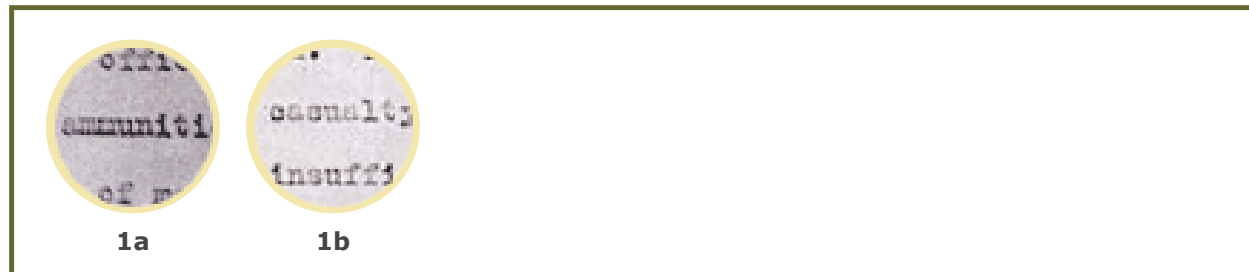




## Source 1

A letter sent to the editors of the main British newspapers by Sir Douglas Haig, May 1916

(Catalogue ref: WO 256/10)



### How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. It contains information that could be useful in your presentation. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What are the main points being made by Haig?
- Does this suggest that Haig knew what the Battle of the Somme was going to be like?
- Some historians have used this source to show that Haig did not care about casualties. Others argue that Haig was just being realistic and honest, based on what had already happened in the war. Which view makes more sense to you?
- Will you use this source in your presentation?



## Source 1a

Together with patience, the nation must be taught to bear losses. No amount of skill on the part of the higher commanders, no training, however good, on the part of officers and men, no superiority, however great, of arms and ammunition, will enable victories to be won without the sacrifice of men's lives. France, Germany and Austria have each lost in killed alone probably not less than one tenth of their male population capable of bearing arms. We must be prepared to accept great losses in future without flinching whenever and wherever it becomes necessary to sacrifice men in order to gain some important advantage or to foil the enemy's endeavours to gain one.



## Source 1b

The nation must also realise that in war the enemy has always to be reckoned with until we have established an overwhelming superiority. However carefully we prepare our plans, his action may compel us to modify them, or to adopt a course which we should have preferred to avoid. Pressure of the enemy on one ally may necessitate the intervention of another in another field, even though the moment may not be so favourable otherwise as could be wished. While, therefore, it would be advantageous to postpone the decisive battle until our men are fully trained and until supplies of all sorts are abundant, we may be forced to carry out counter-offensives on a considerable scale before that. The Germans will assuredly endeavour to force our hand. In this case, the nation must be prepared to see heavy casualty lists for what may appear to the uninitiated to be insufficient object and to have produced unimportant results.

To sum up: The lessons which the people of England have to learn are patience, self-sacrifice, and confidence in our ability to win in the long run. The aim for which the war is being waged is the destruction of German militarism. Three years of war and the loss of one-tenth of the manhood of the nation is not too great a price to pay in so great a cause.