Weapons of the First World War

Artillery

Most British soldiers fighting in the trenches used bolt action rifles.

They used other gun types too, for example field guns and machine guns.

Field guns were large weapons that had to be moved using vehicles and required up to 12 men to work them.

Machine guns were also large weapons and were positioned all along the Western Front. These automatic weapons could fire 600 bullets a minute.

Bayonets

All soldiers carried a bayonet.

A bayonet was a weapon like a knife or blade which could be attached to the barrel of a rifle. This piece of apparatus was used to fight an enemy during close combat.
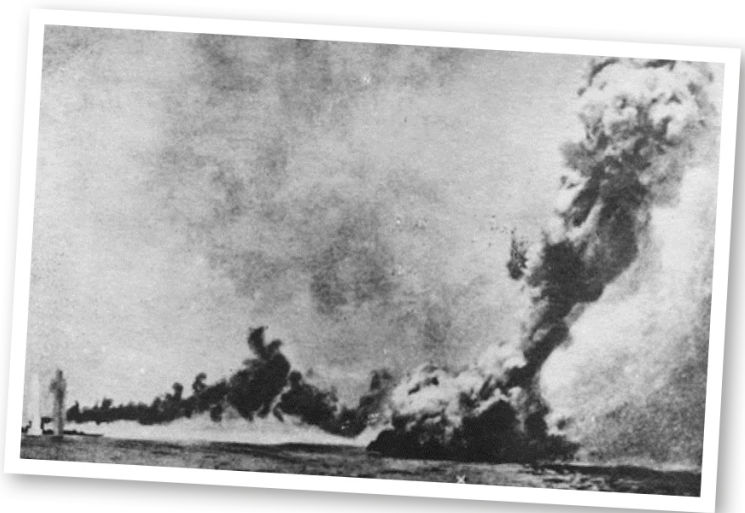
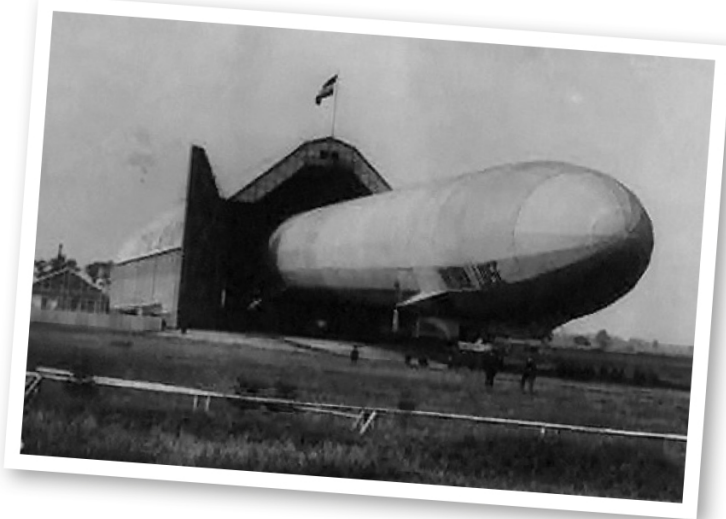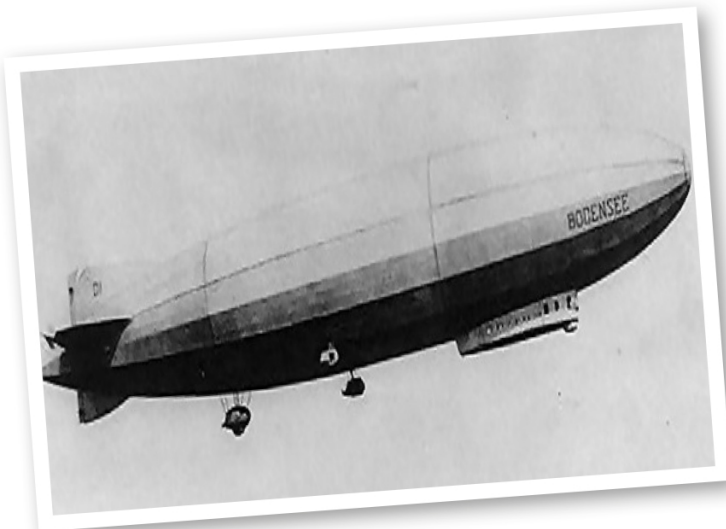Using a bayonet would turn a soldier's rifle into a spear or sword.

Bombs

Bombs were metal shells filled with explosives that were thrown at or dropped on a target to cause destruction.

Bombs were often used to attack a country's towns, dockyards and industries.

Germany attacked the British towns of Great Yarmouth and Sheringham with bombs in 1915.

Zeppelins

Zeppelins were rigid airships, filled with hydrogen gas. The name Zeppelin came from Ferdinand von Zeppelin who was a German aircraft manufacturer.

Zeppelins, which were also known as Blimps, were used in bombing raids by the German forces.

Grenades

During the First World War, grenades were used to attack the enemy in the trenches.

Grenades were small bombs thrown by hand or shot from a rifle.

Some types of grenade were not trusted, due to the possibility of them exploding unexpectedly.

Tanks

Tanks were large armoured vehicles used in military operations.

They were fitted with caterpillar tracks to help them cope with difficult terrains.

The first tank was nicknamed 'Little Willie'. It could only go at 3 mph.

Germany didn't use tanks much but the Allies used them to great effect, especially during the Battle of Cambrai in 1917.

Battleships

A battleship was a large military warship which had heavy armour and large guns. This type of ship was introduced in the early 20th century.

Many First World War battleships were dreadnoughts.

Dreadnoughts were fast and possessed powerful guns that could be fired over large distances.

The Battle of Jutland in 1916 was one of the largest naval battles in history.

Submarines

The most famous First World War submarine was the German 'U-boat'.

U-boats could fire torpedoes that were able to sink older battleships with one hit. This type of submarine was responsible for destroying food and supplies transported by the British Merchant Navy.

The German U-boat became less of a threat by the end of the war as British destroyers started to escort supply ships and used depth charges to attack the submerged submarines.
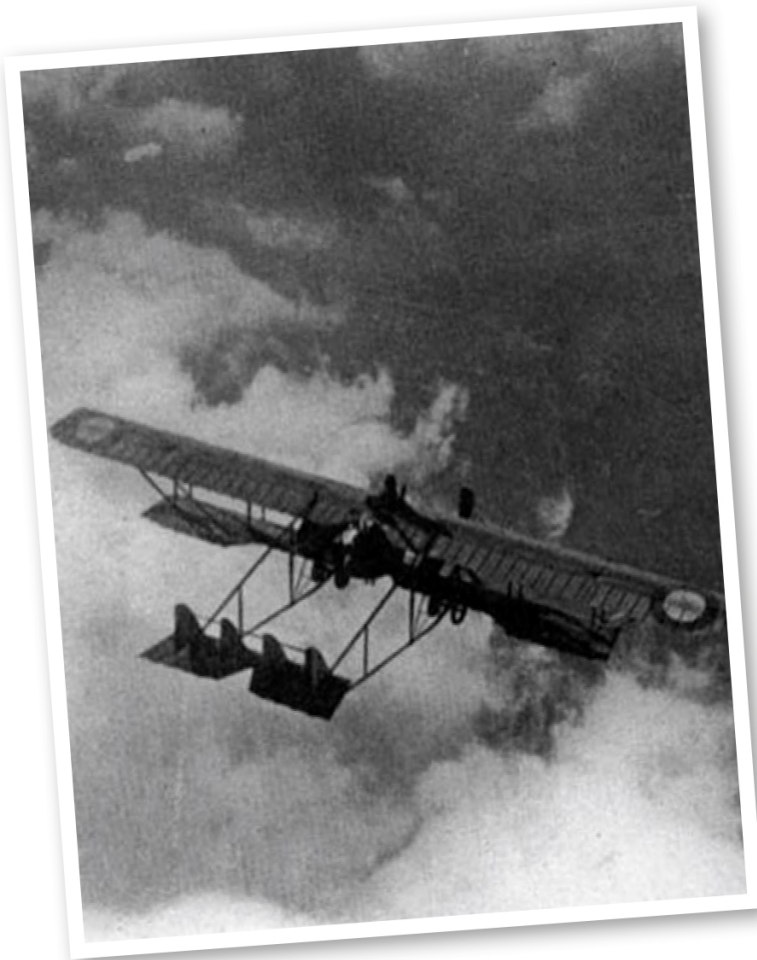
Aircraft

At the start of the First World War, aircrafts were very basic but by the end of the war they had developed into sophisticated fighters.

Planes were used for bombings, combat and spying. Battles between planes in the air were known as dogfights.

The markings on the wings of each plane identified which country the plane was from. This helped to prevent planes from being accidentally shot down by pilots or soldiers who were fighting on the same side.

Chemical weapons

The First World War saw the first use of mustard and chlorine gas. It was an extremely powerful and deadly weapon when used in the trenches.

The odourless mustard gas caused vomiting, blistering skin, sore eyes, internal and external bleeding.

Chlorine gas smelt of pineapple and pepper. It caused chest pains and a burning sensation in the victim's throat.