



April 2007

Dear Head Teacher,

In November 2006 The Old Vic and the Imperial War Museum collaborated on a unique education project called Somme Theatre to provide young people with the opportunity of finding out more and getting a better understanding of both the First World War and in particular the Battle of the Somme in the 90th anniversary year.

The Battle of the Somme lasted from 1 July–18 November 1916 and has become one of the most well known battles of the First World War. The British Army, led by General Haig, aimed to break the deadlock in the trenches of the Western Front and win a decisive victory over the German Army. With nearly 1 million men, mostly volunteers from all walks of life and with a significant number of teenagers under the minimum age of 19, careful preparations were made including a massive bombardment of the German trenches with 1.5 million shells. Zero hour was set at 7.30am on 1 July, but unfortunately the heavy bombardment did not destroy the heavily fortified German front line and machine gun nests. There were subsequently huge British casualties of whom nearly 20,000 died; the heaviest losses ever suffered by the British Army in a single day.

Haig realised that the battle would be both time-consuming and costly (as it proved to be when it finally stopped on 18 November). Little land was gained with over a million casualties, 419,654 from Britain and the Empire, 204,253 French, and between 437,000–680,000 German. The German Army had however been weakened and valuable lessons had been learnt by the British regarding tactics, which would be applied with greater effect later in the war.

The Imperial War Museum provided contextual help for an Old Vic appointed playwright and performance team to present a play entitled *On the Middle Day* in the Museum's atrium in November 2006. As part of the performance key First World War exhibits were used including a tank, artillery gun and bi-plane. Fifty acting roles were cast from the local community and schools and dozens more worked as backstage crew. Performances ran from 15–19 November to much acclaim.

This, the accompanying resource pack contains six easy-to-follow lesson plans suitable for 13–18 year olds. The emphasis is on using drama techniques to initiate debate. The accompanying historical information provides further context to both the lesson plans and to issues raised in the play. Each lesson plan focuses on key issues related to this conflict and provides a challenging and unique learning experience for all those involved.

The stimulus for each of the lessons is the enclosed DVD containing scenes filmed during the performance. The DVD also contains a behind-the-scenes documentary and images from the production as well as further factual information about the battle and what was going on at home. Each lesson lasts roughly 40–50 minutes and will enable students to:

- Look at how drama techniques can be used to explore issue-based work
- Develop skills of communication, imagination, role-play, script study, teamwork, performance and evaluation
- Generate empathy and understanding of the situations that characters of a similar age and background found themselves in
- Analyse dramatic scenes in a critical manner using constructive criticism
- Provide relevant historical context to the issues explored

The pack also contains a simple questionnaire to find out how the Imperial War Museum could help your school, which we would like you to complete and send back. We are also interested in any feedback you have concerning the education pack, which we would be very grateful if you could e-mail back to the addresses below.

Yours sincerely,

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LESSON ONE: SIGNING UP

Context

In the scene you are about to watch you will see the reaction of young people, mostly aged 15–16, to the outbreak of war. The call for volunteers was for men aged 19–35. Our main protagonists were only aged 15–16 but were still intent on joining up. For many it seemed to offer the exciting prospect of travel and the possible glory of fighting for king and country.

Look at the additional historical information sections, **Signing Up, Boy Soldiers** and **Recruitment** on the reverse of this sheet and **Trench Slang**, see Lesson Three.

Play DVD: *Section One: Signing Up*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about signing up.

Exercise One: Taking Sides

Begin in a standing circle numbering your students 1, 2, or 3 giving each of the three groups a designated space in the room. All are too young to legitimately volunteer to fight. Group 1 is in favour of joining up despite being under-age and follow the arguments given by the character of Harry. Group 2 is against joining up under-age and side with the character of Betty. Group 3 are undecided.

Groups 1 and 2 are given five minutes to put together their argument selecting a spokesperson to voice their opinions. Group 3 are to circle the room observing and listening. After five minutes Groups 1 and 2 should 'sell' their argument to Group 3 who will then be asked to make a choice (either as a group or individually) and explain their reasons.

Exercise Two: Attention!

Chants and songs were very popular on the home and battle fronts. During the First World War popular tunes were adapted with different words to fit with the experiences of being a soldier in the trenches, sometimes using trench slang.

As the exercise continues the group should be instructed to move to the centre of the room increasing the volume as they do so. Levels of volume should be played with, culminating in a sudden cessation of the sound indicated by you lowering your arm sharply. The objective is to stop together as a team in absolute silence.

The lyrics, below taken from the DVD, should be copied for the students. Bring the group to a standing circle before splitting them into four groups.

The additional information on trench slang will also give some alternatives regarding words and phrases commonly used by soldiers especially when they became accustomed to trench life.

- Group 1 – Rifle
- Group 2 – Ammunition
- Group 3 – Helmet
- Group 4 – Bomb

Each of the groups should be allocated a corner of the room. Using the lyrics provided give each group approximately five minutes to create a modern day chant. Suggestions could be rap, football chant, boy band, hymn. Once done you should move to the middle of the space. On raising your right arm high each group performs their chant at the same time. At first this should be done quietly almost in a whisper.

Lyrics

Where are our uniforms?

Far, far away.

And when will our rifles come?

Perhaps, perhaps one day.

All we want is a shiny gun,

For to chase the bloody Hun.

Think of us when we are gone,

Far, far away.

Exercise Three: Improvisation

Remain in the same three groups as exercise two. Using the arguments touched upon in the first exercise, each group should begin thinking about how to dramatise their findings incorporating the following key characters:

- Sergeant (keen to recruit as many men as possible)
- Cocky recruit (perhaps under-age but very keen not to miss out)
- Scared recruit (perhaps under-age, afraid that he will be found out and having second thoughts about what he is doing)
- Objectors (realise that many of the young men who wish to join are too young and mothers, wives and girlfriends who do not want their loved ones to go)

Each group should think of a clear beginning, middle and end and their improvisation should last no more than two minutes in duration and involve everyone in the group. Each group should then perform their scene back to the rest of the group.



HISTORICAL INFORMATION: SIGNING UP

It is important to look at the different reasons why thousands of men were so keen to volunteer to fight for their country in 1914.

Key Points

① Boredom at work and a desire for adventure. Most children left school at 14 and sometimes 13 and would therefore be out at work. The main characters in the play are aged 14–16.

② Patriotism. This was strongly ingrained at school and in the media. People were brought up on stories of the British Empire and the 'heroic' tales of those who had helped to create it. Empire Day, 24 May, Queen Victoria's birthday, started in 1902, the year after her death. It was seen as a way of upholding pride in the nation's achievement and the importance of defending the Empire should it be endangered. Youth organisations such as the Scouts endorsed it too, 40% of boys belonged to a youth organisation. Our main characters had been in the Scouts.

③ Desire to escape family pressure and responsibility. It was easier for teenagers who did not have families of their own and were not major wage earners.

④ Peer pressure. Desire to do what your friends do. Also pressure from adults. White feathers were often handed out to teenagers who were too young to legally join up.

⑤ Impact of propaganda. Depictions of the most recent war, Boer War 1899–1902, in illustrated magazines, especially *Boy's Own* papers had often been romanticised, making war look exciting. Recruitment propaganda posters were designed to be very persuasive in encouraging enlistment. As the First World War progressed anti-German propaganda and war atrocity stories had an impact too.

⑥ Money. Joining up offered a regular wage, food and accommodation. 500,000 men were made redundant at the beginning of the war. This would have included teenagers as most left school at 14.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION: BOY SOLDIERS

The story of Harry, Archie, Alfie, Lennie, Albert and Horace is not unusual; there would have been a considerable number of under-age soldiers in the army. Richard Van Emden, in his book, *Boy Soldiers of the Great War*, argues convincingly that there could have been as many as 200,000 under-age soldiers taking part.

Why so many? Key Points

- ① Younger men were more susceptible to propaganda
- ② More willing to accept orders
- ③ Less aware of the dangers of war
- ④ Feel more indestructible
- ⑤ Not same kind of responsibilities as men with families
- ⑥ Fear that the war would be over by Christmas and therefore might miss out

⑦ Many belonged to youth groups such as the Scouts and public school boys received military-type training as cadets. This instilled a sense of patriotism, discipline and good citizenship.

⑧ Many children left school at 14 and would therefore be used to working in an adult environment. This was often factory work, which would have been hard with long hours and sometimes dangerous.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION: RECRUITMENT

At the outbreak of war, 4 August 1914, there were 450,000 men in the British Army, with 268,000 part time soldiers in the Territorial Force. Britain was the only European power without a conscript army. Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, realised that this was not enough and in August 1914, issued an appeal for 100,000 volunteers. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee supervised the most concerted leaflet and poster recruiting drive this country has ever seen. It has been estimated that by the end of March 1915, 20 million leaflets and 2 million posters had been issued with over 200 designs. By the end of August there were in fact 300,000 volunteers and by the end of 1915, nearly 2.5 million. They were to become known as Kitchener's Army.

What did you need to become a recruit? Key Points

① Initially you needed to be aged 19–30 (this was later raised to 35 and then 41). You could enlist at the age of 18 but could not be sent overseas until 19; this was lowered to 18½ in 1918. Nineteen proved to be a popular age in 1914. There were far too many 19 year olds than would have been possible in the British population! Proof of age was not required; passing your medical was enough. All the main characters in the play lie about their age so that they can be recruited.

② In August 1914 the minimum height was 5'3" with chest of 34". By 11 September that was raised to 5'6" to stem the flow of recruits.

③ Recruits came from all walks of life, all professions and from all classes.

④ At first there were too many to cope with and there was a shortage of equipment and uniforms.

⑤ Recruiting sergeants were paid two shillings and sixpence (£6 in today's money) per recruit on top of their wage, which was an incentive to turn a blind eye to recruits who looked too young.

⑥ Initially men from the same village or town were encouraged to join together with the incentive that they would train and fight together; these were called Pals Battalions. This also meant that if they were involved in a particularly dangerous campaign, they could all die together too.

⑦ By the end of 1915 it was apparent that there were not going to be enough volunteers and that therefore men would need to be conscripted, compelled to join the army unless medically unfit or doing essential war work on the home front. On 25 January 1916 the First Military Service Bill was passed introducing conscription for single men aged 18–41 and on 16 May, this was extended to married men. You still had to be 19 before you were sent abroad.

⑧ Some men believed that it was wrong to fight the Germans for religious or political reasons and refused to join the army, they were called 'Conscientious Objectors (COs)'. There were 16,500 COs, most agreed to help in a non-combatant role eg ambulance drivers or agriculture labourers some however refused and 6,000 were imprisoned.

⑨ Recruitment of black Britons was far from consistent. Some were rejected as being medically unfit, while others were sent to join the British West Indies Regiment or even encouraged to join the Canadian Army. Some however were recruited but there are no official records as to how many. Most are hidden stories but we do know of Walter Tull, whose father came to Britain from Barbados in the 19th century. He was Britain's first black outfield player, playing football for both Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town. He was also one of the first black army officers and recommended for the Military Cross but sadly killed in 1918.

LESSON TWO: WOMEN AT HOME

Context

In the scene you are about to watch you will see how young working class women left behind on the home front might react. The scene reveals how little they knew about what was happening overseas. News and letters were censored so it would have been difficult for them to know what conditions were really like on the Western Front. Foreign travel was not something that most ordinary people would have experienced at this time. Later in the scene (not filmed) it also touches on the scandal and difficulties a young unwed mother would have faced at this time.

Look at the additional historical information section,
On the Home Front.

Play DVD: *Section Two – Women at Home*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about the role of women on the home front.



Exercise One: Adventure

Travel abroad was a rare luxury for most at this time and working class women such as Betty, Polly, Hannah, Ruby and Eliza would have had little idea of the places, food and culture of France and Belgium. France for example seemed glamorous and romantic which for those serving out there could not be further from the truth.

Seat the group in a circle and ask individuals to think of one word to describe France, which they must keep to themselves. This should be very quick and take no longer than 30 seconds. Once all individuals have thought of something ask them to stand up one by one and mime their chosen descriptive word making their gestures as big and elaborate as possible.

Once done ask them to repeat the mime but this time add a sound of some kind. Once that has been done hear them for a third time but ask them to say their descriptive word as well after their mime and sound.

Once all have been heard, give the group 30 seconds to get into groups of 3 or 4 choosing other students who will complement their mime. From here each group should work on a short presentation that will 'describe' their view of France.



Exercise Two: Two Truths One Lie

Seat the group in a circle and tell them they have just 30 seconds to come up with two truths and one lie about themselves working in pairs. It must be inventive but realistic as it will be very obvious if it is too outlandish.

In turn ask each pair to present their truths and lies. The object of the exercise is to encourage the rest of the group to distinguish the lies from the truths.

Exercise Three: Moment of Truth

Keeping the group in a circle pick two confident pupils and put them into the circle. We are going to look at the scene (not filmed) where Betty tells the girls her news. Using the lines to the right, teachers should encourage a reflective discussion on the events of the scene. It is interesting to note the views of the young people today at a time where help is available. Using the lines below, taken from the play, choose a Betty and a Polly. Give line one to Polly and line two to Betty. Ask the chosen students to simply repeat the lines over and over again, experimenting with different intonation, energy and volume. The rest of the group should sit in a circle and observe the impact the different emphasis makes on the lines.

Line One: *'Scandalous, you don't do things by half!'*

Line Two: *'Left unmarried with a baby, heading for the poor house!'*

Now split the class into smaller groups and using the lines above begin to dramatise the sentences playing with, vowels, consonants, volume and 'colour' of the words. After sufficient time each group should perform their scene back to the rest of the group who should comment.

ON THE HOME FRONT

The First World War had an unprecedented effect on civilian life. Shortly after the outbreak of war the government brought in the Defence of the Realm Act, which gave it sweeping powers. News was censored, the coal mines nationalised, land and property requisitioned for military purposes, the sale of alcohol restricted and rationing introduced in 1918. Recruiting caused labour shortages, which resulted in large numbers of women doing jobs in industry, transport, agriculture and commerce previously done by men. More than 1.5 million women replaced men in the work place with 100,000 women joining the newly formed auxiliary services of the three armed forces; Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF). Zeppelin and air raids caused fear and hatred of Germany and put civilians in the front line for the first time. The war also made its impact on an emotional level, with almost every family being affected by the death or wounding of a relative or friend.

Key Points

- 1 Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) passed on 8 August 1914 gave the government considerable powers regarding censorship and controlling the lives of ordinary people.
- 2 Invasion threats were taken seriously, especially after the German naval bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool. A territorial force was kept on guard, especially on the east coast.
- 3 There were 103 air raids from first Zeppelin (air balloons) then Gotha aircraft, which, resulted in 1,413 people killed, and 3,407 injured.
- 4 Shortages and price rises in the cost of food plus the stranglehold caused by German submarines sinking merchant shipping, eventually led to compulsory rationing. On February 25, 1918 rationing of meat, butter and margarine came into force in London and the Home Counties and from April 7 meat rationing extended throughout Britain.
- 5 There were spy scares and 25 Germans were arrested and 11 executed.
- 6 Anti-German feeling was so great that shops with German sounding names were ransacked and 32,000 Germans living in Britain were imprisoned as enemy aliens.
- 7 Most families with loved ones in the military forces had to cope with the almost constant worry for their safety, especially during a campaign such as the Somme. Despite government propaganda casualty figures were printed.
- 8 The press stirred up further hatred of the Germans with a variety of atrocity stories concerning treatment of Belgian and French civilians. Some did have some truth such as the execution of civilians at Louvain and the execution of the British nurse Edith Cavell. Most however were exaggerated and made up, such as the bayoneting of babies. Germans living in Britain, even if they had been living in the country for several generations, now found that hatred was turned towards them.
- 9 Illegitimacy rates increased in the wartime atmosphere of living for the present. There was little sympathy for unmarried mothers and they were often turned out of their family homes and could end up in church-run homes for single and pregnant women, which were a bit like prisons, and were forced to give up their children if they could not support them.



LESSON THREE: TRAINING

This scene is about the basic training soldiers received as they prepared to fight the enemy. A large percentage of those training in preparation for the Battle of the Somme, including our main characters, were volunteers and had come from all classes and every profession, from factories and farms to offices, shops, banks and many other areas.

The following scene follows the new recruits as they prepare to go to war and the script explains in detail how weapons should be used and the importance of being fit.

Look at the additional historical information section on **Trench Warfare** and **The Battle of the Somme**.

Play DVD: *Section Three – Training*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about training.

Exercise One: Survival of the Fittest

The group will now participate in a number of training games intended to prepare them for war. This game is a variation of 'Lifeboats/Captain's Coming' where the recruits have to respond instantly to various commands. Pick four points in the room allocating them the following:

- Point One** *Bayonets* Push bayonet into an enemy and twist
- Point Two** *Digging* Dig frantically with spade
- Point Three** *Shells* Drop flat on floor
- Point Four** *Sergeant* Stand to attention and salute

Students are required to be alert and respond quickly to the commands as you point to the various allocated points in the room. It is useful if you take the character of a stereotypical Sergeant Major, barking orders at the students.



Exercise Two: Blind Assault

Create an assault course using chairs, bags, coats and the students themselves. It should be challenging but safe. Students not part of the assault course should be dotted around the room. Select two confident students in the group to be the ones tasked to get through the assault course using their own personalised

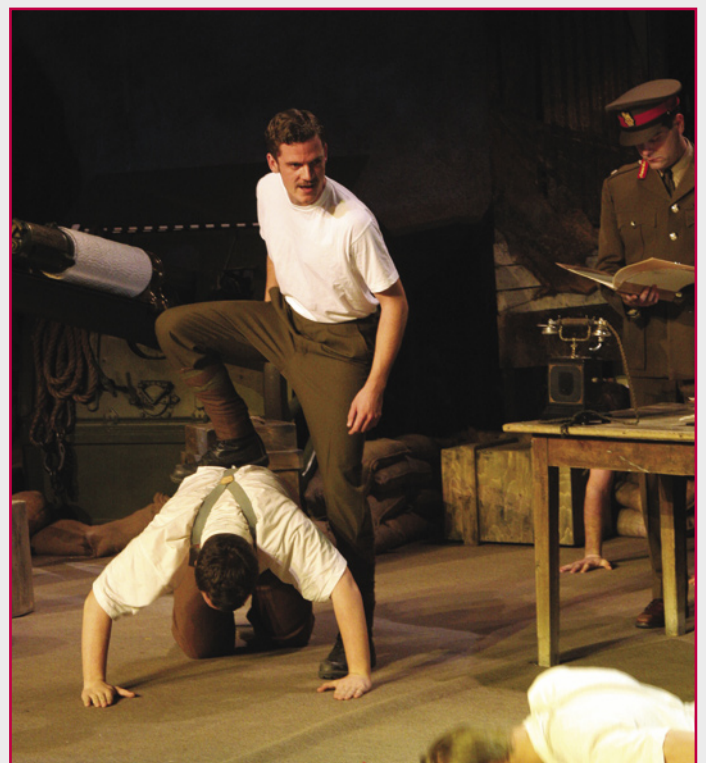
commands for right, left, backwards and forwards etc complicated further by having one of the pair close their eyes or preferably blindfolded and positioned at opposite ends of the space. The rest of the group must prevent the pair from completing the assault course by calling out bogus instructions.

Exercise Three: Fall Out

Split the class into five smaller groups. Once done allocate the lines below taken from the play. You should give each group a couple of minutes to play around with their given line thinking about the sounds of the words, the way it could be split up and who should say what. Building on this you should ask each group to work as a team to dramatise their lines with simple movements that support the text. It can be as simple as a salute or marching drill for example. Each group should make their movements as sharp, clear and clean as possible. The teacher should move to the centre of the space and call each group to the middle to perform. This should be done several times until the pieces flow into one another. This could be developed further by introducing music.

- Line One** *'Twisting the blade'*
- Line Two** *'Don't bloody smile this isn't funny!'*
- Line Three** *'Walk forward to the gas chamber'*
- Line Four** *'Seize and consolidate'*
- Line Five** *'Next time will be the real thing'*

After sufficient time each group should perform their scene back to the rest of the group who should comment on the tone of each and what worked and what did not.



TRENCH WARFARE (WESTERN FRONT)

By September 1914 it became clear that because of the range, accuracy and firepower of modern weapons, in particular the machine gun, soldiers could only survive on the battlefield by taking shelter in trenches. Attempts by each side to outflank the other failed and by December 1914 the opposing lines of trenches extended from the English Channel to the Swiss frontier. For four years the combatants sought ways of ending this stalemate. On a tactical level this resulted in successive attempts to break through using massive artillery bombardments, gas and the development of new weapons such as the tank.

Trench warfare created a unique world of its own in which soldiers on both sides had to contend with difficulties of communication and supply, the hardship of wet, cold, mud, rats and lice and the continual strain of living with the fear of death and dreadful wounds. Life in the trenches was not necessarily the adventure that many had hoped for. Camaraderie and friendship were extremely important and could make it just about bearable.

Key Points

- 1 Often described as nine tenths boredom and one tenth action but with constant tension.
- 2 Usual routine was, 3 days in the front line, 3 days in the support trench, 3 days in the front line then 3 days rest at least a half-mile behind the front line. This is where soldiers had the opportunity to relax and visit the Estaminets, in the villages, to sample red wine. They would also have more time to write letters home.
- 3 The parapet, top of the trench, was a couple of feet higher than the average height of a man and structures were reinforced with wooden planks and sandbags. Each section of trench had a latrine dug at the back.
- 4 Night time was a busy time. Wiring parties would repair barbed wire defences. Raiding parties would also go on night raids, which aimed to kill as many opponents as possible and to seize prisoners for interrogation.
- 5 Gas was a particularly horrendous weapon first used by the Germans in 1915. Chlorine and phosgene gas could suffocate the victim and mustard gas caused burns and temporary blindness. Protection initially was a canvas hood, which later developed into a more substantial respirator.

- 6 Supplies such as ammunition and rations were always brought in after dark for safety.
- 7 There were hygiene problems and soldiers invariably had body lice that could cause trench fever and typhus.
- 8 Bayonet training was for hand-to-hand combat when fighting within a trench with a rifle could not be used.
- 9 Receiving letters and writing home was important for morale. Letters were censored and any information that could be used by the enemy was crossed out. Field service postcards were quick forms of communication where the soldier just crossed out the information that was not applicable and signed their name. Ranges of postcards from comical to sentimental about life in the trenches and being a soldier were very popular to use. Before a major engagement all soldiers wrote a last letter home which would be sent to their loved ones if they were killed.
- 10 Attitudes to the Germans varied from a kind of compassion; feeling that they were in the same situation with no choice, to hatred; especially if friends had been killed. During Christmas 1914 there was an unofficial truce along a few sections of the front line in which both sides downed weapons and met in No Man's Land to exchange gifts and play football.

Trench Slang As with many groups which live and work together in exceptional circumstances, a unique language developed which helped build a sense of camaraderie.

bag of rations A term of contempt, referring to a fussy or domineering superior

bags The trench parapet, constructed with sandbags. 'Mounting the bags', 'over the bags' meant the opening of an attack, going 'over the top'

battle bowler Steel helmet

Blighty England. Home. Derives from the army in India. A 'Blighty wound', involved returning to England

Boches The universal French name in the war for Germans, taken up in England by the public in general and the Press. The nicknames Jerry and Fritz were more usual terms in the Army and Navy, and Hun with the Air Force.

body snatcher A stretcher-bearer

bonfire A cigarette

bongo boosh A tasty morsel of food

cached in Finished; dead

cat stabber Bayonet

clod To shell heavily. Suggested by the heaving up of the earth as shells burst on impact

coal box A German heavy shell, from the dense black smoke at its bursting

cricket ball A type of hand grenade, from its size and shape

dickey leave Absent without leave

duckboards The slatted timber paths laid down in trenches, from the resemblance to the sloping boards leading up to duck houses at the edge of a pond.

dug-out A protected place of shelter in the trenches. Also an elderly officer returning to service.

fairy light Vêry Lights, were flares or fire balls fired from a pistol used at night to see what was happening in No Man's Land.

fatted for the slaughter The intensive training in readiness for the next move back to the trenches

hose of death The Lewis gun; from the stream of bullets it discharged

Hun pinching Raiding an enemy trench in order to secure prisoners for interrogation

in the pink In good health. The usual greeting in a soldier's letter. 'Hoping this finds you in the pink, as it leaves me'

kitch A recruit in Lord Kitchener's 'New Army'

Kitchener's Mob The popular name for the men who joined up in response to Lord Kitchener's Appeal in August 1914

lucky bleeder Bullet

No Man's Land The area of land between the front line trenches of either army, held by neither but patrolled, at night by both. Originally barren stretches of waste ground between two provinces or kingdoms.

number's up To be in trouble, to be dead. *His number's up*

Old Bill A veteran or old soldier

on the barbed wire Killed. Every attack usually left a number of men killed in getting through the enemy's wire entanglements and literally hanging there

out there 'On the Western Front'

over the top To leave the shelter of a trench in order to make an assault, troops had to hoist themselves over the front wall of sandbags (parapet). 'Over the top' became a synonym for an attack

pipped Hit by a bullet

plaster To shell heavily

plum pudding The name for a type of trench mortar shell; suggested by its shape and size

stand to The vigilance kept in all trenches, especially before dawn and at nightfall, when everyone stood on the firesteps in case of attack

spirit of the bayonet To go forward with aggressive determination and confidence

tin hat The steel shrapnel-helmet adopted in the spring of 1916

tin opener A bayonet

toffee apple A name given to a trench-mortar stick bomb

Tommy Atkins The popular generic name for the British private soldier, originates from 1815 when the War Office issued the first Soldier's Account Book using as an example the name Tommy Atkins. Rudyard Kipling's poem familiarised the name all over the English-speaking world.

trench foot The familiar term for a problem to the feet, similar to frostbite, caused by men having to stand in cramped positions in flooded trenches stopping the circulation of blood in the lower limbs.

wind up, to have To be nervous or frightened

windy corner A name for any place that was particularly dangerous

zeppelin in a cloud Sausage and mashed potatoes

zero hour The term for the time officially appointed for the opening of an attack, kept secret at headquarters and meanwhile referred to as 'zero', the actual time being finally made known to the troops only at the last possible moment before the attack.

LESSON FOUR: INTO BATTLE

Context

This scene shows the final terrifying moments before soldiers were sent over the trenches. After seven days of heavy bombardment of the German trenches there was hope that much had been destroyed and that capturing these and pushing the German front line further back would be possible. The feeling of terror was also mixed with a sense of excitement and fervour, as this was what the training and preparation had led up to.

Look at the additional historical information sections **Trench Warfare** and **Battle of the Somme**.

Play DVD: *Section Four – Battle*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about the battle.



Exercise One: Eyes Front

Bring the group to a standing circle. Once done, make eye contact with someone across the circle, walking up to him or her, and saying their name as you do so. This will generate much amusement but generally not from the person you are making eye contact with.

Once you reach the person you have chosen, stop, and explain to the group that the person 'receiving' the eye contact is the next person to make eye contact with someone else across the circle. This is great exercise to improve concentration and communication skills.

Exercise Two: The Box

Remain in a standing circle then, using tape, mark out a box shape roughly one metre square. Place the 'box' in the centre of the circle. Ask a few of the more confident students to approach the 'box' and keeping in mind the scenes they have just watched, get them to imagine there is something shocking and disturbing in there. You may like to give them a few examples such as a bloody piece of kit or an unexploded bomb. The rest of the group should try and guess what they are seeing.

This exercise is a great way to encourage discussion on the feelings of fear and trepidation, feelings common when going into battle. Next put the group into pairs. The box will now become a prison cell. Pairs must decide whether they are a prison guard or a prisoner of war. Each pair must then improvise a scene in which the prisoner must try to escape from the box/cell outwitting the guard on the outside. The constraints of the box shape will enable the students to feel what it might be like to be captured and helpless.

Exercise Three: Cover Me

This exercise is about teamwork and is useful when thinking about camaraderie and how dependent soldiers were on one another. Ask the whole group to find a chair and place it anywhere in the room and sit on it. A volunteer should then be taken to one end of the room leaving their chair empty. The rest of the group must ensure the volunteer never gets to the empty chair by leaving their own chair to 'cover it' effectively creating another empty chair. The success of the exercise depends on teamwork to ensure there are not too many empty chairs and that the volunteer does not get anywhere near an empty chair. If the first volunteer is successful simply pick another one.



Exercise Four: Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre uses arts-based techniques like role-play to tackle issues highlighted in a scene. It encourages students to comment and think about issues and to work out effective solutions. You should begin by pairing the group up and ask each pair to allocate themselves either A or B. Once done ask the As to play the part of a German soldier whilst Bs should play the part of a captured British soldier.

Having given sufficient time call the group back and ask each pair to perform their scene. Once done ask the stronger pairs to perform again but this time ask them to remain in character once their scene is completed so that other members of the group can ask them questions. Try and encourage the questions to be as inventive as possible as this exercise is about getting the group to empathise with both points of view.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

The Battle of the Somme was the first major offensive where the British Army took the leading role with the intention of breaking through the deadlock on the Western Front and winning a decisive victory against the Germans. The battle started on 1 July 1916 but continued until 18 November. The army had increased to nearly 1 million and those who took part were largely volunteers from all professions and classes with a significant number of teenagers, 'boy soldiers', who were under the minimum age of 19.

The battle was preceded by a week-long artillery bombardment with over 1.5 million shells fired into the German lines. Zero Hour was set for 7.30am on 1 July 1916. Unfortunately the bombardment had not destroyed the heavily fortified German trenches and there were 57,470 British casualties, of whom nearly 20,000 died, the heaviest losses ever suffered by the British Army in a single day. There were only limited gains and General Sir Douglas Haig, in overall command, realised that there would be no quick and decisive breakthrough and that the battle would be time consuming and costly.

Contribution from India, Africa and the West Indies

India

At the beginning of the war the Indian Army was the only army in the Empire with a well-trained core of regulars who could be deployed straight away. They were to play an extremely important role on the Western Front especially before Kitchener's army had been trained and was ready to fight. 1,440,500 Indian men took part in the fighting, on the Western Front, Middle East and Africa, and all were volunteers. It was also a self-financing army, providing their own food, supplies and equipment. By 1916 many were moved to the Middle East to fight in Mesopotamia nearer to home with a more sympathetic climate. Two divisions of the Indian Cavalry Corps stayed on in the Western Front and took part in the Battle of the Somme. The nature of trench warfare made it difficult to use cavalry and when they did try to break through they suffered high casualties. These men were therefore mostly used to help build roads and trenches and help the infantry.

At the end of the war some 113,743 Indians were reported dead, wounded or missing. Indian personnel won 12,445 British and 463 Allied medals for bravery, including 12 Victoria Crosses, the highest award for bravery.

West Indies

When war broke out the West Indies offered to send contingents of men to England. The British government felt that they would best be employed defending the Islands from the threat of the German Navy. The West Indian Regiment dates back to the American War of Independence. By 1915 a Royal Warrant established a new force, the British West Indies Regiment and 15,000 men volunteered from across the islands. These men served in France, Palestine, Egypt and Italy. Two battalions were sent to France in 1916 and by 1917 there were seven. During the Battle of the Somme these men were used in a supporting capacity carrying ammunition to the front line but did not bear arms, as they were to do in the other theatres of war. The Bermudan Militia Artillery and the Bermuda Volunteer Rifle Corps did however fight on the Somme and were trained as Lewis gunners. Overall the West Indies suffered 1,325 casualties, 185 killed in action, 1,071 died of sickness with 81 receiving medals for bravery.

Britain also had her Empire, now the Commonwealth, to draw upon and they made a considerable contribution both with raw materials and manpower. Men from Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada took part. What is perhaps less known is the role of the Bermuda Volunteer Rifles Corps, the Indian Cavalry and the British West Indies Regiment.

Very little land was captured for the cost of over a million casualties, 419,654 from Britain and the Empire, 125,000 of them dead. French casualties were 204,253 and German between 437,000 and 680,000. The Germans were weakened and valuable lessons had been learnt regarding tactics, which would be applied with greater effect later in the war. However the Allies failed to achieve all their objectives and the war was to continue for another two years, in fact this was only the halfway point.

Africa

By 1914 the continent of Africa was divided into colonies and protectorates owned by the European powers and fighting took place in Togoland, the Cameroons, German South West Africa and German East Africa. There were approximately 30,000 East Africans fighting for Britain in the King's African Rifles and 25,000 West Africans in the West African Frontier Force. At least 300,000 Africans were used as carriers. The African contribution on the Western Front was fairly small as they were mainly involved in the war in their own continent. On the Western Front, behind the lines, the South African Native Labour Contingent played an important role bringing in supplies, quarrying and felling timber and West Africans also served as carriers, which was vital in ensuring that the army was properly supplied in the front line. Overall, in Africa, 3,000 African soldiers were killed and substantially more carriers, but figures are inaccurate.



LESSON FIVE: BACK HOME

Context

This scene shows the way women were integral to the war effort and although not able to fight on the front line often felt immense pressure to support those who were. Munitions work in particular could be hard, with long hours and hazardous working conditions. Newspapers and letters were censored so it was not possible to grasp what was really going on (though casualty figures were printed). If someone did go missing there were often long periods of not knowing if loved ones were alive or dead which caused great distress.

Look at the additional historical information sections **On the Home Front** and **Munitions Work**.

Play DVD: *Section 5 – Back Home*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about the role of women back home.



Exercise One: Whispers

Misinformation or lack of information was one of the most frustrating elements of being back at home. 'Whispers' is a fun way to demonstrate misinformation. Begin by splitting the group into two lines, Team A and Team B. The lines below, from the scene just watched, should be whispered into the ear of the first person in each line, then to their neighbour and so on until the message is sent to the end of the line. The person at the end of the line should then feed back to the group what they think they have heard.

Invariably the line will change completely which will help to demonstrate the half truths and misinformation common in times of war. Asking students to come up with their own lines can build on this exercise.

Team A: *'I know my Harry's alive, I know it...'*

Team B: *'She's lost three sons in the war...'*



Exercise Two: I'm Falling

Often relationships were heightened at home as the women bonded in their common hatred of the enemy and support of the war effort or the fear of losing loved ones. Relying on your friends was imperative be it when short of food or simply needing someone to share things with. This next exercise demonstrates trust in a practical way.

Begin by splitting the group into pairs who then allocate themselves either A or B. On your count of three As must fall backwards shouting, 'I'm Falling!' as they do so. Bs must catch them. The best way to do this is by asking As to fall with their arms outstretched so that Bs can slot their arms under As armpits.

Exercise Three: Letters

Put the group into smaller groups of between four and six. Each of the groups is then given a piece of paper and a pen. Each group has a short amount of time to write a letter either from the front line or back home. Ideally it should be something dramatic so it should be from a personal perspective. You should then gather all the letters together and mix them up making sure each group does not get their own letter back. Once done you should randomly hand the letters back and ask each of the groups to begin dramatising their letter but only using actions and no sound.

This exercise should be built on by asking the whole group to walk around the space ensuring they are not all walking in the same direction. Once this is working well tell the group that at any point someone can shout, 'I'm Falling!' The group must then work together to ensure whoever is falling is caught before they hit the ground. At first the whole group will start calling out which should be discouraged as the idea is to work as a team.

Once sufficient time has been given you should gather the group back into an audience and see each of the scenes performed. The rest of the group now has five questions to guess what has been said in the letter. The scenes can be developed to include improvised dialogue or sections from the letters.

Remember during the First World War letters would have been censored so any information that could potentially have been of use to the enemy such as location, numbers, tactics, plans and also lack of support for the war would have been crossed out and made illegible.

MUNITIONS WORK

After the Munitions Scare of 1915 when it looked as though the British Army would run out of shells the Ministry of Munitions was created with Lloyd George at its head. Certain new regulations came into place including an increased willingness to employ women. The Ministry took over certain existing arms factories, built new ones and introduced controls on employment especially regarding women which were to set standards for other employers.

Over 750,000 women were employed and this kind of work showed that women could work in a disciplined way with complicated machinery for long hours. It brought a degree of respect and more personal freedom and for the working class girl the pay was much better than that of domestic service.

Key Points

① Women doing men's work were to be paid not less than 6d per hour (equivalent today about £3.60) with a minimum of 24 shillings per week (equivalent today about £144) rising to 35 shillings (equivalent today about £210) by 1918. Pay increased depending upon training and skill and how dangerous the materials were. Women did not usually get the highest wages that fully skilled male workers would have got as they did not always set up the equipment and were sometimes kept deliberately in a position of tutelage where they were still undergoing training which meant employers did not have to pay the full rate.

② Shifts usually lasted 12 hours eg day shift, 7am–7pm or night shift 7pm–7am.

③ Rules and regulations were strict. If you were late by 20 minutes you lost a quarter of the daily rate and if you stopped before the hooter sounded, ending the shift, you could be fined 2s 6d (equivalent today about £7).

④ Wages for munitions work were good for working class women especially compared to other war work and domestic service. It brought a certain level of economic independence and even a few luxuries. There were even complaints of what we would call today 'ladette' culture, of young women drinking too much and having too much independence.

⑤ The work could be dangerous, at least 71 women died in explosions and another 81 died in fatal accidents. It could also adversely affect health eg prolonged exposure to TNT, an important ingredient in explosives, caused toxic jaundice which caused exposed skin and hair to turn yellow and also caused sickness, nausea, vomiting, giddiness and coughing up thick yellow phlegm. 61 women died of poisoning. Women working with TNT were nicknamed 'canaries' because of their yellow skin.



LESSON SIX: CONSEQUENCES

Context

This scene shows some of the consequences of war as we see how Harry, our main protagonist, tries to cope with family life eight years after the end of the war. Often it was very difficult for those who had fought to readjust to civilian life. Many had witnessed terrible events in the trenches and the death of close friends was always difficult to cope with. Health, both physical and mental, could be affected for the rest of their lives. For women it meant giving up their jobs and independence when the men returned home, which also caused bad feeling.

Exercise One: Status

Whilst the men were fighting, women took on very different roles, often taking on jobs of considerable responsibility in support of the war effort. For those returning from war it was difficult to readjust not only to being back at home but also seeing the change in their wives or girlfriends. A sense of responsibility and pride in achievement could affect the way that some women and men regarded their status and how they were regarded by others. This exercise is a useful way to explain the feeling of status.

Pair the group up into As and Bs, asking the As to form a seated audience somewhere in the room, telling them they can talk amongst themselves for a while. You should then take team B to one side of the room whispering 1–15 (presuming the class is an average size of 30) to each in turn. Once done, inform Bs that you have allocated a number between 1–15 to each of them and that for the purposes of this exercise the higher the number the more important their status. You should then ask them to begin walking around the space in any direction they like in a way that reflects their status; eg the lower numbers should walk around timidly, averting eye contact whilst the higher numbers will be confident and have a purposeful stride.

Exercise Two: Inner Thoughts

Select five of the more confident students from the group and tell them that they are now a family living in 1926. Key characters should be a father, mother, brothers and sisters, who are posing for a family portrait and should pose accordingly. Think of appropriate roles that each member of the family might have undertaken during the war. Once posed take suggestions from the group as to how each character might be feeling. Once suggestions have been made pick another five students and allocate them each one of the characters to stand behind.

Exercise Three: Pulse

Split the group up into smaller groups of five or six allocating each of them a character listed below. Using a large piece of paper get each individual group to brainstorm as many words as possible about how their character might feel about war. From here you should ask your group to decide on how their group has been affected by the First World War.

Once decided they should begin creating a short scene using only a few of the key words they have come up with. After sufficient time ask each of the groups to stand up on their own ready to perform their scene. The rest of the group should surround those performing, at first giving them as much space as possible. How they feel about each individual performance will determine how big the circle remains.

Look at the additional historical information sections **On the Home Front**, **Munitions** and **The End of the War**.

Play DVD: *Scene Six – Consequences*

The following drama exercises are intended to stimulate discussion and debate about the consequences of war.



Once Bs are up and walking about tell As what is going on and that it is their job to put the group in order beginning with the least important and moving up to the most important. You should then swap teams and repeat the exercise.

The new students are now going to 'voice' the internal thoughts of their allotted character. The rest of the group can now ask the 'internal thoughts' students direct questions as to how they are feeling which the original characters must physically dramatise as they answer. As seen in the DVD extract often feelings of regret and blame never went away putting enormous strain on the family unit.

If they are affected in a sympathetic way they should step into the circle or negatively step out. This exercise is a simple way of getting young people to open up and form an opinion that is entirely their own. It is a good way of beginning a discussion about the consequences of war either this war or contemporary wars going on today.

Characters:

- German Soldier
- French or Belgian civilian
- Nurse in France
- British Soldier
- Wife at home in Britain

THE END OF THE WAR

Hostilities on the Western Front ceased at 11am on 11 November 1918 when an armistice between Germany and the Allies came into effect. A final settlement, determined by a peace conference, was embodied in the Treaty of Versailles, which was signed by the Germans, under protest, on 28 June 1919. Germany lost territory and its armed forces were greatly reduced. It had to pay massive compensation for war damage and admit its guilt for causing the war.

At the end of the war there were 20 million men in Europe who needed to be demobilised, 3 million of them British. When the war finished many men who had volunteered or were conscripted and had fought in the army found it difficult to readjust to civilian life. War experiences physically and psychologically could mark you for the rest of your life.

In particular it was difficult for the young men who had joined up under-age. Many had missed out on apprenticeships and therefore found it difficult to find work. There were no attempts to rehabilitate the majority of these men and many became disillusioned. Many were now disabled and their health was severely affected. Compensation and pension rights were complicated and many missed out. The Prime Minister, Lloyd George, had promised 'Homes fit for Heroes', and many became disillusioned that this was not going to happen.

One positive development was that on December 1918 women over 30 were able to vote for the first time. It has been argued that the example set by women working in their various roles in the First World War brought about their emancipation more quickly than it might have done otherwise.

Key Points

- 1 It took around 2 years for all the British troops to be demobilised.
- 2 The British government wanted to improve industry and avoid mass unemployment but it was very difficult to find employment for all these men returning to civilian life who had been out of the work environment for so long.
- 3 Only 25% of those who served received a government disability pension.
- 4 Over 240,000 British soldiers received total or partial amputation of a limb. Many had severe facial injuries and many others experienced psychological trauma for the rest of their lives.
- 5 8–12 million men in the military services had died, the exact numbers are unknown. Germany and Russia lost the greatest numbers. Britain and her Empire lost 921,000 (47,746 from India and 3,649 from Africa and the West Indies). In the British forces 1 in 8 soldiers were killed.
- 6 340,000 children lost one or more parent with an even greater number losing a brother or close relative.
- 7 Around 14,000 young men aged 18 or under are listed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Taking into account those who lied about their age, this could be at least 28,000 killed.
- 8 The dead were commemorated in cemeteries at the battlefields where they fell. It was considered too complicated to bring the bodies home to Britain. The national memorial, the Cenotaph, in Whitehall, was unveiled on 11 November 1920 on the same day as the Unknown Warrior was buried in Westminster Abbey. These were to become the focal points along with local memorials for the nation's grief. Those who could afford it would try to make a visit to the relevant cemetery, or to the memorials such as the Menin Gate or Thiepval, if their loved one had no known grave, which were mainly abroad in France and Belgium.

Below are listed some of the inscriptions on gravestones in official cemeteries on the Western Front of under-age soldiers who died during the Somme offensive. Families could choose a few words which they felt were appropriate.

A BOY IN YEARS A MAN IN DEEDS

18/596 Private Willie Whitaker
18th West Yorkshire Regiment
Killed in Action
1st July 1916,
aged 18

DO GOOD & BE GOOD

11117 Private George Edwards
11th Essex Regiment
Killed in Action
24th September 1916,
aged 15

HE GAVE HIS YOUNG LIFE FOR ENGLAND

28407 Private John Harris
1st Cheshire Regiment
Killed in Action
25th July 1916,
aged 17

WORTHY OF EVER LASTING LOVE

25793 Private James Walters
9th Sherwood Foresters
Killed in Action
9th August 1916,
aged 16

A YOUNG LIFE CHEERFULLY GIVEN GOD MAKE US WORTHY OF SUCH SACRIFICE

16201 Lance Corporal Albert Taylor
12th Royal Sussex Regiment
Killed in Action
13th November 1916,
aged 17

O SO YOUNG & YET SO BRAVE

24444 Private James Rathband
9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers
Killed in Action
9th September 1916,
aged 16

A MOTHER'S HOPE, A FATHER'S JOY GOD HAS CALLED OUR ONLY BOY

79210 Private Harold Carter
9th London Regiment (Royal Fusiliers)
Killed in Action (Epéhy)
18th September 1918,
aged 18

ONLY A BOY BUT A HERO

4214 Private Frank Gardiner
16th Battalion Australian Infantry
Killed in Action
30th August 1916,
aged 17

MOTHER'S BABY SON SORELY MISSED

22243 Private Bernard Whittingham
98th Battalion, Machine Gun Corps
Killed in Action
23rd July 1916,
aged 17

RESOURCES

Online resources

Imperial War Museum's website
www.iwm.org.uk
www.iwm.org.uk/thesomme

To mark the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the Museum launched its first major online exhibition. This exhibition looks at the reasons and planning of the battle, preparations and the course of the battle itself. Of particular interest are the personal stories of those involved, both men and women, on the home and battlefronts. It also looks at the battlefields as they are today.

UK National Inventory of War Memorials
www.ukniwm.org.uk

Established in 1989, the UKNIWM has compiled a comprehensive record of the war memorials in the UK and the Channel Islands.

Channel 4's Lost Generation
www.channel4.com/history/microsites/L/lostgeneration
The Lost Generation website offers an opportunity to search for names on war memorials and stories of those who served and lost their lives during the First World War.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission
www.cwgc.org
The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for marking and maintaining the graves of those members of the Commonwealth forces who died during the two world wars, for building and maintaining memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown and for providing records and registers of these 1.7 million burials and commemorations found in most countries throughout the world.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission: The Battle of the Somme
www.cwgc.org/somme
A new history section on this site looks at the progress of the battle.

National Archives
www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

First World War.com
www.firstworldwar.com

Great War.com
www.greatwar.co.uk

World War 1 Battlefields
www.ww1battlefields.co.uk

1914-1918.net
www.1914-1918.net
The story of the British Army in the First World War.

World War 1 1914-1918
www.worldwar1.nl

BBC History
www.bbc.co.uk/history/war/wwone/battle_somme.shtml

The History Channel
www.thehistorychannel.co.uk

Books

www.iwmshop.org.uk

Corsets to Camouflage: Women and War
Kate Adie, Hodder & Stoughton, 2004

The 1916 Experience: The Somme and Verdun
Julian Thompson, Carlton Books, 2006
Contains facsimiles and CD of veterans' interviews from the Museum's Sound Archive

Forgotten Voices of the Great War
Max Arthur, Ebury Press, 2002
Based on the Museum's Sound Archive

Anthem for Doomed Youth: Twelve Soldier Poets of the First World War
Jon Stallworthy, Constable & Robinson, 2005

The Imperial War Museum Book of the Somme
Malcolm Brown, Macmillan, 2002

Tommy Goes to War
Malcolm Brown, Tempus, 1999

The Imperial War Museum Book of the Western Front
Malcolm Brown, Macmillan, 1993

Boy Soldiers of the Great War
Richard Van Emden, Headline, 2005

All Quiet on the Home Front
An Oral History of Life in Britain during the First World War
Richard Van Emden, Headline, 2004

Tommy: The British Soldiers on the Western Front 1914-1918
Richard Holmes, Harper Perennial, 2005

Forgotten Victory
The First World War: Myths and Realities
Gary Sheffield, Headline, 2002

A War in Words, The First World War
Svetlana Palmer & Sarah Wallis, Simon & Schuster, 2003

The Empire Needs Men
A multi-media pack illustrating the role of black Africans, Asians and West Indians in the First World War. Includes information booklet, a video of original film footage, facsimile colour posters, documents and 50 photographs.

Songs and Slang of the British Soldier 1914-1918
Edited by John Brophy & Eric Partridge, 1930

Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases
Compiled by Edward Fraser & John Gibbons, 1925
