

0. AIR SHIPS OF WORLD WAR I - Story Preface

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**8. AIR SHIPS OF WORLD WAR I**



This image depicts a photo of the wrecked German Zeppelin L-21, lying in ruins at Cuffley in Hertfordshire, England. The rigid airship was shot-down on the 3rd of September, 1916, by Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson VC. German Zeppelins caused fear and damage in England during World War I. Image online via the Imperial War Museum.

At the start of World War I, few countries could match Germany's air power. It was the rigid air ships - often called Zeppelins - which especially caused great fear among Britain's population (Before the 20th century, for the most part, British civilians did not directly experience the traumatic effects of war.)

Able to stay aloft at 10,000 feet while inflicting death and destruction, the great bomb-dropping ships were frequently (but not always) safe from anti-aircraft fire. In 1915, for example, Germany lost no rigid air ships to combat injuries.

That same year, during the Second Battle of Ypres, the Kaiser's troops used chlorine gas (in April) and mustard gas (in June) to inflict combat injuries - the first time chemical weapons were effectively used in war. It was also during that battle when Major John McCrae - a Canadian doctor attached to the 1st Field Artillery Brigade - was appalled at the horrific death of his friend (and former student), Alexis Helmer.

Blown apart by a shell burst on May 2, 1915, Helmer's body was in pieces. Those parts were carefully gathered by other soldiers and placed into sandbags, then laid on a blanket awaiting burial.

Because the chaplain was away, McCrae conducted Helmer's funeral himself. The young soldier was buried at a cemetery called Essex Farm, close to the doctor's dressing station.

The next evening, while sitting on the step of an ambulance, McCrae gazed at the scene of devastation around him. Despite the war, larks were singing and poppies growing as McCrae began to write fifteen lines of verse in his notebook. His words - "In Flanders Fields" - became famous after they were published in the British

magazine *Punch* (on the 8th of December, 1915).

As the "Great War" continued, Britain invented incendiary bullets intended to target the hydrogen bags which fueled the Zeppelins. Germany responded with the "height climber," a rigid airship able to maintain altitude at 20,000 feet. (Twenty-two years later, when the *Hindenburg* exploded, some experts blamed hydrogen fuel for the disaster.)

In one London raid - on September 8, 1915 (before America entered the war) - Zeppelin L-13 killed 22 people and caused massive property damage. Far worse, however, was the psychological damage the great air ships caused to people living within their range.

Had the fictitious League of Extraordinary Gentlemen actually existed in 1898, its members would have been powerless to stop production of the mighty Zeppelins or to prevent World War I. Once Queen Victoria (who was the only person able to keep her feuding grandchildren from fighting against each other) died in 1901, political arrogance and diplomatic ineptitude ruled the day.

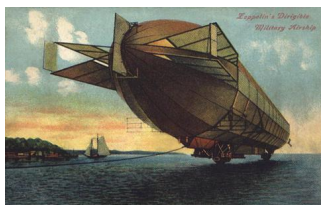
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/AIR-SHIPS-OF-WORLD-WAR-I-League-of-Extraordinary-Gentlemen>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/AIR-SHIPS-OF-WORLD-WAR-I-League-of-Extraordinary-Gentlemen>

## Media Stream



### Zeppelin Military Air Ship

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#) website.

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View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Zeppelin-Military-Air-Ship>



### Downed Zeppelins

Image online via the Imperial War Museum, in London.

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### Rigid Air Ships

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#) website.

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### Fear of the Zeppelins during WWI

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#).

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Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War website](#). Image used above for educational purposes and to acquaint readers with this resource. - See more at:

<http://beta.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rigid-Air-Ships#sthash.10Pr0zkA.dpuf>

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War website](#). Image used above for educational purposes and to acquaint readers with this resource. - See more at:

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### Zeppelins Over London

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#).

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### Fleeing the Zeppelins

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#) website.

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### Zeppelins Dropping Bombs

Image online, courtesy picture database at [World War 1.com](#).

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### Downed Zeppelins

Image online via the [Imperial War Museum](#), in London.

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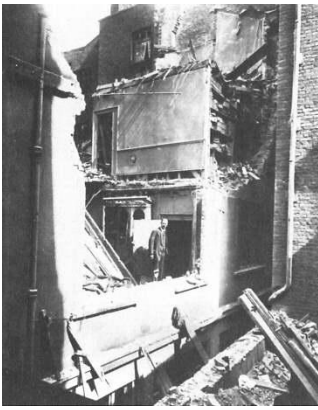


### Zeppelins Encountering Anti-Aircraft Fire

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#).

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### Massive Damage Caused by Zeppelin L-13

Image online, courtesy Imperial War Museum.

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### Protecting Horses and Soldiers from Chemical Attacks in WWI

Online image, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

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### Germany's Air Ships in Combat

Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#).

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Image online, courtesy [Propaganda Postcards of the Great War](#). - See more at:

<http://beta.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Zepelins-Over-London#sthash.1vrC1s9N.dpuf>

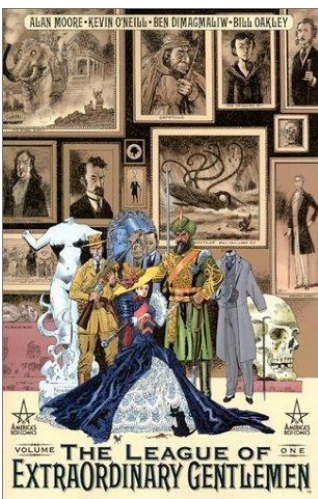
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### Damage the Zeppelin Can Do

[Image, described above](#), online via the Imperial War Museum.

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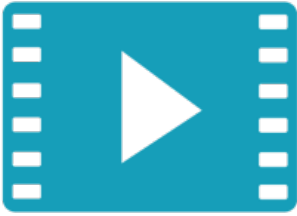


### League of Extraordinary Gentlemen - Cover Image

Image online, courtesy Amazon.

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### In Flanders Fields - John McCrae

Video clip, featuring "In Flanders Fields" - as read by [Anthony Davies](#) - is from "The Great War Poems," copyright Blue Dot Music, all rights reserved. Clip provided here as fair use for educational purposes and to acquaint new listeners with the work. Online, via worcesterjonny's channel at YouTube.

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