

## FIELD MARSHAL HAIG: 'THE BUTCHER OF THE SOMME'?

Politicians, including members of the government, began to wonder whether Haig's approach was working. They accepted that the pressure had been taken off Verdun, but they were concerned about the number of dead and wounded.

**SOURCE 12** A personal memoir written by Winston Churchill MP in August 1916

*"I view with the utmost pain, this terrible killing of our troops. We have not gained in a month's fighting as much ground as we were expected to gain in the first two hours. We have not advanced two miles in a direct line at any point . . . Nor are we making for any point of military importance; it is all open country which can easily be defended by the use of trenches."*

**SOURCE 13** A letter written to the *Daily Telegraph* by Lord Lansdowne, an ex-Cabinet Minister, on 29 November 1916

*"We are slowly but surely killing off the best of the male population of these islands. Can we afford to go on paying the same sort of price for the same sort of gain?"*

This celebrated letter became known as the Lansdowne Letter. It was the first time that a leading politician had openly questioned the way the War was being fought.



Major-General (addressing the men before practising an attack behind the lines). "I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REHEARSAL AND THE REAL THING. THERE ARE THREE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES: FIRST, THE ABSENCE OF THE ENEMY. NOW (turning to the Regimental Sergeant-Major) WHAT IS THE SECOND DIFFERENCE?"  
Sergeant-Major. "THE ABSENCE OF THE GENERAL, SIR."

**SOURCE 14** A cartoon from *Punch* magazine

### Activity

It is 1916. You have seen the cartoon in Source 14. Write a letter to the magazine in response to the cartoon. Your letter should either support or complain about the way the generals are fighting the War.

### Did Haig make mistakes?

**SOURCE 15** Judgements on Haig

1. Source 15 gives some judgements on Haig's leadership. Can you match each sentence up to the character who you think might have said it?



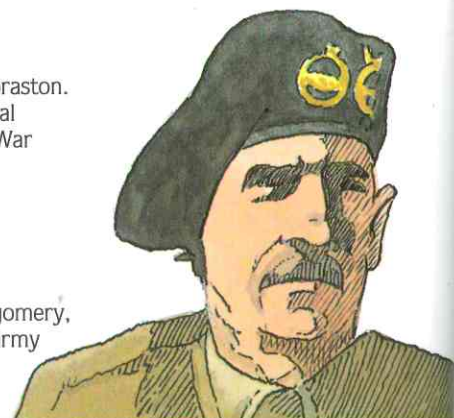
1967 The historian  
Sir Llewellyn Woodward



1919 Lovat Fraser, a fighting soldier



1922 Colonel J.H. Boraston.  
He was Haig's personal  
secretary during the War



1968 Field Marshal Montgomery,  
who was one of Britain's army  
chiefs in World War II