

Topic: Volunteering for the British army during the First World War

Level: B2 / upper intermediate

Time: 60 minutes

Aims:

- To develop students' ability to read for gist and for detailed information
- To encourage word building skills
- To develop critical thinking skills

Introduction

This lesson examines the motives and men who volunteered to fight for the British Army during the First World War, and features a letter from a young recruit to his mother. This is closely based on the letter written by an English soldier called Frederick Wade, which is in the collection of the Imperial War Museum (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030007841>).

Students will start by looking at some First World War recruitment posters, which men like Frederick Wade would have seen. The students will also have a group discussion about patriotism in the present day.

Preparation

The **Warmer** activity features four propaganda posters, large versions of which can be found in the accompanying PowerPoint file **A_First_World_War_soldier-Recruitment posters_for_Warmer**.

Procedure:

Warmer – First World War recruitment posters (10 mins)

- Show the students the PowerPoint slideshow. For **slides 2–5**, a recruitment poster will appear. Elicit comments, then **click** again to display the commentary.
- **Show slide 6**, with the questions.
- Ask the students to discuss the questions in groups of four.
- Alternatively, get students into the groups of four and ask them to look at the images on their worksheets and discuss in their groups the four questions in the **Warmer**.
- After feedback, **show slide 7**. Tell the students that the photo shows a young man (sitting down) called Frederick Wade, who would have seen posters like this at the start of the First World War.
- **Click again** to show the letter he wrote to his mother, and tell the students that they are going to read and talk about his letter.
- **NB** – use the slightly simplified version of the letter from the worksheet, rather than the photo of the actual letter from the PowerPoint.

Notes on the posters

Poster A – Britons. Join Your Country's Army!

This was one of the most famous and iconic posters in the First World War. It shows Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War at that time, appealing to people to join the British Army.

Poster B – Sportsmen's 1000

The idea that team sports were good preparation for war was common across Britain and its Empire. Team sports incorporated both team spirit and a sense of patriotism and this Australian poster plays on the country's sporting pride and its growing sense of identity.

Poster C – For the Glory of Ireland

This Irish recruiting poster uses the German invasion of Belgium as a recruiting tool. It is appealing specifically to the Catholic population of Ireland, which at this time was still part of the United Kingdom, to defend Belgium, which was also a Catholic country.

Poster D – Are you in this?

This poster shows how different sections of society are contributing to the war effort. On the side there is a man shown with his hands in his pockets and smoking a cigarette. He is not involved yet.

Task 1 – A recruit’s letter to his mother: Reading for gist (5 mins)

- Focus students’ attention on a recruit’s letter on their worksheets. Tell them to read the letter quickly and find out the answers to the three questions in this task. Ask them to justify their answers.

Answers:

1. B (1st paragraph – ‘Mother dear, don’t take this to heart too much and worry over it’)
2. A (1st paragraph – ‘when you weigh up the hazards I face here in the mines’)
3. B (3rd paragraph – ‘I know perfectly well we will have to work very hard during those six months, but that I’m prepared to do’)

Task 2 – A recruit’s letter to his mother: Intensive reading (15 mins)

- Get students to focus on the seven possible reasons for Frederick’s joining the army in **Task 2A**. Ask them to read the text again and tick only those he mentions in his letter. Encourage the learners to justify their choices.

Answers:

2 (2nd paragraph – ‘I’ve had to sit still and watch most of my pals go’ / ‘Just think what a shame it will be to meet them on their return’)

5 (3rd paragraph – ‘In my case I think the spirit of adventure is more the lure than patriotism’)

7 (3rd paragraph – ‘It will harden my muscles and make a man of me’)

- Once they’ve finished, tell students to compare their answers with their partners’.
- Encourage them now to do **Task 2B** in pairs. Tell them to work out the meaning of the highlighted words in the text.

Answers:

hazard – a dangerous thing that can cause accidents

adventure – an unusual, exciting experience, sometimes dangerous

patriotism – a strong feeling of love and respect towards your country

recruit – someone who has recently joined the army

volunteer – someone who offers to fight in a war without being called up

Task 3 – Vocabulary: Word building (10 mins)

- Get students into new pairs and focus their attention on the word building activity in **Task 3**. Encourage your students to form some new words (nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs) from the ones already given in the table. You can do a first example with them.

Tip: The weaker students might find a dictionary helpful in this task.

Answers:

noun (thing)	noun (person)	verb	adjective	adverb
<i>hazard</i>	-----	<i>hazard</i>	<i>hazardous</i>	<i>hazardously</i>
<i>adventure</i>	<i>adventurer</i>	-----	<i>adventurous</i>	<i>adventurously</i>
<i>patriotism</i>	<i>patriot</i>	-----	<i>patriotic</i>	<i>patriotically</i>
<i>recruitment</i>	<i>recruit</i>	<i>recruit</i>	-----	-----
-----	<i>volunteer</i>	<i>volunteer</i>	<i>voluntary</i>	<i>voluntarily</i>

Task 4 – Vocabulary: Completing the sentences (5 mins)

- Ask students to complete the sentences in this task with the correct form of the word, a, b or c.

Answers:

1.c 2.b 3.a 4.c 5.a

Task 5 – Group discussion: A good patriot nowadays (15 mins)

- Divide students into new groups of four. Ask them if they consider themselves patriots and why.
- Get your students to discuss the qualities of a good patriot in **Task 5**. They need to order them from 1 – the most important – to 8 – the least important. Encourage them to justify their opinion.
- Tell your students to prepare a short report from each group to share their ideas with the rest of the class.
- Feedback on any errors that occurred during the speaking stage.

Extension activity

Homework/Follow-up activity: Writing a letter

- Tell students they'll have to write a letter to Frederick – a reply from his mother to the news of her son's joining up and going to the front.