

Background: This lesson uses a Kent war memorial as the basis for pupils learning about the early days of the First World War and in particular the recruitment to the army of thousands of volunteers. The memorial is a statue of Field Marshall Earl Kitchener and is located opposite Brompton Barracks in Chatham. Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War shortly after war was declared in August 1914, and is arguably best remembered for the part he played in recruiting large numbers of men to the army in the early months of the war. This lesson therefore focuses on Kitchener and why he is now remembered for this, and encourages pupils to consider what we can learn about him and the war from this war memorial.

Suitable for: Key Stage 3

Learning objectives: Pupils will learn:

- Who Kitchener was and that he is widely commemorated by war memorials
- Why Kitchener is remembered and about his role in recruiting volunteers to the Army at the start of the First World War
- What we can learn from war memorials and why these are important

Resources: images of the Kitchener memorial in Chatham (available from www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org), Kitchener memorial war memorial case study sheet. You may also want to use additional resources depending on the activities chosen.

Introduction

- Ask pupils what a war memorial is and take suggestions. Give them a basic definition – a war memorial is an object created to commemorate a war or those involved in a war, and it helps us remember those people and events. Particularly for events such as the First World War that are beyond living memory, war memorials are a link to past events and also help us learn about those events and the people involved.
- Explain that this lesson is going to focus on one war memorial from the local area, and what it can teach us about people and events in the First World War. Highlight that this memorial is just one example – there are approximately 100,000 in the UK alone and can be any design or type. Further information about different war memorial designs and the reasons for these differences is given in War Memorials Trust's 'Types of war memorial' helpsheet for secondary teachers, should you wish to expand on this point in this lesson.

Suggested teaching points and activities

Who was Kitchener and why is he remembered?

- Show a picture of the Kitchener memorial statue in Chatham and ask pupils if they know who it is. If they do not know, also show an image of the now famous recruitment poster showing Kitchener pointing and ask them again – explain they show the same person.
- It is important at this stage of the lesson for pupils to acquire some knowledge about the main events that Kitchener is remembered for. There are many resources and activities available that give more detail on this topic which you may find it helpful to use with your class. Pupils should as a minimum understand:
 - ◇ When the First World War happened
 - ◇ That the British Army in 1914 was a small professional army and would be unable to fight a long war
 - ◇ Kitchener was one of the few who foresaw a lengthy war in 1914 and therefore believed the existing army should be used to train a new one consisting of volunteers.
 - ◇ By January 1915 one million men had enlisted voluntarily. This was for a variety of reasons, but it is widely believed that a significant factor in enlistment was enthusiasm for

war and patriotic feeling. The main wave of voluntary enlistment occurred towards the end of August and in early September, not at the immediate outbreak.

- Because this lesson focuses on the war memorial itself rather than the history of this part of Kitchener's career, it is not essential to explore this period of the war in depth. However, you could extend the lesson at this point by using other resources to examine the timing and nature of this enlistment and its extent in more depth, compare it to other countries' military recruitment, and explore Kitchener's role in this more thoroughly. More information is given in the 'Ideas for further work' section below.

What can we learn about Kitchener from the war memorial?

- When pupils have an understanding of what Kitchener is widely remembered for, reiterate that the function of war memorials is to commemorate wars, conflicts and the people involved in them, whether military personnel or civilians. They can also help us to learn about past events and people, and this memorial can help us learn about Kitchener and his military career.
- Distribute photographs of the memorial, available at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org, and give pupils time to study it, including the statue and the plaque.
- Discuss what the memorial tells us about Kitchener and this period in history. Points to highlight to pupils include:
 - ◊ The fact that the plaque gives detailed information about Kitchener and his career, beyond what he is now best remembered for. This is an example of how war memorials can be used as a source of information on the events and people they commemorate – while the information they contain varies, and this is a particularly detailed example, many inscriptions include a surprising amount about the memorial, who and what it commemorates and who is (and often was) responsible for the memorial. Many casualty names also include details like rank and regiment. Therefore war memorials can often give information beyond what is generally well known.
 - ◊ Looking beyond the factual information contained in the memorial, the memorial's design can reveal information about changes to commemoration and the attitudes towards it. It was the aftermath of the First World War that saw a large increase in memorials that commemorated everyone who died (and often who served) rather than only those who were significant leaders or who were otherwise different to the large numbers of ordinary men who served. Memorials like the Kitchener statue, which commemorate an individual and are of a design that implies that individual's importance, were more common prior to the First World War. Pupils may therefore consider what such a prominent memorial to Kitchener tells us about attitudes towards him after his death. Further information about the memorial's design is given in the memorial case study sheet.

Conclusion

- When pupils have discussed what this memorial can tell us about Kitchener and his military career, link the topic back to war memorials more widely and emphasise their general importance as sources of information about the conflicts and people that they commemorate, and therefore the need for all of us to ensure they are cared for and preserved.
- If you are teaching this lesson around a significant anniversary or are doing other work related to the First World War centenary this point can be linked to this by highlighting how we still remember those events and people, and how war memorials are a crucial part of this remembrance.

Support/Extension:

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

- You may find it helpful to encourage less able pupils to focus on looking at what the plaque and inscriptions tell us about Kitchener, since this is more direct information retrieval, while more able pupils consider the overall design of the memorial and what can be inferred from this.
- Techniques such as drama could be used to help pupils explore and understand the various reasons behind so many volunteering for the army in 1914-15.

Ideas for further work:

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

- This lesson focuses specifically on this particular war memorial and what it can tell us, but there is plenty of scope for widening this and, as suggested above, using it as an opportunity to teach about the recruitment of volunteers during the early months of the First World War. Some of the organisations listed at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org/links have educational resources about this period which you may find helpful.
- Having focused on the design of this war memorial, pupils could look at the designs of other local war memorials and compare them, considering which designs they think are most effective for their purpose and which might be chosen today. They could also look at changes to war memorials over time and where the Kitchener memorial fits into this.
- Further information about these suggestions can be found in the information given in the Kitchener war memorial case study sheet and other lesson plans and teachers' helpsheets from War Memorials Trust, available at www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org.

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