**Number 1**

**The Battle of the Marne**

(September 1914)

The Site: The Marne River in Northern France

The Story: This is the first engagement of WWI along the Western Front (between France, England, and Germany). This was the culmination of the Schlieffen Plan, and the Germans expected it to be a quick and easy victory. Unfortunately, after the battle, no clear winner emerged, and both sides were left at a stalemate (which means that neither side can advance). The problem with a stalemate is that neither side wanted to retreat, as the enemy would simply advance as they retreated. So both sides were committed to holding their positions, and neither side could gain the advantage militarily. The solution ended up being trenches. Both sides dug trenches to protect themselves against the deadly machine-gun fire. In between the two trenches was an area that became known as No Man’s Land. No Man’s Land became synonymous with death and suffering, because it was littered with barbed wire, unexploded shells, and dead bodies. It was often too dangerous to go retrieve the wounded, and each side was tortured with the cries of the wounded and dying soldiers.

The Significance:

Beginning of Trench Warfare and a stalemate along the Western Front. The stalemate wouldn’t be broken until the final year of the war (when the arrival of U.S. soldiers finally gave the allied powers the ability to break through the German trench lines and end the stalemate).

This also ended the Schlieffen Plan, because the German army was not able to neutralize France and England, and thus had to divide their armies between the Western and Eastern Fronts.

The Battle of Marne was also one of the first major battles in which reconnaissance planes played a decisive role, by discovering weak points in the German lines and allowing the Allies to take advantage of them. The mobility and destructive power of the numerous French 75 batteries engaged in the Battle of the Marne played a key role in slowing down and then halting German progress everywhere.

The First Battle of the Marne is best remembered for the approximately 600 Parisian taxicabs, mainly Renault AGs, commandeered by French authorities and used to transport 6,000 French reserve infantry troops to the battle. Their arrival has traditionally been described as critical in stopping a possible German breakthrough against the Sixth Army. Today, some historians question their real impact. Their impact on morale, however, is undeniable: the taxis de la Marne were perceived as a manifestation of the sacred union of the French civilian population and its soldiers at the front.

Over two million men fought in the First Battle of the Marne and perhaps 500,000 were killed or wounded. French casualties totalled 250,000, 80,000 of them dead. British casualties were 13,000, 1,700 of them dead. The Germans suffered 220,000 casualties.

1. Define Stalemate:
2. Define No Man’s Land:
3. How is the connection between the Schlieffen Plan and the Battle of the Marne?
4. Summarize the battle: