

## ENGLISH ACTIVITY ONE: WRITING YOUR LETTER HOME

**THIS ACTIVITY IS COMPULSORY AS IT FORMS THE BASIS FOR THE COMPOSITION SESSION**

### LINK TO HISTORY I: SOLDIER BIOGRAPHY TOOLKIT

#### Learning Objectives:

- To identify the audience for and the purpose of writing;
- To develop ideas drawing on reading and research;
- To understand the conventions of different types of writing e.g. diary/autobiography.

#### Resources:

- Findings about your allocated Soldier, from your tool kit research
- First World War Terms from [Historical Context 22 First World War Terms](#)

#### Prior Learning

Students need to have done their research toolkits.

#### Introduction

Think about the research you have done about your soldier, to ensure you know everything you can about who they were, where they came from, what their life might have been like before they went to war and what happened to them during the war. You might not know about their family or loved ones, so you have free rein to invent these, thinking about how realistic these characters would be in relation to what you know about their lives. Remember that your soldier only knows their life history up to the point you are writing – i.e. they don't know if they survived or died – only you know this!

#### MAIN TASKS

Write a letter home either from your soldier or to your soldier. Read and think about all the following pointers, before you begin.

1. Think about the specific language and colloquial terms of the war and times from the vocabulary list and try and use them where appropriate so the letter sounds like a soldier living through WWI.
2. Who are you writing to? Is it someone you know well? Do you want to find out about how life is for them or are you focusing on telling them about your situation?
3. At what point in the war are you writing e.g.
  - a. Have you been in the Trenches for a while?
  - b. Have you arrived recently and are you discovering the new environment?
  - c. Are you describing a particular event e.g. a battle experience, a journey, a relationship with another soldier e.g. something nice they did for you (saving your life, sharing their possessions/parcel home) or perhaps an argument you had with someone, or bad treatment from an officer or fellow soldier?

- d. Are you writing before a particular event e.g. the evening before you're going 'over the top'?
4. Letters were censored, which means they were read by a superior officer, and if you were giving away secret information, they would cross it out. For this project you can either choose to write in a code or restrict how much information you give out, or you can decide not to worry about this issue and write in the way you want.
  5. Think about how you feel? Are you scared? Are you proud to be serving your country? Are you hopeful you're going to win? Are you fed up and depressed about how badly everything has been going? Have you been injured? Are you in pain? Are you suffering from shell shock and are perhaps confused and don't remember things properly?
  6. Do you want to share how you feel with who you are writing to or do you want them to think you are fine? How might this affect how you write?
  7. You also have the option of being the person the soldier would have written to e.g. a parent, a wife, even a child or maybe someone from home who isn't a relative but who you know e.g. a friend, a teacher. How do you feel about the soldier being away? Do you want to tell them about your life to give them a picture of home and something positive to think about, or do you want to know about what their life is like and ask a lot of questions?
  8. All of the individual letters will be made into one letter which you will work with a composer on to set to music. This final letter will be taken from ideas, phrases and excerpts from everyone's letters. Think about how your sentences will work when they are set to music – you might want to go about this by writing your letter a bit more like a poem. This doesn't mean it has to rhyme but means you want strong phrases which sum up a particular feeling or experience. Think about this when you write your individual letters so that some of the phrases you write, can be used in the big, main letter.