**How will your school commemorate the end of World War 1 in 2018?**

Many schools will be thinking about how to commemorate the end of World War 1 this year. The hostilities finally stopped at the 11th hour of the 11th month in 1918. During the four years of warfare, it is estimated that there were over 40 million military and civilian casualties. The Great War touched everyone in the UK and beyond. In the UK everyone would have known someone who had fought, died or been injured or whose everyday life had been affected through the war.

Many schools already commemorate Remembrance Day in different ways: exploring the origins of poppy day, visiting their local war memorials and investigating the effects of the war on their local communities. (Heritage Schools have some interesting examples of work undertaken by children in their locality <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/education/heritage-schools/> ).

**Sensitivities in teaching about warfare**

As schools plan their work teachers will need to:

* Take into account children’s own experience and the experiences of those in their family of conflict and warfare
* Consider the impact of learning about certain aspects of warfare on children’s overall well being
* Reflect on media representations of current warfare including TV news, newspapers and other media
* Identify which aspects of warfare and its effects on daily life at the time children will learn about
* Select resources which provide opportunities for children to raise questions and to appreciate that there might be alternative viewpoints about what happened.

**Warfare and Remembrance**

Learning about World War 1 raises other issues concerning remembrance:

* Why is remembrance important?
* What should be remembered?
* What are appropriate memorials?

The cenotaph in Whitehall was erected permanently in 1920 and memorials erected throughout the UK to remember those who had contributed to the war. The National Memorial Arboretum provides a centre for Remembrance and children might like to compare this centre with former ways of expressing remembrance <http://www.thenma.org.uk/>

**Using fiction to explore ways of life during World War 1.**

Fiction provides opportunities for children to explore what life might have been like for people living during the war and, as Megan Brownrigg from Strauss House Productions suggests, may help children understand the effects of war. She draws attention to the work of author Hilary Robinson and illustrator Martin Impey in their award-winning series of picture books which focus on different experiences of living through the war, such as signing up, spending Christmas in a trench, sharing the front line with four-legged friends, and even dealing with life back home.

**Where the Poppies Now Grow** tells the tale of best friends Ben and Ray signing up to the war effort….

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPtkO5JbTG0>

**The Christmas Truce** gives us a sense of the day when enemy lines blurred into a friendly football pitch…

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6pWQlARocw&t=13s>

**Flo of the Somme** shows us what it was like for soldiers to have the support of the animal kingdom…

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afiUldn5MHU>

**And A Song for Will** stands alone as the enchanting true tale of the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall. 13 labourers from these beautiful grounds went to war, only 4 returned. The gardens retreated into a secret jungle, only to be discovered in the 1990s; you can visit them today. In A Song for Will, we meet pals Alfie and Fred, who exchange letters between Cornwall and the Front...

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBM\_Wfhrz6w\*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBM_Wfhrz6w*" \t "_blank)

Historical fiction provides many interesting opportunities to develop historical enquiries

* Why did Hilary and Martin select particular events for their stories?
* How did they find out the information for their stories? What sources of information did they use?
* Is this an accurate representation of what happened? Why? Why not?
* What questions do the stories still raise in your mind? What else would you like to know?
* How did the illustrator know what to draw in the illustrations?
* Do you think that the characters would be pleased that they were remembered in the stories?

Hilary Robinson explains that, *‘Remembrance is all about people and the sacrifices they made; we hope our stories offer a stepping stone between these older souls and the young minds learning about them. That way paying our respects, and even learning in general, can be that little bit more personal’.*

* How successful are these stories in achieving these aims?