

**Box 16. Silence of Nature**



### List of contents

1. Parcel of burnt twigs
2. 2 photographs on acetate:
  - Polygon Wood after the Battle (AWM E01912) <https://www.abc.net.au/ww1-anzac/passchendaele/galleries/>
  - Mametz Wood, The maze of bunkers that made up the German headquarters. : <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-36723939>  
Photo credit: Aled Rhys Hughes [www.aledrhys Hughes.co.uk](http://www.aledrhys Hughes.co.uk)
3. 2 postcards
4. Zappar link to Mametz Wood by Owen Sheers

### Key information

- Nature bore the brunt of warfare. Landscape was devastated across all front lines. Armies altered ecosystems and accelerated environmental change.
- Land was torn apart by construction of trenches, bombs and thousands of muddy boots. Wildlife was killed for food. In the great boreal forest of Bialowiza, soldiers killed European bison for food nearly exterminating it.
- Nowhere was as greatly damaged than the Western Front, with trenches that ran from the North Sea to the Swiss frontier causing ecological upheaval, transforming rich fields and forests into wasteland. Low lands were flooded purposely to prevent German advance. Scorched earth tactics were implemented, burning the earth and everything that grew or lived there so the Germans would find a desert.
- The most damage was done by large projectiles fired by the artillery, several hundred rounds an hour. Chemical weapons added to the devastation of the ecosystem, with chlorine, phosgene and mustard gases asphyxiating animals as well as the intended target of humans. The landscape torn apart by the bombing trapped deadly vapours in pockets of earth in shell holes and trenches. This, with the burnt earth and decaying bodies, made the mud rank - green and yellow gas escaping intermittently from the shell holes and craters. "An image straight from hell."
- The landscape did recover although there are still traces of the scars. The first sign of recovery were fields filled with poppies.

### Zappar Code:

### Mametz Wood Poem



## 16. Silence of Nature



1. What do you think is in this box?
2. What do you think this box was used for?

### 3. Parcel

- Smell this parcel – what does it smell of? Does it remind you of anything?
- Open the parcel – what do you think has happened to these trees?
- What do you think happened to the birds and other animals that lived in this tree?

### 4. Photographs:

- Look at both these photographs. If you were a tree in this forest – how would you feel? Why?

### 5. Zappar Code:

- Listen to the poem with your eyes closed – how does it make you feel?
- How does it describe nature?



### **Suggested box combinations**

- Box 11 Silence of Surveillance
- Box 2 Mourning,
- Box 7 Waiting

### **Suggested activities**

- Outdoor activity (Wellies needed): select a piece of earth in the shape of a square – mark it out. Now dig into the earth, stamp on it, destroy the surface of it.
- Each day come and see the square and monitor how quickly it takes to recover. Take photographs, make drawings, noting down the first changes that show the earth is recovering.
- Do this until the earth seems fully recovered, noting how long that recovery has taken.

### **Caring for the box after use**

- Carefully wrap the wood in tissue paper
- Carefully place everything back in the box.
- If the Zappar Code does not work, please inform us.