

By: Andrew Moore

On the Western Front from 1914-1918, British soldiers were subjected to new and increasingly deadly forms of warfare. What motivated these men to fight in such a life-threatening conflict? Society was tasked with replacing those killed and wounded on the battlefield with a continuing stream of new soldiers. Tactical propaganda, newspaper articles, and draft law were employed to influence these men into military service. Once in the trenches of Europe, they left behind diaries, letters, postcards, and poems that reveal their personal wartime experiences and motivations. Much of the scholarship concerned with The First World War, however, has been focused on the military tactics or wide scale results of the war. Even those historians who have begun to consider the individual men that fought, have concentrated on the impact that they had on society and literature after the war's conclusion. I argue that British soldiers were compelled into service based on a variety of societal pressures, but once introduced to the horrors of the Great War, some became motivated by their own self-confidence, leadership, and their brothers-in-arms to see their tours through. These soldiers were real people that feared, hated, and loved as vividly as we do today. Their lives and stories matter, and I think that they earned the right to speak for themselves. Caring for humanity and the world should be something we continue to strive for both in the past and the present.