

**Senior Essay 3rd Place  
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Zone G-2**

Dear Samuel Malcolm Jr;

I am so deeply sorry I wasn't home again for your birthday, I meant to write you a letter but the trenches are too muddy and the paper kept getting ruined. General Haig told me hopefully your uncle John and I will be home for Christmas and I'll be able to see you and your mother again. It's only begun but every day without you is a punch to the heart but I need to make you and our country proud.

Today marks the 79<sup>th</sup> day of the battle of Somme, every day is like a challenge of who can live the longest. Sometimes it all sounds like a blur, running while the screams and gun shots are muffled like I have something wrapped around my ears. Sometimes you don't even notice your friend fall dead beside you because everything doesn't feel real and it's as if it's all a bad dream, however, it is real.

Tomorrow I'm back to the trenches, the trenches are these long narrow ditches for us the stay in, I'm on the night shift so I must keep watch while the others sleep to keep them safe. It's boring and cold during the nights, when you're alone it feels so much longer. I mostly think about you and your mother. Sometimes it stops raining enough that I can set my rifle down and just watch the stars and know you are looking at the same ones. Your uncle John usually doesn't shoot rifles but is one of the men working the machine guns. It's amazing to watch, one second there could be one hundred men and the next they're all laying on the ground lifeless. Sometimes I wake up screaming thinking about the fights and blood, lately I can't sleep. I stay awake thinking of the men I killed, they have the same intensions as me, to keep our country safe and make our people proud.

There is this place in between us and the enemy trenches called "no man's lands", no one goes there in the fear of being killed. Its left unoccupied besides the many still bodies left on the ground to rot and abandoned weapons. Sometimes I look across the land and think of what their stories could be and think how many of these men were killed by my bullet. It brings tears to my eyes but I know I must do this to make sure you never have to do the things I have done.

When I shoot my gun, I don't even feel guilty, until everything goes calm and I see the lives lost scattered across the grass. I hate myself for it, and I always will. Every day I think about how at home their wives having to sit down and tell their children their father is dead. They won't know I am the reason, but I will. Most of the time I don't even know who I killed but I still feel as if I killed them all. I know I shouldn't feel guilty because this is my job and they were here to kill too but I just think of me dying and your mother having to tell you.

It's not all just blood and gore, it can be fun, when I'm working on the front line I can play cards, draughts and chess, we can't play anything fun because we might need to grab our rifles at any given minute. Time off on the trenches are more fun, we all play soccer and some target shooting. The officers get to play rugby and ride horses so they have a little more fun but it's okay.

They feed us okay but getting hot food from the kitchens to the frontline or the trenches is almost impossible, but when we aren't fighting it's a lot easier to get food. Some men get sent parcels of food from home but I don't want you to do that, we simply don't have enough money. We have some bully beef, which is caned corned beef), bread, and biscuits. The biscuits are kind of different at back home because we don't have lots of flower so it's made from dried ground turnips.

These past 79 days have been hell but I'd do it all over again to make sure you don't have to wake up scared every day and know your dad is keeping you safe. I love you very much and I miss you dearly. I hope you're proud of me.

Sincerely,

Your father, Samuel Malcolm