

People of the Great War: Shaping the Modern World

Shaping the Modern World

TEACHING NOTES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduction

This resource was made in 2008, as the generation who lived through the First World War dwindled, and experience of that time was passing from living memory.

The whole resource comprises:

- *People of the Great War* – a short, c.12 minute, film for use in assemblies and/or lessons
- *The Making Of ...* – a short film explaining how the *People of the Great War* film was made using original historical sources from the archives of the Imperial War Museum and Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Learning Resources CD-Rom – containing a gallery of the images and documents used in the film, teaching notes and much more (all available for download)
- Shaping the Modern World Learning Resources for secondary schools – that further explore the human impact of the war, and its continuing legacy and relevance to the world today. Free at www.iwm.org.uk/peopleofthegreatwar

The resource was shaped by the following learning outcomes. Having watched the resource people should have been given the chance to experience one or more of these outcomes:

Knowledge and Understanding:

- About the First World War, its impact on the people who fought and lived during that time, including an understanding of the depth of personal sacrifice and loss, the unprecedented scale and horror of the war, and its legacy for the UK now
- About the relevance of continuing to commemorate this war, and the different ways to commemorate it
- About the legacy of the war and how it has shaped the world we live in today

Attitudes and Values:

- Valuing the sacrifice of those people who fought, served or worked throughout the First World War
- Appreciating the role that they can play in their own community to preserve and disseminate its history

Behaviour:

- Motivation to take part in a commemorative event in their local school, youth group and/or community

These activities focus on the longer term effects of the First World War on the world, for society and for individual families, and have been written for secondary schools.



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1. Reshaping the World

Useful for:

History, Environmental Studies (People in the Past)

By learning about the Middle East and the Balkans at different points in history, students can begin to understand the longer term significance of the First World War and how it has affected world events since 1918. It will also help them to look at the impact of events and to understand that the present can only be fully understood by looking at the past.

Citizenship

An investigation of the Middle East and the Balkans can provide a starting point for looking at human rights and the role of the United Nations in peacekeeping. It can also be related to conflict resolution and why it is difficult to keep peace in the world today.

Background

By 1914 the long decline of the Ottoman Empire had created a series of weak states and heightened imperial rivalries in both the Middle East and the Balkans.

Most of its territories in North Africa, such as modern day Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, had been taken over by either the French or British in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Palestine was still under Ottoman rule as the First World War broke out, but had been the cause of fierce imperial rivalry and conflict throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly during the Crimean War of 1853-1856. All the major European powers believed that they had strategic interests in this region, a situation given greater weight by the fact that Jerusalem is such a vital place for all three major religions; Christianity (both Roman and Orthodox), Judaism and Islam.

The Balkans had become an unstable region where nationalist rivalries and imperial interest had led to rebellion, local and regional wars since the 1870s. It also led to the creation of a number of small states, many of which relied on Russian support for survival. The Balkan peoples struggled to live with the social and religious consequences of their long history of occupation under different imperial powers, each bringing their own religion, politics and way of life. Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire had been in decline for so long none of the European powers had made plans for its final disintegration.

Summary

This activity aims to give students an introduction to the Middle East and Balkans regions and an understanding of how modern conflicts have roots in the First World War and its aftermath. They will investigate the legacy of the First World War and understand the role of this conflict in shaping the modern world.

Activity

1. Teacher led introduction to the First World War in the Middle East and the Balkans. This can use maps, photographs and questioning to ascertain what the students already know, before explaining to them what happened during the First World War in these areas. The Additional Resources for Activity 1 contain links to online resources about these regions.
2. Students then use a variety of resources and weblinks to carry out their own research into what happened next. This can be divided into manageable sections in order to produce a class display or timeline of events e.g.



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Middle East

- The Balfour Declaration and the Palestinian Mandate, to 1939
- The Middle East and the Second World War, to 1948
- The Suez Crisis, the Six Day War and the Yom Kippur War
- The Palestinian Liberation Organisation
- Current events/news
- British involvement (forces, charities, NGOs, the media)

Balkans

- After the Second World War, to 1989
- Effects of the rule of Milosevic
- The significance of Mostar Bridge
- UN/NATO involvement
- Ethnic cleansing and the refugee problem
- Dayton Agreement, IFOR (Implementation Force) and SFOR (Stabilising Force)
- British involvement (forces, charities, NGOs, the media)

3. Once research is complete, groups present back to the class to build a picture of events and discuss *Is the First World War still relevant to us today?*

2. Shaping National Identities

Useful for:

History, Environmental Studies (People in the Past)

Knowledge, investigation, communication

This activity will help students understand the reasons for and results of historical events, highlighting the range of experiences of people in the past. It also enables students to investigate the significance of events, using a range of sources to collect information and reach conclusions. This knowledge can be communicated using a range of techniques.

Citizenship

An investigation into issues of national identity and commemoration and the impact of past events on the national identity of one country

Background

Certain battles of the First World War have particular resonance for the national identity of different countries, for example, Britain at the Somme, the French at Verdun, Canada at Vimy Ridge, and Australia and New Zealand at Gallipoli. Not all of these battles were victories for the Allies – but there are other, less tangible reasons, why these areas have become inextricably linked with particular countries.

Summary

This activity investigates the reasons why these particular battles and places have become so significant to the countries involved. It will enable students to research the relationship between the First World War and the development of national identity. The activity also aims to enable students to learn about the nature of myths in history and national identity.



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Activity

1. Teacher led introduction using the fact sheets about each battle – see Additional Resources for Activity 2. Teacher leads a question and answer to determine where battles of the war that were significant for different countries took place, and to give some basic facts on each battle
2. Groups investigate one battle each to answer the following:
 - Where did this battle take place?
 - Who fought in this battle?
 - How many casualties were there?
 - Was it a victory or a defeat?
 - Why was this battle important in shaping the national identity of the country involved? What makes it so important?
 - How is this battle commemorated?
3. Groups should present their findings in an appropriate manner, using maps/pictures etc to illustrate their research. In a joint session the groups could make comparisons between the different battles and their significance, guided by some of the following:
 - Are all the battles either victories or defeats for the countries concerned?
 - How many other nationalities fought in the battles that have been researched? Were these a minority or majority of the Allied forces?
 - How are commemorations different in different countries?
 - What does this study reveal about the relationship between the First World War and national identity today of the countries concerned?

3. A War of 'Firsts'?

Useful for:

History, Environmental Studies (People in the Past)

Knowledge, investigation and communication

Using a range of sources to investigate the reasons for, results and significance of historical events and the legacy for people and the world. Students can also investigate the range of experiences of people in the past.

Background

The First World War was in many ways a war of 'firsts.' From new military technology to the numbers and range of people involved, many aspects of the war were unprecedented in earlier conflicts. It was fought on a global scale as the European Imperial powers drew the armed forces of their empires into the conflict. British forces were supported by the armed forces of its Empire and Dominions, including India, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, the West Indies and South Africa. The all-encompassing experience of the First World War meant that it didn't just involve the regular armed forces. The Home Front was just as important with many women providing labour to replace the men that had gone to fight. Children and older men were also mobilised to contribute to the war effort. Female nurses served in many of the places where the war was being fought as well as at home and many women worked in munitions factories providing the ammunition needed to continue the war. In addition to the diverse experience of the people, they were fighting with many new technologies which changed the face of modern warfare for example tanks and aerial warfare were used for the first time. It was the first war where civilians at home were at risk from the weapons of war as well as the troops on the front line.



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Summary

Groups of students will use selections of photographs from the Imperial War Museum collection to investigate aspects of the 'firsts' of the First World War. Some photographs can be accessed on the *People of the Great War* CD-Rom (this is also available from the site: www.iwm.org.uk/peopleofthegreatwar) but there are further images on the Collections Online section of the Imperial War Museum website: www.iwmcollections.org.uk. Students can also use the internet to search for relevant information to support what they find from the photographs, for example statistics or personal stories from people who were involved in the First World War.

Activity

1. Groups of students will investigate different aspects of the First World War, focusing on the 'firsts' of the war to explain how it was different to previous conflicts. Groups can investigate one of the following, using the questions provided:

Women – What roles did women play on the front line, e.g. as nurses or, later, in the armed forces? Where did women serve during the First World War? How many women served during the First World War?

Empire – Which countries were in the British Empire in 1914? Why did they fight for Britain during the First World War? Where did people from the Empire fight? How many people from the Empire fought for Britain?

Technology – What new technology was used for the first time during the First World War, e.g. tanks, poison gas, zeppelins and aircraft? What technologies were not new during the war but were still in use? How did this make the First World War different to other wars?

Home Front – Who was involved in the First World War at home? What roles did different people have on the Home Front? What risks were involved for people living and working in Britain during the First World War? What difficulties did they face?

Groups can present their findings in an appropriate way so that the class can build up a full picture of how the First World War was different to other wars.

2. This activity can lead to a discussion about the aftermath of the war and questions about the long term effects of the First World War. If the class is going to go on to study interwar European or world history and the Second World War, they could investigate the impact of the First World War in terms of economic and social change as well as political and international relations.

4. Families in War and Peace

Useful for:

History and Environmental Studies (People in the Past)

Knowledge, investigation, communication

Investigating the experiences of people in the past and the long- and short-term significance of events. Using a range of historical sources to discover the past.



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Background

The First World War had far-reaching effects on many people, for far longer than the four years that the war was underway. Although many families only lost one family member this loss was enough to affect the lives of those families forever. Each family featured in this activity was affected by death in the First World War and by using original documents, students can explore the impact of the war on individual families.

Summary

Using the stories of the Baker, Meade, Stratford and Mudd families, students will investigate the long- and short-term effects of the First World War on individual people and their families. They may be able to use these stories to begin an investigation into the wider social and societal impact of the war in Britain.

Activity

1. Teacher led introduction which explains to the class the extent of losses during the First World War. Introduction to the group the group of the Baker, Meade, Mudd and Stratford families – their stories, photographs and original sources are contained in the Additional Resources for Activity 4.
2. Group activity – groups will use the Additional Resources for Activity 4 to investigate the effects of the First World War using the families as case studies. Each group could be assigned one particular family to research. They will use the historical documents to look at long and short term effects on each family.
3. Each group can present their findings and report back to the rest of the class. The class can then discuss the differences and similarities between the different families and the different effects on each family. They can discuss whether the experience of the First World War, and its aftermath was the same for everyone. The teacher could use the following statements to support the discussion and highlight some of the myths about the First World War:
 - Most people who fought in the First World War died*
 - Those who came back from the war just carried on with their lives as if nothing had happened*
 - Women whose fiancés or husbands died could never married again*
 - Children of First World War veterans were not affected by the First World War*
 - There was a shortage of men in 1918*
4. This activity could lead to further investigation of the effects of the First World War on other people, either in the local area, or further afield.

5. The Landscape of Mourning

Useful for:

History, Environmental Studies (People in the Past)

Knowledge, investigation and communication

Students use a variety of sources to investigate the significance of past events both for people at the time and on our lives today

Citizenship

This activity can provide a starting point for students to plan their own commemorative event, either for the school or involving the wider community



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Background

The First World War brought about a profound change in the way that war dead are commemorated. The involvement of so many volunteer soldiers and the sheer numbers of people that died meant that some kind of national organisation of commemoration was necessary at the end of the war. Coupled with this is the fact that the remains of many of the soldiers that died could not be found, identified or buried in an individual, named grave. The Imperial War Museum and Commonwealth War Graves Commission were both established as a direct response to the need to document and commemorate the war. The concept of the Unknown Warrior also originated from this conflict. All three of these initiatives were efforts to make sense of the enormous losses of the war. Remembrance Day on 11 November, with the associated silence at 11am and veterans' march down Whitehall past the Cenotaph to Westminster Abbey also originated from the First World War. This new way of commemorating has literally changed the landscape in those parts of the world where battles had been fought, and in the towns and villages of Britain who had lost men and women to the war.

Summary

Students will use initial class discussion to offer their own thoughts about commemoration and remembrance and how this is carried out today. Through discussion they will gain some understanding of why the First World War was a very different conflict to those that had happened before it and how this led to an increased concentration on commemoration and remembrance. In groups, they will then investigate the Imperial War Museum, Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior as examples of commemoration legacies from the First World War.

Activity

1. Ask students the question, *How do we remember those who have died in war?* They can either answer as part of a class discussion or record what they think in small groups to report back to the rest of the class.
2. Use the images from the Additional Resources for Activity 5 to illustrate that the First World War and the post war commemorations literally changed the landscape of those places where fighting took place, and in cities, towns and villages around the world. Local examples can be integrated into this activity to show how war memorials have changed the local or regional environment.
3. Groups of students investigate one of the following subjects: the founding of the Imperial War Museum; the founding of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; the Cenotaph; the burial of the Unknown Warrior, using the resources and links provided in the Additional Resources for Activity 5. They can aim to answer the following questions:

What is the IWM/CWGC/Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?

How did the IWM/CWGC/Tomb of the Unknown Soldier come about?

What purpose did the IWM/CWGC/Tomb of the Unknown Soldier serve just after the First World War?

What purpose does the IWM/CWGC/Tomb of the Unknown Soldier serve today?

Each group can present this information in an appropriate way to the rest of the class.



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Extension Activities

1. The Unknown Warrior and Eternal Flame

Research task to find out which other countries have Unknown Warriors and/or Eternal Flames to commemorate their dead. Is the Eternal Flame used to commemorate any other event in other parts of the world?

2. The 'Bond of Sacrifice' collection at the Imperial War Museum

After a brief introduction to this collection (teacher led) students search IWM collections (www.iwmcollections.org.uk) for images held within this collection. These can be used as the basis for planning a Remembrance Day assembly or class commemoration.

3. Does the First World War ever end?

As an extension activity, groups could be asked to consider this question and research stories about the First World War that are still relevant today. Particularly relevant is the recent excavation of the Australian mass grave at Fromelles which illustrates that decisions made after the First World War are still debated today. Also relevant are issues surrounding First World War veterans and how the First World War will continue to be commemorated once the conflict passes out of living memory. Once groups have considered this question individually, they can discuss their thoughts. Alternatively, this could be set up as a debate with some members of the class arguing that the First World War should now be laid to rest and others arguing that it should still be remembered.

