**Lesson 1: Court Martial Death Penalties**

**Why were there executions?**

To their far-off generals, the soldiers' executions served a dual purpose - to punish the deserters and to their comrades having similar ideas. Courts martial were anxious to make an example and those on trial could expect little support from medical officers. One such doctor later recalled, 'I went to the trial determined to give him no help, for I detest his type - I really hoped he would be shot.'

**Serious matters**

These were tried by Courts-Martial. Some of these offences were ones that would have been tried by a civilian court if the man had not been on active service e.g. murder or rape. Other offences were purely military in nature, such as desertion.

Table of offences tried by Court Martial

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| Charge | Maximum penalty |
| 1. Shamefully delivering up a garrison to the enemy | Death |
| 1. Shamefully casting away arms in the presence of the enemy | Death |
| 1. Misbehaving before the enemy in such a manner as to show cowardice | Death |
| 1. Leaving his Commanding Officer to go in search of plunder | Death |
| 1. Forcing a safeguard (to put something at risk) | Death |
| 1. Forcing a soldier when acting as sentinel | Death |
| 1. Doing violence to a person bringing provisions to the forces | Death |
| 1. Committing an offence against the person of a resident in the country in which he was serving | Death |
| 1. Breaking into a house in search of plunder | Death |
| 1. By discharging firearms intentionally occasioning false alarms on the march | Death |
| 1. When acting as a sentinel on active service sleeping at his post | Death |
| 1. Causing a mutiny in the forces, or endeavouring to persuade persons in HM forces to join in a mutiny | Death |
| 1. Striking his superior officer | Death |
| 1. Disobeying in such a manner as to show a wilful defiance of authority, a lawful command given personally by his superior officer | Death |
| 1. Deserting HM service, or attempting to desert | Death |
| 1. Committing the offence of murder | Death |

Task:

* Tick any charges you agree deserved the death penalty in World War One.

Circle the most serious charge of the 16 which warranted the death penalty.

Underline any charges you think should still carry the death penalty in the military.