





Schlieffen Plan Activity12



Schlieffen Plan Activity8

MODERN HISTORY MEETS THE WESTERN FRONT

During the first week of the HSC course, the new Year 12 Modern History students prepared for war.

The students were provided a map of Europe, and a variety of lollies/chocolates that represented the entire military capabilities of Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Russia in the year 1914. Over the course of the lesson, the students adopted the personas of the German Chiefs of Staff, Helmuth von Moltke, Erich Ludendorff, and later on, Erich von Falkenhayn, as they navigated through the events that initiated World War One.

In 1906, desiring to lessen the impact of an inevitable two-front war against both Russia (on the Eastern Front) and France (on the Western Front), the German military leader Alfred von Schlieffen developed a plan that depended on timing: the German army would force her way through Belgium and, by swinging around north-east France, capture Paris and force a French surrender within six weeks.

The aim, then, was to turn on Russia, who the Germans believed would take at least six weeks to mobilise. Unfortunately, as the students found out by walking through a scenario-based role-playing game constructed by Mr. Driscoll, the plan failed for a number of reasons, including military mistakes, Belgian and French resistance, the introduction of British forces into the war, and the rapid mobilisation of Russian forces. The failure of the Schlieffen Plan's execution to capture Paris saw German and Allied forces begin to dig trenches and outflank one another from September to November 1914.

However, with neither side being able to outflank the other, a stalemate developed across a 750km long trench system that stretched from the English Channel in the north to Switzerland in the south, known as the Western Front. It is this front that forms the basis of the students' first unit of work in Modern History, a source-based study into World War I 1914-1918.

It was great to see the students of 12-3 not simply reading notes, but applying their learning to demonstrate an understanding of the course content. It is this demonstration of understanding learning that is core to student improvement and their own classroom engagement. And yes, they enjoyed eating the food upon completion as well!

Matthew Driscoll

HSIE Teacher
