**Why wasn’t the war over by Christmas?**

**Today I will practise:**
- **Explanation skills**: identifying the **reasons (causes)** of events
- **Research skills**: (knowing where to find information)

### Introduction

- Count Alfred von Schlieffen drew up the Schlieffen Plan in 1905 when he was the German Chief of Staff.
- In a European war, Germany would face France in the west and Russia in the east, and would need to defeat France within six weeks before Russia mobilised her troops.
- As most of the French army was stationed on the border with Germany, the Schlieffen Plan aimed for the quick defeat of France by invading it through neutral Belgium and moving rapidly on to capture Paris.
- The Germans did not believe that Britain would go to war, based on their 1839 treaty with Belgium, which they described as a 'scrap of paper'.
- Even if Britain did defend Belgium, the Kaiser thought there was no need to fear the **British Expeditionary Force** (**BEF**), which he called a 'contemptible little army'.
- Having defeated France, Germany could concentrate her efforts on defeating the Russians in the east rather than having to fight on two fronts at once.

### TASK: Using the information overleaf, produce a mind-map or bullet-pointed list (with subheadings) to explain the reasons why the Schlieffen plan failed.
Belgium

- The Germans were not expecting any resistance from Belgium, but the Belgian army fought bravely and managed to delay the German advance.

- Members of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) arrived to help, and the Germans were held up at Mons.

- The Belgians later prevented the Germans from taking the French channel ports by flooding much of their land. The Germans hadn’t foreseen this – much of their planning was based on guesswork.

Britain

- Britain declared war on Germany in response to the invasion of Belgium

- Although the BEF consisted of only 125,000 men, they were well-trained and equipped, and ready for action within less than one week. The Germans had severely underestimated their strength.

- Having helped the Belgians hold the Germans up at Mons, the BEF then supported the French on the River Marne, stopping the Germans from reaching Paris.

- Losses were heavy and by December 1914 more than half of the original BEF were dead.

France

- France responded quickly to the German attack by launching an invasion of Alsace and Lorraine, but this failed.

- Then they switched troops to the defence of Paris in a desperate attempt to hold the Germans up, which involved transporting troops to the front line in fleets of taxis. This provided more effective resistance than the Germans expected.

- The Battle of the Marne was a turning-point; with the help of the remaining members of the BEF the German advance was not only halted but the Germans were also pushed back about 35 miles.

- The British and French armies then moved quickly to secure the Channel ports.
Russia

- Russia (nicknamed ‘the steamroller’) mobilised more quickly than expected, so the Germans had to divide their force to fight on both Eastern and Western Fronts. Within 10 days the Russians had invaded Germany, which meant that the Germans had to switch troops away from western Europe to hold up the Russian invasion on the eastern front. This meant that the Germans were forced to overstretch themselves.

Germany

- The Germans were forced to cover huge distances very quickly, meaning their troops tired very quickly.
- German forces became too spread out to deliver a decisive blow on France.
- Von Schlieffen had thought that swords and cavalry would be useful, but the attacking Germans were shot to pieces by French, British and Belgian use of machine guns and heavy artillery.
- The use of rifles, artillery and machine guns meant no one could go forward – this meant both sides had to dig in. From now until 1918, neither side would advance more than 10 miles forward or backwards from the positions they now held.

*The map above shows the line of trenches that reached from the English Channel in the North to neutral Switzerland (and the Alps) in the South*