**Number 4**

**The Somme**

July – October 1916

The Site: The Somme River in Northern France

The Story: The British and French forces decided to attempt to break the stalemate by advancing across No Man’s Land, despite taking heavy losses. The German lines along the Somme River in Northern France were well-fortified, but even though the battle raged for months, no decisive victory occurred. Casualties were extremely high on both sides, but German forces suffered more casualties at this battle. Part of the motivation to undertake this desperate attempt was to draw German forces away from Verdun, which was costing the allied powers many soldiers.

The battle at the Somme started with a weeklong [artillery](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/artillery_and_world_war_one.htm) bombardment of the German lines. 1,738,000 shells were fired at the Germans. The logic behind this was so that the artillery guns would destroy the German trenches and barbed wire placed in front of the trenches.

In fact, the Germans had deep dugouts for their men and all they had to do when the bombardment started was to move these men into the relative safety of the deep dugouts. When the bombardment stopped, the Germans would have known that this would have been the signal for an infantry advance. They moved from the safety of their dugouts and manned their machine guns to face the British and French.

The Significance:

This is the deadliest battle in WWI. There were over 1,000,000 DEATHS (not casualties!).

The battle is notable for the importance of air power and the first use of the tank.

When the British public learned about the Somme, they were horrified, and the government lost public support for the war.

On the first day of the battle, July 1, 1916, the British had 57,470 casualties. One British Battalion suffered 91% casualties.

The Somme became a symbol for the inevitable futility of the entire war.

1. What were the British hoping to accomplish at the Somme?
2. Summarize what happened on the first day of the battle:
3. Identify 3 significances of this battle: