

Conscience

A World War I critical thinking project

A primary school-focused teachers' resource



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Conscience: A World War I critical thinking project

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Original text drawn from *Conviction*, by Don Rowe, in collaboration with Isabel Cartwright. Adapted for Key Stage 2 with special thanks to Lucy Henning.

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Information for teachers

Introduction

This pack has been produced by Quakers in Britain, in collaboration with teachers and pupils. It is intended for use in primary schools to support children's critical thinking about how people's understanding of right and wrong influences the decisions they make in their lives. It is aimed at Key Stage 2 (7- to 11-year-olds), but could also be adapted for use in secondary schools at Key Stage 3 (11- to 14-year-olds). Through engaging with speaking and listening activities in pairs and groups, based around original source material from 1914 to 1919, children are invited to consider the issues of conscience faced by families in World War I. The materials are intended to support children in:

- exploring their personal understanding of conscience and how they understand the difference between right and wrong
- thinking carefully about the difficulties and dilemmas faced by people caught up in historical events.

Although the focus of the work is on facilitating the development of children's opinions on a contentious subject, teachers may wish to focus the work on a particular curriculum area. To support this a list of possible areas from the National Curriculum 2014 programmes of study is included in the pack. A number of key ideas run through this material:

- World War I was waged on a scale never before known, and such modern methods of warfare have now come to endanger civilians more than the military
- steps can be taken, by individuals and nations, to build peace and reduce the likelihood of war
- war and violence present individuals with difficult decisions

- it is important to follow one's conscience.

Using *Conscience*

The intended outcome of this pack is to give children the opportunity to reflect on a contentious issue in the light of their personal conscience. In order to achieve this outcome, teachers are encouraged to adapt the resources provided in this pack to suit the needs of their pupils and ensure all children have access to the discussion.

The materials in *Conscience* must be used with care. This is especially true for children with personal experience of conflict and violence. For guidance and support with teaching controversial subjects and topical issues, teachers may want to refer to *Headlines: War and Conflict – Tackling controversial issues in the classroom* by Marguerite Heath (2010). Published in association with the Citizenship Foundation, it is one of a series of books that offers support to primary school teachers. For more activities and ideas (for both primary- and secondary-level students) see *Teaching Controversial Issues, a Global Citizenship Guide* by Oxfam, available at www.oxfam.org.uk. *Conscience* offers four suggested teaching sequences:

1. The first invites children to explore the idea of conscience and what helps them to make decisions about how to act, based on their personal understanding of right and wrong.
2. The second explores the experience of Albert French, one of the youngest soldiers to be killed in World War I.
3. The third explores the idea of conscientious objection by looking at the experience of the Peet family.
4. The fourth explores the experiences of

members of the Friends Ambulance Unit, who brought medical aid to all people affected by the fighting.

Each teaching sequence aims to support children in drawing *their own* conclusions about whether they feel they would have decided to fight in the war. Children also have the option of saying they are not sure. However, whatever their conclusions, the children should use evidence from their discussions and the source material to justify their position.

Suggested questions are provided with each teaching sequence. However, teachers will have their own ideas about how to manage the classroom to ensure children have as many opportunities as possible to reflect on and discuss their ideas. Once the children have reached a decision they could be asked to:

- produce a short text explaining why they reached their decision, using evidence from the resources to support their ideas
- form a group with other children who reached the same decision and create a short presentation for another class
- produce a poster or leaflet aimed at persuading others to make the same decision they made
- role-play one of the historical figures in the resource materials, using 'hot-seating' to explain their decision to the class.

Conscience also contains a historical overview – 'A new kind of world'. This sets the issue of conscription and conscientious objection in the context of World War I. It can be used for whole-class shared reading to introduce people and concepts, or for background information for teachers and students.

Issues to do with the morality of war are amongst the most challenging moral problems faced by individuals and societies. Even Churches are divided as to whether war is ever justified. (For more on this see *Conviction: Stories of conscience and courage in World*

War I – the secondary-level resource in this series. This also provides more information on the people featured in *Conscience*.) The aim of this resource is to help children better understand the thinking underlying decisions to fight, not to fight, or to help the victims of war, and to think more deeply for themselves about the best ways to make and keep peace.

Quaker and other faith schools will want to set these discussions in the context of their own spiritual tradition, bearing in mind that this can be a divisive issue on which there is a wide spectrum of views. It is important that the children are encouraged to reach their own personal decisions. *Conscience* may also help to encourage the children to discuss their work outside school with friends and family.

Activities for speaking and listening

There are some useful speaking and listening activities to support exploration of materials from the Primary National Strategies. This can be downloaded from the National Archive in the form of a pack, containing leaflets, posters and a handbook: <http://tinyurl.com/KS1-2Posters>

Useful activities on these posters include 'conscience alley', 'thought tracking' and 'hot-seating' from the drama poster and any of the activities from the group discussion poster. The changes to the National Curriculum that come into effect in September 2014 mean that the activities are still relevant but the progression aspects of these posters no longer apply. They can help children developing speaking and listening skills to video a discussion and play it back, helping them to revisit key points made in their discussions. They can also help them to evaluate their participation in the discussion, thinking about how effectively points were made and whether they could improve their techniques for engaging in debates.

Developing children's point of view

The intended outcome of the teaching sequences is for the children to develop and justify their own opinions. In the first lesson the children write their names on a sticky note and place it on a chart on the wall:

As the lessons progress the children can move their sticky note to the positions that best reflect their current understanding of the issues, explaining what has influenced their decision.

Fight

Not fight

Not sure

It might help the children to keep a journal of their thoughts as they work through the units, noting down interesting points their friends have made or relevant ideas from the source materials.

Acknowledgements

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) would like to say a special thank you to Lucy Henning, and to the teachers and children who made this resource possible, and whose ideas and feedback helped to shape it. *Conscience* was inspired by, and developed from, *Conviction*, the secondary-level resource in this series. *Conviction* was written by Don Rowe, teacher, writer and former Director of Curriculum Resources at the Citizenship Foundation. Thank you.

Both *Conscience* and *Conviction* were produced and edited by QPSW and are available for free download at www.quaker.org.uk/education. For printed copies please email the Quaker Centre at quakercentre@quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1030.

Quakers believe...

Quakers believe that love is at the heart of existence, that all human beings are unique and equal, and that there is “that of God in everyone”. This leads Quakers to put their faith into action by working locally and globally to change the systems that cause injustice and violent conflict.

In 1660 the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) declared its commitment to peace. Ever since then it has opposed all wars and has tried to help the victims on all sides, recognising that women and children are often the most vulnerable to war’s deadly effects.

Quakers understand that peace education is essential if people are to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to deal with conflict nonviolently. Quakers have a long history of involvement in peace education through training in such methods as mediation, alternatives to violence and creative responses to conflict. These methods all stem from a restorative – rather than punitive – approach to healing problems in society.

In a world that too often resorts to war as a primary tool to counter unpopular ideas and practices, Quakers and other faith communities are aware that there are times when it is necessary to speak up and speak out, regardless of the personal cost. It is therefore essential that stories are told and that people are given the opportunity to reflect on the witness of others. Everyone needs to be aware that there are many ways of responding to challenges. Peace education is at the heart of this. For Quakers, marking the centenary of World War I must include stories of the moral questions and challenges it posed for many people.

Lesson sequence folders

Teaching sequence 1:

Conscience

Aim

To help the children explore what helps them know the difference between right and wrong. To consider what might influence their own conscience and how they might make decisions.

A big idea

Write the word 'conscience' on the interactive white board (IWB). In pairs, the children discuss what they think this word might mean. Have they heard it before?

Take ideas from the children and write around the word on the board. If the children have not heard the word before offer them a dictionary definition, for example:

conscience *noun* 1. the sense of right and wrong that governs a person's thoughts and actions
The New Collins Concise English Dictionary (1987)

Thinking – how do you know if something is right or wrong?

- A new person joins our class. How should you treat them?
- You see someone from our class being unkind to some of the younger children. What should you do?
- You see someone drop five pounds in the street. No one else saw. What should you do?

On tables, groups have a large sheet of paper with the definition of conscience in the middle. In groups, think about what helps us know what to do in a situation like the one in the examples. What influences our decisions? Is it school rules? Family values? Religious beliefs? Our

friends? What helps the children know what to do in a tricky situation?

Historical source material – recruitment poster

Tell the children they are going to look at a tricky situation that real people and their families faced at a particular time in history – during World War I. In 1916 the government made a law that ordered all men between the ages of 18 and 41 to fight in the war. The war had been going on for two years and there had been many deaths.

Look at the poster (Resource 1a). Read the top section – from “Military Service Act” to “Be deemed to be enlisted for the period of the war”. Ask the children to think about what this might mean. Draw the children’s attention to the phrase near the bottom of the poster – “Men who conscientiously object to combatant service”. What do the children think this might mean?

Explain to the children that they will learn about some people’s experiences during the war and then think about whether they would have made the choice to fight or not.

Where would the children stand?

Give each child a sticky note. Ask them to write their names on it or draw a picture of themselves dressed as a person from 1916. Display a poster on the wall of the classroom with three boxes labelled 'Fight', 'Not fight' and

'Not sure'. If the children are willing to share their ideas so far, ask them to put their sticky note next to what they think they might do. Explain that as they learn more about the war they can move their sticky note if they change their mind, but they *must* justify their opinion.

Fight

Not fight

Not sure

Resource 1a

Enlistment information poster, 1916

**THE
MILITARY SERVICE ACT,
1916,**

APPLIES TO UNMARRIED MEN WHO, ON AUGUST 15th, 1915, WERE 18 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER AND WHO WILL NOT BE 41 YEARS OF AGE ON MARCH 2nd, 1916.

ALL MEN (NOT EXCEPTED OR EXEMPTED),
between the above ages who, on November 2nd, 1915, were Unmarried or Widowers without any Child dependent on them will, on
Thursday, March 2nd, 1916
BE DEEMED TO BE ENLISTED FOR THE PERIOD OF THE WAR.
They will be placed in the Reserve until Called Up in their Class.

MEN EXCEPTED:

SOLDIERS, including Territorials who have volunteered for Foreign Service;
MEN serving in the NAVY or ROYAL MARINES;
MEN DISCHARGED from ARMY or NAVY, disabled or ill, or TIME-EXPIRED MEN;
MEN REJECTED for the ARMY since AUGUST 14th, 1915;
CLERGYMEN, PRIESTS, and MINISTERS OF RELIGION;
VISITORS from the DOMINIONS.

MEN WHO MAY BE EXEMPTED BY LOCAL TRIBUNALS:

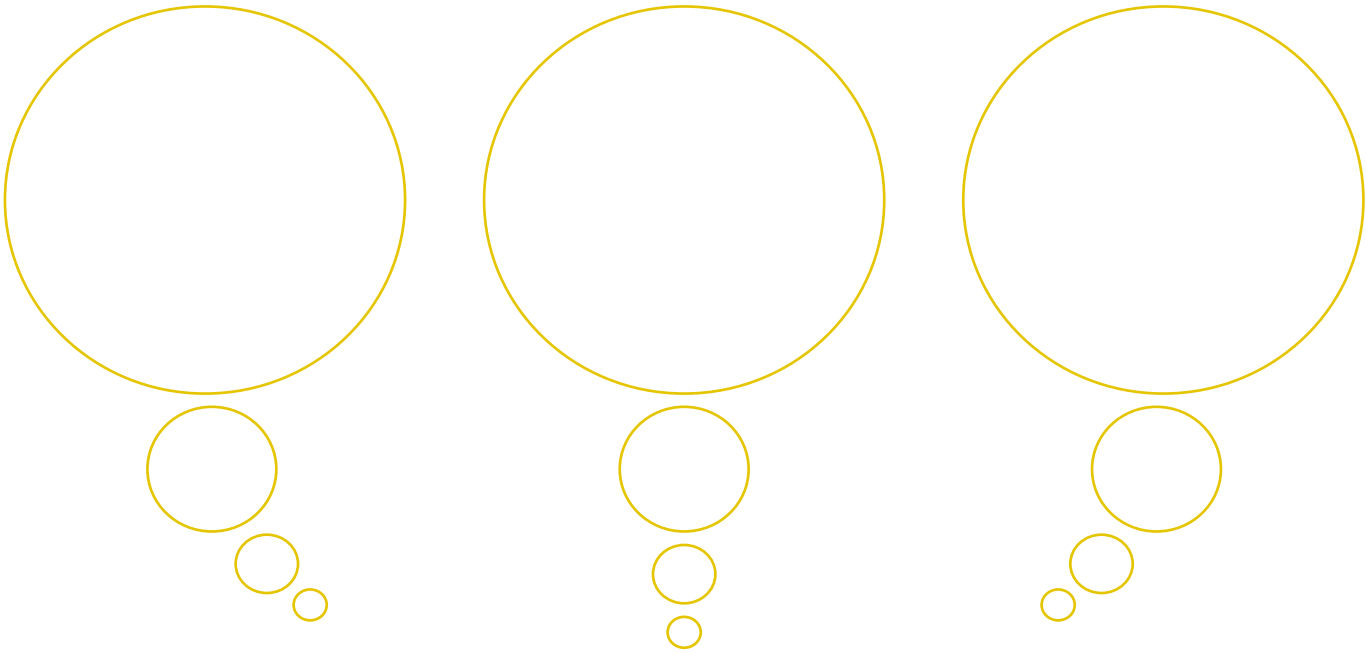
Men more useful to the Nation in their present employments;
Men in whose case Military Service would cause serious hardship owing to exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position;
Men who are ill or infirm;
Men who conscientiously object to combatant service. If the Tribunal thinks fit, men may, on this ground, be (a) exempted from combatant service only (not non-combatant service), or (b) exempted on condition that they are engaged in work of National importance.

Up to March 2nd, a man can apply to his Local Tribunal for a certificate of exemption. There is a Right of Appeal. He will not be called up until his case has been dealt with finally.
Certificates of exemption may be absolute, conditional or temporary. Such certificates can be renewed, varied or withdrawn.
Men retain their Civil Rights until called up and are amenable to Civil Courts only.

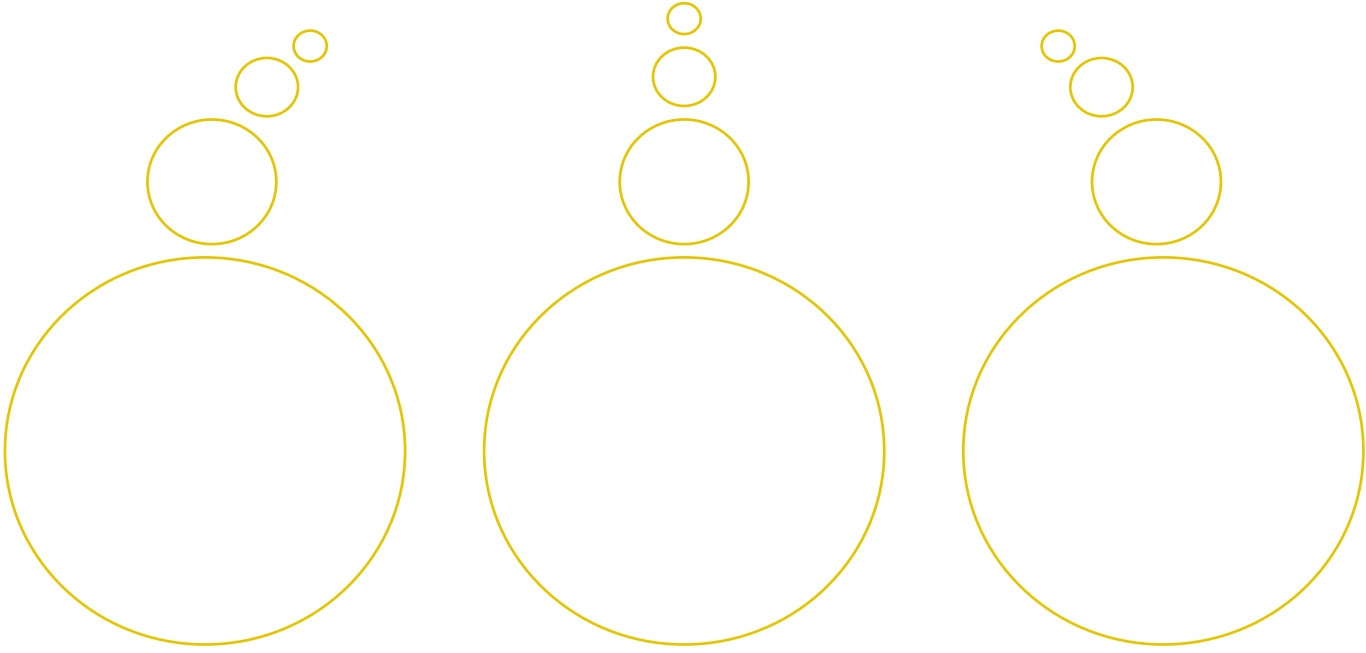
**DO NOT WAIT UNTIL MARCH 2nd.
ENLIST VOLUNTARILY NOW.**

For fuller particulars of the Act, please apply for Leaflet No. 94, to the nearest Post Office, Police Station, or Recruiting Office.

Resource 1b: Conscience discussion



Who or what helps us make decisions about what we think is right or wrong?



Teaching sequence 2: Albert French

Aim

To offer relevant historical information that supports thinking carefully about the past and making informed responses.

Introduction

Look at the two recruitment posters (Resource 2a). What does the designer of each poster want the people reading it to do? What persuasive devices can the children see? How do the pictures help to persuade people? What reasons do the posters give for people to enlist?

Introducing Albert

Read, or ask the children to read, the first letter extract from Albert French (Resource 2b, Extract A). Ask the children who they think wrote the letter. What was that person doing? How old do the children think the writer was? Show the children the picture of Albert (Resource 2c).

Albert's story

Albert's mother had died when Albert was young, and he lived with his father and family. Albert's older sister May looked after him and his two younger brothers. Albert was 15 years old when the war broke out in 1914. In 1915 he left his job at the railway works and joined the army. As soon as Albert's father discovered what he had done, he tried to stop him but it was too late. Albert was too young to join so he lied about his age and said he was 19. He was really 16.

Look at the first letter extract again. How do the children think Albert feels about being in the army? Which of the two recruitment posters matches his feelings? Why do they think Albert decided to fight?

Role-play

Return to the second recruitment poster (Resource 2a) – “Women of Britain say ‘Go!’”. The children work in pairs. One is May, Albert's



Albert in uniform. Image courtesy of Milton Keynes Heritage Association

older sister. Their partner is a good friend. What would May tell her friend about the first letter? How do they feel about Albert? What questions would the friend have?

Read the second letter extract (Resource 2b, Extract B). This letter came from France. How do the children think Albert feels now?

Return to the role-play. What would May be telling her friend?

Read the final letter extract (Resource 2b, Extract C). Role-play again. The children could track Albert and May's feelings as they wrote

or read the letters. They could 'hot-seat' a child or adult playing Albert or May. How have their feelings changed since Albert joined up? Would Albert and May still feel like the people depicted in the recruitment posters?

The last letter

Read the last letter from the company chaplain (Resource 2c, Extract D). Allow the children some time to reflect on the experience of Albert and his family. Explain that Albert was one of the youngest soldiers to be killed in the war. There was a campaign to record his young age on his gravestone and many people visit it today.

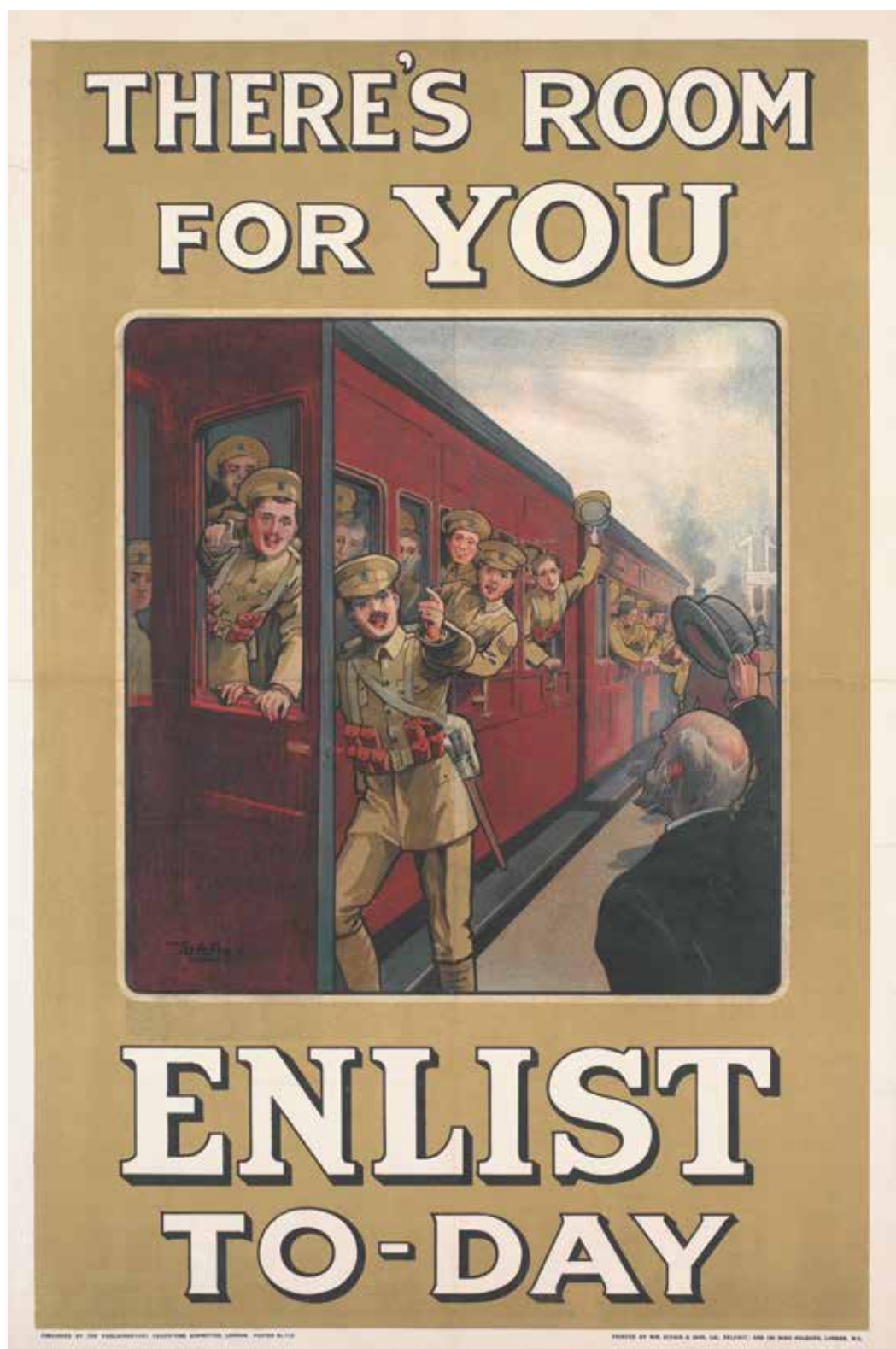
Plenary

Do you think Albert's story is important? Why? Should the authorities have enquired more closely about his age? Why didn't they check more carefully? Why did people think it was important for his age to be added to his gravestone?

What do the children think about the fact that today, you can join the army at 16 (though not fight?).

Has Albert's story made you want to move your sticky note? Why? Why not?

Resource 2a:
Recruitment posters



© IWM (Art.IWM PST 5255 www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/10133)

Resource 2a: Recruitment posters



Resource 2b: Albert's letters

Extract A

6 November 1915

"I am going to try to be a lance-corporal before Christmas. Last Friday we were short of section commanders, so the commander asked me to command one section. I had to drill them, and the commander said I was very good. He said I was getting on quick. So, you see I am getting on all right, and stand a good chance of rising from the ranks. [...] I'm going to [...] buy a military book of some kind every week, and become a Major-General some day."

Extract B

15 May 1916

"The sergeant's just gave me one of your letters, and by the date it's taken three days to come.[...] I shan't stop in the army after the war, its not good enough. Our sergeant [...]says the grub is good but there's not enough of it. We don't get as much as we did at Aldershot. If you don't keep your eyes skinned, you don't get any at all. [...] We shall be popping away at the Germans pretty shortly, and as long as I don't get popped it will be all right, I guess."

Extract C

4 June 1916

"We are quartered in 'Musty Villa' which is the name given to our dug out. We have to do our grub up securely, or half of it disappears to the rats and mice. [...] The shells do not make so much row as I thought they would. They make a whirling tearing noise and scream slightly. You can hear them rush through the air, but you can't see them going. They make a big hole and plenty of smoke when they burst, and bits fly about 50 yards. The bullets make a long drawn out pinging noise. Well dear May, must now come to a close with the best of my love to you.

Your loving brother,

Albert
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX"

Resource 2c: Chaplain's letter

Extract D

17 June 1916

"Dear Mr. French,

I am very sorry to have to write to you and inform you that your dear son was killed in action on June 15th. He died as every true soldier wishes to die – doing his duty nobly for King and Country. He was doing some sand-bagging on the parapet of the trench when four bullets from a machine gun hit him and he died instantaneously.

He lies buried amid brave comrades in a wood, and his grave is carefully tended by his friends in his battalion...

Yours sincerely

M.A.O. Mayne

C of E Chaplain"



The story of Albert French and a collection of his letters can be found on the Milton Keynes Heritage Association website at www.mkheritage.co.uk/la.

Teaching sequence 3:

Conscientious objection

Aim

To offer relevant historical information that supports thinking carefully about the past and making informed responses.

Introduction

Edith Peet's letter to her husband Hubert.

Read, or ask the children to read, the extract from the letter Edith Peet wrote to her husband Hubert (Resource 3b, Extract A). What do the children think Edith means about the "out and out stand which you have taken"? How does Edith feel about what Hubert is doing to fill his place in the world "worthily"?

Explaining conscientious objection

A large number of people did not want to join the armed forces. These people were called 'conscientious objectors' (or COs). There were several types of CO. Some were pacifists who were against war in general. Others, who were international socialists, did not believe the ordinary German people (i.e. the working classes) were their enemy. Some felt that war

and fighting were against their religious principles. Conscientious objectors had to explain to a special court, called a tribunal, why they did not want to fight. Sometimes the tribunal did not believe the CO and made him join the army. He could then be sent to prison for refusing to fight. Sometimes the tribunal said the CO could support the war in a way that did not involve fighting. The Friends Ambulance Unit (or FAU), founded by a group of Quakers in 1914, was a way people could help those hurt in the war without fighting themselves. Some COs felt that war was wrong and did not think it was right to support the war effort in any way. If they would not support the war effort, they were sent to prison. In prison many were kept in solitary confinement where they could not see any other people. Many COs did 'hard labour' like breaking stones (see Dyce Prison Camp picture). They were forbidden to talk to each other and were given very little food.

One CO, Howard Marten (pictured here), explained after his release from prison:



'Sentenced to be shot' image from newspaper of Howard Marten and John Ring.
© 2014 The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

“We were forever being threatened with the death sentence – over and over again – all done with the idea of intimidating us. The military authorities didn’t know how to react... we weren’t people that could be bullied into it... we were never prepared to do things in a military way. We never saluted anybody, we never stood to attention.”

The argument for conscientious objection

Read Resource 3a from the Peace Committee of the Society of Friends. What persuasive devices can the children see? Why are some words in bold? What reasons are given for people not to enlist? This card could be compared with the recruitment posters from the Albert French teaching sequence (Resource 2a).

The Peet family

Hubert Peet was a journalist who was sent to prison for three years in 1916 for being a conscientious objector.¹ He wrote to his daughters to explain his decision. Read Hubert’s letter (Resource 3b, Extract B). Why did Hubert refuse to fight? What influenced his decision?

Read Edith’s letter (Resource 3b, Extract C). What do you think she means by “right away”? How are the two girls feeling? What do you think Edith means by “tears or bother”?

Read Edith’s description of Joan and Mary’s responses to Hubert’s decision (Resource 3b, Extract C). Do the children agree with Joan or Mary? Why do you think Joan disagreed with her father’s decision? Why would Mary have agreed?

Play ‘conscience alley’. Children who agree with Mary line up on one side, children who agree with Joan on the other side. One child plays Hubert. ‘Hubert’ walks down the middle of the two lines. At each step one child from each side says what they think Hubert should have done and explains their opinion. At the end of the ‘alley’ ‘Hubert’ tells the class who he agrees with most and why.

Plenary

Do the children think the Peet family story is important? Why? Has the story made any of the children want to move their sticky note? Why? Why not?



Dyce Prison Camp near Aberdeen, Scotland, 1916

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1. In June 1916 conscription laws changed to include married men.

Resource 3a: Objecting to military service

COMPULSORY MILITARY SERVICE

ORGANIZED attempt is being made by Military Men and others to **COMPEL** every young man to become a soldier.

These people want us all, whether we will or no, to leave our labour, which is real service for the State, and spend a part of each year **in being trained to kill men!**

If one man kills another intentionally it is murder. Is it not murder if the killing is wholesale? Vast numbers of good citizens believe it to be **wicked to take the life of fellow men** even in war.

The people of other nations are **our fellow workmen and good friends**. They buy our manufactures and employ us; we buy from them the things we want. They have no more thought of invading us than we have of invading them. Why then should we be compelled to do what our conscience tells us is wrong?

Our forefathers won for us civil and religious liberty—**freedom of conscience to obey God rather than man**. This liberty was won at great cost: will you let it be destroyed?

*Issued by the PEACE COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,
136, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.
1913.*

Card issued by the Peace Committee of the Society of Friends in 1913.
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Resource 3b:

The Peet family letters

Extract A: Edith Peet's letter

"May God give you the strength to go on for it is the only way. You know that I stand with you and [...] back you up. If only I could do a little to help these children of ours to be more ready and fitted to fill their place in the world as worthily as their father is filling his I shall be thankful. It will be a great help to them in the future, Hubert, this out and out stand which you have taken."

Extract B: Hubert Peet explains his objection to fighting to his daughters

"The English People and the German People have got angry with each other like two children who want the same toys, and hundreds of men are now trying to kill each other. Now Daddy and Mummy and lots of other people think it is wrong even if another person gets angry with you, for you to get angry with them. [...] This is why your Daddy says he cannot be a soldier and go and try to kill the daddies of little German boys and girls. Most people think he ought to go and, because he will not and thinks it is wrong, they are shutting him up in prison."

Extract C: Joan and Mary's responses to Hubert's letter

Edith Peet wrote to tell Hubert about how their daughters responded to his letter:

"The girls talk about you continually and of all they are going to do and tell you when you come back. They are being so very good and I very seldom have any tears or bother. The letter you sent them before you went right away was so dear. We read it often, they like to hear it and I think they have quite grasped what it means. Mary stands up for you very much but I heard Joan say to her the other day, 'I think Daddy ought to have gone and been a soldier when they wanted him to go, Mary.' 'I don't,' said Mary very promptly."

These letter extracts are from Felicity Goodall, *We will not go to war: conscientious objection during the World Wars* (Stroud: The History Press, 2010).

Teaching sequence 4:

The Friends Ambulance Unit

Aim

To offer relevant historical information that supports thinking carefully about the past and making informed responses.

Introduction

Read the letter extract from Corder Catchpool (Resource 4a). Explain that it was written in November 1914. It describes a scene near a railway line near the coast of France. What do the children think is happening? What is the writer's job? Why do the children think he will never forget what he saw? Who do the children think the "we" are who "flung ourselves into this work"? What does "this work" mean?

The Friends Ambulance Unit

In 1914 a group of Quakers formed the Friends Ambulance Unit (or FAU) to provide opportunities for pacifists to help those suffering in the war. This ambulance unit was different because it was not a part of the army. This meant that it could help anyone, from either side of the fighting. Around 1,200 conscientious objectors served with the FAU.

Corder Catchpool was a pacifist and so did not want to fight in World War I. However, he wanted to do something positive to alleviate the suffering caused by the war. Corder Catchpool joined the Friends Ambulance Unit and was trained to help wounded soldiers. The letter extract describes what he found when his unit arrived in France for the first time.

Rachel Wilson

Show the children the photograph of Rachel Wilson and her colleagues (Resource 4b). Who do the children think these people were? Women did not have to fight, so what do the children think their job was?

Many women signed up as nurses to support the war effort. If they joined the army's Medical Corps (the RAMC) they could only help British



soldiers. However, the Friends Ambulance Unit could help anyone who was suffering because of the war, whether 'friend or foe'.

Ask the children to think about why Rachel would have decided to join the Friends Ambulance Unit rather than the army's Medical Corps. How important do they think the difference was? Why do they think pacifists joined the Friends Ambulance Unit?

Show the children the sketch Rachel Wilson drew of herself on duty (Resource 4b). Look at the hats she is carrying. What do the children think the hats were for?

Read the letter extract from Rachel Wilson (Resource 4b).

Teachers might use sound effects of a battle played at high volume to help the children understand the source of Rachel's headache.² The children could use the letter in groups to create a role-play to perform for the class playing Rachel and the patients. As they play their scene the teacher could call 'freeze frame' at different points and the class could ask the players what their character is feeling

or thinking. What qualities as a person might Rachel Wilson have had?

Plenary

Reflect on what the class have read and discussed in the different teaching sequences. Where would they place themselves on the wall chart now? Would they fight, not fight or are

they not sure? Take their sticky note from the chart and place it in the middle of a piece of paper. Write their decision on the sticky note and their reasons for it around the outside. If they are not sure they must also think about their reasons for this decision. They must use evidence from the source material they have read to support their decision.



Interior of a ward at Sacre Coeur Hospital, Ypres in 1915.

2. The website 'FindSounds' (www.findsounds.com) has sound recordings that could be used in this way, and teachers could also use film clips from films or television programmes (sound only). As with any internet resource, teachers will need to listen to recordings carefully and read the whole web page before deciding whether to share them with the children.

FAU badge on page 20 © 2014 The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain.

Resource 4a: The Friends Ambulance Unit

Extract of letter from Corder Catchpool

This letter was written about the Friends Ambulance Unit's arrival in Dunkirk. They found many wounded soldiers waiting for help near the railway line:

November 1914

"I shall never in my life forget the sights and sounds that met us. Figure two huge goods sheds, semi-dark, every inch of floor space... covered with the flimsy French stretchers, and on each stretcher a wounded man, desperately wounded nearly every one. The air heavy with the stench of putrid flesh, and thick with groans and cries. Four hundred wounded... Half dead as we were with fatigue, we flung ourselves into this work throughout the night, the need was so great..."



Two Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) members transporting bread. Date unknown.

Resource 4b: Rachel Wilson

Extract of letter from Rachel Wilson

Rachel is describing a naval attack on the army unit near her hospital:

Dunkirk, France, 1918

"I was sitting comfortably before the firing [began] surveying the prospect of beginning work again when the sound of guns close to made me automatically spring from my chair and turn out the light. The firing continued and the cow [a type of siren] chimed in, the patients of course woke up...

The noise was deafening and one could hear the shells whizzing through the air while the boom of our guns made a background of sound – I sat on one of the beds and chatted with the patients and longed for one moment of quiet to give my head a rest. After a bit I groped my way to the door and looked out at the blue glare of light outside – after about ten minutes the cracking and whizzing of the shells died down and only a more distant booming could be heard...

Our first report was from the ten casualties [...] who were admitted at 9am and who all survived – one man in spite of gas-gangrene."



Nurses at Queen Alexandra Hospital. Rachel Wilson is second from the right at the back.



Going on duty, a sketch Rachel Wilson drew of herself.

Words and phrases to support discussions

Below are some words and phrases that children could use to help them discuss the resources in each lesson with each other and with the adults in the classroom. These words

and phrases could be put on tables, cut up into cards or displayed on the wall for children to refer to.

I agree/disagree with you because...	
I would like to ask you...	
I wish we knew more about...	
I wonder if...	
Could you explain more about...?	
I think that...because...	
But don't you think that...?	
I hear what you're saying...	
Where does it tell us that...?	
Was it fair that...?	
wondered	understand
was puzzled by	wondered why
couldn't understand	didn't think
liked	consequences
enjoyed	agree/disagree

A new kind of world – historical context

One hundred years ago this country was a very different place. Britain was the most powerful nation in the world. It had a huge empire. Queen Victoria had ruled over a quarter of the world's population.

Other countries had empires too, such as Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia. This meant that they ruled many smaller countries around the world. Each Empire was afraid that the others would become more powerful than they were.

How had Britain, such a small country, come to be so powerful? It was partly because the process of making things with machines had begun in Britain. This change had made some people hugely rich. But for most people it meant moving to crowded cities that grew up around the factories. Conditions were harsh and wages were very low for most people. Also, people who did not own property could not vote. In 1900 only two out of every three men had the vote and no women at all had any say in who should run the country.

But change was in the air, at home and abroad. Women began to campaign for the vote. Abroad, countries like Germany were beginning to build up their armies and navies. Germany wanted its forces to match the armies of France and Russia, and its navy to rival that of Britain. The other countries saw this as a threat to their own empires. Every country was suspicious and nervous about what the others might do.

Many countries had made alliances – agreements to protect one another. This meant that if one country was attacked, the others could get involved to defend that country. Britain had agreements to protect both Belgium and France. War broke out across Europe in 1914 because Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was killed by a student from Serbia. The student was

protesting about Austria-Hungary's treatment of his country. This caused a 'domino effect', meaning that when one falls over, so do the others. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and so Russia – Serbia's friend – declared war on Austria-Hungary. This made Germany declare war on Russia to help Austria-Hungary. Germany also decided to invade France – Russia's friend – and to do this they needed to invade Belgium as well. Belgium was a neutral country (meaning it didn't take sides in a war) and should have been left alone. As Britain had agreed to protect Belgium if it was invaded, Britain joined the war. Soon, fighting was going on around the globe. It was the first truly worldwide war in history.

New methods of warfare

New inventions were changing the way we lived but they were also changing the way wars were fought. For example, a man called Hiram Maxim had invented a new kind of gun – the machine gun. Though he was an American, he was living in England at the time. He offered his new invention to the government. The British were not very interested in this new idea when it was demonstrated to them in 1885, so Mr Maxim sold his invention abroad. The Germans were impressed that machine guns could fire over 400 bullets a minute. It was said that a



Hiram Maxim's company was taken over by Vickers. This is a picture of a Vickers machine gun in use.
© IWM – Image Ref: 2864

single machine gun was worth at least 60 rifles. By the time war broke out Germany had over 12,000 machine guns ready. The British and the French had only a few hundred.

This is just one example of how new inventions were making war so much more terrible than before. Huge guns were also developed that could fire massive shells for miles. Before long, planes were also being used to bomb towns and villages as well as troops. All this meant that warfare was changing rapidly. On land, tanks were developed and, at sea, submarines were used for the first time. These new weapons enabled a country to bomb its enemy's factories from the air and to prevent food ships from arriving by sea. A major effect of these changes was that many more women, children and other civilians were being killed than ever before.



A horse is stuck in the mud after falling off its brushwood track. © IWM – Image Ref: 5943

In World War I it is thought that about four out of every ten deaths were civilians. (This was from disease and starvation as well as being killed by weapons.) By the time of World War II, this figure had climbed even higher, to about six or seven out of every ten deaths. In other words, more civilians than soldiers died.

Back in the days of World War I, all this was new and many traditional methods of warfare were still being used. For example, horses, dogs and pigeons were still vital weapons



Naval carrier pigeons, used to carry messages during the war. © IWM – Image Ref: 18622

of war. Horses carried soldiers into battle, even though they were no match for the new machine guns. Horses were also still needed to haul guns and other supplies to and from the front. Dogs were used as messengers and scouts and to catch rats in the trenches. Pigeons carried thousands of messages in the battle zones before the days of reliable radio sets.

A volunteer army

When World War I broke out, thousands of British men rushed to join up, even though they did not have to. If they had known what lay ahead for them, they might have changed their minds. Many men joined up to defend their families and their country. Even teenagers too young to enlist lied about their age in order to 'do their bit'. Sometimes, whole groups of friends went off together.

Albert French (who you meet in Teaching sequence 2) was just 16 when he left his job on the railway and went to London to join up. He did not even tell his father or his big sister. Imagine how they must have felt! Albert was tall for his age and told the army he was 19 years old. One soldier, many years later, said he had joined up "expecting an heroic adventure and believing [...] in the rightness of our cause".³ Albert seems to have been just like this.

3. Max Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to war 1914* (London: William Collins, 2014), p. 546.



Albert French was only 16 when he joined up. He told the army he was 19. Did they really believe him?

When Henry Williamson joined up (a person you meet in *Conviction* – the secondary-level resource in this series), his belief was that the enemy were “fiends” (devils). But on Christmas Day 1914, when a truce suddenly began (an agreement between enemies to stop fighting for a period of time), Henry found himself talking to German soldiers he had been shooting at the day before. Suddenly, he realised that they were just like himself. They believed in the same God and they were able to sing the same Christmas carols together. They exchanged presents such as cigarettes, tinned goods, plum pudding and even helmets! Someone found a football and a game began. They told each other stories about their families and girlfriends. Then, tragically, they went back to war just a few days later. Henry was never the same again. Later in the war, when he could not fight in the trenches any more, he worked with the horses.

Women and the war

Life for women changed dramatically during the war. Before the war began men were thought of as the ‘breadwinners’, bringing in the weekly

wage. With so many men away fighting, women were able to take paid jobs outside the home, often for the first time. Many young women without children went to work in the factories, doing work previously done by the men. They did all sorts of other jobs too, such as tram drivers and train cleaners, postal workers and police patrols.

Women were not allowed in the armed forces but thousands of women, old and young, volunteered to help the war effort both at home and abroad. Some rich women ran charities to help soldiers or turned their homes into hospitals. Many young women left home for the first time to help in the war, doing jobs such as nursing or driving. At first, some women saw the war as an adventure, but they quickly realised it was very different to the war stories they had read.

Some women who had belonged to the suffragette movement stopped their ‘votes for women’ campaign and supported the war effort. They hoped that this would show they were responsible citizens who deserved the vote.

However, many suffragettes joined the peace movement and campaigned against the war. The Women’s Peace Crusade had over 100 branches across Britain. It organised street protests, public meetings and marches, and sold badges and gave out leaflets. One



A group of female workers at the Royal Gun Factory in the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich, London, in 1918. © IWM

demonstration in Glasgow involved 14,000 people. It attracted many women whose husbands and sons had been killed in the war. Children carried banners with slogans such as “I want my Daddy”. Women involved were often attacked at their meetings and in the press. Other women took up ‘alternative service’, wanting to help the victims of the war in some way.

Alternative service

Some men and women hated the thought of killing other human beings and thought it was wrong. But even though they did not have to fight, some wanted to help in some way. One thing they could do was to help look after those who had been injured. The army had a medical corps but the Quakers (or Friends) had founded an ambulance unit. They thought the army’s ambulance services would be inadequate and that offering such a service could save many lives. The Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) was not under the army’s command. This meant that they could help enemy soldiers as well as wounded men from their own side.



Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) ambulance train.
© 2014 The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

One woman who joined the FAU was **Rachel Wilson** (introduced in Teaching sequence 4). She worked in a hospital near the French coast. It was very hard work and it needed a lot of courage and strength. Someone else who joined the FAU was **Corder Catchpool** (also featured in Teaching sequence 4). He

had wanted to be a doctor but had not been able to afford the training. He was sent to help the soldiers in France. As soon as he arrived, he was met by hundreds of wounded men needing help. The work was difficult, very tiring and dangerous.

Conscription

At first, people thought that the war would be over in a few months. But after nearly two years it was still dragging on. Many people at home now knew about the horror of the fighting in the trenches. And everyone knew someone who had been killed. Sometimes whole groups of friends, who had joined up on the same day, had been killed on the same day. This war was like nothing that had gone before.

By now, the government badly needed more soldiers to fight. Not enough men were volunteering. So in 1916 a law was passed forcing men between the ages of 18 and 41 to enlist – this is known as ‘conscription’. If you were ill, unfit or were needed for important work at home, you did not have to join up.

Those men who thought it was wrong to kill had to decide what to do. They had to appear in front of a special court (called a tribunal) to prove that killing was against their conscience. Over 20,000 men claimed ‘**conscientious objection**’. They were known as COs or ‘conchies’. If the tribunal did not believe them they had to join up straight away. A small number (around 300) were believed and received complete exemption. It was more common to be offered a chance to work for the war in a way that avoided fighting. Many chose the Friends Ambulance Unit or worked on the land producing food. Others joined the army as long as they were not trained to carry or use weapons. These men were called ‘non-combatants’ because they didn’t take part in the fighting.

Some men felt so strongly about the wrongness of the war they didn’t want to do anything that might help it, even growing food or nursing wounded soldiers. These men were known as ‘absolutists’. More than 6,000 conscientious objectors (COs) went to prison and some were

threatened with being shot. It is thought that 81 died as a result of the way they were treated in the army and in prison.

Some people at the time thought COs were weak and cowardly for not joining the armed forces and being willing to kill the enemy. The Order of the White Feather was founded at the start of the war. It encouraged women to give white feathers to young men who had not joined the army to shame them into joining. Women would present a white feather to men not in uniform as a sign of cowardice.

Why a white feather?

The story is thought to have originated in England at the turn of the 18th century, when cockfighting was a popular sport. Some of the birds tossed into the fighting ring had white tail feathers. In no hurry to fight, they would turn away from their opponents, showing these feathers. So white feathers came to signify cowardice. How do you think it would have felt to be given a white feather? Do you think it is ever brave to decide *not* to fight?



Hubert and Edith Peet and their children Joan and Mary

were a family affected by Hubert's decision to be a conscientious objector. Hubert believed that he was doing the right thing and that his actions would help to build a more peaceful world in the future. Find out more about the Peet family in Teaching sequence 3.

When conscription came into force Corder Catchpool had a battle of conscience. He thought that being in the Friends Ambulance Unit might be seen as an easy way out for

those who opposed the war, so he resigned from the FAU and came back to England and became a CO. He too was sent to prison. Like Hubert, he wanted more than anything else to build a world that would never again go to war. So he started to learn German. Then, as soon as he could after the war, he went to Germany to help provide food to thousands of men, women and children who were starving as a result of the terrible conflict. In this way, he was trying to rebuild the bridges that the war had torn down. Many Quakers and others went to Germany to help with the relief work. Many Germans remembered these acts of friendship, even after World War II had broken out.

It was a new kind of world that emerged from World War I. British society became much more equal and all men and women over the age of 21 got the vote. New inventions had changed the way war was waged, which made it even more important to avoid it in the first place. An organisation called the League of Nations was set up in 1919 to find better ways to settle arguments between countries. It was the first international organisation whose principal mission was to maintain world peace. Most countries joined, but they never really agreed on anything or gave up their armies, navies and air forces. In fact, they started making new weapons, beginning another 'arms race'. Each country tried to get ahead of its rivals. After World War II, another peacekeeping organisation called the United Nations was set up. Over the years its work has not always been successful, but it is still working hard to stop wars, and it has helped to keep the peace and resolve conflicts between many countries.

In 1947 Quakers were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for the work they had done, particularly relief work, between the two world wars and after World War II. Quaker work for peace continues to this day.

National Curriculum 2014 links

It is intended that teachers use the resources as appropriate in their own classes. Below are suggested areas from the 2014 programmes of study that teachers might draw on to focus their lessons according to the needs of their pupils and requirements of their school's curriculum.

English

Spoken Language – Years 1–6.

Pupils should be taught to:

- ask relevant questions to extend their understanding and knowledge
- articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions
- use spoken language to develop understanding through speculating, hypothesising, imagining and exploring ideas
- consider and evaluate different viewpoints, attending to and building on the contributions of others.

Reading – Years 3 and 4 programme of study

Pupils should be taught to understand what they read, in books they can read independently, by:

- checking that the text makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and explaining the meaning of words in context
- asking questions to improve their understanding of a text
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning

- participating in discussion about both books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, taking turns and listening to what others say.

Years 5 and 6 programme of study.

Pupils should be taught to understand what they read by:

- checking that the book makes sense to them, discussing their understanding and exploring the meaning of words in context
- asking questions to improve their understanding
- drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions, and justifying inferences with evidence
- identifying how language, structure and presentation contribute to meaning
- distinguishing between statements of fact and opinion
- retrieving, recording and presenting information from non-fiction
- participating in discussions about books that are read to them and those they can read for themselves, building on their own and others' ideas and challenging views courteously
- explaining and discussing their understanding of what they have read, including through formal presentations and debates, maintaining a focus on the topic and using notes where necessary
- providing reasoned justifications for their views.

History

Meeting the aims:

“understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed”.

Pupils should be taught about:

“...a study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils’ chronological knowledge beyond 1066”.

Meeting the attainment targets:

Pupils “...should construct informed responses that involve thoughtful selection and organisation of relevant historical information. They should understand how our knowledge of the past is constructed from a range of sources”.

*National Curriculum in England 2014 KS2
Attainment Targets*

References and further reading

Albert French

Albert's letters can be found at www.mkheritage.co.uk/la.

This helpful website has a wealth of material on Albert that teachers may like to draw on to add more detail to his story.

More recruitment posters, oral history resources and photographs relating to World War I can be found on the Imperial War Museums website: www.iwm.org.uk/collections/search.

The Peet family

Further information on the Peet family can be found in:

Felicity Goodall, *We will not go to war: conscientious objection during the World Wars*. Stroud: The History Press (2010).

The Friends Ambulance Unit

More information about the Friends Ambulance Unit, Corder Catchpool and Rachel Wilson can be found on these Quaker websites:

www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/252

www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/234

www.librarysocietyfriendsblog.wordpress.com/tag/friends-ambulance-unit-1914-1919

Additional resources

Conviction: stories of conscience and courage in World War I

The inspiration for *Conscience*, *Conviction* was created for use in secondary schools and uses personal stories and first-hand accounts to consider the moral dilemmas faced by men and women during World War I. It helps students to think about the consequences of war and violence, critically explore notions of loyalty, patriotism and militarism, and consider the importance of peacebuilding. For a free download go to www.quaker.org.uk/education. For printed copies email the Quaker Centre at quakercentre@quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1030.

Voices of conscience

Six short films of personal experiences of war, conscientious objection and peacemaking. The films allow ordinary people to tell their personal stories, accompanied by photographs and illustrations from the period. Each film lasts for less than five minutes – accessible for all ages but ideal for Key Stages 2 and 3. They are accompanied by teachers' notes and are available in English or Welsh. To order a £5 DVD email info@breakingbarriers.org.uk or view the films at www.vimeo.com/channels/voicesofconscience.

Quaker service: a teachers' resource

Planned for use in Key Stages 3 and 4, this resource can also be used in primary or further education contexts. It uses the service provided by Quakers as an example through which to explore the wider issues of humanitarianism, refugee assistance, pacifism and peace. Its primary focus is on World War II, but Quaker service during World War I and the interwar period is briefly explored. For a copy email jenny.carson@het.org.uk.

Choices then and now – a World War I resource for primary schools, secondary schools and colleges

Choices focuses on the stories of peacemakers, as well as those who fought in World War I, days that changed the world and peace and conflict today. This resource includes integrated comprehensive (humanities, citizenship, English, ICT, SMSC) medium-term plans and a CD-ROM containing copies of primary sources, images and untold stories. It is priced at £19.99 plus P&P. Email diane.hadwen@peacemuseum.org.uk or call 01274 780 241. Web: www.choicesthenandnow.co.uk

Witnessing for peace on the centenary of World War I: a resource pack for Quaker meetings

Covering Quaker activity during World War I, this pack can be used for peace education and group learning. Email quakercentre@quaker.org.uk to order a free paper copy or download it at www.quaker.org.uk/WWI.

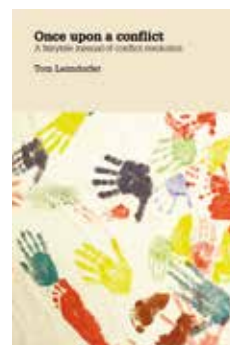


BBC Schools – World War One primary school resources

These include an assembly pack exploring themes of remembrance, commemoration and peace. Visit www.bbc.co.uk/schools/0/ww1/25827997.

Once upon a conflict: A fairytale manual of conflict resolution by Tom Leimdorfer.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness; first published 1992, new edition 2014. This book uses familiar stories to help readers explore the nature of conflict and find ways to handle it constructively. *Once upon a conflict* is inspired by the author's belief that, while we can't individually put an end to oppression and violent conflict, we can all be agents of change. Available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop, priced at £4. Visit www.quaker.org.uk/shop or phone 020 7663 1030 to order your copy.



For more on peace education

The Peace Education Network: www.peace-education.org.uk/education-for-peace
Their *Teach Peace Pack*, including primary school assemblies, is available for free download at www.peace-education.org.uk/teach-peace.

The Peaceful Schools Movement: www.spiritualengland.org.uk/index.php/peaceful-schools/about

The Peer Mediation Network: www.peermediationnetwork.org.uk

The Peace Pledge Union: www.ppu.org.uk

The Peace Pledge Union also provides a World War I reading list at www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/cos/cos_selectedreading.html

Peace One Day: www.peaceoneday.org

The Northern Friends Peace Board: www.nfpb.org.uk

For a free download of *Conscience* go to www.quaker.org.uk/education. For printed copies email the Quaker Centre at quakercentre@quaker.org.uk or call 020 7663 1030.

“Conscience will suit values-driven schools that have, as their mission, the desire to prepare our children to grow up in the current climate as critical yet moral thinkers who can make reasoned and humble decisions when faced with the many difficult decisions they will inevitably have to make.”

Joanne Botley, Assistant Head, Oasis Academy Shirley Park

“With a tough topic like World War I, it's hard to find resources that young people can access without being glib or simplistic; with Conscience, teachers will have the tools to evoke real-life dilemmas people like them and their families faced in a way their classes can understand.”

Ellis Brooks, CRESST (Conflict Resolution Education Sheffield)

“A timely resource with stimulating material that will help young people think critically around the issues.”

Jackie Zammit, Peace Education Trainer,
West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project (Peacemakers)

“In using some of the lesser told stories of World War I to reflect on how we make decisions in our day-to-day lives, Conscience is an important and valuable resource for developing the skills at the heart of peace-making.”

Matt Jeziorski, Schools and Youth Outreach Worker, Pax Christi

“An accessible and attractive resource for teachers to help students develop their ability to think about the difficulties and dilemmas faced by people caught up in conflict and war.”

Anna Lubelska, founder of the Peaceful Schools Movement

“Knowledge, skills and understanding of the topic using personal narratives in this resource brings alive this controversial issue, a very practical and timely resource that schools will find useful.”

Balbir Sohal, ACT (Association for Citizenship Teaching)

Conscience uses original source material from 1914 to 1919 to engage children with the dilemmas faced by families in World War I. It is intended for use in primary schools at Key Stage 2, but could also be adapted for use in secondary schools at Key Stage 3.

Through engaging with speaking and listening activities in pairs and groups, the materials support children in:

- exploring their personal understanding of conscience and how they understand the difference between right and wrong
- thinking carefully about the difficulties and dilemmas faced by people caught up in historical events.

It is intended that teachers use *Conscience* as appropriate in their own classes. The focus is on facilitating the development of children's opinions on a contentious subject. To focus the work on a particular curriculum area, a list of suggested areas from the National Curriculum 2014 programmes of study are included in the pack (see 'National Curriculum 2014 links').

“Conscience is a brilliant resource – fantastic for opinion sharing, debate, Circle Time and persuasive writing at KS2”

Jacqui Page, Deputy Head, Holy Trinity Primary Academy

“An excellent teaching resource. The centenary of World War I is an ideal opportunity for pupils to reflect on the consequences of warfare and violence and to think about how they can contribute to a peaceful world. Conscience enables schools to reflect on the importance of core human values that will sustain peace in our world.”

Dr Neil Hawkes, former Headteacher
and founder of the International Values-based Education Trust (IVET)

“Conscience encourages constructive reflection on World War I while also fostering skills and understanding required by the National Curriculum. The Quaker perspective offers unusual challenges and opportunities for children: to develop their own moral compass; and to build their capacity to work with others towards a better world.”

Michael Madden, HMI schools, retired

“A superb resource. During the commemoration of World War I it is important to recognise those who objected conscientiously and consider how that viewpoint was treated at the time.”

Michael McIntyre, UK Programme Coordinator, Facing History and Ourselves

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