What weapons came to the forefront during WW1?

- **List and describe** arms (weapons) used prior to and during WWI.
The Realities of Trench Warfare During WWI

OVER THE TOP

Aircraft can warn of the build-up of enemy troops before an attack.

Barbed wire: metres deep and an impassable obstacle for any troops able to reach it.

Concrete block house for a machine-gun.

Reserve trench.

Support trench.

Front-line trench.

No Man's Land (the stretch of land between the trenches of the opposing sides) has already been churned up by shell fire. In wet weather it becomes a mass of mud, making it even harder for troops to cross.

A deep dug-out German ones could be 1.5 m below ground and too well constructed to be damaged by shell fire.

PROBLEMS FACING ATTACKING TROOPS
When a soldier went ‘over the top’ to attack the enemy he had to carry all of this equipment through the mud, barbed wires & crater holes made by mines. They had to make sure that they didn’t get shot at the same time.

“The zig-zag pattern of the trenches, made such that an enemy could not enter and begin firing straight down the entire length of the trench.”
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Soldiers wore heavy cotton uniforms, so fleas and ticks got in, but they did not get out. Socks became a much wanted item. People in the U.S. would make socks to send to soldiers. Flash floods drowned many. There was nowhere to put the bodies.
Rain would transform trenches into mud pits. They were very crowded and often men would sit back to back for hours on end.

Dead bodies and unsanitary conditions would cause infestations of rats, lice and diseases.

Water-logged trenches resulted in trench foot. The smallest injury would get infected and could lead to gangrene.
Trench Foot

*Trench foot* refers to injury to the tissues of the foot, resulting from prolonged exposure of feet to moisture.

- The symptoms of trench foot include:
  - Numbness
  - Tingling pain
  - Burning pain
  - Itching
  - Swelling
  - Initial color change to pale
  - Final color change to dark purple, gray, or blue
  - Sometimes, blisters

“If you have never had trench foot described to you, I will explain. Your feet swell to two to three times their normal size and go completely dead. You can stick a bayonet into them and not feel a thing. If you are lucky enough not to lose your feet and the swelling starts to go down, it is then that the most indescribable agony begins. I have heard men cry and scream with pain and many have had to have their feet and legs amputated. I was one of the lucky ones, but one more day in that trench and it may have been too late.”

(Harry Roberts)
The soldiers had very little decent food, and what food they had was often attacked by rats.

These rats were the size of small rabbits and badgers because they had fed on the decomposing bodies of dead soldiers.

The stench of the dead bodies now is awful as they have been exposed to the sun for several days, many have swollen and burst. The trench is full of other occupants, things with lots of legs, also swarms of rats.

Sergeant A. Vine
8th August, 1915
The casualties from WWI ranked the worst of all wars to that date. It was known as the “War To End All Wars.” This was primarily due to a large number of new weapons introduced at this time.
Each symbol indicates 100,000 dead
As is the case in all wars, guns were used. On the left, is a pistol that you had to pull the hammer on to fire.

The picture on the right is of a more modern pistol. Guns were modernized and improved throughout the course of the war.

Grenades were used by soldiers on all sides. Like guns, grenades were improved on throughout the war.

Later, some grenades contained poisonous gases.
The machine gun was one of the most famous weapons developed during WWI. The first took three men to use it. One to load, one to empty casings, and one to shoot.

By the end of the war new one man machine guns were developed. Examples are the Maxim above, and the Browning below.
Gas Masks and the Machine Gun

The British and Germans argue over who invented the first tank. It was used to get over enemy lines and through “no-man’s land.” The first tanks had guns, but were blind on the side. They had to build platforms to get them over trenches.
Holt Caterpillar Tractor—early tank design of WWI

The Whippet Tank—later tank design of WWI

An example of a Tank During WWI
The fighting was not limited to land. WWI was also fought on the water and in the air.
There were naval battles that included submarine warfare.

The first modern submarine was used by Germany in WWI. Wireless communication was another first, allowing them to locate and torpedo ships.
At first, planes were used to spy on trenches. Later they hand dropped bombs and eventually mounted machine guns.

Dogfights occurred and both sides had their ace pilots. Germany had Baron Von Richthofen (a.k.a. the Red Baron) and America had Eddie Rickenbacker.
The Zeppelin, also known as a blimp, was an airship that was used during the early part of the war in bombing raids by the Germans.

- They carried machine guns and bombs.
- They were abandoned because they were easy to shoot out of the sky.
After a zeppelin attack in London.

After a zeppelin attack in Antwerp.

Other Weapons Include

- cannons
- barbed wire (to protect trenches)
- flame-throwers
- shrapnel
- smokeless gun powder
- bayonets
- torpedoes
French troops using flamethrowers

- The weapon which caused the most fear and panic, as well as painful death
- Both sides utilized chemical weapons in the trench warfare battle strategy.
- Although some protection was available, it was not very good and most soldiers that came in contact with the gas were disfigured or killed.
There were several different types of chemicals used in warfare.

- Tearing Agents
- Asphyxiates
- Blistering Agents
Tearing Agents

Tearing agents could be easily compared to the tear gas and mace used today. They would not kill the enemy soldiers, only temporarily blind them leaving them vulnerable to attack.

Asphyxiates

These gases included chlorine and phosgene. It works when the gas forms a hydrochloric acid after coming into contact with moisture (ex. eyes and lungs). It becomes lethal as it attacks and destroys the respiratory organs.
Blistering Agents

This was the most dreaded of all the poisonous gasses. The most commonly used form was known as Mustard Gas. It would attack the skin, eyes, lungs, etc. It produced large burn like blisters and was very painful.

This picture shows some of the first gas masks used by soldiers in the war. Gas was usually fired off in canisters. The sound that these launching canisters made would cause soldiers to go running for their masks. Often the gas would linger in areas for days, and soldiers never knew before jumping into a trench or hole if gas was present. Sometimes wind conditions would cause the gas to blow back into the direction of those who fired it.
Gas shells exploding in No Man's Land

Italian gas projectors in action

Gas masks for man and horse demonstrated by an American soldier

British soldier wearing a gas mask

Treating a mustard gas victim
Gas! Gas! Quick, boys! An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

Wilfred Owen 1917

“Gassed” by John Singer Sargent
Shows how the war was depicted in the artwork of the time.
After WWI, Erich Maria Remarque became a teacher and in 1929, his novel about his war experiences, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, was published in Germany. The book was attacked by Hitler and Goebbels and in 1931 Remarque decided to move to Switzerland. In 1933 *All Quiet on the Western Front* was banned and destroyed by the Nazis.

German cemetery
Mass graves in Russia

You are all a Lost Generation

Gertrude Stein