



Learning ideas: Football during the First World War

Learning Objectives

- To deepen the understanding of football during the First World War
- To read and understand the structure of a range of poems, and recognise a range of linguistic features used to create meaning in poetry
- Choose words to explore and construct meaning
- To construct a poem or piece of art together as part of the Royal British Legion's Thank You movement and the Games of Remembrance

Resources

Page numbers referred to below are from the Never Such Innocence resource which may be downloaded for free from www.neversuchinnocence.com/first-world-war-resources

Why not look particularly at page 67 to learn more about the First World War Generation's love of football, which has inspired the Games of Remembrance, or refer to www.footballandthefirstworldwar.org/ for more in depth information.

Football was a force for unity one hundred years ago, as men on the frontlines played together with friends and foe, and women and girls took to the field in unprecedented numbers. The educational resource covers other wide topics related to the First World War including the various fronts across the world, the role of sport, and the home front. There is also a ready-made PowerPoint for Football in the First World War.

Opening activities

Ask students what they already know about the First World War

- Talk briefly through 'the outbreak of the war' (p. 6-7) and 'responses to war' (p. 8-9)
- Look at some of the major battles (p. 10-13) to give students context of the scale of the First World War

Ask students what they know about Remembrance

- Do they know what the poppy is and why people wear it? (p.122-123)
- Why do we continue to mark Armistice Day each year?
(<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/schools-learning/learning-resources/>)
- Ask the group: do you think people played football during the First World War? Who do you think played?

The role of football during the First World War

- Ask the group to imagine leaving home to fight in a War – what would they take with them? Lots of people took things to remind them of home, things to keep them busy, and things that made them happy. So there was lots of football played at the front!
- Take a look at the Imperial War Museum’s facts about football during this time (www.iwm.org.uk/history/9-facts-about-football-in-the-first-world-war)
- Explain that many professional and amateur footballers enlisted in the British Army, and the Footballers’ Battalion was formed. Ask whether having a shared love of the sport might have affected the Battalion. More info can be found on the For Club and Country website: www.forclubandcountry.org.uk/footballers-battalion
- Ask if anyone has heard of ‘The Christmas Truce’ – on Christmas Day, 1914, a football game may have been played between British and German troops in No Man’s Land
 - Ask the group to think about the day – can they imagine having a Christmas game of football, but far away from home and against a team you’ve been fighting against? How do you think that would that have felt?
- Use the visual cue of the memorial to the Christmas Truce at the National Memorial Arboretum – ask the group how they think the memorial tells a story.
- Explain that football was just one sport people used to lift morale – rugby and cricket (p. 66) were also popular, and cricket was even used as a diversion at Gallipoli! In May 1916 Allied troops in Salonika held a Sports Field Day (p. 29) – ask the group what affect this might have had on the troops.

Football on the Home Front

Women took on many different roles during the First World War and during this time there was also a huge increase in women and girls playing football – this helped keep morale up, raise money for war charities, and helped munitions workers stay healthy.

- How do these three factors compare to the reasons people play football today?
- Women were not encouraged to play football before 1914. Why do the group think official attitudes to the women’s game changed during the War?
- Use the ‘Wartime Work’ (p. 88-89) section of the NSI resource to give an idea of some of the roles women took on during the First World War.
- Ask the group to think about the changes that the War brought, e.g. the movement from domestic service work to factory work
- Ask the group to imagine the 1918 Munitionettes Cup - what do they think the atmosphere was like?
- Explain that women were banned from playing football by the FA after the War was over (1921) – ask the pupils why do you think this was? What impact do you think it had? How does it make you feel now?

Personal stories

- Look together at the life of Walter Tull in the NSI resource (p. 67)
- Use the National Football Museum website to research Lily Parr:
www.nationalfootballmuseum.com/halloffame/lily-parr
- Use the Football in the First World War website to look up your local / club players:
 - www.footballandthefirstworldwar.org/
Select 'Club by Club' – select club – view players and records / profiles
 - Encourage the group to do their own research on different players

Additional themes to explore

Look at just some of the ways different groups of people contributed tremendously to the First World War and the changes that occurred as a result of it. Encourage students to think about how these people may have had an impact on the life they enjoy today.

Commonwealth

When Britain declared war in 1914, it did so on behalf of the British Empire. There were four self-governing Dominions (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa) and close to 80 British colonies that fought in the First World War. Servicemen also came from across Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia. We recognise them today as our Commonwealth family who we owe so much to. All across Britain we continue to enjoy many of these cultural influences especially reflected in our cuisine, fashion and music.

Resources:

- The West Indies Regiment – approximately 16,000 men served, travelling to France, Palestine, Egypt and Italy (p. 46)
- The Bikaner Camel Corps, led by the Maharaja of Bikaner, defended the Egyptian canals (p.48)
- Soldiers from British West Africa were divided into two military formations, the West African Regiment and West African Frontier Force (p.51)
- South Asian men served in France, Belgium, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, and East Africa (p. 52)
- The Australian Army Nursing Service served in Greece, Egypt, and India (p. 55)

Youth

As well as adults, children and teenagers around the country played a huge role during this time. Many helped to raise money for medical supplies and equipment as well as land work to help produce more food which was greatly needed. It is thought that around 600,000 children were at work during the war and their contribution was vital for the whole country.

Resources:

- Young people and the war (p.92)
- 10 ways children took part in the First World War
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/10-ways-children-took-part-in-the-first-world-war>

Pioneers

As a result of the First World War, major medical advancements were made in the areas of x-rays, blood transfusions, reconstructive surgery and understanding bone injuries. Pioneers were also busy inventing a whole array of things which we still rely on today such as teabags, wristwatches, zips and sanitary pads to name a few. Resources:

- Long-term advances in medicine (p. 106-109)
- Reconstructive surgery and facial injuries (p.114 – 115)
- At the beginning of the conflict in 1914, 80% of soldiers with broken thigh bones died. The use of the Thomas splint meant that, by 1916, 80% of soldiers suffering that injury survived. (www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zip2tfr)

Arts and Culture

The war influenced poets, painters, composers and writers. It changed arts and culture forever and its impact and influence is still being felt today.

Resources:

- Poems from different countries, e.g. *The Gift of India* on p.53, *After the Speeches About The Empire* on p.59 or *War* on p.33
- Poems written by members of the armed forces, e.g. *Dulce et Decorum Est* on p.100, *To My Daughter Betty* on p. 73, or *Years Ahead* on p.82
- Poems written by those at home, e.g. *To My Mother* on p.94, *Kaiser Bill* on p. 92, or *The Wind on the Downs* on p.121
- Did you know that famous books such as *Lord of the Rings* written by JRR Tolkien was actually influenced by his time serving in the First World War (www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zgr9kqt)

Loss and Recovery

The generation of the First World War not only had to deal with the huge loss of life and an economy in ruins but also try to build a better world for everyone in the country.

Resources:

- Many people lost their lives. People like Walter Tull (p.67), Edith Cavell (p.112), Gabrielle Petit (p.81), and Frank Alexander De Pass (p. 75), all died during the War
- People did very brave things. Manta Singh rescued his injured comrade under heavy fire – by carrying him away in a wheelbarrow! (p. 64)
- Members of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Navy Air Service (which together became the Royal Air Force, RAF, in 1918) had extremely dangerous jobs (p. 68-71)
- Many people at home worked very hard – making munitions, making ration tins and other supplies, farming for food or building ships (p. 89)

Responding through poetry

- Many people turned to poetry and art during the First World War as a way of sharing their experiences of life during this time.
- Having looked at some examples of war poetry featured in the Never Such Innocence resource and elsewhere, ask students to select one they like and ask;
 - How do you think this poet felt about the War? How can you tell?
 - Has the poet used simile? Metaphor? Imagery? Rhyming? Rhythm?
 - Discuss the importance of word choice – how does the poet use different words to make the reader understand their feelings or mood?
 - What makes an intriguing or memorable word choice?
- Having explored how different people were involved in the war, ask your pupils what their opinion of the war is and how they might convey this in their poem
- Encourage pupils to think about what their lives now might be if the war hadn't happened. What do they think would be different?
- What sort of language you might use to convey the tone of your chosen poem and to make it interesting and/or surprising

Responding through artwork

- Look together at a sample of artwork from the First World War period, e.g.
 - *Gassed* by John Singer Sargent (p.76)
 - *Women Working in a Gas Retort House* by Anna Airy (p. 77)
 - *A Battery Shelled* by Percy Wyndham Lewis (p.77)
 - *A Drawing of Welsh Soldiers*, by Muirhead Bone (p. 11, p. 76)
- For each piece of art, discuss how the artist has created different effects or conveyed their experience of the War.
 - How do you think this artist felt about the War? How can you tell?
 - Has the artist used colour? Light and dark? What medium have they used?
- Encourage the group to think about the different people they have learned about, and their own view of the First World War, and to create a piece of artwork that conveys this
 - Encourage everyone to think outside the box and to use either the techniques they have noticed in artwork from the period to convey their own meaning or put their own creative stance on their work

Get in Touch

We would love you to send us any work that is produced! Our poetry, art, and song competition has now closed but we will still be delighted to see any work and to hear how our resources have been used. If you have any feedback or ideas about the resource or this lesson plan please get in touch!

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