

Level – B2 /C1**Task 1 – Quiz about military conscription (10 mins)**

Work with a partner and guess the answers to these multiple choice questions.

1. The war started in August 1914. In Britain, many people volunteered to join the army, as they believed the war would be over

- a. By Christmas
- b. In 6 months
- c. In 1 year

2. At the start of the war, the minimum age for volunteers wanting to fight in France was

- a. 17
- b. 19
- c. 21

3. Between 1914 and 1918, what percentage of the British army were volunteers?

- a. Nearly 10%
- b. Nearly 20%
- c. Nearly 50%

4. If a man didn't volunteer, he might be given a white feather by a woman. This meant he was

- a. Cowardly
- b. Lazy
- c. Boring

5. The first people to be conscripted were

- a. Old men
- b. Married men
- c. Young single men

6. A lot of men appealed to a Military Service Tribunal. What happened to them?

- a. None got excused from fighting
- b. All got excused from fighting
- c. Many got a temporary exemption from fighting

Task 2 – Reading: Military Service Tribunal (20 mins)

In the extract below, a judge on a military exemption panel describes a meeting with a conscientious objector.

“Next!”. As I waited for the next man to come in, I glanced up at the clock. It was nearly lunchtime. The door opened and a tall young man marched in. I recognised him at once: Jack Smith. Jack had been in the same year at school as my own son Peter. I immediately felt annoyed that this strong healthy man was trying to *get out of* serving his country in the war. I started questioning him: his name, although I knew it already, his age, his address, his occupation and, finally, his reason for not wanting to fight. He looked me in the eye and said, “I’m a conscientious objector Sir.” Now I felt angry. “And why, may I ask, are you a conscientious objector?” Jack hesitated and then replied, “I don’t believe in fighting Sir.”

I sat back in my chair, took off my glasses and rubbed my eyes. I suddenly felt very tired. I asked him if it was because of his religion, but he said he didn’t have one. I asked him if it was a political decision, but he shook his head. I leant forward and pointed at him with my glasses, “Why should you be *let off*? Thousands of men go to fight every day. Why not you? Are you a coward? Or are you just weak and lazy?” I sat back again, glared at him and waited. Jack blinked at me and then said, “I just don’t believe in violence Sir. I could *make up for* not fighting, I could do something else to help...” His voice trailed off.

I looked at him and I felt both anger and pity. I tried to keep calm as I spoke: “My own son went to the front. He *put up with* fighting and violence. It wasn’t his choice, but he went. You haven’t given me good enough reasons for not fighting. I am sorry but I am going to *turn down* your application. You must go to France, or go to prison.” I kept my eyes on my desk so I couldn’t see his face. He stood there, in silence. “You may go now,” I said. Jack turned to leave and then turned back. “I hope you *get over* your son’s death Sir,” he said and then he marched out. I waited for the door to close and then I put my head on the desk and *broke down*.

Match the phrasal verbs highlighted in the text with the definitions in the box below

Definitions for phrasal verbs

1. to suffer /endure
2. to reject/refuse
3. to recover (from)
4. to lose control emotionally
5. to excuse
6. to avoid
7. to compensate (for)

Task 3 – Discussion about the text (10 mins)

Work with a partner, and take turns to ask each other the following questions:

1. Could you put up with fighting in a war far from home?
2. Do you think the judge is right to turn down Jack's appeal?
3. Do you think Jack is a genuine conscientious objector, or is he just trying to get out of going to France?
4. How do you think Jack could make up for not fighting?
5. If you were the judge, would you let Jack off?
6. Why do you think the judge breaks down at the end?
7. Do you think he will get over his son's death?