

Guidelines for the use of 'Letters Home'

Activity title:	Letters Home
Curriculum area:	English
NC objectives:	English: En1 1e, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3c, 6a, 8a, 9a.
Main learning objective	How armed forces personnel in wartime communicated with friends & family

Timing	Lesson plan ideas, activities and resource sheets
INTRODUCTION 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain to the class that if you had joined the armed forces in WW1, you would rarely get any home leave (a holiday where you could return home for a few days). As a result, the only way you could communicate with your friends and family was by writing a letter or sending a postcard. Soldiers wrote lots of letters back to their friends and family, telling them about events and what was happening.
MAIN ACTIVITY 35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask whether anyone has received any letters or postcards. Ask how they felt when the opened them or read them. Explain that everyone in the armed forces everywhere always look forward to receiving letters and parcels from home. Provide the class with the supporting letters '1a Letter from Alfred Putley', '1b Letter from James Hedges', '1.c Letter from B White' and '1.d Letter from G Edwards'. Tell the class that these are real letters sent home by Gloucestershire soldiers in WW1. Each one has a transcript for easy reading. Read the letters aloud or get the class to read the letters. Afterwards, ask the class what they think has happened in them (Alfred Putley - received parcel of food & family news; James Hedges - very muddy in the



	<p>trenches, German gunfire & Zeppelin raids; Ben White - fellow soldier wounded (loss of eye), lost teeth in action & parents; G Edwards - lost both legs below knees, going to new hospital to receive artificial legs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the children with the 'Eng1.e News/event cards' and randomly had two out to each child. Tell them their task is to imagine that they are a soldier in the war and they have to write a letter home and that the letter has to include the item listed on the News/event cards.
PLENARY 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite pupils to read their letters aloud to the class. The rest of the class are to listen and discuss. There are many letters that survive written from soldiers to home, but far fewer letters written from soldier's families to the men in the trenches, mostly because it was very difficult for the soldiers to keep any personal belongings. Alfred Putley and Ben White did not survive the war, being killed in action on 19 November 1916 and 15 January 1916 respectively. PDF copies of their entry from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission are in the Letters Home folder.

Suggested extension activities or cross curricular links:

- Research how soldiers lived in the trenches.
- Make sound recordings of the letters to create audio files.
- Undertake 'Censorship'
- Write and publish a school version of a trench newspaper.