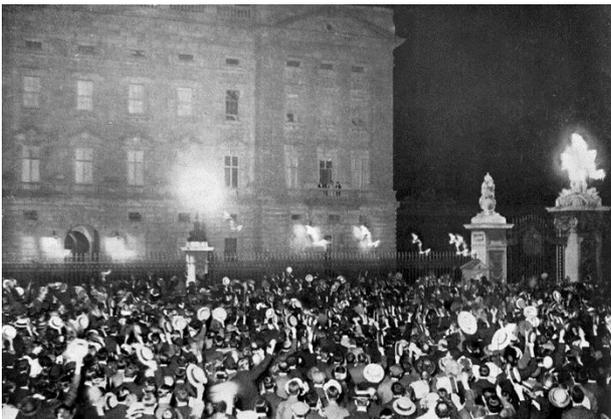


## Life in the Trenches and Legacy of War

### Welcome to IWM North

Use this activity sheet as you walk around the Main Exhibition Space to help you find out more about life in the trenches and the legacy of the First World War.

### 1. Outbreak of War



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**Find this photograph at the start of the 1914-1918 section of the Timeline. What two reasons are given to explain why Britain declared war?**

*Two reasons Britain declared war were that since 1839 the country had been bound by a treaty to guarantee Belgium neutrality. It also had a moral obligation to support France if attacked by Germany.*

*Britain's own security would be seriously threatened if the French and Belgian coastlines were captured by the Germans.*

*These reasons may provoke a wider discussion about Britain's place in the world. The arms race between Britain and Germany may be suggested as another reason.*

**Look closely at the photograph, how did people react?**

*The photograph shows a scene outside Buckingham Palace following the declaration of war in August 1914. Use of photograph as historical evidence - Students may pick out the King addressing large crowd gathered and consider why people are waving their hats and arms in the air. Overall this can be interpreted as a photograph that shows support and enthusiasm towards the outbreak of the war.*

**Why would somebody feel like this at the outbreak of war?**

*Enthusiastic attitudes towards the outbreak of war existed due to patriotic feelings.*

**Back at school you could discuss further the different reactions of people to the outbreak of the First World War. Look for evidence as you go round the museum today.**

*In Silo 1 there is a letter from a nine year old boy, Alfie Knight from Ireland writing to Lord Kitchener volunteering for the war and in silo 2 there are examples of white feathers given to men who were seen in civilian clothing after the outbreak of the war. Discussion could also bring in the attitudes of conscientious objectors.*

## 2. Trench Warfare



The Western Front consisted of lines of trenches from the Belgian coast to Switzerland. Trenches were dug to protect soldiers from shell and rifle fire.

**Go to Cabinet ‘The Western Front 1914-1917’ at the start of the Timeline.**

Look at the uniform on display. Identify 4 things in the cabinet that interest you. Explain why you have picked these items.

*Items in this cabinet are grouped in broad themes such as food, equipment, uniform and correspondence. Students may focus upon the hats on display and how adequate they were at offering protection in the trenches during the conflict. They may also question the quality of food which soldiers were provided with, and how this impacted the morale amongst troops.*

**Food was monotonous and conditions harsh. Find object 8 in the cabinet.**

**What does the message say?**

**Explain what the message tells us about how this soldier’s attitude to war has changed as a result of his experience in the trenches.**

*On the biscuit the soldier has inscribed ‘King and Country need you, and is how they feed you.’ The British Army issue biscuit was a key component of a soldier's rations. The notoriously hard biscuits could crack teeth if not first soaked in tea or water. Tea was also part of the British soldier's rations. It was a familiar comfort and concealed the taste of water, which was often transported to the front line in petrol tins.*

*In the trenches soldiers could not rely upon receiving hot food. Rations that were being brought to the front line trenches in sandbags may not even reach the soldiers if the ration detail came under attack. For the next twenty four hours soldiers would then have to rely on their emergency rations which included army biscuits. From initial enthusiasm at the start of the war the message suggests that conditions in the trenches are poor, including the way that the soldiers are supplied and fed and this is potentially having an effect on their morale.*

*Students may consider other food and nutritional items such as corned beef referred to as 'Bully Beef' on display in the cabinet*

### **Did you know?**

Trench systems included different features, like support trenches and communications trenches, as well as the front line trenches themselves.



**Find item number 6 in the cabinet. Look at the letter. *Second Lieutenant Collier, 16th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, writing to his niece Dorothy in 1916:***

*There are various kinds of shells (there are some which....wrap round the white and yolk of an egg to keep them from spilling, this kind is quite..... ) one of these favourites we call the 'whizz bang' because it goes over your head (if you're lucky) 'whizz' then a second later 'bang'*

Soldiers would often use humour as a way to ease the tension of fighting in a war where they lived under the constant threat of being killed or wounded.



**Watch the video showing archive film of trench warfare on the Western Front in the First World War.**

**Write down three things that you observe in the film that particularly surprised you. How do YOU think soldiers would have felt fighting in the trenches?**

*In the film students can observe soldiers marching on the Western Front, and may comment on the uniform and equipment that they are carrying. The conditions men faced in the trenches is clearly shown. Also featured in the film clips is the impact of the weapons that are being used.*

In the film there are some soldiers loading shells to be fired by artillery. Look for the weapons that the soldiers are using in the exhibition spaces around you.

### 3. Mud



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**Find this artwork. It is called *Mud* and was painted by Gilbert Rogers. What was his job in the war?**

*Gilbert Rogers served as a medical officer during the First World War. He was commissioned by the Royal Army Medical Corps to record their work in France.*

*The painting shows a British soldier standing against a background of thick grey clouds. He is covered with a layer of mud from head to toe. His hands are as thickly encrusted as his boots and his face is the same colour as the earth.*

**Write down two words to sum up the mood of the soldier.**

*Students may consider words such as tired, exhausted, wet, cold, miserable, heroic, to start a discussion. Allow students to consider the demeanour of the soldier, and implications of fighting on the Western Front in the First World War.*

**Why do you think this? Give reasons for your answer.**

*Students may use ideas from looking at the Western Front cabinet next to the painting.*

Gilbert Rogers was a medical officer during the First World War. He painted *Mud* in 1919 after the war had ended and used a model for the figure of the soldier.

**A question for you to consider back at school**

**How reliable (truthful) is the painting *Mud* about conditions in France during the First World War?**

*The provenance of the painting suggests that as Gilbert Rogers was posted to the Western Front during the First World War he should know what the conditions were like and how the soldiers would have felt. Even though the painting has been done after the end of the war and a model was used for the figure of the soldier the key features should be reliable.*

*The painting does not specify when in the war it represents or where on the Western Front. The soldier is wearing the type of protective headgear that was only issued to the army late in 1915, whilst certain areas of the Western Front would not have looked so desolate and muddy until after the heavy artillery fire associated with a major battle. It would also depend on the location, some places being more prone to mud than others.*



**Next follow the Timeline around to find the cabinet Beyond the Western Front. Find this item...**



**What has it been made out of? Why has this material been used?**

*This item is made from the bark of a birch tree, and has been used to make a postcard by an Austro-Hungarian soldier in 1916. Bark may have been used as it was the only material to hand, and/or perhaps he thought it was attractive.*

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**Name two other places the war was fought aside from the Western Front.**

*This question allows students to consider how the First World War was a truly global conflict. In the cabinet are items which allude to fighting on the Turkish front, Mesopotamia, Salonika and Italy. The war was also fought at sea and in the air, as well as on the home front.*

**Back at school you may want to find out how fighting was different in these places compared to fighting on the Western Front.**

*In some of the theatres of war the First World War was a war of movement which contrasted with the trench warfare that was typical on the Western Front after the Battle of the Marne in 1914. In Mesopotamia conditions were much warmer than conditions on the Western Front and so mud was less of a problem. However there were other problems associated with warm climates such as insects, disease and dehydration.*

## 4. Flora Sandes



Go to *Silo 2: Women and War* and find the nine boxes containing objects belonging to different women. Find the revolver that belonged to Flora Sandes.

### What was unusual about Flora's life?

*Flora Sandes travelled from Britain to Serbia to become a nurse in the First World War. She then volunteered to fight in the Serbian Army. Flora is the only known British woman to fight on the frontline. In 1916, she was seriously wounded by a Bulgarian hand grenade. She was awarded the Order of the Star of Karageorge in 1918.*



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### Did you know?

Women carried out a variety of roles in the First World War with over 600,000 women working as munitions workers making weapons in factories.



Flora Sandes talks about her experiences fighting in the First World War:

*Scorching days followed by freezing nights, when we lay on the bare mountainside in clothes soaked with perspiration and shivered, with no covering but our overcoats. Incessant fighting, weariness indescribable.*

**From your research back at school, in which theatre of war did Flora Sandes fight?**

*The Balkans*

The roles that women have taken on during wartime have often been unfamiliar and challenging.



Many women also worked on the front line in other roles during the First World War.

**Find the uniform, diary and crucifix in the large display cabinet to read about what happened to Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm as they worked at Pervyse in Belgium.**



**A diary is a useful type of historical evidence from the First World War. As you go around the museum today, make a list of the types of evidence we can use to find out about how people have been affected by war?**

*Examples could include oral testimony, some of the artefacts themselves, examples of the letters that were written at the time and photographs.*

*Students may consider other forms of evidence such as communications technology - highlighting the Internet, Email and Social Media as evidence to find out about the feelings of loved ones compared to letters and postcards during the First World War.*

*Another perspective could highlight examples of reports in the media of those who have returned home from experiences of warfare and conflict. Students may also consider artworks around IWM North as an expressive form of communicating feelings about war.*

**Back at school you could discuss which types of evidence are the most reliable.**

## 5. Legacy of War



**Go to Silo 6: Legacy of War and find this photograph of Ernest Nicolson.**

He was a policeman from Stockport, and was killed in action on 12 September 1917. Ernest left behind a son Clifford and his wife, Emma.

During the First World War over 9 million people are estimated to have been killed.

### **What has been collected from the site of his grave?**

*Rose petals were collected from the site of his grave.*

### **What evidence shows how his family would have remembered Ernest?**

*Students may consider the Next of Kin Memorial Plaque on display – which has the name Ernest Nicolson written on it. The immediate next of kin of all who died serving with the British and Empire forces in the First World War were eligible to receive the plaque and scroll. With nearly a million dead for the British Army alone, the plaques are today still commonly found; the fragile scrolls survive less often. Some of those recorded by plaques and scrolls were not eligible for service medals, for instance, those who did not serve overseas but who died in service through accident or illness.*

*They also may consider personal ways of memorialisation such as the photograph of Ernest Nicolson in police uniform, treasured by his family alongside his campaign medals. The British War Medal and Victory Medal would have been awarded after his death. The rose petals show remembrance through a personal journey to his grave in France on the Somme.*

**Do you think it is important to remember soldiers who fought in wars in the past? Why?**



**In *Silo 6: Legacy of War*, listen on the sound point to Gunner William Towers speaking about the impact of his injuries, and how he had an artificial limb fitted.**



***Gunner William Towers talks about the trauma he suffered:***

*And I put this leg on, and I'm not lying I didn't tighten it up enough and it was trailing. I was on crutches and I had a kit bag and a quarter of a mile to go to a tram. And nobody helped me.*



**Explore the rest of the cabinet *Coming Home*. Choose a First World War object on display that interests you. What is it and what does it tell us about the legacy of war?**

*The physical trauma of warfare is highlighted through items such as an artificial arm that was fitted to a sailor who lost an arm at the Battle of Jutland in 1916. This demonstrates the difficulties that individuals faced returning home to 'Civvy Street' after their service. Also on display is a prosthetic plate worn by a serviceman to disguise a severe facial injury, made of shaped aluminium and hand painted to match the skin tone of the recipient. This shows the legacy of some of the new weapons that were to be used in the conflict and their impact.*

*Students may focus upon items such as the letter, photograph album, and Turkish bayonet which belonged to Major Guy Nightingale who served on the Eastern Front in Gallipoli. Writing to his mother he describes some of the horrors he witnessed. These items deal with the psychological trauma of warfare, despite surviving he was never able to come to terms with some of the horrors that he witnessed. He was sadly to take his own life in 1935, at the age of 43 years old.*

### **Did you know?**

Over 41,000 soldiers had limb amputations having been injured in the First World War.



**Look around you and write down some different ways that those who have been killed in war have been remembered?**

*This could include both public/national forms of remembrance, such as the silence to commemorate the armistice, and more private forms of remembrance such as keeping significant objects as a way of remembering a loved one.*

*Students may wish to reflect upon the inception of Imperial War Museums, as it was founded during the First World War in 1917. It was not intended to be a monument to military glory, but it was to be a place to commemorate the efforts and sacrifices of ordinary people. As the name suggests, Imperial War Museums also considers the experiences of people in countries from the British Empire and Commonwealth.*

## **A question for you to consider back at school**

**The evidence that you have looked at today helps us to understand what the experience of war was like for a number of different people. How far do you agree that these experiences were typical First World War experiences?**

*Students will need to draw on their own knowledge relating to soldiers joining up underage, the number of casualties and fatalities and the war at sea, in the air, and on other fronts to provide evidence firstly to support the interpretation that the exhibitions at IWM North illustrate typical First World War experiences and secondly that the experience of other people was different.*