Dear Mother,

I send wishes from the Soviet front against the German invaders. I hope all is well at home and that little Tolstoy has learnt how to behave. It is possible that I may be able to come home in the summer to be with you for a few weeks, although I am not sure if I will survive that long.

We have been fighting the Germans in Stalingrad for some time now. The Germans appear unbeatable with their powerful tanks and skilled soldiers. Our heroic fight began on 23rd August 1942 – we have been fighting this gruesome match for some months now.

This morning, under the heavy sky, we launched another brutal attack; many men died and many more are now missing. Sergev, our Captain, was the first casualty. He heroically climbed the factory fortifications armed with his sniper-rifle to attempt to provide cover for his comrades; sadly, another sniper noticed him – we will miss Sergev greatly.

It has been cold recently – so cold. Over the last few weeks we have heard the Volga freezing over. Strange, ethereal-like, cracks and groans emanate from the iced water. To many of the new recruits this sound falls incongruously upon their ears, but – for us veterans – we know it is just another brutal sound of war. So far, we have lost twelve men from the company who have frostbitten toes and twice that taken by the enemy. Every morning we awake the find our foxholes (the holes we dig into the earth with our shovels) covered in new layers on snow. I honestly cannot remember the last time I could feel my fingers. I pray that I do not lose them to the snow and therefore will be unable to fire my weapon in defence of The Soviet Union.

The big attack is tomorrow. It has made all of us very edgy. The thought of charging through the streets surrounded by other heroes is actually a rather daunting prospect. I only hope that I do not die tomorrow – I have felt enough bullets whizzing past my ears, enough shells erupting nearby, felt the death of enough friends. I am to lead the attack upon the tall four-storey building across the main thoroughfare. At night, we can see strange movements lurking in the shadows of this building. Some of our company believe it to be machine-gun nests setting up; I doubt that – I feel that it could be a storehouse. We will not know until we storm it tomorrow.

I bid you farewell mother. I would like you to know that if I die before I see you again you know that I died to defend Mother Russia from this Nazi menace and that I missed you every day.

Yours,

Zegonyev

Letter from Stalingrad questions

1. How long does he say that they have been fighting in Stalingrad for?
2. In the first paragraph the author states that the Germans have two advantages. What are they? (2)
3. In the second paragraph it is about the rain/snow – find and copy a phrase which tells you this.
4. How did Sergev die?
5. What is the Volga?
6. How many soldiers has his company lost?
7. Why does the author not want to lose his fingers?
8. What do you think a *daunting prospect* means?
9. Read the sentence: *We will not know until we storm it tomorrow*.

What do you think the word *storm* means?

1. Zegonyev believes that he will likely die soon. Using evidence from the text explain why you think that this could be so. (2)
2. Would you like to be fighting in Stalingrad? Use evidence from the text to explain your answer. (3)
3. Create your own two mark questions