

Session Plan 6

Events on the First World War Home Front

This session introduces significant events that happened on the Home Front during the First World War.

The activities are designed to support the National Curriculum in England, Wales and Northern Ireland at Key Stage 2 and are suitable for pupils in Scotland following the broad general education phase of the Curriculum of Excellence. They are relevant for the KS2 'Local History Study' in England and Wales, 'The World Around Us' at KS2 in Northern Ireland, and support experiences and outcomes in Social Studies at Levels 2-4 in the broad general education of the Curriculum for Excellence. The activities are also tailored for youth groups such as Young Archaeologists' Clubs, Scouts and Guides.

Session aims

- For your group to learn about significant Home Front dates and events.
- For your group to create a timeline of First World War events on the Home Front.

Session outcomes

Your class or group will have discovered more about the significant events of the First World War and will be able to create a timeline of these events. Your pupils or group will have undertaken some independent research to find out more about one or more of the events.

Resources required

Timeline of events:

This is available at the end of this Session Plan, both with the dates linked to provide an answer sheet and with the dates separately to enable your pupils or group members to create their own version of the timeline, which can then be checked back against the answer sheet.



Illustrations:

The Home Front Legacy project commissioned five special illustrations that depict aspects of life on the Home Front, 1914–18.

The illustrations show different aspects of the Home Front landscapes of the United Kingdom during the First World War. They can be downloaded as A3-sized PDFs using the links below:

- [Town](#)
- [Air](#)
- [Army Camp](#)
- [Countryside](#)
- [Coast](#)

The illustrated landscapes are imagined, but all the buildings, military activity and people going about their day-to-day business are based on real places and events that formed part of the Home Front story. The illustrations can be joined together to create a wall display for your classroom.

Session plan

Divide your class or group into small teams and provide each team with a set of the Home Front events and a set of the associated dates.

Begin by challenging your teams to put the events into order, starting with the earliest. Encourage your teams to discuss their ideas as they work through the selection of events. You might like to prompt the groups by asking questions such as, “Are there some events that must have occurred before others?” (For example, the Munitions of War Act was a response to the ‘Shell Crisis’, so it must have happened later.) Can your teams match dates to the events? They might know some of the dates themselves and some of the events have a year included in the description – which will give your teams a little bit of help!

Once your teams have completed the task of ordering the events, compare their timelines. If appropriate for your group/class, you could consider scoring the process to find a winning team.



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Can your group or class find any evidence for the events in their timelines hidden within the Home Front Legacy illustrations? For example, this might include defences constructed to try and counter air raids, as well as evidence of damage to buildings or people undertaking particular roles.

Inspirational idea... can your pupils or group members conduct some research into one (or more) of the events from the timeline using the internet or other resources, such as books – or even contemporary newspapers? Encourage them to create a poster about the event that they are researching for a class display, or to put together a presentation using PowerPoint or a similar computer package to share with the rest of the group or class.

The following links can be used as starting points for research. Please note that the Home Front Legacy project and the Council for British Archaeology are not responsible for the content of third-party websites:

- [The first air raid on Britain](#) hit Dover in December 1914. This link takes you to a website dedicated to 'Zeppelin raids, Gothas and 'Giants': Britain's First Blitz' written by Ian Castle.
- [Voluntary recruiting in Britain, 1914-1915](#) article by Professor Peter Simkins, on the British Library website.
- [The Scarborough Bombardment](#) resources on MyLearning from Scarborough Museums Trust about the bombardment of Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool in December 1914.
- [The Shell Crisis of 1915](#), from Wikipedia.
- [Female munitions workers in the First World War](#) article on MyLearning from Leeds Library and Information Service.

Writing challenge... can your pupils or group members create a front-page newspaper story about the Home Front event that they have researched? Can they think up a good headline for their story?

Discussion question... how might their chosen event be reported nowadays? How would social media and the internet change the reporting of the story?



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Can your pupils or group members write a series of social media posts that describe the unfolding of the event? What hashtag might be used to describe the event?

Extension suggestion... you might like to challenge your pupils or group to include some events from before and after the First World War on your timeline to put the Home Front events into context. Events you may wish to consider including could be the death of Queen Victoria, the sinking of the *Titanic*, the Suffragette movement, etc. What do these events add in terms of social context? For example, the Suffragette movement was heavily influenced by the changing roles of women during the First World War.

Compare and contrast... can your pupils or group create a timeline of significant First World War battles and events that happened outside Britain (e.g. on the Western Front)? Can your pupils draw conclusions about how events elsewhere during the war influenced activity on the Home Front? For example, factories in Sheffield produced an increased number of helmets in preparation for the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

Final questions

At the end of this session, your group members or pupils should be able to answer the following questions: ***Can you describe some of the significant events that took place on the Home Front during the First World War? How did events which happened on the Home Front during the First World War affect people and places?***



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Home Front Timeline (teacher/group leader copy – 1/4)

1914

- 28 June 1914** Archduke Franz Ferdinand assassinated in Sarajevo.
- 4 August 1914** Britain declares war on Germany.
- 7 August 1914** General Lord Kitchener starts a campaign to recruit volunteers for the Army. At the outbreak of war Britain's army was very small and more soldiers would be needed to win the war. During this time, many 'Pals Battalions' were formed. The raw recruits would eventually be housed in large training camps where they would learn how to be a soldier.
- 16 December 1914** The German Navy bombard Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool. Many buildings were damaged and over 120 people died in this raid. The German fleet also laid mines at sea which sunk a number of civilian ships.
- 24 December 1914** First ever air raid on Britain. The first bomb ever dropped from the air against the UK fell on Taswell Street, near Dover Castle, causing £40 of damage.

1915

- 19 January 1915** Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn bombed during the first airship raid on Britain. Two Zeppelin airships attacked these coastal towns in East Anglia, killing 4 people and injuring 16.
- 14 May 1915** The 'Shell Crisis' started due to a shortage of munitions. The artillery on the front were firing so many shells that stores of ammunition were starting to run extremely low.

Home Front Timeline (teacher/group leader copy – continued – 2/4)

2 July 1915

The Munitions of War Act 1915 was passed by Parliament as a response to the Shell Crisis. The act brought private companies under control of Ministry of Munitions and led to the construction of 200 new munitions factories. The Ministry of Munitions encouraged factories to employ women to produce more munitions and help fill the jobs of men recruited into the army.

1916

5 April 1916

Zeppelin L15 damaged by anti-aircraft gunfire crashes into the Thames Estuary.

2 March 1916

The Military Service Act 1916 introduced. All single men aged 18-40 could now be forced to join the army. Men refused to join up on grounds of conscientious objection, family issues or due to their occupation. These objections would be taken to a tribunal where their fate was decided.

2 September 1916

First airship shot down over Britain by William Leefe-Robinson. Leefe-Robinson used special ammunition to shoot down airship SL. 11. The airship crashed near the village of Cuffley, Hertfordshire.

1917

9 January 1917

Germany recommences unrestricted U-boat warfare (having previously moved away from the tactic earlier in the war). This involved attacking and sinking merchant ships without warning. As these ships supplied Britain with vital food and raw materials it was the aim of the German Navy to starve Britain into submission.

Home Front Timeline (teacher/group leader copy – continued – 3/4)

- 1 February 1917** Voluntary rationing introduced. A campaign to encourage people to voluntarily ration their food intake was introduced. This scheme had an effect but wasn't enough to prevent food shortages.
- 2 February 1917** Women's Land Army formed. The Women's Land Army (WLA) led to women working as labourers on farms and cutting down trees for timber. They played a vital role and helped keep the country fed when unrestricted U-boat warfare was starting to take its toll on the merchant fleet.
- 25 May 1917** The first air raid by Gotha bombers takes place with bombs falling on Shorncliffe and Folkestone. These large fixed-wing aircraft carried a large bomb load and were less vulnerable to attack than airships, meaning they could attack during daylight. This raid killed 95 people, injuring a further 195.
- 13 June 1917** The first raid on London by Gotha Bombers. A formation of twenty Gotha bombers attacked the capital during the daytime. Bombs fell on Victoria Station and Upper North Street School, killing 18 children and injuring 37 teachers and children. 162 people were killed and 432 injured, making this the most deadly raid on Britain during the First World War.
- 1918**
- 6 February 1918** Representation of the People Act 1918 given Royal assent. Women over the age of 30 are now allowed to vote. Only women over the age of 30 who occupied a property were allowed to vote, which was only 40% of the population of women at the time. It would be another 10 years before all women over the age of 21 were allowed to vote.



Home Front Timeline (teacher/group leader copy – continued – 4/4)

- 25 February 1918** Compulsory food rationing introduced. At this point, Britain only had 6 weeks' worth of wheat stores left. These food shortages led to the Government introducing compulsory food rationing to ensure food didn't run out and so that food was shared fairly. Sugar, margarine, butter, and meat were all rationed.
- 19 May 1918** The last heavy bomber raid against London. 28 Gotha and three Giant bombers attacked London during the night, killing 49 civilians.
- 11 November 1918** Armistice Day. Peace is declared, the war is now over. Life on the Home Front would eventually return to normal. Many of the sites and buildings would return to their pre-war function. Many remain for you to re-discover.



Home Front Timeline (group copy – 1/4)

Cut out the events and arrange them in the order that you think they happened:

Zeppelin L15 damaged by anti-aircraft gunfire crashes into the Thames Estuary.

The Military Service Act 1916 introduced. All single men aged 18-40 could now be forced to join the army. Men refused to join up on grounds of conscientious objection, family issues or due to their occupation. These objections would be taken to a tribunal where their fate was decided.

First ever air raid on Britain. The first bomb ever dropped from the air against the UK fell on Taswell Street, near Dover Castle, causing £40 of damage.

Britain declares war on Germany.

General Lord Kitchener starts campaign to recruit volunteers for the Army. At the outbreak of war Britain's army was very small and more soldiers would be needed to win the war. During this time, many 'Pals Battalions' were formed. The raw recruits would eventually be housed in large training camps where they would learn how to be a soldier.

The 'Shell Crisis' started due to a shortage of munitions. The artillery on the front were firing so many shells that stores of ammunition were starting to run extremely low.



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The German Navy bombard Scarborough, Whitby and Hartlepool. Many buildings were damaged and over 120 people died in this raid. The German fleet also laid mines at sea which sunk a number of civilian ships.

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Women's Land Army formed. The Women's Land Army (WLA) led to women working as labourers on farms and cutting down trees for timber. They played a vital role and helped keep the country fed when unrestricted U-boat warfare was starting to take its toll on the merchant fleet.

The last heavy bomber raid against London. 28 Gotha and three Giant bombers attacked London during the night, killing 49 civilians.

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Home Front Timeline – cut out the dates and match them to the events

28 June 1914

2 March 1916

4 August 1914

9 January 1917

7 August 1914

1 February 1917

16 December 1914

2 February 1917

24 December 1914

25 May 1917

19 January 1915

13 June 1917

14 May 1915

6 February 1918

2 July 1915

25 February 1918

5 April 1916

19 May 1918

2 September 1916

11 November 1918



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