

Warmer – Class Discussion (10 minutes)

Look at the photo of soldiers who were fighting on different sides in World War I.

Why do you think they have been photographed together?



British and German soldiers photographed together, December 26 1914. © IWM (HU 35801)

Task 1 – Vocabulary (15 minutes)

a) Work with a partner to make a list of as many words as you can to do with war.

b) Look at the list of words and phrases below. Which do you associate with war? Which do you associate with peace time? Which could be both?

fire	attack	shoot	greetings	trenches	fraternisation	rude remarks
waving	sentries	no man's land	commotion	to cease	carols	

c) You are going to listen to a podcast about the Christmas truce in World War I. Using as many of the words as you can from the box above, discuss with your partner what you think might have happened.

Task 2 – Listening (20 minutes)

a) Listen to the first part of the recording (Extract 0.00 to 07.58). Were the events which took place during the truce similar in any way to what you predicted?

b) Listen again. Are the following sentences true or false? Correct the false sentences.

1. The truce took part all over the Western Front.
2. Some officers were worried about the ceasefire.
3. The soldiers were able to communicate more easily because they were closer to each other.
4. The German and British soldiers had been chatting politely with each other before the ceasefire.
5. Colin Wilson remembers that the truce started with carols.
6. Clifford Lane and his battalion were happy to take part in the Christmas Truce.
7. Mr Rickner and his battalion were ordered to go back to their trenches after one and a half days.
8. Soldiers often gave each other gifts during the Christmas Truce.
9. Peter Jackson played football with German soldiers for three hours.

Task 3 – Language Focus (15 minutes)

a) Read the passage from the podcast. What words are missing?

For Colin Wilson of the Grenadier Guards, the truce also (1) _____ with carols. This was then followed by an invitation from the German troops opposite.

We (2) _____ a German singing Holy Night of course in German, naturally. Then after he'd (3) _____ singing there were all sorts of Christmas greetings being shouted across no man's land at us. These Germans (4) _____ out, 'What about you singing Holy Night?' Well we (5) _____ a go but of course we (6) _____ very good at that. Anyway they said, 'Meet us and come over in no man's land.' Well after a time we (7) _____ allowed – a limited number of us – our officers (8) _____ a limited number of us to go into no man's land.

b) In the podcast you have listened to, a number of narrative tenses are used. Choose the correct narrative tense in each sentence.

1. On Christmas Eve at noon, fire ceased/was ceasing completely on both fronts.
2. The morning came and we didn't shoot/weren't shooting and they didn't shoot/weren't shooting.
3. We d'been singing/sung carols and the Germans had been doing/had done the same.
4. We heard/were hearing a German singing 'Holy Night'.
5. We hadn't eaten/ate anything for days and we were both starving and freezing cold.
6. We often talked about how easy our lives were/had been before the war started.

Task 4 – Writing (20 minutes)

Look again at the photograph of the soldiers in World War I. What must life have been like for them? How must they have felt at Christmas? What effect do you think the events of the Christmas Truce might have had on them?

Imagine you are one of the soldiers in the photograph. Write a diary entry describing the Christmas Truce from your own point of view.

Then, read over your work carefully. Have you used narrative tenses accurately? Ask a partner to check your work.

Task 5 – Discussion (10 minutes)

a) Read the following quotations about war. Do you agree or disagree with them?

'You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.'
Jeanette Rankin (1880 – 1973)

'War is a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.'
Thomas Mann (1875 – 1955)

b) Discuss the following questions in groups.

- Is war necessary?
- Does war have any positive consequences for mankind?
- How could people resolve conflicts instead of through war?