

# Impacts of the First World War

One hundred years after the 'Great War' began, how is it relevant to the subjects you study today?

IBReviewExtras



Go online (see back cover) for a printable PDF of these centre pages that you can display in class, plus an accompanying lesson plan.

## Psychology

### Shell shock and PTSD

In 1917 German psychiatrist Robert Gaupp reported that his hospitals were widely populated with soldiers unfit for battle but with no visible wounds. This condition was dubbed 'shell shock'. In 1951 the DSM-1 included 'Gross Stress Reaction' as a psychological disorder and today post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a recognised consequence of war, as debilitating and long lasting as physical injury.

- <http://historyofptsd.wordpress.com/>
- BBC article: [www.tinyurl.com/dhju6](http://www.tinyurl.com/dhju6)
- History of psychotraumatology: [www.tinyurl.com/mnogtjt](http://www.tinyurl.com/mnogtjt)

### IQ tests for army entrance

In order to help screen the huge number of recruits signing up to join the military, the US government began using the Stanford-Binet intelligence test. Its purported success led to the tests being used in civilian life, including in an effort to screen the US population and identify the 'feeble-minded'. In the 1920s Carl Brigham, who helped develop the US army's tests, administered the first 'Scholastic Aptitude Tests', the precursor to the modern SAT. In the 1950s the Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) was developed as a response to the Stanford-Binet test and the WAIS is still used today to measure IQ.

- IQ tests go to war: <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5293>
- History of intelligence testing: [www.tinyurl.com/27jz88a](http://www.tinyurl.com/27jz88a)

## Chemistry

German chemist Fritz Haber shows the ethical dilemmas facing chemists at that time. During the early years of the twentieth century Haber developed a process for the synthesis of ammonia, which was vital for the development of effective fertilisers, and it is estimated that half the world's population remains fed because of the effectiveness of his process. He won the Nobel prize in 1918 for his work with fertilisers. However, Haber was also instrumental to the German poison gas programme during the war, overseeing the first use of chlorine gas at Ypres in 1915. Haber once said:

During peace time a scientist belongs to the World, but during war time he belongs to his country.

There was a strong reaction to the use of chemical weapons in the war. Since then they have rarely been used. This is partly due to the Geneva protocol prohibiting their use, coupled with the fact that countries fear strong retaliation if they use them. However, the purported use of chemical weapons in Syria shows that this problem is not solved yet.

**GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!— An ecstasy of fumbling  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.**

Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce et decorum est'



## Humanities subjects

### St Kilda's 1-day war

On 15 May 1918 an SM U-90 submarine surfaced unexpectedly by Hirta, the only populated island of the Scottish islands of St Kilda. Its 80 inhabitants were warned politely that shelling was imminent and their village was duly bombarded. No islander was harmed.

St Kilda is an extreme environment. Forty-one miles west of the Outer Hebrides, these storm-blasted granite isles are the rotting teeth of a drowned volcanic mouth. Subsistence conditions prevailed right up until the 1914–18 war. People lived as their ancestors had, scaling sheer cliffs to gather bird eggs and meat. The islanders lacked regular contact with the mainland until the Royal Navy installed a wireless telegraph, complete with ten staff, which was the submarine's intended target.

Despite the brevity of hostilities, the First World War was fatal for St Kilda's culture. The sense of a 'shrinking world' became inescapable. The island's youth migrated to the mainland, spurred on by the telegraph staff's tales. The remaining population, numbering just 36, was evacuated to the mainland in 1930, leaving behind an unpeopled wilderness.

### Aerial photography

Prior to the First World War aerial photography consisted of cameras mounted on all manner of flying objects, from kites to hot air balloons, rockets and even pigeons. The first recorded use of photography from an aeroplane was in 1911 when an Italian pilot flew over Turkish gun emplacements outside Tripoli, but the captain had trouble remembering the details so requested a camera.

During the First World War, demand grew for up-to-date and locally precise images. These could literally mean the difference between life and death. By 1918 French units were producing up to 10 000 aerial images per day and some 56 000 were produced for the US expeditionary forces during the Meuse–Argonne offensive. Cameras were attached to rockets for the first time in the 1920s, allowing the curvature of the Earth to be seen. Aerial photographic reconnaissance was crucial to the success of the D-day landings and high-altitude reconnaissance photos fuelled the Cold War for decades.

Aerial photography is a crucial tool for mapping urban and rural environments, helping to identify geographical features and ancient archaeological sites. Striking photos taken from spacecraft include the picture of Earth during the *Apollo 8* mission (which is credited by some with spawning the modern environmental movement) and *Voyager 1*'s picture showing Earth as nothing more than a 'pale blue dot'. See [www.tinyurl.com/cvxcw35](http://www.tinyurl.com/cvxcw35) for a further history of aerial photography.

### Womens' rights

During the war, women filled the gaps in the workforce by entering factories, civil service, transport, munitions production and chemical development. In the UK it is estimated that 1.6 million women entered the workforce. Their rise in the employment ranks was short lived and little progress in gender equality was actually achieved in the years immediately after the war as the men returned to their posts, but the war years showed that women had a large part to play in the success of contemporary society. See [www.tinyurl.com/avmvpxs](http://www.tinyurl.com/avmvpxs) for more information on women in the war.

### League of Nations and UN

As Europe limped into the peace process that ended the war, the need for a strategic and global approach to national relations became apparent. In 1919 representatives from 42 countries signed an agreement for long-term peace and cooperation known as the League of Nations. Throughout the 1920s the League of Nations worked to maintain the fragile peace brokered by the Treaty of Versailles, but it proved unable to stem the tide of growing discontent, and by expelling the Soviet Union in 1939 it set off a chain reaction that resulted in its dissolution in 1946.

The United Nations became the League's successor and remains the closest thing we have to a democratic governance of international relationships. Its activities encompass global finance, human rights, education and refugee support, in addition to global security and peace negotiations. In 2007 the UN was awarded the Nobel peace prize for its work.

## Philosophy

Ludwig Wittgenstein joined the Austrian army in 1914, after having spent nearly 4 years studying philosophy at the University of Cambridge. His sister reported that she suspected it was out of a desire to try something difficult as opposed to a sense of patriotism, and he won a number of medals for bravery. During the war he continued to work on his philosophy and by the end of the conflict had finished the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which was published in 1921 and later offered as his PhD dissertation at Cambridge.

During the Second World War Wittgenstein remained in the UK, working in a hospital to support the Allies. He died in 1951 and his work became influential in philosophy, psychology, mathematics and linguistics. In 1999 a survey of US universities rated his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations* as the most important book of the twentieth century.

## Education

Kurt Hahn, born in 1886, served in the German Department for Foreign Affairs during the war, monitoring English newspapers. Affected by the horrors of the war, Hahn devoted the rest of his life to education, specifically to the belief that an international education grounded in learning outside the classroom, incorporating physical activity and a devotion to service, could help prevent the atrocities that he'd witnessed.

In 1920 he founded Schule Schloss Salem in Germany on these principles, but then had to leave the country because of his opposition to the Nazi regime. He moved to the UK and founded Gordonstoun School, attended by both Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh and his son Charles, the Prince of Wales.

After the Second World War Hahn founded boarding schools all around the world and inspired others to establish programmes based on his principles, including Round Square Schools, Outward Bound, the United World Colleges, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the International Baccalaureate.



Ypres after German bombardment