

## Lesson 4: Women during World War II



War Memorials Trust

**Background:** This is the fourth in War Memorials Trust's series of lessons about World War II. It uses the Memorial to the Women of World War II as a starting point for finding out about the contributions women made to the war effort beyond the Home Front aspects they have already learned about. Pupils will learn about the jobs that many women took on during the war that they had not done on a wide scale before and in doing so can begin to consider how women's roles and status changed as a result of the conflict. Pupils will also consider what the creation of a specific memorial means for how women's contributions to the war are seen and remembered today.

**Suitable for:** Key Stage 2

**Learning objective:** Pupils will learn:

- what effect World War II had on women and their roles
- how this is remembered

**Learning outcomes:** Pupils will be able to:

- explain the jobs women did during the war and how this helped the war effort
- describe memorials to what women did during the war

**Resources:** WMT 'Women during World War II' and 'Women of World War II memorial' information sheets; pictures of the Women of World War II memorial.

**Introduction:**

- Recap the previous lessons from this series that you have already taught. If you have taught lessons about civilian involvement in the war then you may have already started to think about how women specifically were affected.
- Explain that this lesson looks at what women did during the war beyond the involvement of ordinary civilians.

**Suggested teaching points and activities:**

**What jobs did women do during the war?**

- Using the 'Women during World War II' information sheet discuss with pupils what women's roles were generally like prior to the war and how this changed. There is information on the sheet that pupils can read which could guide the discussion, or you may wish to use other resources from other organisations that deal with this aspect in more depth.
- You could approach this by asking pupils to imagine what life was like prior to World War II and then suggest what sort of jobs they think women may have done during the war – so asking them to suggest suitable changes for the time period. This would also help you assess their prior knowledge of the topic.

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- Focus particularly on the specific jobs that women did do and are represented on the Memorial to the Women of World War II. There is information about and pictures of the memorial on the accompanying information sheet, and the pictures are also available to download and print from [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org).
- Pupils could carry out research on the different jobs in groups to find out more about what they involved.
- Ask pupils why they think women had to take on more of these sorts of jobs – encourage them to think about the fact that they had previously been done by men who were now away fighting.

### **The Women of World War II memorial**

- Using the information sheet, ensure pupils understand the key facts about when this memorial was built and unveiled.
- Compare it to other memorials they may have looked at. Highlight its similarities to some memorials that commemorate specific groups (e.g. the Tottenham civilians memorial from last lesson) but also its differences to other memorials that commemorate primarily men who fought in the war.
- Compare the date of this – 2005 – with other memorials commemorating the World Wars (with some exceptions, these were generally created shortly after the wars ended). Why do pupils think a memorial to specifically commemorate women was unveiled so much later? Do they think it is important to commemorate the contribution of women to the war?

### **Conclusion:**

- If pupils have researched different jobs women did during the war in more detail, you could finish the lesson by looking at what they have found out.
- As this is the last lesson that looks at how the war affected a specific group of people you could use this time to look back over what the pupils now understand about this and the war in general. If you started the topic by developing ideas around what pupils wanted to learn or by recording what they already knew, this could be reviewed and added to now to highlight the learning that has taken place.

### **Suggestions for differentiation**

The activities in this lesson plan are suggestions only and teachers will need to adapt the lesson to take account of the needs of their class:

- Researching different jobs that women did during the war may be particularly suitable for more able pupils

### **Ideas for further work**

- Pupils could consider the other groups they have looked at during this unit and design their own war memorial to commemorate the people and events that have featured. WMT's 'Design a war memorial' lesson plan and resources at [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/primary) can provide more information about this.

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