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## Analysis of impact

This fellowship resonated with me as an educator as it impacts not only the way in which we teach the First World War, but also how we look at remembrance as an industry and as a way to interpret the way in which other conflicts have ended too. As a teacher who leads battlefield trips to France and Belgium, I have been acutely aware of the rise in visitor numbers to these sites, but with the hundredth anniversary been and gone, what would the legacy of the First World War be?

The programme has given me a greater breadth of evidence to support the view that we have created a Western-centric stance to commemoration, and although there have been new historical works looking at the impact of colonial troops during the War, it still is a Western-centric field. The centenary art installations and commemorative work undertaken by 14–18 and other organisations have given us a deeper understanding of the scale of fighting. For example, the *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* at the Tower of London in 2014 commemorated the 888,246 British and colonial servicemen who were killed in the First World War. However, since then we have seen a multitude of projects take different angles to address a similar image, that of the national sense of loss and a narrative that focuses on Britain.

We have been introduced to a great wave of historiography and resources, which have given us a strong insight into the challenges of presenting a new narrative of the First World War and of those historians who have broken the mould already. David Olusoga's book *The World's War: forgotten soldiers of the First World War* is a good example of this. He addressed the work played by colonial forces in the War. Another key work was David Reynolds's *The Long Shadow: the Great War and the twentieth century*, which looks at the role played by the national narrative of some countries post-First World War and how it helped shape the way in which we look at the Second World War.

I particularly enjoyed the sessions relating to the study of the physical monuments towards remembrance, such as memorials and paintings. Michael Riley's session, which explored the way in which you could use an individual person to hook pupils into an investigation on a wider concept, was excellent and his reveal about the German postcards was what inspired me to pursue a resource related to Stanley Spencer.

It has already affected my teaching, as I believe that a good starting point for any new resource should be the historiography. We are currently rewriting our Key Stage 3 schemes of learning, which gives my department the perfect opportunity to delve into the historians' current thinking and use this to help to inform our planning. The fellowship has given me the building blocks to open up our thinking into other realms of enquiry and to incorporate the historian into our lessons. Alongside this, the most direct way in which the programme has affected my teaching is in rethinking the way that we deliver our lessons on the First World War and broadening the experience that pupils receive about the War. We will use some of the resources made by other fellows on this programme, including the interactive map tool, which will allow us to see where different individuals came from and what fronts they fought on.

The fellowship experience is a rigorous exercise in historical engagement and would benefit any history department because it gives you the tools and the confidence to take any existing or new schemes of learning and work out what really needs to be taught. From the active discussions and the reading materials provided, the course was the perfect extension to my teaching and outstanding CPD.

## Rationale

### **Introductory notes**

This resource is designed to give students an insight into how First World War art acts as a form of remembrance. It is specifically focused on the work of the artist Stanley Spencer and his 19 murals that affix the walls of the Sandham Memorial Chapel in Berkshire.

Spencer was 23 when the First World War began, and he volunteered in 1915, along with his two brothers; only one would return from the War. He began his military career in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), where he worked as an orderly at Beaufort Hospital (now Glenside) in Bristol. In 1916, he travelled via train to a training camp in Surrey to await overseas deployment. He was assigned to the 7th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment and was sent to Macedonia, where the Germans, Greek and Bulgarians were fighting.

The resource helps to highlight the fact that there were other sectors of the Western Front, not just northern France and Belgium, and also another feature of war work: the role of medic. It touches on the life story of Spencer to help to contextualise the development of the murals in the chapel, but primarily is a means of getting pupils to analyse art.

A visit to the chapel allowed me to gain an appreciation of the size and scale of the work and to appreciate the location in such a rural part of the county. Reading material from the National Trust, custodians of his work, and from art historians gave me a range of knowledge to apply to the resource, and podcasts from leading historians such as Bethany Hughes and Dr Janina Ramirez gave another appreciation of what the artwork means to them. Following reading and visiting the site, the next step was to consider what the main aim of the resource would be, which was to engage pupils with art and give them the skills to interpret art and use knowledge to explain what meaning they find in it.

Once the planning and note-taking were over, the resource took shape, initially in the form of two lessons, which were designed to hook pupils into the artist through his work prior to the First World War and then get them to look at the events of his life. The second lesson would take it further and look at the War and the paintings, and then I realised that a third lesson was required to consolidate and give pupils the opportunity to create something to pull together all that they know about the War and what they have learnt from the lessons on the memorial.

### **Rationale for the resource**

Using the 19 murals as the main resource and talking point in class, I wanted to design a sequence of lessons that could come at the end of a scheme of learning on the First World War and also allow for cross-curricular links with art departments. The belief is that having taught a number of lessons on the First World War, this would come at the end to bring together the thoughts of pupils on war, to consider an interpretation of the War from someone who lived through it and to then produce something that reflects how we remember the War today.

This is a necessary theme for any scheme of learning on the First World War, as it gives a perspective of war that might not already be covered. Memorials have been a common theme to address remembrance, and some departments finish on the Treaty of Versailles as a way of considering the impact of the First World War. The hope is that these lessons will add to the work that has been done by colleagues within the fellowship and act as an end that gives pupils an ownership over remembrance.

Until the 1990s, twentieth-century art had been dominated by 'modernist accounts, which emphasised avant-garde artists' (Malvern, 2016), which led to war art being neglected or at least the artists being seen as agents of official employment, such as the role of the Official War Artist. More propaganda than a reflection of personal encounters from real people, war art was used post-1918 to justify the actions of the conflict and to play into a European continent in need of re-establishing order and not allowing the floodgates of change to sweep through the continent. There had already been a vast number of nations who had replaced their monarchs with new republics and, in the case of Eastern Europe, a huge shakedown of national borders, with countries like Poland appearing again. According to Sue Malvern, 'there is now a growing literature on art... yet there remains a critical need to be sensitive' (2016) in the development of a new narrative that takes on board the state-sponsored story of the War from 1920, along with the contradictions that come from comparing artists both professional and amateur.

In *Teaching History*, Liz Dawes Duraisingh and Veronica Boix Mansilla created a research project looking at how art and history might be mutually beneficial in enriching pupils' experiences within the classroom (2007). Whereas they were using memorials, studying and then creating their own, the genesis of this resource is in studying the artwork of one artist. The conclusions that they made from their study help to highlight the fact that this is an area worthy of further development. In their final conclusions, they stated that 'creating monuments provides opportunities for students to reason about historical significance, advance new questions about the past, construct and justify interpretations and position themselves in relationship to the past, present and future'. From their work, their conclusions were aimed at getting pupils to consider the intent behind the creation of any art and how it helps to represent the past. These ideas are part of how this resource will develop over the three prescribed lessons.

Overall, both the curricular and scholarly rationale point to a gap where there should be more art studied in the history classroom. The fellowship has highlighted where the First World War would be an interesting place to consider this, yet there are plenty of other opportunities that this could lead to. For example, a scheme of learning could be created that uses Stanley Spencer as a springboard to then compare him to the work of German artists like Otto Dix and Paul Grosz. It could be used to compare across wars to look at how official war artists like Henry Moore compare to Spencer's work and then how individual soldiers' art compares.

The aim is to use this as a means of considering the way in which war is remembered, directly after the event, decades later and centuries afterwards.

## **How to use the resource in teaching**

There are three lessons, designed to take pupils on a journey through different works of art. It begins with Spencer's *Swan Upping*, which was created in 1915 before he had enlisted in the War. Only the top part had been drawn at this stage. At the end of this lesson, pupils will have been on a journey looking at the artist responsible for the piece of work, wondering why it was unfinished and seeing whether they can spot any differences between the top half and the bottom half.

The second lesson takes us into a small part of the *Resurrection of the Soldiers* painting, which sits on the main eastern wall of the Sandham Memorial Chapel. It is designed to hook pupils into showing what they remember about War, such as the role of barbed wire and uniforms, and to lead them to see that this is just a small part of a much larger piece of art. The remainder of the lesson gets the class looking at the *Resurrection* painting and reading a biography of Spencer's life. This will give them the ability to put context to the artwork. The lesson finishes with pupils looking through the remaining pieces of art from the chapel and working out what is happening in the scenes. Can they then produce an example from Spencer's life to show how it has influenced his painting?

There are plenty of resources in the second lesson that could be used to extend or set as homework. The painting cards are designed to get whole groups interrogating art, and the data capture sheets are to be used as guides to help students record their thoughts. Alternative lesson activities include spending longer on the reading exercise, with prompt questions and highlighting activities, as well as giving pupils the opportunity to choose one of the murals and to become 'art masters' and teach others within a group about their piece. This would help to develop oracy skills.

The final lesson starts with a recap quiz and then goes on to look at the actual words of Spencer through one of his letters, to see how he reflects upon the way in which war has affected him. The final part of the lesson consolidates the learning across all three lessons, with pupils tasked with creating a visitor's welcome podcast. A small timing frame is included with some glossary terms on the PowerPoint, and three different script templates have also been created to enable all pupils to access the lesson. The final script template is a gap-fill, which could also be used by the teacher to help to model phrases for pupils. At the end of the lesson, pupils will be asked to share their scripts, and as homework pupils could record them for presentation in a future lesson.

Lesson plans included with the PowerPoints also include additional tasks and extension activities.

## **References**

Dawes Duraisingh, L. and Boix Mansilla, V. (2007) 'Interdisciplinary forays within the classroom: how the visual arts can enhance (or hinder) historical understanding' in *Teaching History*, 129, *Disciplined Minds Edition*, pp. 22–30

Malvern, S. (2016) 'Art' in *1914–1918 Online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, <https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/art>