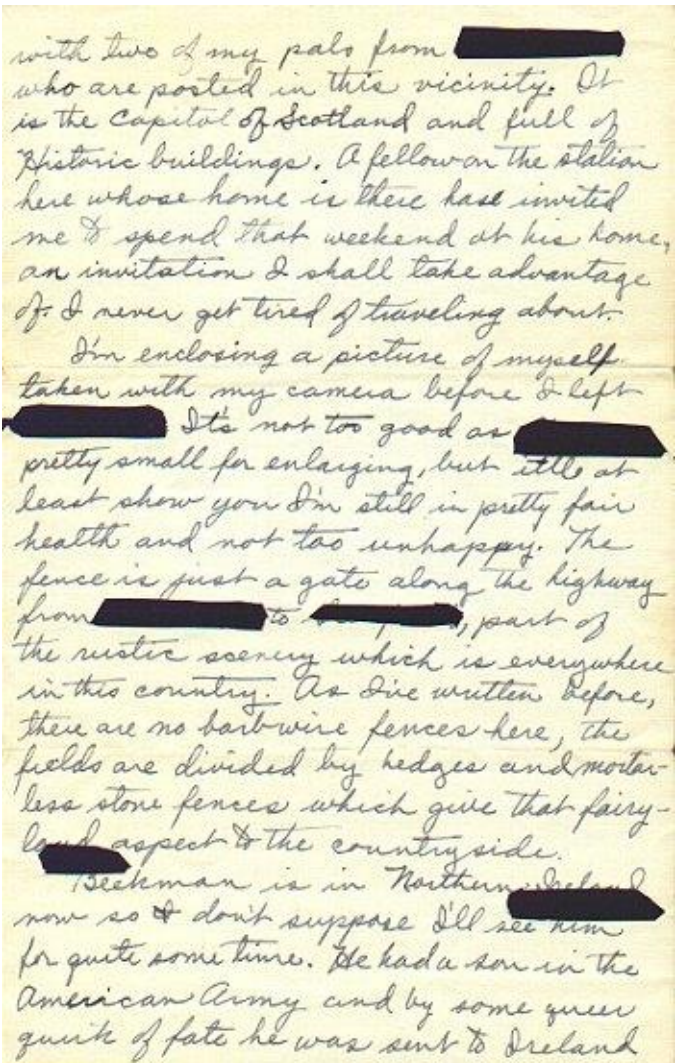
If a soldier wrote home complaining about his life there, then his family would worry and may tell other people not to join up.

The Government did not want people to be upset about the war or think that Britain might lose.



What would be censored in a Letter from the Trenches?

- Where you were stationed
- How many soldiers were there
- Names of any soldiers or officers
- What weapons you had
- Details of planned attacks
- Soldiers who were injured
- Soldiers who had died
- Bad conditions



with two of my pals from [redacted] who are posted in this vicinity. It is the capital of Scotland and full of historic buildings. A fellow on the station here whose home is there has invited me to spend that weekend at his home, an invitation I shall take advantage of I never get tired of traveling about.

I'm enclosing a picture of myself taken with my camera before I left [redacted]. It's not too good as [redacted] pretty small for enlarging, but still at least show you I'm still in pretty fair health and not too unhappy. The fence is just a gate along the highway from [redacted] to [redacted], part of the rustic scenery which is everywhere in this country. As I've written before, there are no barbed wire fences here, the fields are divided by hedges and mortarless stone fences which give that fairy-land aspect to the countryside.

Beckman is in Northern Ireland now so I don't suppose I'll see him for quite some time. He had a son in the American Army and by some queer quirk of fate he was sent to Ireland

Now...you try!

TASK: to censor your partner's letter from the trenches

Listen to Mr. Harrison... using the letter to "Rose"...

Censor their letter home from the trenches as if you were an officer.

Highlight anything that you think should be censored.



25th June 1916

My dearest Rose,

We've been up on the front line near Beaumont Hamel for a couple of weeks now. There's a rumour going around that we are going to launch a big attack pretty soon. There's certainly been a lot of artillery fire over the last couple of days and two extra battalions, the West Kent and the Westminster Rifles, have just moved in to this stretch of the front.

The weather has been beautiful. The sun has been out for most of last week and we've managed to dry everything out at last. It seems strange to think that each day might be my last. Only last week, a young lad on sentry duty had his brains blown out by a sniper. I should be due some leave fairly soon. I am missing you and the kids very much. How are they? Send them my love.

You can't imagine what it's like to be stuck in these trenches for days on end. The real problem at the moment is the rats. There are hundreds of them. There's no shortage of food for them, with all the dead bodies around. The smell is disgusting. But I'm keeping my spirits up. The lads are great. There's a lot of laughing and joking. At times you wouldn't think there was a war on. The food rations are fine and there are plenty of cigarettes. It's not always been like that. I don't think the generals have a clue what it's like up here at the front, otherwise we'd get better food all the time.

Yesterday morning at dawn, we were on alert for an attack. The alarm suddenly went along the lines that the Germans had let off some mustard gas. We put on our gas masks so quickly it wasn't true! We were lucky! In this part of the country, there's a lot of early morning mist. Thank God it wasn't gas. We are pretty well kitted out and equipped against any attack.

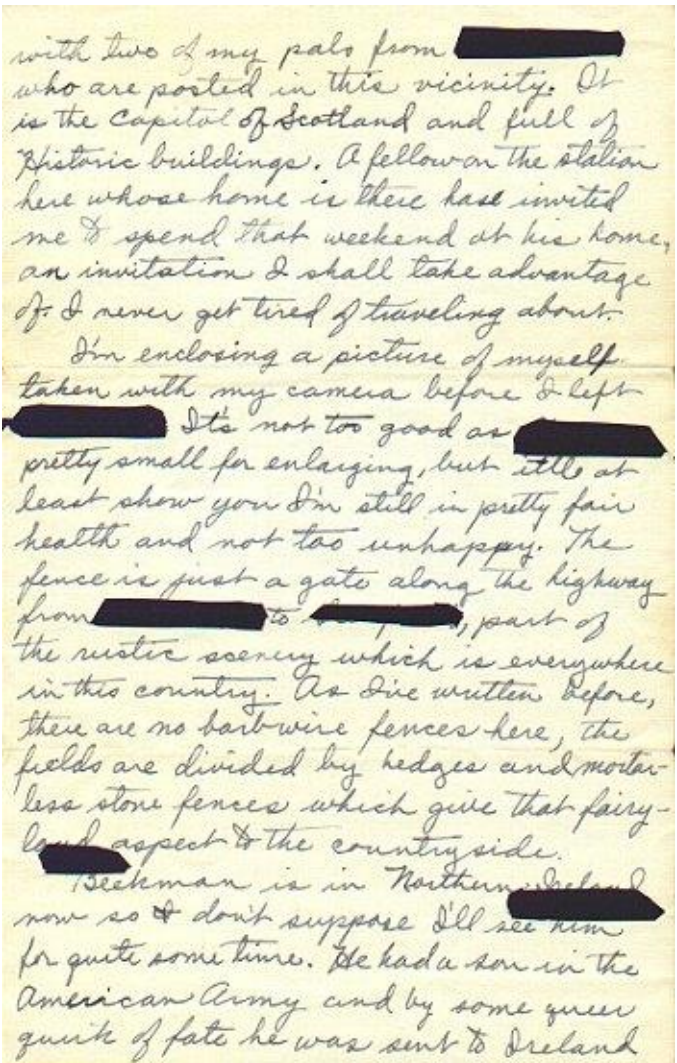
Well that's it for now. I hope to see you soon. I can't wait for this stupid war to be over so we can get back to normal again. I often wonder whether it's all worthwhile. I know we are fighting for King and for our country, but try telling that to all my mates who have died.

Your ever loving,

Jack

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