

Chapter 6 - the end of the war to end all wars

teachers' notes

in brief

This short chapter looks at the end of the war and how conscientious objectors and returning soldiers fared following the cessation of hostilities as well as outlining the impact of the conscientious objection movement on the peace movement in the inter war period. Also considered are the lessons learned by the government in relation to conscientious objectors as well as its depiction or portrayal of the First World War as a heroic event that needed to be celebrated

learning objectives by sub-section

Students will be able to:

6.1 describe the different experiences endured by conscientious objectors (COs) following the cessation of hostilities in 1918.

6.2 describe the condition of many of the soldiers as they returned from combat duties at the end of WW1 and their experience of life back home

6.3 compare and contrast the difference in the lessons learnt from WW1 by the government and conscientious objectors

questions and answers

6.1 COs post war experiences

in writing briefly describe the different experiences endured by conscientious objectors (COs) following the cessation of hostilities in 1918.

Some COs found it difficult to find work in the aftermath of the war because of the stigma attached to the principle d stance they had taken and some were initially excluded from voting . Some COs died as a result of the conditions they had experienced whilst others went insane . Some COs went on to have important careers as public servants and some of them founded organisations to promote the peace movement.

6.2 soldiers' post war experiences

Many soldiers found life very difficult when they returned from the war prepare a diary entry describing how you felt about your life back home in Britain 2 years after having left the army.

Learners' own words but would expect to see references to some of the following:

difficulty or inability of finding work, terrible memories, inability to talk about their experience to civilians and family members, nervousness, sleeplessness, adverse impact on relationships and lack of support and help from the authorities.

6.3 different views and lessons learnt from WW1

As you might expect, just as during the war itself, attitudes toward warfare and its place in the modern world between the government and those in the newly established peace movements differed significantly.

Complete the table below, broadly indicating the nature of these differences. You may wish to add additional issues, as appropriate.

Differing Approaches to Post World War One issues

Issues	Government	Peace Movement
Armed Forces	Very supportive, expand or at least maintain high expenditure. Promote the importance of their role in protection and security of society as a whole	Reduce the importance and role of the armed forces not seen as fundamentally central to the security of the nation. Explore alternative approaches see International Relationships
Weaponry	Continue to develop weaponry in order to ensure that the country stays technologically and quantitatively ahead of potential enemies	Move toward disarmament, end stockpiling of weapons, end arms races and invest saved resources in improving standards of living
International relationships	Punish enemies for having gone to war by imposing punitive conditions at Peace Treaty. Seek public support for war as a legitimate tool to resolve disputes between nations	Push for reconciliation and cooperation amongst nations and develop ways of working closely together that would prevent conflict and war
Portrayal of WW1	Glorify the war as a great victory against barbaric enemies. Glorification of the heroic deeds, bravery and sacrifice of the heroes in the "war to end all wars"	Unmitigated international disaster for all sides and an incredible waste of lives and resources; a lesson as to what, should at all costs, be avoided in the future.

Having completed your table get into groups of 4 and discuss the different views.

Try and reach a consensus about which views you are in agreement; bring that group view back to inform a wider whole class discussion which could also consider the relevance or otherwise of these views to the current state of international relations in the world.

6.4 Heroic activity

We hear a lot about heroes and acts of heroism and they are often associated with the activities of soldiers when they are involved in self sacrifice in dangerous wartime activities but they may also be associated with situations

where people are standing up for their principles also in potentially very difficult and dangerous situations.

1. Write down all the characteristics that you think could makeup an act of heroism or describe a hero.
2. When you have done that make up a template and then apply this template to two of the attached case studies (either A and B or C and D)

The Heroism Template	Soldier		Conscientious Objector	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Self sacrifice				
Standing up for others				
Difficult and dangerous situation(s)				
Dangerous consequences				
Using your own mind				
Fearless despite understanding or awareness of the consequence of actions				
Physical bravery and courage				
“Sticking to your guns” and principles				
Mental bravery and courage				
Ignoring your own well being for a cause in which you believe				
Exemplar for others				

3. When you have completed your analysis work out which person has been allocated the most characteristics. Does this make them the bigger hero?

4. Are you surprised at the outcomes of this exercise? Use the results of this exercise to help inform a full classroom discussion.

5. Why do you think that one received a medal of gallantry and the other one was treated very differently

It could be argued that people involved in the case studies all behaved bravely and heroically, though in different ways, there are a number of reasons why they were treated differently.

The soldiers were acting heroically in support of the aims and actions of those in power and were therefore examples that would be used to persuade others to follow suit and not question the use of military activities.

Conscientious objectors, on the other hand, although brave and heroic maintained a different set of principles from those in power and if their bravery had been acknowledged it could potentially undermine the support that the government required from ordinary people as it pursued its stated war aims and accompanying military actions.

6. Can you think of any other people that you know about or have heard about who may also be “hidden” heroes? Examples might be young people who stand up to bullies, people who refuse to join gangs, young men and women who refuse to accept sexist or homophobic behaviour and youngsters who stand up for their rights.

7. Could your template be applied to them?