

ACTIVITY 1
Why did Reg and his Friends Join the Army?

**Look at the postcards (from the CD ROM).
What do the pictures make you feel?**

What do you think they were produced to do?

War broke out on the 4th August 1914 when Reg had just turned seventeen. He still had another year at school but all his friends who were a little older than him decided to join up. Reg decided he would like to join up too even though he was still a year too young.

Reg Wilkes joined the Birmingham Pals in 1914. This battalion was made up of people from the same District of Birmingham Reg was from. The families often knew each other, worked and socialised together.

**Discuss why you think Reg joined up?
Draw a spider-diagram or make a list of the different reasons there could be.**

Now read Transcript 1 of a letter Reg wrote home when he had joined up and was training in England, before being sent to France.

Fill in the data capture table. It will help you answer the following questions. What sorts of information does the letter provide? What can you infer from it? What other information would you like to know?

Finish with a discussion in your group or class to conclude why you think Reg joined up.

What evidence is this decision based on?

ACTIVITY 1
Why Did Reg and his Friends Join the army
DATA CAPTURE TABLE

Read Transcript draft and consider the question “Why did Reg join the Birmingham Pals”

Fill in the table below

TRANSCRIPT

“Today is the anniversary of our arrival at Moseley. B “Coy” is much the same as then in personnel. A few have gone from use with transfers etc. Two, as far as I know have been killed at the Front, only last week the death of C W Atherton was reported.(*see sheet for the rest of this letter*)

What does this source definitely tell me?

What might this source tell me? What can I infer from this source?

What doesn't this source tell me about why Reg joined up to fight? What questions do I want to ask?

ACTIVITY 1
Why did Reg and his Friends Join the Army?
TEACHERS' NOTES

Resources

- Transcript 1 and letter written by Reg when training in Britain
- Patriotic postcards (CD ROM)

Aim

- To consider why thousands of young people like Reg Wilkes joined up to fight in World War One
- To use primary sources
- To consider what facts can be learnt from a document and what can be inferred
- To develop literacy skills

Notes

The students will need an understanding that the “pals” battalions consisted of recruits with a common link, such as the school that they attended, their place of work or living in a particular geographical area.

The Pals battalions in the Birmingham area were recruited via the “Birmingham Daily Post” and the “Birmingham Daily Mail”. The aim was to recruit non-manual workers.

During the morning of the Saturday 19th September the 2nd Battalion had enough men. Only about 250 names were left on the list to fill the 3rd Battalion (needed 1000 altogether). Of the 4,500 names some failed on health grounds and others joined other battalions/regiments as they wanted to get to the front sooner and there were rumours that the pals battalions would never fight.

The first activity uses postcards in Reg’s collection of material. They were used by the government to encourage national pride and patriotism. Pupils should list the types of feelings that they invoke and thus consider how Reg and others felt about them.

Pupils should then consider what the reasons were that might have caused Reg and his friends to join. They should then read the letter and gather data to fill in the “data capture” chart, which helps differentiate primary source data and inferences.

Pupils are then asked to discuss all the data to come to a conclusion (with reasons) on why Reg joined up.

Extension activity A section from “Remembrance” by Theresa Breslin is included on the CD ROM. Remembrance is a novel for young people and tells the story of a group of friends and their experiences during World War One at home and in France. It considers in some detail why men chose to sign up to fight. The section given in this pack can be used to develop this aspect further.

For further information on World War One please check the bibliography and website list.

ACTIVITY 2
What did the Soldiers Feel about the War?
TEACHERS' NOTES

Resources needed:

- Emotions graph for each group
- Emotions cards - cut up into individual statements for each group
- Transcript 2 of a letter by Reg to his parents dated 1st June, 1916
- Original letter dated 1.6.1916 on CD ROM (optional)

Aims of Activity

- To provide a deeper understanding of the conditions during World War One
- To develop an idea of chronology
- To help develop skills of empathy

Notes

Using the “cards” which provide extracts from Reg’s letters, a soldier in World War One and notable dates, students should sort them into chronological order. Working in small groups will provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and justify their thinking. Once an order has been established pupils should then draw an emotions graph to link in with their chronology. How did Reg actually feel at each of these points in time? More positive emotions will show above the line and negative emotions below as in the example below.

++ (very positive feelings of happiness, excitement) X

+ (positive feelings of happiness, excitement) X

- (negative feelings of sadness, fear) X

-- (very negative feelings of sadness, fear) X

Groups can negotiate the final solutions. An “order” could be established for the degree of emotion for all the cards. Final class discussion can focus on what evidence is not available and thus how *trustworthy* the conclusions made are. Are there difficulties with some events being both exciting and frightening? What do they think it would really be like to be a soldier? The last activity uses one of Reg’s letters (Transcript 1) to develop ideas of what it was really like in France. Reg did not just spend time fighting on the front line but spent much time behind the lines where there was opportunity to wash, play sport and to write letters.

Follow up activity can use drama or “hot seating” (ask a pupil or several pupils to take it in turn to be Reg Wilkes so that the rest of the class can ask “him” questions about the war) to extend development of empathy skills. Further details on Reg (eg photographs, other letters, family details) are available on the CD ROM.

For information on World War One and the Somme see bibliography/website list

ACTIVITY 2
What did the Soldiers Feel about the War?

You will need copies of the “emotion cards”(cut-up) and an emotions graph.

Look at the “emotion cards” your group have been given.

These are excerpts from the letters and personal notes from Reg Wilkes a young man of 17 who volunteered to join the armed forces in World War One.

Working as a group place the “cards” in chronological order

Then for each “emotion card” decide how Reg Wilkes felt and mark a point on your emotions graph to show this. Make sure you have reasons for your choices.

For example if you think he is very happy about something put a small cross above the line or if you think he was frightened place a small cross below the line.

You can place it further away from the middle line for greater sadness or happiness.

Join all the crosses up to make a “graph” of Reg’s feelings.

Questions for group discussion

Did you have any problems?

What does the graph show you?

What do you think it was like to be a soldier in the trenches?

Now you will need transcript 2

Read Transcript 2, one of Reg’s letters, dated 1st June 1916.

Here he describes more about his time in France.

Do you think they spent all their time fighting?

What else did they do?

ACTIVITY 2
What did the Soldiers Feel about the War?
EMOTIONS CARDS

Please cut these out and put in chronological order.
Each card can then be used to develop an emotions graph

21.12.1915

"I had 7 parcels yesterday, a packet of cigarettes,... chocolate from Emscote ... and some handkerchiefs and a drinking cup from Bessie Preston. I hope you have sent on those buttons....".

BATTLE OF DELVILLE WOOD

27TH JULY, 1916

2.12.16 "How desolate it must be for them. How true in this case the old saying seems – "Whom the Gods love die young" He had every thing to look forward to and was such a good sort himself" (On the death of a friend)

28.1.1916

"I have heard that some of 1st battalion are in Birmingham on leave; if so it should not be long before we have leave."

29.1.1916

"I have been in the trenches when several mines have gone off ... when the mine is very near the earth under one, trembles and shakes violently"

21.12.1915

"We have just come out of the trenches after a three day spell.... Fortunately we had no casualties"

15.11.15

"Rumours are flying about as to when we leave England but nothing definite is known, We are being dished out bit by bit with the usual service kit and accessories"

26.11.15

REG'S DAD'S BIRTHDAY

2.12.16 "Please see that you get them with my money (sounds swank, does it not) and you can send me on a week's stipend to help me to get any Christmas presents I wish. Am sending up "Barlasch of the Guard" for Dad"

9.10.16

"Matron has not yet turned up but we expect her tonight. I daresay when she sees my arm, she will be able to give you a very satisfactory report" (at a Hospital in Britain)

ACTIVITY 3
Why is it hard to know what the Trenches really like?
TEACHERS' NOTES

Bruce Bairnsfather, a cartoonist came from Birmingham. He drew cartoons about the war for a number of newspapers and magazines.

Resources for each group

- Letters 21.12.15 and 28/29.1.1916 (to Mother and Father) (CD ROM)
- Transcript 5
- Cartoon about trench warfare by Bruce Bairnsfather (CD ROM/ Websites)
- Photo of trench scenes (CD ROM)

Aim

- To consider the different types of primary source and the sorts of information they provide
- To consider the “trustworthiness” of these different sources

Notes

This activity uses pictorial primary sources (and also letters for comparison) and asks students to consider the information and its accuracy that can be gained. Students are asked to fill in the table with details about each of the document types. The table helps highlight the different purpose of different sources and thus illustrates the different bias they may have. You might like them to consider the differences between the different sources in terms of seriousness and hidden messages. Final discussion can focus on the trustworthiness of such sources.

Follow-up activity Use propaganda from the web or ask students to develop their own cartoons using the information in the letters.

For further information refer to the bibliography/website listings

ACTIVITY 3

Why is it hard to know what the Trenches really like?

You will need a World War one Cartoon by Bairnsfather, photos of trenches and transcript 5 of letters by Reg Wilkes a soldier in World War One, written in December 1915 and January 1916. Look carefully at the documents and think about what they **do** and **don't** tell us about the war.

What are the pictures useful for?

What other information do the letters provide?

Add Author and details about who it was produced for?	What is the purpose of the document? why do you think it was written and what sort of style does it have?	What information does it provide about the War? Are there any hidden messages?	What can you infer from the document?	What does it fail to tell you?
Letter				
Photo				
Cartoon				

ACTIVITY 6
What was the Battle of Delville Wood like?
TEACHERS' NOTES

Resources for each group

- Transcripts 6 (CD ROM)
- Optional - Letters 28/29.1.1916, 21.12.15 and 1.6.1916 (to "Dor") (CD ROM)
- Diary extract (CD ROM)
- Official report from War Diary (transcript on CD ROM)
- Newspaper article (CD ROM)
- Diary by Lieutenant Pearman (CD ROM)
- Transcript 7a – letter to Reg's parents

Aims

- To consider different sources for the same event
- To consider the types of information that can be gleaned from different sources
- To consider the trustworthiness of the different sources

Notes

Students are asked to use a number of different official and personal documents to learn about the diversity of primary sources and the evidence they provide. Students should also consider the trustworthiness of the different types of sources. A table is provided for students to add information about the material.

Follow-up work Consider the types of language used in the different types of sources provided. Included on the web are some other interesting diaries about the Battle of the Somme and specifically the Battle of Delville Wood. Some interesting comparisons can also be made using Reg's letters home and his more personal notes written in his diary (transcript on CD ROM) where he is much more informative about the location, troop movements etc

Pupils could use the list Reg made of people in his platoon who were injured (see CD ROM) and check on the Commonwealth War Graves website to see if they died. Alternatively they may wish to look up names on the local war memorial (or list copied from it). Details about these individuals could also be researched.

For further information on World War One refer to the bibliography/website listings

ACTIVITY 6
What was the Battle of Delville Wood like?

Look at the different primary sources.

You will need Transcript 5 and 6 of letters by Reg Wilkes, a soldier in World War One, his diary extract, the diary of Lieutenant Pearman, a newspaper article on Delville Wood and the Official War Diary (from the CD ROM).

Look carefully at the documents and then fill in the table below.

Question	What information can you find to show what it was like in the trenches in France?	How trustworthy do you think the information is? Why do you think this? (Think about the purpose of the document and where the information came from.)
Source From the letters home by Reg		
From Reg's diary?		
From the Newspaper		
From the Official War Diary		

ACTIVITY 6 continued		
From the Diary of Pearman?		

**How accurate a picture can you develop from this information?
Which sources do you think are the most helpful? Why?**

Where else could you look to check the accuracy of this information?

**Look at Reg's diary. His entries stop after July 26th, 1916.
Why do you think this is?**

Read the Regimental letter (Transcript 7a) to his parents to help you.

Use what you have learnt from this letter and from the other documents used in this activity, write a newspaper report (approx 100) for the local paper in Birmingham, entitled " A local man returns with injuries". What information would you be allowed to print? What would you want your readers to feel? Use the extract from The Times to think about what style of writing to use.

ACTIVITY 7
How do we interpret the past?
TEACHERS' NOTES

Resources

- Transcripts 6 and 7
- Optional - Original letters 28/29.1.16, 2.12.15, 1.6.16 (to Dor) (CD ROM)
- Diary extract (CD ROM)
- Newspaper cutting (CD ROM)
- War diary extract transcript (CD ROM)
- A3 paper
- Transcript 7a – letter written in hospital

It might be useful to “age” the documents

Aim

- To develop ideas of Chronology
- To consider the different types of primary source
- To consider how trustworthy the different types of material are
- To develop sorting skills

Notes

Students should be told that a number of old documents have been found in a museum cupboard and they seem to include some private letters as well as various official documents.

Ask the pupils to sort through the documents and fill in the details on a timeline using A3 paper as shown on the activity sheet. It is important that they consider and note for each document : what it is, author, what it is about, and its trustworthiness.

Using Transcript 7a pupils are then asked to consider what Reg felt like when he was in hospital. Group discussion provides a good opportunity for pupils to focus on the different emotions that soldiers might have had in hospital. Reg may well have had mixed emotions about being safe in England when his friends were still in France. Some, he knew, had already died and so he was aware of the dangers, however he would also know that his family would be relieved to have him home.

Lastly they are asked to write a short pen portrait on him for a museum display. Students can work in pairs or on their own.

For further information on this period of World War One please check the bibliography. There are a number of good websites, which provide information on the Somme

