

Guidelines for the use of 'Censorship'

Activity title:	Censorship
Curriculum area:	English, History
NC objectives:	English: 1e, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2e, 3a, 3b, 6a, 8a, 9a. History: 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 4a, 4b, 7.
Main learning objective	How personal communications were treated in wartime.

Timing	Lesson plan ideas, activities and resource sheets
INTRODUCTION 15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask the class what things they think might be the important in wartime. Answers might be: size of armies, number of warplanes or bombs, etc. Explain that in fact, one of the most important things in any sort of conflict is 'intelligence'. This is the term for knowledge of what the other side is doing, what it is going to do and also any strengths or weaknesses it might have - this even comes into sport such as football or rugby games, where you keep your game plan secret! Keeping information safe and secure is vital in wartime and in WW1 it was taken very seriously, with newspapers and personal communications (including private letters between members of the armed forces and their friends and families) all being censored. It was the job of a censor to read these letters and delete (make unreadable), any information in them that they thought might be useful to the enemy.
MAIN ACTIVITY 35 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a 'compare & contrast' exercise. Explain that the children are going to take on the role of a wartime Army censor. They will be given some letters that are written from families to soldiers and from soldiers at the front and they have to censor them for sensitive information that they think might be a security risk.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the class with the supporting letters 'Eng.2a Letters from Soldiers' and 'Eng.2b 'Letters from home'. Divide the class into groups as appropriate and ask one group to censor the soldiers' letters and one group the letters from home. Ask the children to censor the letters, deleting what they think might be sensitive information. Children can do all of the letters or selected ones.
PLENARY 10 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite pupils to read their censored letters aloud to the class. The rest of the class are to listen and discuss. What was deleted and why? Do the children agree? How would the children feel if their own letters (or postcards or e-mails) were censored? Note: It is a fact that there are many surviving letters written from soldiers in France/Belgium to home, but far fewer letters written from soldier's families to the men in the trenches. Why do the children think that this might be?

Suggested extension activities or cross curricular links:

- Use Extension Activity 2c Field Postcards and see how other pro-forma forms of censorship were imposed.
- Research how military signalling, such as radio (wireless telegraphy), semaphore, animal messenger/carrier pigeons.
- Research how military intelligence is obtained today (i.e. drones, satellites, etc) and in the past.
- Investigate codes and ciphers for protecting information.