

Europeana Learning Scenario

(Teachers)

Title

“For and From the Homeland”: World War I Poetry and Postcards

Author(s)

April Capili

Abstract

In this lesson, students are tasked to study side by side two types of documents: one, sentimental postcards sent to soldiers early in the First World War, the other, some pieces of poetry written by Wilfred Owen, a soldier, a casualty, and one of the greatest British poets of the Great War. Using what they have learned in class discussions and from assigned readings, students are challenged to compare the documents in terms of type, time period, message, and the expectations and realities surrounding the global conflict.

Keywords

World War I, Wilfred Owens, War Poetry, War Writing, Literature

Table of summary

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Subject	History, Literature
Topic	World War I, soldiers at war
Age of students	16-17
Preparation time	120-150 minutes
Teaching time	90 minutes
Online teaching material	BBC.com: Soldier Life in the Trenches The British Library online: Life as a Soldier The Poetry Foundation: Wilfred Owen BBC.com: Wilfred Owen
Offline teaching material	Paper and pen for those who wish to take notes by hand.

	<p>Printed copies of Wilfred Owen poems, such as “Dulce et Decorum Est”, “Anthem for Doomed Youth”, “Spring Offensive”</p> <p>These reading material:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowe, N. <i>Mastering World History</i>. 5th ed. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. pp. 18-32.• Walsh, B. (2014). <i>GCSE Modern World History</i>. 2nd ed. London: Hodder. pp. 2-36.
Europeana resources used	<p>‘Love and Fond Kisses to Dear Dad from Home.’ A British sentimental postcard. n.a. 1916-1918. Credits: Europeana 1914-1918; contributor: The Army Children Archive. License: CC-BY-SA.</p> <p>‘Loving Thoughts this Christmastide.’ A British sentimental postcard. n.a. 1916-1918. Credits: Europeana 1914-1918; contributor: The Army Children Archive. License: CC-BY-SA.</p>

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Integration into the curriculum

This lesson can be implemented in History classes in upper secondary education, and in particular, in the context of class sessions on the First World War. It can also be used in English classes dealing with (contemporary-, war-) poetry in English.

Aim of the lesson

The lesson aims to give students a view into the experiences of soldiers as well as citizens who stayed home during World War I by way of studying two different types of historical sources.

At the end of the lesson the students will

- become familiar with some World War I poetry
- be able to articulate the differences between expectations and reality relating to historical events
- become more skilled in comparing and contrasting different types of documents

Outcome of the lesson

At the end of the lesson, the students will have produced a comparison of the two types of texts that they considered. The targeted output of this lesson is written work, but the teacher can allow students to choose other forms of (re)presentation (oral sharing, a recorded audio-only presentation, a mind map, or visuals).

Trends

- Collaborative Learning: a strong focus on group work
- Visual Search & Learning: images and multimedia are more powerful than verbal stimuli
- BYOD: Students bring their own mobile devices to the classroom
- Open Source Learning: teachers copy, share, adapt, and reuse free educational materials

Key competences

Literacy competence: In the course of the lesson, the students will learn words relating to war; new vocabulary in English will also be gained as the poems are studied and discussed.

Digital competence: the students are expected to access internet resources, complete their work on their devices, and submit them using an online learning/communication platform.

Cultural awareness and expression competence: the lesson will touch upon Western cultural traditions (for instance, Christmas time celebrations, letter writing, etc.); students will have to take their understanding of these into account in their work.

Activities

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
PART 1 Introduction	The teacher introduces the topic and activity for the day, enumerates the aims of the lesson, and the learning outcomes the students can expect.	5'
Brainstorming: activating knowledge	In groups of 3 to 4 people, the students will make a list of phrases that show what they remember from past lessons on World War I. They can be asked to categorize the phrases they write down under "causes", "actors", "objectives", and "expectations". The students will be allowed to consult their materials (online or physical).	8'

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
Short discussion	The teacher will then ask the students to share what they remember from past lessons using the lists they created.	5'
Group work on source type 1	<p>The students will be given time to choose and read at least 1 Wilfred Owen poem. They can choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Dulce et Decorum Est” • “Anthem for Doomed Youth” • “Spring Offensive” <p>Physical copies of the poems can be given to the students. Alternatively, the students can also search for them online using their devices.</p> <p><i>(In the interest of time, the teacher could also give the reading and selection of the poem as an assignment that needs to be completed before the present class period.)</i></p> <p>In reading their selected poem in groups, the students are tasked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) make a list of words that they did not originally know the meaning of; (b) choose at least one line from the poem that they understand and which they think allows the reader to understand what war was like for soldiers; (c) write down their brief explanation of what they understand to be the reality of the war for those directly involved in it. <p>The teacher will of course be available in the classroom to assist the students as they grapple with their selected poem.</p> <p>Ideally, the work of the students will need to be submitted before the next class period, either on paper or on the online platform used by the class.</p>	32'
PART 2 Comparison and contrast of sources	The teacher will ask at least 1 student to give a recapitulation of the activities done in the previous class session.	5'

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
Explanation of the next step: introduction of source type 2	The teacher will then explain the activity for the current class period. The students are tasked with comparing and contrasting the poem they selected before with a couple of postcards sent to soldiers at the warfront.	7'
Group work on comparing source types 1 and 2	<p>The students are given time to access and study the postcards on <i>Europeana.eu</i> on their devices. In case the students do not have laptops or tablets in the classroom, the teacher can project at least one of the sources for all the students to see. Alternatively, physical copies of the postcards can be distributed in class.</p> <p>The students are then tasked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Compare the poems and postcards in terms of type, author, and time period. (b) Answer the question: What do the postcards say about the expectations of the soldiers and families with regard to the war? (c) Briefly compare and contrast the views expressed in the poems and those in the postcards. <p>The teacher will be at hand to assist the students, answer their questions if they have any, or direct them with questions if they need guidance.</p> <p>The desired output at the end of this activity is written work. The students are asked to do the foregoing in writing. They can submit their work either on paper or online. <i>However, the teacher can decide to allow the students to submit work in other forms (oral presentation, visuals, audio-recording, etc.)</i></p> <p>It would be recommendable to give the students time to work on their tasks in the classroom <i>and</i> to ask them to submit the final output at a later moment, so that they have sufficient time to return to their previous task and incorporate into the present work their previous responses.</p>	25'
Brief sharing and discussion of findings	In the time remaining, the teacher can ask a few students to share their findings with the rest of the class.	10'

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
	<p>In the current class session (or in the next one if time does not allow it), the teacher can mention, remind, or ask the students about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The novelty of the type of warfare waged in World War I (b) The use of new technologies and weapons (tear gas) (c) The use of propaganda targeted at home populations (d) The importance of letter exchanges to keep up the morale of the troops (e) The staggeringly high casualty rates 	

Assessment

Task 1

1. Make a list of phrases about past lessons on World War 1 (3 points)
2. Make a list of unfamiliar words (2 point)
3. Choose one line from the selected poem (2 points)
4. Explain briefly the reality of the war for those involved in it (3 points)

Task 2

- a. Compare the poems and postcards in terms of type, author, and time period. (3 points)
- b. Answer the question: What do the postcards say about the expectations of the soldiers and families with regard to the war? (2 points)
- c. Briefly compare and contrast the views expressed in the poems and those in the postcards. (4 points)
- d. Complete the short evaluation of the two tasks you had to complete. (1 point)

The teacher can also give points or credits to those who students who spoke up during the discussions.

***** AFTER IMPLEMENTATION *****

Student feedback

Students will be asked to include their feedback on the task in the Word document that they are expected to submit. Feedback will take the form of answers to the following questions:

- (a) What difficulties did you encounter in completing the two tasks?
- (b) Was this exercise helpful in deepening your understanding of the First World War? Explain your answer in at least one sentence.

About the Europeana DSI-4 project

[Europeana](#) is Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage, providing free online access to over 53 million digitised items drawn from Europe's museums, archives, libraries and galleries. The Europeana DSI-4 project continues the work of the previous three Europeana Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs). It is the fourth iteration with a proven record of accomplishment in creating access, interoperability, visibility and use of European cultural heritage in the five target markets outlined: European Citizens, Education, Research, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Institutions.

[European Schoolnet](#) (EUN) is the network of 32 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organisation, EUN aims to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners. European Schoolnet's task in the Europeana DSI-4 project is to continue and expand the Europeana Education Community.