6. Researching names on war memorials

War Memorials Trust

Background: This is the second in a series of lessons focusing on using war memorials to find out about local people and places in the past. It would be beneficial to teach this lesson after lesson 5, 'What can we learn from war memorials?' but the lesson can be adapted if this has not been taught. Pupils have opportunities to develop historical research skills by using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database to search for casualties named on their local war memorial and trace other details about them, helping them learn about their local area and its residents in the past. The lesson gives opportunities to link with mathematics, ICT and literacy.

Suitable for: Upper Key Stage 2

Learning objectives: Pupils will learn:

- To use the Commonwealth War Graves Commission database to find out about people from the local area in the past

Learning outcomes: Pupils will be able to:

- Use the database to find information about people named on a war memorial
- Answer questions using the information they have found

Resources: computer access**,** photos from visits to a war memorial, 'Researching names on war memorials' primary helpsheet, photos of war memorials if needed, 'Researching names on war memorials' PowerPoint, 'Using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission' primary resource sheet.

Introduction

What can we learn from war memorials?

- Slides 4 and 5: Recap the previous lesson (primary lesson 5, 'What can we learn from war memorials?') particularly the questions pupils came up with about the people named on their war memorial (or from photos of a war memorial if there is none locally). If lesson 5 has not been used get pupils to think of questions about the people named on a war memorial now as an introductory activity – what do they hope to find out about them? Why is it important to learn about who lived in our local area in the past?
- Revisit the photographs of your local war memorial taken during a visit (or use photographs of a different war memorial) and recap which questions can and cannot be answered using the inscriptions.
- Return to the list of sources of further information that the pupils came up with in the last lesson (or ask them where they would look for information to help them answer their

© War Memorials Trust, 2015

questions now if necessary) and introduce the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as a source of information.

Suggested teaching points and activities

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

- Slide 6: Outline the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Their website, www.cwgc.org contains information about their work and resources.
- Recap what pupils know about databases and why they are used, and model using the CWGC database to search for a casualty name from the war memorial your pupils have been studying (please see our 'Researching names on a war memorial,' primary helpsheet for guidance on using this resource effectively). We advise you try this out before the lesson so that you model using the database with a name that you know will return suitable information.
- Discuss with pupils the sort of information found through this search. Model how to note information that is relevant and answers the questions they wanted to answer. War Memorials Trust's 'Using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission' primary resource sheet can be used by pupils to record information.
- Highlight the potential problems of searching for information this way, such as a large number of returns for common names, and how these might be resolved.
- Ways of narrowing down results include using your own knowledge (e.g. of the casualty's regiment) to 'filter' your results or searching for your locality in the 'Additional information' field of the database, which would indicate that a person coming up in that search was from that place (this will only work if that information is held about your person by the CWGC but it can be helpful). You wish to model the search process with several names to demonstrate one that is relatively straightforward and one that is more complex, to show pupils how to narrow down the results and overcome possible challenges.
- If you plan to use this lesson to lead into learning in other curriculum areas (see 'Ideas for further work,' below), you might want to outline this at this stage to give help pupils put their work into context.

Children's research

- Slide 7: Give pupils time to independently search the database for other people named on the war memorial they have been studying, take notes on the resource sheet and answer the questions they had about that person – this could be presented in various ways. There are various ways this information can be used as the basis for further work (see 'Ideas for further work,' below). Please note that internet access will be needed for this activity and you may need to arrange this in advance of the lesson.

Conclusion

- Slide 8: Review what the pupils have been able to find out from the Commonwealth War Graves database about the individuals they are researching. Pupils could write their answers into the speech bubbles or use post-its to create a class list of information. Go over any difficulties that they had and how these were resolved.
- Discuss any questions that they have not been able to answer about the person they are researching. Explore ideas for other sources of information on the biographical details of the person, such as local parish records, army records, primary sources such as newspaper

© War Memorials Trust, 2015

obituaries and rolls of honour. These form the basis of further lessons from War Memorials Trust where local sources of information are used.

Support/extension:

The ideas in this lesson plan are suggestions only, and teachers will need to adapt the lesson to take account of the needs of their class. It is important to remember that, when using the school's local memorial as a source of information, it is possible that descendants of those named still live in the locality. Teachers should be aware of this and how it may affect pupils.

- Some pupils may benefit from adult support when searching the database for information about casualties. Teachers may want to carefully assign pupils to research names where a simple, straightforward search returns the necessary information so pupils can focus on their objective of using the information to answer their questions.
- Older or more able pupils could research names where a search using multiple fields is necessary or a large number of results are returned so that they have the challenge of narrowing down options and deciding which is the correct record for their name. This will require additional preparation before the lesson.

Ideas for further work:

There are many further opportunities to extend this lesson and link it with other areas of the curriculum:

- Literacy: Using the database gives pupils the opportunity to practise their skills in reading, searching for, noting and checking relevant information. The information they find can also lead to planning and writing a biography of the person they have researched, or various other types of writing.
- Mathematics: The information gathered during the lesson could be used in subsequent mathematics lessons on handling data. Pupils could, for example, use the information to construct tables and charts showing information about the casualties they have researched between them. Prior knowledge of drawing and using tables can be applied during the lesson to help pupils record their information in a systematic way.
- ICT: the activities suggested here will help pupils learn about using a database, finding information from ICT based sources, carrying out a complex search and checking information is accurate. They could go on to create their own simple database of casualties from the locality.

© War Memorials Trust, 2015

War Memorials Trust 14 Buckingham Palace Road London SW1W 0QP
Telephone: 020 7834 0200/ 0300 123 0764
Email: learning@warmemorials.org **Website:** www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org
Registered Charity Commission Number: 1062255
© War Memorials Trust, 2015