

World War One: The Battle for Communications

Letters and censorship

The British Army took a number of steps to censor what information made it home in letters sent by soldiers from the trenches. Censorship was very basic – censored topics were physically removed from letters using a sharp knife or were scribbled over. However, sometime censored words remained visible.

One method of censorship was the field postcard. These printed cards gave soldiers a number of multiple choice options which they could cross out if they weren't relevant. They were not allowed to write messages on them.

Another, more artistic form of written communication was the silk postcard. During World War One, silk postcards and handkerchiefs were bought as souvenirs by soldiers when they were on leave from the Western Front.

Local French and Belgian women embroidered different images onto strips of silk mesh which were sent to factories for cutting and mounting on postcards. This was an example of an industry which appeared as a result of war and was a useful source of income for families in France and Belgium.

Try writing a message on the back of this postcard. What would you have been allowed to say? Do you think your card would get through uncensored?

Postcard from the Italian front of World War I, c.1917.

Image available in the public domain via [Wikimedia Commons](#).



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

