Why did the Schlieffen Plan fail?

L/O – To identify the reasons why the Schlieffen Plan failed.
encouraging __________ movements in
Austria's __________ areas of the Balkans. Serbia was

In 1914, political tension in Europe was
gradually increasing. The great European powers had
divided themselves into: ____________ rival
alliances: the Triple Alliance consisting of
____________________ and
____________________ and the Triple Entente consisting of
____________________ and
____________________. All the powers had been
divided themselves into ____________ rival
alliances: the Triple Alliance consisting of
____________________ and
____________________ and the Triple Entente consisting of
____________________ and
____________________. All the powers had been
gradually increasing their

France
Italy
military
independence

two
Britain
Morocco
Austria-Hungary

Germany
high
arms
navy

empire
Russians
Russia
Serbia.
Europe Quiz

How much can you remember?
Read the definition at the bottom and then click on the the right answer...

Press start to begin.
The Assassination

Here's what happened when the Arch Duke and his wife arrived in Sarajevo.

Press play to begin.
The Outbreak of War

The assassination in Sarajevo triggered a sequence of events which dragged the whole of Europe into war. The following timeline shows how the war escalated.
The Outbreak of War

Assassination

Arch Duke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated.

Russia mobilizes its forces in support of Serbia.

Germany declares war on Serbia.

Britain declares war on Germany.

Germany declares war on Russia.

Germany sends a "blank cheque" to Austria-Hungary.

The Serbs reject the ultimatum.
The Road to War

In 1914, Europe was primed for war.

It was not only the politicians who were anticipating war – rearmament and frequent war scares had caused European society to become increasingly militaristic and nationalistic.

Many people not only expected war, but welcomed it.

Each side had long prepared for war. They had written plans, books and policies on what to do. These plans also played a part in the outbreak of large-scale war in 1914.
The War Plans of Europe

Click on Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary to learn about each country's war plans.
The Schlieffen Plan

The most influential plan was that of Germany – the **Schlieffen Plan** – drawn up in 1905 by General Alfred von Schlieffen.

It was an ambitious plan designed to avoid Germany having to fight a **two-front war** against France and Russia.

The plan was to invade France and capture Paris before the Russians could mobilize.

It relied on three things:

- **German speed**
- slow **Russian mobilization** (6 weeks?)
- **Britain** staying out of the war.
Britain’s Position

Britain’s position in 1914 was complicated. Despite having alliances with France and Russia, Britain had made no firm promises to help them in war. However, Britain had promised in 1834 to protect the neutrality of **Belgium** if she was ever attacked.

The Schlieffen Plan required the German army to attack France through Belgium. The German generals gambled that Britain would not keep her promise to defend Belgium.

*For a scrap of paper, Great Britain is going to make war?*

*Bethmann-Hollweg, German Chancellor*
Le Front de l'Ouest en 1914
Le plan Schlieffen et le Plan XVII

La 1ère Armée doit se placer à gauche ou à droite de la 1ère Armée selon l'attaque allemande

Aile droite 1ère, 1ère et 1ère Armées

Aile gauche 1ère et 1ère Armées
The Schlieffen Plan in action.
Why did it fail? Reason 1

• Whilst the plan looked good on paper, it **underestimated** the distances the German Army had to cover in the strict timetable.

• The German troops on the extreme right were **exhausted** after several weeks of marching and fighting and were **unable to keep up the pace**. This meant Paris was not surrounded.
Why did it fail? Reason 2

- Second, even before 1914, the plan was changed. Von Moltke, the new Chief of Staff, withdrew forces from the right wing of the German army to strengthen the left.

- He also sent some battalions to the Eastern Front with Russia. This slowed down the advance and left the German right wing unable to push forward and surround Paris from the West.

> Numbers of German infantry divisions in the Schlieffen Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Right flank in Belgium</th>
<th>Left flank in Alsace-Lorraine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I had come to the conclusion that the great decisive battle in the West had been fought and decided in Germany’s favour. I had intended to take these reinforcements from the Seventh Army, which had made as little progress towards the Moselle as the Sixth. Both these armies, however, consistently reported that they were opposed by superior numbers of the enemy, also that losses had been so heavy that no units of the Seventh Army were fit for employment elsewhere until they had been brought up to strength again. For these reasons, it was decided to send two Corps from the right wing ... to the Eastern Front. I admit that this was a mistake and one that was fully paid for on the Marne.

From the memoirs of Von Moltke, describing his actions on 25–26 August 1914, when he sent reinforcements from the West to the Eastern Front.
Why did it fail? Reason 3

- Thirdly, Belgian resistance was **stronger than expected**. The Belgian forts at Liége held out for **12 days** and Brussels was not occupied until 20\(^{th}\) August.
Ruines du Fort de Loncin après Liège.
(Belgium) Ruins of Loncin's Fort near Liège.
Why did it fail? Reason 4

- Fourthly, the British sent an Expeditionary Force (BEF) of **80,000 men** to Belgium. They met the Germans at Mons on 23\textsuperscript{rd} August and again at Le Cateu on 26\textsuperscript{th} August.

- Although the British were **forced to retreat** at Mons, they managed to inflict **heavy casualties** on the Germans before issuing a tactical retreat to Paris which took 2 weeks.
The Battle of Mons

• The British were professional soldiers equipped with the new Lee Enfield Mark III rifle.

• They were heavily outnumbered, but their rapid and accurate rifle fire slowed down the advance of the German conscripts.

• One German officer wrote in a letter: ‘It seemed as though there was a machine gun behind every bush’
The Battle of Mons

• “At the Nimy bridge, Maurice Dease took control of his machine gun after every other member of his section had been killed or wounded and continued to fire the weapon despite being shot multiple times.”

• “Only after being wounded for a fifth time was he evacuated to the battalion aid station, where he died.”
The Germans advanced in companies of 150 men five deep, and our rifle has a flat trajectory up to 600 yards. Guess the result. We could steady our rifles on the trench and take deliberate aim. The first company was simply blasted away to Heaven, and in their insane formation every bullet was bound to kill two men. The other companies kept advancing very slowly, using the bodies of their dead comrades as cover, but they had absolutely no chance.

A British soldier describes the opening of the Battle of Mons on 23 August 1914.
Why did it fail? Reason 5

• The Belgian and British forces managed to slow down the German offensive and forced the German right flank to turn South.

• This gave French forces enough time to rush troops into Paris to defend the city. The Germans met French forces on 5\(^{th}\) September along the River Marne.

• The Battle of the Marne lasted 8 days and forced the Germans to fall back to the River Aisne. Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, played a crucial role in rallying the French forces at the Marne.
One must face facts. Our Army Corps, in spite of the numerical superiority, which was assured to them, have not shown on the battlefield those offensive qualities, which we had hoped for ... We are therefore compelled to resort to the defensive ... Our object must be to last out as long as possible, trying to wear out the enemy, and to resume the offensive when the time comes.

From a report written by the French General, Joffre, to the French Minister of War on 24 August 1914.
The Race to the Sea

- After losing the Battle of the Marne, German forces retreated to the River Aisne and dug trenches for extra protection.

- From 10th October onwards, the two armies attempted to outflank each other by advancing to the North Sea.

- This was important because the Germans took Ghent, Bruges and Ostend, but failed to take any of the Channel ports.
The Race to the Sea

• By the end of the year, a **front line had been established** that was to remain largely in place until early 1918.

• As each side had built trenches sideways in order to try to outflank each other, a complex system of trenches – with **connecting, reserve and communication trenches** – soon extended for miles across Belgium and France.
PROBLEMS FACING ATTACKING TROOPS

Aircraft can warn of the build-up of enemy troops before an attack.

Concrete block house for a machine-gun.

Reserve trench.

Support trench.

Front-line trench.

Communication trenches allow reserves to be brought forward quickly and exposing them to enemy fire.

Barbed wire: metres deep and an impassable obstacle for any troops able to reach it.

No Man's Land (the stretch of land between the trenches of the opposing sides) has already been churned up by shell fire. In wet weather it becomes a mass of mud, making it even harder for troops to cross.

A deep dug-out. German ones could be 15 m below ground and too well constructed to be damaged by shell fire.

Long-range artillery is placed about 10 km behind the front line. These guns fire at advancing enemy troops.

Front-line dug-outs provide protection but not against a direct hit from an artillery shell.
The Start of War

The Germans initiate the Schlieffen Plan.
GCSE Question 1 – Question A

• Part A questions will ask you to make 3 inferences about a particular topic from the source provided. This is worth 3 marks so spend about 5 minutes.

An inference means working something out from a source that the source doesn’t actually tell you. From example, we often make inferences (get messages) from body language.

Be careful not to just write down what you can see from the source. In other words, the contents. For example, ‘The student is yawning’ is a description, not an inference.

You need to make inferences from the sources based on the information in it. Begin each answer with phrase, ‘This source suggests...’
B2(a) Target: Source comprehension, inference and inference support (A02) (3)

One inference 1 mark
Two inferences 2 marks
Three inferences 3 marks

e.g. It was very heroic, some troops fought very bravely, a number of casualties, not very strong defensive positions.
GCSE Question 1 – Question B

• Part B questions will ask you to compare two sources by looking for support and disagreement between the two sources as well as making a judgement about the extent of support. This is worth 7 marks, so spend about 10 minutes.

To answer this question, you need to be clear which areas of the sources say the same things; which, if any, contradict; and which just don’t overlap. A good way to plan the answer to the question is to:

| Highlight any areas of support in what the sources say. Highlight words and phrases in any colour. Explain these similarities. |
| In a different colour, highlight any areas of challenge in what the sources say. Explain these differences. |
GCSE Question 1 – Question B

• Are there any differences in the overall attitude or tone of each of the sources, in what they are suggesting? Use this grid to help plan your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source B</th>
<th>Source C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Now make a judgement on the extent of support between the two sources. Try to use judgement phrases such as strongly support, some support, very little support. Remember to explain this judgement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strong Support</th>
<th>Some Support</th>
<th>Little Support</th>
<th>No Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(b) **Target: Corroboration by cross-referencing of sources (AO2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Level 1 | Simple statements which identify support/differences at face value.  
1 mark - summarises or paraphrases the sources.  
2 marks for generalised comparisons.  
e.g. *The two sources agree about the Battle of Mons.* | (1-2) |
| Level 2 | Developed statements identifying support OR challenge based on source contents.  
e.g. *Support. Both suggest that the Germans suffered a great number of casualties. B mentions loss of 60 out of 160 and B ten times as many casualties. Differences - B suggests the Germans were driven back whilst C says Germans could have pushed British back.* | (3-5) |
| Level 3 | Developed statements identifying support AND challenge based on source contents and extent of support.  
e.g. *Strong support between the two sources as both suggest that the Battle was a success for the British who took the Germans by surprise.* | (6-7) |
My answer...

• Source B is an account of the Battle of Mons by a German soldier in August 1914. The source gives the impression that the Germans were badly defeated as it mentions that out of 160 troops, 60 died within seconds.
My answer...

• Source C *strongly supports* this evidence as it shows that the British realised ‘well-directed fire could mow down the enemy’. The results of this well-directed fire is shown in Source B as it quotes 60 Germans being instantly killed.

• This is further supported by Source C as it mentions that ‘...the Germans must have suffered ten times as many causalities as us.’ The German eye witness supports this by mentioning ‘...Wherever I looked there were dead and wounded...we were being driven back’.
My answer...

• However, Source C also challenges the views of Source B about the outcome of the battle. Source B gives the impression that the German’s lost the battle as it says, ‘we were being driven back, badly beaten by the British...’.

• However the Germans actually won the battle and Source B challenges this by saying, ‘If they had a proper plan, they would have pushed us back in a quarter of the time they did.’ This shows that the two source are not in complete agreement.
My answer...

- Overall, there are **strong similarities** in the attitude and tone of the sources, **because** both suggest that the German’s received heavy causalities. However they are **not in complete agreement** only Source C mentions how the Germans actually won the battle eventually.
GCSE Question 1 – Question C

• Part C questions will ask you to **discuss a view using the sources and your own knowledge**. Remember to keep focused on the view and consider support or lack of support. It is worth 15 marks so spend about 30 minutes.

1.) Decide which sources can be used to support the view

2.) Decide which sources can be used to challenge the view. Some sources can be used to give both sides.

3.) Use the sources to stimulate your own knowledge. Remember that if you develop information from the source then it becomes your own knowledge.
GCSE Question 1 – Question C

- Here is a grid to help you plan your answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Support the View</th>
<th>Challenge the View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ensure you write a balanced answer in which you use one or more of the sources and your own knowledge to support the view and one or more of the sources and your own knowledge to challenge the view.

Write a conclusion in which you make a final judgement on the view given in the question.
(c) Target: Making a judgement about an interpretation, relating analysis of sources to own knowledge (AO1, AO2, AO3)

(15)

Level 1
Simple statements, based on sources and/or own knowledge. Answers will often make generalised comments with little or no focus on the question. 1-2 marks for answers which summarise or copy sources. e.g. Source B says that there were dead and wounded. 3-4 marks for answers which attempt to answer the question using sources or own knowledge. e.g. Source C suggests it was due to the actions of the BEF at Mons.

(1-4)

Level 2
Developed statements offering evidence for or against the view and is supported with details from the sources. 5-6 marks for using sources/own knowledge only. 7-8 marks for using the sources and own knowledge. e.g. Source C suggests it was due to the Battle of Mons because the BEF inflicted heavy casualties on the Germans who did not seem to have any plan of action. The Battle did slow down the Schlieffen Plan and the German advance...
Level 3

Developed explanation offering support for and/or against the view and is supported by precisely selected details from the sources.
9-10 marks for using the sources/own knowledge only.
11-12 marks for using the sources and own knowledge.
 e.g. As Level 2. However Source A suggests it was due to the heroic defence of the Belgians, who slowed down the German advance. Source D blames the changes by Von Moltke, who reduced the number of troops suggested by the original plan to successfully encircle Paris....

Level 4

Sustained argument, explicitly focused on the question, which reviews alternative views before giving a balanced judgement. The answer is supported by precisely selected details from sources and own knowledge.
13-14 marks for explicit judgement on one factor.
14-15 marks for explicit judgement comparing the relative importance of a number of factors.
 e.g. Inter-action of a variety of factors including the actions of the Belgians, shown in Source A, and the BEF, mentioned in B and C, who successfully slowed down the German advance culminating in the decisive Battle of the Marne, mentioned in D......