

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ACTIVITY THREE: THE ROLE OF RELIGION DURING WAR

Learning Objectives

- To explore the importance of belief for people dealing with the horrors and complexity of warfare;
- To look at the role of religious Conscientious Objectors;
- To examine the role of faith leaders on the battlefield.

Introduction

War is complex for many reasons, not least for the moral conflict it can provoke about whether it is the 'right thing to do'. Dealing with the horrors of war pushes many people to the edge and religious belief can either make their experiences better or worse.

MAIN TASKS

1. Research into Conscientious Objectors (C. O.s or Conchies) who refused to fight on a range of grounds: political, pacifism or religious. Alongside the Military Service Act which made signing up compulsory in 1916, was a clause allowing people to refuse to fight if they could justify their reasons. The main religious groups, which objected were Quakers and Jehovah Witnesses. Set up a tribunal in which student(s) have to plead for the right not to fight.
2. Discuss the reality of the horrors of war: soldiers having to kill someone who might be very similar to themselves, but who just happened to be born in another country and therefore, be the enemy; seeing the wounded, maimed and dead everyday with the fear that you might be next; Doctors, nurses and ambulance men faced with trying to save lives, sometimes succeeding but at other times not. How might religion help you deal with these traumas? What impact might faith have on your ability to deal with them? What about the reverse? Might such experiences shatter your faith? What effect might this have on someone?
3. What purpose do Faith leaders serve in the Military? List the type of duties they might have undertaken. What must the experience have been like for them?