



1914

2014

# WORLD WAR ONE

**BBC**

1918

2018

ASSEMBLY PACK

SECONDARY



## ASSEMBLY THEME

# REMEMBRANCE



This assembly, on the theme of remembrance, helps students to reflect on the 2014 centenary of World War One.

It suggests ways in which students can assess the impact of the war on history and also explore how remembrance has become part of national life in the UK and other countries. Students are encouraged to consider how remembrance has evolved to include World War Two and later conflicts. The materials include a [script](#) for teachers, along with [classroom ideas](#) and suggestions for further research. There are [online resources](#) too, including [image galleries](#), [video clips](#) and [audio clips](#).

The assembly addresses the reasons why we remember World War One and how that remembrance is marked, for example by Remembrance Sunday in November, the two-minute silence, war memorials and poppy-wearing. Students are asked to consider how learning about past wars (and about historic public attitudes to war and peace) can shape our attitudes to present conflicts.

The soldiers of the 1914-1918 war are no more but their memories and experiences live on in archives, image galleries, video clips and audio recordings. Such records illustrate why remembrance became such an emotive concept. Remembrance still arouses strong feelings in the bereaved families of servicemen and in pacifists who feel uncomfortable with the 'militarism' they believe surrounds remembrance. These issues can be explored in the assembly with avenues for further research outlined in the [teachers' notes](#).

The assembly begins by encouraging discussion about what people think when they hear the word 'remembrance'. The events surrounding Remembrance Sunday are outlined and there is an opportunity to discuss how we mark anniversaries, such as the centenary of World War One. How appropriate is our contemporary response to these long-ago events?

The assembly offers an introduction to study topics in history, English literature, RE, PSHE and citizenship.



# REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY

**1914** is an important year. It is important not just in the UK but across the world. 1914 is remembered in France and Germany, Italy and Austria, Russia, Turkey and India. It is remembered in Africa and the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand and in the United States and Canada too. 1914 is the year that World War One began. The war they called The Great War.

We remember this war on Remembrance Day. We bring to mind not just those people who fought and died in World War One a hundred years ago but also those affected by World War Two and by other wars since 1945.

Remembrance is not a word we use every day. In everyday life, we say we 'remember' something like a friend's birthday. Things around us help us to remember people or places. Photos remind us of a party or maybe a holiday. An old toy, a football programme, clothes now too small for us... these things remind us of the past.

'Remembrance' suggests something more important, a significant experience that can be shared.

Remembrance Sunday is the one nearest to the eleventh of November. Many people wear poppies as November the eleventh draws near.

Why November the eleventh? It was at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month that World War One ended in 1918. At eleven o'clock on a Monday morning, the guns fell silent. The killing stopped. This was the armistice – an agreement to stop fighting. When World War One was over, people wanted to mark the event on a special day, so they chose Armistice Day. Today many people observe Remembrance Sunday but they also have a time for silent reflection on Armistice Day, the eleventh of November, no matter what day of the week it falls on. Many Cubs, Scouts and Guide Groups attend.

 *Play the '[Remembrance](#)' video clip.*

Those images will be familiar to many of you. Some of us take part in Remembrance Sunday events around the country, while others watch at home on television. It is a time to pause. To remember. To think about how wars affect people. No British soldier who fought in World War One is alive now. We only have their stories. But we remember them, as we remember the men and women who fought in World War Two. And we remember those still at war today, wherever they may be. A good way to do this is by being silent for a short time.



## REMEMBRANCE ASSEMBLY

At 11 o'clock on Remembrance Sunday there is a two-minute silence to remember those who died in war. Ours is not a silent world. There is noise all around us. So silence is special. Silence helps us to stop thinking about what is going on right now or what we have to do next. Silence lets us pause to reflect.

*(A brief pause. You could choose to have a longer period of silence here.)*

 *Play the 'Poppies' video clip.*

Soldiers and sailors often get forgotten when peace comes but after the 1914-1918 war, people did not want to forget. That is why Remembrance Day became what it is, a day for calling the past to mind. Many of the World War One soldiers whose graves we see in such long rows in the war cemeteries were very young. Most families lost someone they loved. Remembrance gives us time to think about how we too cope with sadness and loss.

We can also take time to reflect on how good can come out of bad. How enemies can become friends. Today we are thankful for the peace in our country. We hope for peace in countries where there is conflict.

While Remembrance Day brings sadness, it also brings hope for the future. Hope of a better world, the world for which so many of those soldiers believed they were fighting.

You may have heard these words spoken on Remembrance Day. It is a good way to end.

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.'*



**AUDIO CLIPS**

[Listen to the poem](#)

 **You could ask students to join in as you repeat the verse.**





# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# REMEMBRANCE

## Online resources

### [Remembrance clip – summary](#)

The Last Post is played on the bugle at the Menin Gate in Belgium. We see the war memorial, listing the names of many thousands of soldiers killed in battle. This is followed by images of the armistice being signed, the annual Cenotaph remembrance service in London and similar services in present-day war zones.

There is coverage of the two-minute silence and two veterans from wars since the 1980s (including the 1982 Falklands War) explain why they remember lost comrades.

The clip ends with a sequence of people at war memorials, including the Cenotaph in London with the Queen and political leaders. We also see scenes from around the United Kingdom and from other countries, such as the United States and France.

Chelsea Pensioners march past in their distinctive red uniforms and we hear a verse from Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen', published in September 1914. These words also appear at the conclusion of the assembly script.

### [Poppies clip – summary](#)

This video clip shows some familiar TV figures, all wearing poppies. We then see paper poppies being made by ex-servicemen. The commentary explains how poppy-wearing began in the 1920s and why the poppy was chosen as the symbol of remembrance.

Two veterans from past wars including World War Two explain what the poppy means to them. A wounded soldier from a more recent war in Iraq gives his view.

The clip explains how the Royal British Legion makes and distributes poppies for Remembrance Day.

The clip concludes with lines from 'In Flanders Fields', the poem by the Canadian army doctor John McCrae. This poem was inspired by the poppies McCrae saw growing on the battlefields and was written after the funeral of a friend, killed in action in 1915.



# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# REMEMBRANCE

## Classroom ideas

### Timeline

Introduce the topic of World War One using [BBC Schools](#) resources. You could put the war in its historical context by making a timeline, showing the two world wars and events that happened before and after them. Take the line right up to the present day. Explain that World War One began 100 years ago. When we reach such an important anniversary, it is a time to look back and try to make sense of what happened.

Establish that the 1914-1918 conflict was called The Great War because the hostilities were global. The war was more destructive than any previous conflict in history.

Explain that the main combatant nations were: Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey, who fought against Britain, the British Empire (India, Australia, Canada and others), France, Russia and (from 1917) the United States. [BBC Schools](#) resources will help explain the background.

### The red and the white poppy

In 1933, peace campaigners started wearing white poppies for peace. White poppies came about after the British Legion started selling red poppies for Armistice Day. Peace campaigners in the No More War movement objected to the words 'Haig Fund' on the red poppies. (Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British armies on the Western Front and officially a national hero, had become a hate-figure for some.) Women in the Co-operative movement took up the idea of the white poppy, as did the Peace Pledge Union, set up in 1934. Many of these campaigners argued that it was not their intention to devalue the wearing of the red poppy.

*"Many in the churches never seem to question the annual remembrance cult. Personally I would love to organise an 'alternative remembrance service'..."*

This more recently expressed view comes from Andrew, a minister of a nonconformist Christian church in eastern England, writing on the website of the Peace Pledge Union.

Today, some people wear the red poppy. Some people wear the white poppy. Some people wear both the red and white poppy together. And many people do not wear a poppy at all.



### What do the students make of these differing attitudes?

In recent times, the words 'Haig Fund' have been replaced on red poppies. The message on the black button at the centre of the flower now simply says 'Poppy Appeal'. Students could investigate this revision.



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# REMEMBRANCE

 When did it happen? Why did it happen? What do students make of the change? Is it an attempt to rewrite history? You could ask students for their personal views on poppy wearing. Are they for? Against? Indifferent?

### Why so many killed?

 You could ask students to consider why so many soldiers were killed in World War One and why this had such an impact on people.

War reporting was still confined to press photos and jerky silent newsreels in cinemas. There were no satellite TV reports. What makes all those World War One war images still shocking today?

Students might respond to the above discussion points in a variety of ways. They might note that the war introduced new weapons, vastly more destructive than the mass formations of soldiers common in earlier wars. Generals were slow to devise effective strategies to cope with this new technology. Instead, infantry troops were often used as 'cannon fodder'. Images of World War One weaponry such as tanks, heavy artillery, machine guns, aircraft, Zeppelin airships, battleships, submarines and gas masks will reinforce the learning. Trench warfare on the Western Front was particularly gruesome, owing to the static nature of the fighting, which produced huge casualties with little gain in territory.

Students could consider images or video clips of war graves from 1914-1918 and from other conflicts, including the D-Day war cemeteries in Normandy and those of the Korean and Vietnam wars. They might also look at memorials to those who fought in the Falklands, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Discuss the students' reactions. How do such images affect modern attitudes to remembrance?

They could consider too, footage of British military cemeteries and monuments, such as the Menin Gate, or the Fields of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, in Cardiff or Belfast.

Students might also study pictures of war graves or pictures of some of the disabled ex-servicemen associated with modern wars, such as the conflict in Afghanistan. They could look too at images of the modern army engaged in non-combat roles such as working on relief projects.



### IMAGES OF WAR

[Military equipment](#)  
image gallery



### IMAGES OF WAR

[War cemeteries and memorials](#)  
image gallery



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# REMEMBRANCE

**Students could also consider the following questions: Why do people (including school and college parties) still visit war graves on what was once the Western Front? What do young people today feel when they visit these cemeteries? What should they feel?**

Students might locate and study some of the many images of World War One. They could look in particular for photographs of the Western Front (trenches, troops, casualties, devastation); for images of convalescent homes or military hospitals in Britain and for images of the home front (women at work, Land Army and schoolchildren waving flags).

**You might ask students for their response to a 'Help for Heroes' poster. How does the experience of the wounded in current conflicts differ from those of the World War One? What are the shared experiences?**

### IMAGES OF WAR



[The Western Front](#), [Women on the home front](#), [The Women's Land Army](#) image galleries

### Personal stories

Students might like to hear about and research the personal stories of some of those caught up in World War One. They could look for information about:

- Capt Noel Chavasse (twice a VC winner, an army doctor and former athlete, killed in 1917)
- Edith Cavell (a nurse shot for helping soldiers)
- Elsie Inglis (a doctor and women's rights campaigner, died in 1917)
- Harry Patch (one of the last survivors of the 1914-1918 war, died in 2009)
- Jack Cornwell (a boy-sailor killed at the Battle of Jutland)
- Lord Kitchener (a trained soldier responsible for army strategy during the war, died 1916)
- Walter Tull (a black army officer, a former footballer who served in the Footballers Battalion, killed in 1918)
- Wilfred Owen (a poet who died fighting in the war in 1918 aged 25)



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# REMEMBRANCE

### Memorabilia

Students may have old family photos at home that they might like to share or even wartime memorabilia. If these items are too precious to bring to school, the students could photograph them instead.

The students could make a display of all their 'found objects' and try to discover more about them from books and websites.

### Remembrance poem

*'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.'*

These lines are from a poem by Laurence Binyon, published in September 1914, only a month after World War One had begun.



**Ask students what they think the verse means. They might like to find and read the rest of the poem.**

At the time he wrote these lines, Binyon was a civilian. Does that make a difference to how the students now see the lines? Binyon was too old to enlist as a soldier, but volunteered in 1916 to serve on the Western Front as a Red Cross orderly. How do the students think Binyon himself came to think of this verse?

Introduce other war poetry including the work of Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, Isaac Rosenberg, Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas and others. They could link this work to their study of poetry in English and to their course work.



### AUDIO CLIPS

[Listen to the poem](#)



## ASSEMBLY THEME

# COMMEMORATION



This assembly on the theme of Commemoration aims to focus awareness on the 2014 centenary of World War One.

It gives students the opportunity to think about the impact of the war on world history and particularly on the UK. The assembly materials explore the reasons why remembrance and commemoration have become part of national life not just in this country but around the world. The resources include a [script](#) for teachers, along with [classroom ideas](#) and suggestions for further research. There are [online resources](#) too, including [image galleries](#), [video clips](#) and [audio clips](#).

This assembly looks at why and how we remember World War One. It explores the ways in which we hold the past in memory through symbols and ceremonies, such as Remembrance Sunday, the two-minute silence, war cemeteries, war memorials and the wearing of poppies. The assembly encourages the whole school community to think about the experiences of the men, women and children who lived through World War One and later conflicts. Students are asked to consider how learning about past wars can shape our attitude to present conflicts.

The assembly starts off by discussing what 'commemoration' means. Online [image galleries](#) are available for further illustration. Students are asked what they think 'commemoration' means, why we have war memorials and dedicated war cemeteries and why people wear poppies on Remembrance Day. The following [video clip](#) illustrates commemoration in action at the Cenotaph in London and in other countries. Teachers may wish to widen the discussion, to talk about how we commemorate other events in our family lives (such as birthdays, anniversaries and funerals).

The assembly offers an introduction to study topics in history, English, RE, PSHE and citizenship.



# COMMEMORATION ASSEMBLY

## What is 'Commemoration'?

 Here you might invite some brief responses from students.

To commemorate means to remember through an action or a sign. We may carry out an action or say certain words in a special place. Commemoration is often a public, collective, act. We share it with others to signify the importance of the event we remember.

When a pet dies we mark the grave with a stick or a stone. When people die we remember them not just by our thoughts but by physical objects – a photo perhaps. People hold funerals and write the names of the dead on gravestones. Remembering the dead is as old as time, as old as the pyramids of ancient Egypt, as old as the green burial mounds around Stonehenge.

Commemoration has a special meaning when we think about one of the most terrible wars in history, World War One. A war that began one hundred years ago.

No soldier from the 1914-1918 war is now alive to tell his story. But we can still see some of these people and hear their voices in audio and video recordings. We can watch film clips of the battles they fought in and see the conditions in which they lived and died.

It is hard to imagine what they went through. The survivors felt lucky to be alive but some felt almost guilty because so many of their friends did not come home. Many veterans would not talk about their experiences, though they could never forget them.

In their later years, some of these people did finally begin to speak out and to recall their wartime lives. They found it hard to talk about the terrible things they had seen but felt that they had to so that we would know about the war today.

Every year people gather for acts of commemoration on Remembrance Day. This is a national version of what some people do in a family context, when they visit a loved-one's grave to leave flowers.

 *Play the 'Commemoration' video clip.*

Words like those, at the end of that clip, are found on war memorials. You can see war memorials all over the UK. You will find them in parks, town centres, village greens, churchyards, town halls, factories, even post offices and railway stations. On the memorials there are often lists of the names of people who died in World War One and often World War Two as well. Even more names were added after 1945. Putting up a memorial is a way of saying, 'We will not forget you, even if we cannot visit your grave.'



## COMMEMORATION ASSEMBLY

Every November, people gather at the Cenotaph in London. It is a national war memorial and the focus for the annual Remembrance Sunday parade and service. The Queen and the leaders of the country and armed forces take part. So do many members of the public. They lay wreaths of poppies at the foot of the Cenotaph.

People watch on television. Similar acts of commemoration take place across the United Kingdom and around the world.

And there are still new memorials, new ways to commemorate those who gave their lives. Because there are still wars. In 2003, British troops were sent to war in Iraq. People still argue about the rights and wrongs of the Iraq War. The Basra War Memorial was built in Iraq by British soldiers to commemorate comrades who had been killed.

British troops have now left Iraq and the memorial has been brought home. It is now in the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

After World War One people knew it was important to commemorate the dead. Many fallen soldiers had been buried in rough battlefield graves. After the conflict was over war cemeteries were laid out. There are thousands of graves and long lists of names of those who died. Few people who visit these war cemeteries come away unmoved.

**You could ask a group of students to read out the names of some of the fallen from a local war memorial, perhaps a plaque that hangs somewhere in their own school.**

And yet thousands of these dead soldiers have no known graves. The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey commemorates them. Among the great and the good lies a nameless soldier whose body was brought back from France after World War One.

Many people need somewhere to go, a place to commemorate a loved one. It can be a private place or it can be a public memorial. A statue perhaps or one of the memorials to those who died in accidents or terrorist attacks or to those who were victims of violent crime.

For many people after World War One, wearing a poppy became a symbol of commemoration. Canadian Army doctor John McCrae wrote a poem about the poppies he saw in Flanders after the funeral of a friend killed in 1915.



## COMMEMORATION ASSEMBLY

*'In Flanders' fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high,  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' fields.'*



Portrait of  
Dr John McCrae  
(© Mccrod Museum,  
Montreal)



### AUDIO CLIPS

[Listen to the In Flanders  
Fields poem](#)

John McCrae's poem became famous. Sadly he did not live to see peace: he died of pneumonia in January 1918.

A hundred years have passed since the outbreak of World War One. You will see and hear a lot about World War One on television and in other media over the course of this year. You may wonder what all the fuss is about: it was a long time ago. The people who fought in it are all dead now.

But people do not forget. People are planning new commemorations. There will be new poppy fields planted, old war memorials will be cleaned up and new ones built. Commemoration shows we have not forgotten and that we are thankful for the peace we have.

We remember those who gave their lives. We remember that for our tomorrow, they gave their today.



# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# COMMEMORATION

## Online resources

### [Commemoration clip – summary](#)

This clip shows the national commemoration of Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph. Remembrance Day began in 1919 when people gathered to remember loved ones they had lost in the war. Today it is a national day of commemoration, replicated at memorials around the United Kingdom and in many parts of the world.

In the clip, we see the wreath-laying at the Cenotaph, as well as a school head teacher and a pupil talking about what it means to them. We see shots of war cemeteries with rows of memorials and graves. We are reminded that the war affected people in many countries, including India, France, Canada, Australia, Russia and the United States. People in Germany, Austria and other countries that fought against the UK in World War One also remember their losses. The clip concludes with images of memorials and the well-known lines, 'For your tomorrow, we gave our today'.

### [Remembrance clip – summary](#)

The Last Post is played on the bugle at the Menin Gate in Belgium. We see the war memorial, listing the names of many thousands of soldiers killed in battle. This is followed by images of the armistice being signed, the annual Cenotaph remembrance service in London and similar services in present-day war zones.

There is coverage of the two-minute silence and two veterans from wars since the 1980s (including the 1982 Falklands War) explain why they remember lost comrades.

The clip ends with a sequence of people at war memorials, including the Cenotaph in London with the Queen and political leaders. We also see scenes from around the United Kingdom and from other countries, such as the United States and France.

Chelsea Pensioners march past in their distinctive red uniforms and we hear a verse from Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen', published in September 1914. These words also appear at the conclusion of the assembly script.



# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# COMMEMORATION

## Classroom ideas

### Timeline

Introduce the topic of World War One using [BBC Schools](#) resources. You could put the war in its historical context by making a timeline that shows the two world wars and events that happened before and after them. Take the line right up to the present day. Explain that World War One happened 100 years ago. When we reach such an important anniversary, it is time to look back and try to make sense of what happened.

### War cemeteries and war memorials

Encourage students to examine images of war cemeteries and memorials. You could discuss how people of different religious faiths, or those who have no religious beliefs, behave when a loved-one dies. For example, how are funerals conducted by the different traditions of Christians, Hindus and Muslims?

The students could study images of war cemeteries and discuss what they think about them.



**What might people do as an act of commemoration?**  
(Planting trees, for example.) What other kinds of commemoration can the students suggest?



### IMAGES OF WAR

[War cemeteries and memorials](#) image gallery

Students might research other World War One commemorative projects, including unusual ones such as the LMS Patriot Project (building a steam railway locomotive) or the Animals in War memorial in Hyde Park.

### Archive material

In 1964 the BBC interviewed many World War One ex-servicemen or veterans, most of them in their 70s and 80s. Such sound archives and other archives in museums are now part of history. TV programmes, books and websites help us to re-live that history.

The centenary of World War One will provide more material for reflection on the conflict. Other countries are also sharing their archive materials. This was a 'world war' affecting people in many parts of the world as well as the UK. France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Russia, Portugal, Turkey and Greece all fell under the shadow of the war. India, Brazil, Japan, China and large parts of Africa and the Caribbean were caught up in the conflict. Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada were all finally drawn into the war too.



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# COMMEMORATION

### Tomb of the Unknown Warrior

Thousands of soldiers who fell in World War One have no known graves.

**You could ask students why they think so many bodies were never identified even though every soldier wore an identity disc.**

Some students may know about the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. They can find out more about the Unknown Warrior's journey from battlefield to national memorial online.

### The Basra Memorial

There are more than 250 memorials at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. Opened in 2001, this is a place many people visit, especially those who have lost a family member in a recent conflict.



### Poppies

Ever since 1921, the poppy has been worn in the UK and many other countries. In 1922 a former soldier started a factory to make artificial poppies. In the UK, poppies are distributed by the Royal British Legion, in return for donations.

**Students could research the origins of poppy-wearing and how this American act of commemoration quickly became internationalised.**

### Fallen soldiers

Traditionally British soldiers killed abroad were buried where they fell. In more recent conflicts, bodies have been brought home for burial and Royal Wootton Bassett has become famous for military homecomings. What do the students think of this change?

### Is there a local memorial?

The War Memorials Trust helps to look after and protect the UK's war memorials. There may be a memorial nearby. Before visiting the memorial students might consider: Why is it there? What form does it take? How is it made?

**Do students know of any other local memorials, such as a brass plate in a nearby public building or railway station? Is there a memorial somewhere in the school itself?**



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# COMMEMORATION

Students may see names they know on the memorial; the surnames of families still living locally. What does this tell us? Some students may feel these are just the names of strangers from the past, from a different, far-away world. Some may ask, 'What has all this got to do with us?'

Encourage students to consider these questions and their possible responses.

**Why do students think people get upset if others mistreat or vandalise memorials?**

### What do the words mean?

Students could think about the words and phrases they may see inscribed on war memorials. These might include, for example: The Glorious Dead; In Grateful Memory; Lest We Forget; or Those Who Gave Their Lives.

**What do these words mean to people in the twenty-first century? What did the people of 1914 mean by such words and terms such as 'sacrifice', 'duty' and 'honour'? Do any of these ideas still have resonance today?**



## ASSEMBLY THEME

# PEACE



This assembly on the theme of peace is linked to those on remembrance and commemoration.

It is intended to help schools mark the centenary of World War One (1914-1918). Through raising awareness of that war, the assembly gives students an opportunity to think about the impact of war and peace on modern times. They will be invited to consider why some people think remembrance ceremonies glorify war and why others say such commemoration helps us to value peace by reminding us of the sacrifices made, particularly in the world wars of the twentieth century.

The assembly resources include a [script](#) for teachers, along with [classroom ideas](#) and suggestions for further research. There are [online resources](#) too, including a [video clip](#).

The assembly script describes how many people hoped for peace and reconciliation after the horrors of World War One. It invites students to think about how World War One influenced attitudes to pacifism and patriotism and to reflect on their own attitudes to peace. Students are asked to think about the contrasting impacts of non-violent action and terrorism.

The assembly examines the role of international peacemakers, as well as the peace movement, in the light of the commemoration of the World War One's centenary. It encourages discussion of issues around the themes of world peace, reconciliation, disarmament, tolerance and mutual understanding. The [video clip](#) can be used to aid this discussion.

The assembly explores the idea that hoping for peace is not enough to achieve it. Sometimes, paradoxically, peace can only be attained by conflict. The soldiers who survived the trenches of the World War One had their own views on what peace meant. They are now all dead but their experiences live on in archive audio and video recordings. The fallen of World War One remain graphic witnesses to history.

The assembly offers an introduction to study topics in history, English, RE, PSHE and citizenship.



# PEACE ASSEMBLY

## What do we mean by peace?

For most people, peace means not having someone shoot at them or bomb them. But it can mean other things too. Like having a quiet life, not breaking the law, being gentle and kind to other people or not having arguments.

One hundred years ago, in August 1914, peace in Europe vanished as World War One began. The centenary of that war will be marked not just in the UK but across the world. In France and Germany, in Russia and Turkey, in Australia, New Zealand and America. It will be marked in India, Africa and the Caribbean too. For this was a truly global war.

When World War One ended in 1918 peace returned. Yet people still felt shocked because war on such a destructive scale had never been experienced before: the loss of life was enormous.

People longed for peace yet they were uneasy. They had hoped World War One would be the war that ended wars for good but just 21 years later, war came again. World War Two began in September 1939 – something had gone tragically wrong.

World War One is often said to have been started by one shot, the murder of an Austrian duke in Serbia. After that, armies ‘mobilised’ as if a machine had been set in motion. An arms race and a system of alliances across Europe meant that no government seemed able to stop the war machine.

In the UK, the national mood was upbeat. There was a widespread confidence that the UK would quickly win this war. In August 1914, soldiers marched off cheering and smiling. They expected to be home by Christmas. Many people felt very patriotic, as we can see from the cartoons and posters of the time. People on both sides believed they were fighting a ‘just war’. ‘We’ were right, the enemy was wrong.

The mood soon changed. By 1916, there were enormous numbers of war dead on both sides of the conflict. Many people wanted peace as quickly as possible. Patriots who wanted to win the war at all costs clashed with pacifists who demanded that the war be stopped and argued that all war was wrong. There were peace marches and demonstrations. Some people refused to fight, for moral and religious reasons. These ‘conscientious objectors’ were jailed when they refused to join the army. Some conscientious objectors instead laboured on farms or in military hospitals, to help their country without resorting to violence. Some went to the battlefields to help soldiers wounded by the fighting. It was dangerous work and some conscientious objectors won medals for bravery, even though they refused to fight. Many of those fighting respected the moral courage of the pacifists.



## PEACE ASSEMBLY

After peace was finally declared in 1918, with millions dead, war did not seem glorious any more. Many asked, 'Surely we can do better?'

### Were the peace protesters and the conscientious objectors right after all?

After World War One, the peace movement grew and organisations such as the Peace Pledge Union were set up. Countries around the world formed the League of Nations to try to settle disputes without wars. The League failed when World War Two began in 1939.

But a few people showed it was possible to achieve political goals by using non-violent means. Mahatma Gandhi in India for example, whose peaceful protests helped to bring about India's independence from the UK in the years following World War Two.

After the horrors of World War Two the peacemakers tried again. They set up the United Nations. It is not a world government and it has no army of its own to enforce its decisions, but it does try to keep the peace. There has been some progress in disarmament and efforts continue to reduce the world's stockpile of weapons of mass destruction.

The key to lasting peace is getting people to live together and put their grievances, their differences and their past arguments aside. In a word, reconciliation.

Reconciliation is difficult, but it can happen. Germany and France fought in two world wars but today they are partners. the UK and Germany, once old enemies, are friends today. Reconciliation has brought hope to Northern Ireland and to South Africa.

These are all positive signs. We can work and live together in peace, as long as we learn the lessons of the past.

One hundred years ago, we were at war. Today we are at peace. And it is up to us to keep it that way.

 *Play the secondary 'Peace' video clip.*



# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# PEACE

## Online resources

### **Peace clip – summary**

The clip shows scenes of battle and civilian devastation in World War One and includes a shot of wounded survivors. It goes on to describe how the League of Nations was formed in an attempt to resolve international disputes peacefully, but how those hopes were dashed by its failure.

We hear part of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's 1939 radio broadcast telling people in the UK they were once again at war with Germany. World War Two, as the clip points out, was even more destructive, with air raids, genocide in the Nazi death camps and the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When peace came, people felt relieved, as a witness explains, but also uncertain about the future. They wondered, 'Where do we go from here?'

We live in a global economy with different threats. There is less danger, perhaps, of a world war on the scale of 1914 or 1939 and most of us feel we live in a 'peaceful country'. Yet we face the dangers of terrorism and soldiers still risk their lives in wars and peace-keeping missions. Soldiers like British Army Staff Sergeant Olaf Schmid whose funeral is shown in the video. We see images of World War One recruits joining the army then coverage of protesters marching against the Iraq War.

The clip concludes with the question: 'Can war be avoided?'

## Classroom ideas

### Timeline

Introduce the topic of World War One using [BBC Schools](#) resources. You could put the war in its historical context by making a timeline that shows the two world wars and events that happened before and after them. Take the line right up to the present day. Explain that World War One happened 100 years ago. When we reach such an important anniversary, it is time to look back and try to make sense of what happened.

### Learning from the past

Many people visit World War One battlefields and war museums.



**You could ask students what can be learned from such visits. Some people talk about 'learning the lessons of the past' but what does that mean in practice?**



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# PEACE

Students may have visited the Imperial War Museum or another military museum. How did they react? Why do we have war museums? How do students feel about peace museums such as Bradford's Peace Museum UK?

Students could research into active peace organisations such as the Peace Pledge Union which was set up in the 1930s and tried to popularise the wearing of white 'peace poppies'.

Students may wish to compare the Peace Pledge Union's ideals with those of the Royal British Legion, the organisation which sells red poppies for remembrance.

The students could find out more about the League of Nations and its aims.



**How does it compare with the United Nations, set up after World War Two? What do students think are the strengths and weaknesses of the UN? How might it be improved?**

You could suggest that students look at youth protests in the peace movement. For example: the CND campaign against nuclear weapons in the 1950s; the anti-Vietnam war protests of the 1960s; the women of Greenham Common in the 1980s and the anti-Iraq war protests of the 2000s.

### Conscientious objectors

Members of the Society of Friends (Quakers) were prominent anti-war voices during the 1914-1918 conflict. They believed it was wrong to fight wars and kill people. Many other religious believers were also taught that killing was wrong but were prepared to fight in a 'just war'. During World War One, Quakers were prepared to face danger as ambulance crews, helping wounded soldiers at the front. For this they and other conscientious objectors were admired. However some conscientious objectors were abused as cowards and had a rough time. Hundreds more went to jail.

Conscientious objectors had to appear before tribunals to argue their case against going to war. You could ask students to write the defence these conscientious objectors might have used. Students could go on to write the counter-arguments that might have been made in court against them. The class could also discuss what they think would have happened to the UK if no one had been prepared to fight.

The class might stage a role-play courtroom confrontation to explore the opposing views and arguments.

Students could find out more about the Society of Friends and other organisations that promote non-violence and disarmament.



## TEACHERS' NOTES:

# PEACE

Teachers and students may wish to take their research further and consider issues of peace and conflict resolution in historically strife-torn regions, such as Israel, Palestine, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Iraq.

### Other themes to explore

Students could discuss issues related to concepts of peace and justice. You might prompt classroom discussion with the following questions:

Peace is often linked to justice.

**What do we mean by justice? Can there be a 'just war'?  
Can terrorists ever justify violence against innocent people?**

Students could also consider the impact of technology on peace. You could prompt classroom discussion with the following questions:

World War One introduced terrible new weapons – does that mean science contributed towards the mass slaughter of World War One? Were the scientists and engineers who developed these weapons morally responsible for how they were used? Does technology make peace more difficult? How might science help move the world towards peace?

Students could also consider why so many of us like war stories and war games. What is the attraction of this kind of material? Is it simple escapism or are there more sinister implications?

Further discussion might be prompted with the following questions:

**Why do people still watch films about World War One and Two, even though we are now friends with Germany? Why was Michael Morpurgo's 'War Horse' such a success as a book, play and film?**

Compare cheerful songs of the World War One era (such as 'Goodbye-ee', 'Pack Up Your Troubles' and 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary') with the war poetry that students may well be reading in English. Recordings of wartime songs are easy to find on video-sharing websites.

Finally, you might ask students to consider issues of international co-operation and conciliation. They could find out more about the work of UN agencies, the World Health Organisation and other charities active in disaster and famine relief. Do these initiatives help to promote peace?

You could ask whether the students believe modern news agencies and other media have any responsibility for keeping the peace.



# TEACHERS' NOTES:

# PEACE

**What about governments, international organisations and private citizens?**

## Images of peace and war

You could encourage students to debate what makes a good peace symbol.

You might invite suggestions about the way artists, musicians and writers have expressed their views on war and peace. Students could find examples of contrasting images of peace and violence. They could go on to make a peace wall art installation of their own artwork.

They might consider sources such as: heroic battle paintings made for propaganda purposes; more realistic paintings and photographs of war; art made with the explicit purpose of promoting peace; songs; images of anti-war protests during World War One; world leaders at the 1919 peace conference; victory celebrations in the UK; the rise of Hitler; the League of Nations in session; conscientious objectors; CND marchers in the 1950s; anti-Vietnam war protesters in the 1960s; modern peacemakers; the UN General Assembly and the work of UN peacekeepers.