

This picture is of the original trenches which we visited in Ypres, Belgium on our Grade 9 school trip. The trenches were filled with water and mud and the majority of the trench were so filled with water that it was almost impossible to get through. These trenches were very cramped and were filthy. I could not imagine what it would be like to live in those trenches. We also stumbled upon a living quarter where a group of soldiers would be crammed into a tiny bunker. The roof of the bunker was collapsing and there was no light entering the bunker. The soldiers which would have stayed there would have likely not been able to breathe clean air and would not have any privacy. The soldiers would have undoubtedly suffered from claustrophobia and depression from living in such horrific conditions. Another interesting feature of the trenches was the mine tunnel. These tunnels would sometimes stretch for kilometers. There was almost no space to move around and I had to crouch down almost on my hands and knees to be able to move around in the tunnel. I can't imagine what it would be like to work there with the constant threat of being found by the enemy and the horrible working conditions.

"I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome
dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling
eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go."



When I first saw this picture the poem *Suicide in the Trenches* by Siegfried Sassoon was the first thing that came to mind. The second stanza relates perfectly to what I felt it would be like to live in those trenches. The word *cowed* shows the reader the fear of a slow and painful death and the word lingers in the mind as if replicating post-traumatic stress disorder which many soldiers suffered in the Great War. *Glum* means that someone is feeling dejected and this must be what the soldiers felt during the war. They felt depressed as all their friends were dying for no reason. When the soldier kills himself it brings a feeling of oppression to me, as most people who commit suicide just need to talk and let themselves be heard and none of the soldiers could do this and they had no way of escaping except for death.