Being Young on the Home Front: Young People in North West England during World War One

A Project and Resource Pack

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the project

As we celebrate the centenary of the First World War, one of the most devastating conflicts in our history, numerous studies and projects are seeking to challenge our understanding of the war and its effects. Yet, there is one large group that is largely missing from those studies: young people. The central aim of this project has thus been to examine the wartime, home front experiences of young people during the war, focusing in particular on the North West of England given the geographical base of those leading the project. Those involved in the project and those who attended associated events ultimately saw the point of the project to be looking at the First World War and war in general from a child’s perspective.

The project has also put young people today at the heart of those examinations. An explicit aim for the project has been to introduce young people in the local community to the history of the war and they are the key target audience for the project. Moreover, we have sought to engage the participants in non-traditional ways in the hope that this will stimulate greater interest and further develop understanding. The way we did this on the project was to get the young people participating to research, devise, rehearse and perform their own cultural productions. We thus gave the participants authorship of their productions, further encouraging their interest in the topic and associated themes. As well as young people acquiring knowledge and understanding of the First World War, the project has aimed to improve their research and analytical skills, encourage them to apply such knowledge and to develop their creative skills.

The project is part of the centenary activities planned by the First World War Engagement Centres funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is directly funded by the Voices of War and Peace Engagement Centre run by the University of Birmingham. The project lead is Dr Marcus Morris, Senior Lecturer in History at Manchester Metropolitan University, in conjunction with Sue Reddish and Jim Dalziel, who have worked directly with the groups and have produced the cultural outputs. Liaising with the Little Hulton and Walkden Neighbourhood Community Team we have worked with a number of schools, colleges and youth groups in the Salford area. We have particularly closely worked with Harrop Fold School, Walkden High School and Salford City College, Pendleton.
Purpose of this pack

This pack has been produced as a guide to our project and as a guide to possible educational and cultural projects that may be pursued to engage with this topic further or other topics connected to the First World War. Indeed, the practices employed here may be applied to other times of war or other events where young people have been directly affected. By no means are we saying that this is the definitive way in which to approach such a project. We do hope, though, that we can provide some inspiration as a successful project, through which we were able to get young people to consider, engage with and think differently about an historical topic that they knew little about and were not necessarily interested in.

In this pack you will find an overview of our project, from conception to delivery, and some reflections on the process. It is important to note that this was a project that evolved during its delivery. Primarily, this was a result of the participants and their interest, and the practical limitations associated with production and performance elements of the project. The pack also provides a guide to the key themes associated with young people and the First World War that we covered with our participants. In this, it should be considered in conjunction with the films that came out of the project, which can be found on the Manchester Centre for Public History and Heritage’s website. Our work has not been exhaustive and undoubtedly these themes can be examined further. Thus, the pack gives key information about the themes, commentary on their significance, key questions that can be addressed and some contemporary source material that those wishing to look more at the themes may find useful. Finally, the pack outlines more themes that may be explored and other practices that can be pursued.
Our project

‘Being Young on the Home Front: Young People in North West England during World War One’ was conceived as a project that would get young people engaging with the centenary celebrations through a different focus and a different medium. To give more ownership to the young people who would be participating we worked initially through local youth group leaders and teachers, so that they could lead rather the project team from Manchester Metropolitan University. At the outset, we thus had devised the project to employ a cascade model, whereby direction was given by the project lead to group leaders (and young people directly) and then worked through participants’ authorship of piece. Ultimately, we wanted all outcomes to be co-produced with both group leaders and the young people involved, impacting on the leaders’ learning as well as the young people.

As such, with the leaders and teachers not being historians – this was deliberate so that we would be engaging with those who would not normally encounter historical topics such as this – they required an introductory session to young people’s experiences in the First World War. This project should be viewed as a series of process by which the group leaders and subsequently participants were introduced to, became familiar with and engaged with themes around young people in the First World War. This can be viewed as performance and practice as research: employing a model of using the arts to enable youth leaders and young people to explore untold historical contexts.
Through their endeavours we had around 50 young people sign up to be part of the project. They ranged in age from 12 to 18 years of age, many coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. As many commented, this was their first introduction to the First World War, but had been drawn to the project – this was extra-curricular and they had all volunteered for the project – by the prospect of coming up with their own production on the topic. In making this about more than ‘just’ the history of young people in the war, the project became much more appealing to potential participants. In particular, it linked into other interests, which were perceived as being much more attractive.

The next step was to give the young people involved an introduction to the key information, ideas and themes surrounding the war’s effects on young people. We did this in the unfamiliar surroundings of Manchester Met and brought each group in separately. The project lead – and lecturer in History at Manchester Met – gave a short informative lecture to ensure that the different groups were all familiar with the key issues and that they would be starting from the same point. We hoped that there would be a dialogue between form and content, which the young people involved would inform and be central to.

Throughout the process, we wanted to give the participants as much authorship of their productions as possible. This can hopefully be seen in the film produced as part of the project. Therefore, though they were given different themes to consider, they were given the choice as to which they covered in their productions. Indeed, this resulted in surprises for the project
team. A theme that we thought would appeal – juvenile delinquency and older people’s misconceptions of youth – simply did not.

The sessions held at Manchester Met were also about giving the participants inspiration for the content of their pieces. The aim had been to give all participants the opportunity to research, using the university’s resources, the themes for themselves. However, this proved more challenging with the younger participants. For these, then, the project team provided primary source material that covered the major themes. Some of this can be found later in this pack, along with the questions raised and information provided. This did, though, to some extent take away some of the ownership they may have felt.

Once this part of the process was complete, we moved to the next stage. This saw the participants devising and rehearsing their productions. In this, we aimed to give them as free a hand as possible, though they were under the supervision (not direction) of the group leaders and the project’s creative team. Genuine co-production has been at the heart of this project, with the project team’s and group leaders’ role primarily centred on ensuring that the participants did not lose sight of the central themes in their enthusiasm; the modern did creep in to a degree, at times, that meant the history was lost.
The penultimate stage in our project was the delivery of those productions. All groups performed their productions in one way or another. Two would perform their pieces – both a mixture of drama and dance – to a live audience (of around 40) at Salford City College, Pendleton. It had been hoped that all participants would perform, but this proved logistically impossible. Nevertheless, around two thirds of the participants were able to display their hard work to a live audience. As participant feedback has shown, this was the stage of the project that the vast majority found most rewarding. The audience’s reaction was a key factor in this. They were genuinely fascinated and moved by the performance, while many commented that they had been inspired to think not only about the war differently, but also young people’s experiences of war. That the performances had been produced and performed by young people was central to such reactions.

The final stage for our project has been the production of two films centred the project. Once again, the young people involved in the project have been at the heart of this and they have been genuinely involved in their production. The first film documents the stages already outlined, and includes interviews with the participants, consolidating what they have done and getting them to reflect on their endeavours. It tells the story of the process, culminating with footage of the live performances. The second film has been produced in conjunction with this pack and to ensure co-production. After their performances, the participants were given the opportunity to comment on their productions in terms of what worked and anything that requires change. In allowing for this, we suggested to the young people that the performance was a first draft and the subsequent second film a second draft. This film has taken sections
from their performances that most closely tied in with the key themes set out in this pack and re-filmed them against a green screen, so that they can be set against contemporary images and films, with the young people’s changes included. As thematic segments, they illustrate and are a response to the key questions set out in this pack and demonstrate particular ways in which these aspects on young people’s experiences on the home front in the First World War can be engaged with.
Our Themes

Introduction

There are multiple themes that could have been addressed as part of this project. Indeed, as already noted, some were rejected – or at least they were seen to be not as important or interesting – by the young people involved in the project. This next section sets out the three key themes – the emotional impact on young people; young people’s disempowerment; young people and work – that were central to our project and are central to the second film that we produced. So that others may take these themes further or engage with them through different forms or mediums, this section provides some key information, sets out the central issues, questions that we can ask to develop the theme, a link to the catalyst film and stimulus in the form of contemporary source material (some of this can be found in the film as well). By no means are these the only questions that can be asked and the only way in which the themes can be addressed, but we hope that what is provided here can inspire others to look at them (or other themes) in different ways.

The emotional impact on young people

Our first theme centred on the emotional impact that the war had on young people. Virtually every child was affected in some way by the war. In a war that saw 4,970,000 British men serve in the army, 407,000 in the navy and 293,000 in the air force, there would be very few families that were not impacted in some way. Having a male member of the family serving abroad in a war with so many casualties brought obvious fears and worries, but their absence from the home also had an emotional impact. Of course, for so many families those fears were realised and around 350,000 children would never see their fathers again. Furthermore, around 1,675,000 of Britain’s soldiers were wounded in the fighting. Their return was a constant reminder to Britain’s children of the effects of war, with many physically disfigured. The psychological trauma was less obvious, but that did not necessarily diminish the effects of Britain’s young people.

We should be careful not to become fixated just on the negative though. Not all young people were repulsed by war, nor were they all emotionally traumatised by war. Many were excited by the glory of war, the action and the heroism of British soldiers, some of whom may have been family or friends. That there were around 250,000 underage soldiers who fought in the war is testament to this. Many young people felt strong positive emotions towards the war – indeed, they were encouraged to – and were often conflicted by such feelings.
By no means were these the only emotional effects, and the themes outlined below undoubtedly had their own emotional impact, but the unprecedented carnage of the world’s first industrial war raises multiple questions that young people today can engage with.

Questioning the emotional impact of war:

- How would the absence of fathers in particular, but also other male family members, have affected Britain’s young people?
- Would the absence of men from British society more generally have affected the country’s young people emotionally?
- How would the fears surrounding the fate of those men impacted on Britain’s young people? What would you feel today if your father/brother/uncle was serving in the war?
- With so many children losing their fathers in the war, how would they have been affected by such losses?
- How would Britain’s children have responded to the sights of wounded soldiers returning home?
- Would the psychological trauma that so many soldiers suffered have impacted on Britain’s children? In what ways would young people been affected by the emotional state of those returning soldiers?
- In what ways would Britain’s children have been ‘positively’ emotionally impacted by the war?
- Why might Britain’s young people have been excited by war? Do you think you would be excited by the prospect of war today? Why might your feelings be different and for what reasons might they be the same?
- Do you think that Britain’s young people might have been conflicted emotionally by the war? Would this have brought any further emotional challenges for those young people?
Contemporary sources:
MY DADDY'S A SOLDIER
I don’t know much of fighting,
And I’ve never seen a sword
But Daddy’s gone and left us
And they say he’ll get reward.
But, oh me the house is lonely,
And poor Mother’s awful sad
She’s one pleasure, now, one only
And it’s me now we’ve lost Dad.
Dad they tell me is a soldier.
And he ought to go and fight;
And our neighbours say he’s plucky
And I’m sure he’s going right.
But oh dear, we do so miss him
And poor Mother sits and sighs
And I know she’s very troubled
By the tears in her eyes
Young people’s disempowerment

Our second theme on the project centred on young people’s feelings of isolation, inaction and subsequent disempowerment. Though they may have not conceived of it in those terms, many young people felt unable, for different reasons, to contribute to the war effort in what they saw as a meaningful way and felt that they did not have a voice. As young people, many also felt that their efforts were not being recognised, while there were too few areas in which they could participate.

This is not to say that children did not participate in the war effort: young people volunteered to fight and many underage soldiers did; they helped the military through organisations like the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Sea Scouts; they worked as agricultural labourers and in war industries (see below); they raised money; they salvaged scrap metal; they were used in propaganda and were often the most powerful conduits for its message. Nevertheless, despite these activities, many young people felt that they did not have a role in this great event because of either their age or gender.

The disempowered group that interested our participants most was ‘girls who would fight’. That is young women who wanted to contribute directly to Britain’s war effort on the front line, but were not allowed to do because of their sex. The restriction on women in the British army was total and gender divisions have remained for the last hundred years. It was only in 2016 that women were allowed to serve on the front line in the British army. Given current gender divisions, the focus for much debate, this theme particularly drew in the female participants.

Questioning young people’s disempowerment:

- In what ways were young people able to contribute to the war effort?
- In what areas were they not involved and why would this have been frustrating for young people at the time?
- How would the inability to contribute fully have impacted on Britain’s young people?
- How would young people have felt about not being allowed to get involved because of their age?
- How would you feel today in a similar situation? Do you feel it is fair that young people were not given or allowed a greater role?
- Why would young people have felt particularly excluded?
- How would young women have felt about not being allowed to fight? Do you think this might have reflected any further differences in involvement and expectations?
- Why do you think young people may have felt that they did not have a voice?
- Do you think young people’s roles in the war have not been given enough credit?
Contemporary sources:
WOMEN’S DEFENCE CORPS.

BLACKBURN GIRLS' DESIRE TO FIGHT IN TRENCHES.

Nearly a hundred Blackburn girls have established a women’s defence corps to perfect themselves in shooting, drilling, and ambulance work. Their officers are Bessie, Marian, Annie, and Edith Cowan, four sisters, who are ambitious to fight in the trenches. They told a correspondent yesterday that given the doctor’s certificate of fitness they would enter upon serious military training immediately. They have already unsuccessfully tried to secure the necessary sanction. Determined to assist their country, they have instituted defence and recruiting corps, and have actively exerted themselves to secure recruits and to provide comforts for the soldiers at the front.

GIRL ANXIOUS TO FIGHT.
EXPERT SHOT WITH MILITARY ASPIRATIONS.

Miss Gladys Davidson, a Blackburn girl, is anxious to render service in the trenches. She is an expert shot, and has secured many trophies in shooting competitions in various Lancashire contests. On Saturday she obtained first prize in a competition at Accrington Theatre, which was promoted by Miss Cody. She secured a bull and two inners out of three shots, which was the score obtained by Miss Cody, the distance being from the pit to the stage. In an interview yesterday, Miss Davidson advocated the formation of a women’s army corps. She said it was very unfair that men alone should be eligible to fight on the battlefield. She was prepared to make any sacrifice to render assistance to her country at this hour of need, and would be quite willing to part with her locks of auburn hair if this would assist her to achieve her ambition.
GIRL WHO WOULD FIGHT

Pleads With Recruiting Officer for a Chance.

WOULD CUT OFF HAIR

Manchester Lady Whose Parents are Russian Poles.

A remarkable evidence of the eagerness with which some of the fairer sex would enlist in the British Army were that
possible to them is afforded by a letter from and interview with a young Manchester lady.

"I feel it my duty to write to you. I am 20 years of age, and five feet eight in height. I am quite strong and healthy; I have never been ill in my life. I have never had a doctor, and I think I would have the pluck to join the army. My parents are willing for me to enlist, and I would be in my glory if I could join Lord Kitchener's Army."

These were the opening words of a letter received last week by Captain Walkley, principal recruiting officer in Manchester for Lord Kitchener's Army, from Miss Frances Phillips, of Collyhurst Road Buildings, Newtown.

Miss Phillips, a slimy-bulld, vivacious young woman, told a Daily Dispatch representative yesterday that she would "love to do something for her country. "I wish I were a lad," she added, "and I would join at once. I would not mind where I was fighting so that it was on the side of the Allies and against Germany."

"Lots of people," she continued, "have told me I have plenty of strength, and it have had to use it on occasions to defend myself."

When She Used Her Fists.

She related on in which a readiness to use her fists proved useful. 

"A year or two ago I was coming home from a dance," she said, "when a big man stopped me and tried to snatch my bag. I gave him one 'lander' in the face and knocked him down. Then I ran off, leaving him on the ground."

This valiant young lady's parents are Russian Poles, her father having been born at Kerno, and her mother in Suwalki.

They came to Manchester between 15 and 20 years ago, and were married here. Miss Phillips was born in Tiel-street, Angel Meadows, on Christmas Day, 1894, and was educated at St. Chad's Schools, Cheetham Hill. At the present time she is employed as a milliner in Rochdale.

When three years of age she went to her mother's native place, where she stayed for about four years, and on the homeward journey, owing to an accident, had to stay at Hamburg for about six months.

In reply to a question as to whether Red Cross work would not be more suitable, Miss Phillips said she had no training at nursing. She wanted to be a soldier, and she was confident she would do her share of fighting if she had the chance.

She had some practice at military drill, and had been told that she could pick up the work quicker than many men.

"DON'T LAUGH."

In her letter to Captain Walkley, Miss Phillips wrote:

"Do you know when I read the paper and see how our soldiers are fighting I feel a coward staying at home. Surely I have got hands and strength to help to fight for my country. I would even cut my hair off and put all my affairs on one side if you would only give me a chance. When you have read this letter do not throw it away and laugh at it, for I am writing seriously."

Captain Walkley has sent a sympathetic reply to the letter. He wrote:

You are showing a very fine spirit, and it is encouraging to find ladies in your frame of mind at the present moment. We only wish that others could be brought to the same way of thinking. Of course, you cannot come forward to serve in the ranks until you are serving the country well and helping us immensely by encouraging others to come forward to sustain our army in the field at the requisite numbers.
Young people and work

Perhaps the greatest contribution to Britain’s war effort from young people came in their war work. With millions of men serving in the armed forces, there was a severe shortage in the nation’s workforce. Many women would fill the places left by serving men. Over 600,000 women would enter the workforce, working in previously male-dominated work places. This in itself would impact on children, with childcare problematic and often non-existent. In the vital munitions industry the government would thus establish over one hundred day nurseries to look after women workers’ children. However, women’s efforts alone were not enough to make up for the missing men and children were therefore increasingly brought into work, often at the expense of their schooling.

In many ways, this theme is clouded by modern conceptions. In 1914, the school leaving age was 12. Therefore, our modern understanding of what constituted childhood and when young people are expected to work did not apply one hundred years ago. Nevertheless, concerns did exist about how many young people were working, about the number of hours they were working and the age at which they were starting work. In 1917, Education Minister H.A.L. Fisher claimed that as many as 600,000 children had been ‘prematurely’ put to work. A ‘Certificate of Exemption’ was required to leave school early, but they were easy to come by and many young people chose to earn an income rather than finish their education. They were widely used in factories and on the land, often engaged in dangerous and strenuous work vital to the war effort.

Questioning young people’s work:

- Why were so many young people working during the war?
- What sort of work would they have undertaken and what sort of challenges would that have presented?
- What sort of conditions would young people have been working in?
- How do you think young people would have felt about taking on these roles?
- Why was it a problem that young people were working ‘prematurely’?
- Do you think that the young people involved would have seen it as a problem?
- Could you imagine at your age working in the sorts of jobs and environments that young people would have been during the war?
Contemporary sources:
CHILDREN'S HARD LOT

SCHOOL BY DAY AND AT WORK ALL NIGHT.

Some almost incredible facts in regard to child labour were disclosed yesterday in a factory prosecution against Wood's Bottle Works, Limited, Portobello, near Edinburgh.

Five charges were made, and the evidence showed that children between twelve and thirteen worked in the bottle works throughout the night. They attended school during the day, started work at six at night, worked till five next morning, and then returned to school. One boy collapsed in the school. He had only had three hours' sleep.

The prosecutor said it took us back one hundred years.

A fine of £10 was imposed.
An Abuse of Child Labour.

Cases were brought before the Salford Council yesterday of two children who, in addition to spending 2½ hours at school, were working 62½ hours a week outside school hours, making a total of ninety hours in the week. That this should be possible after more than a century's legislation to prevent the abuse of child labour is hardly credible. The instances were not, of course, cited as being typical; they were extreme examples of a danger that has not been generally recognised. It would be natural to suppose that the Factory and Education Acts would between them have made it impossible for any child to be worked nearly twice as many hours as it is legal, for instance, to employ a miner. But there is apparently a gap in these Acts which makes it possible for a child under certain circumstances to be worked for hours limited by nothing except his or her physical capacity, and, in any humane interpretation of the words, far beyond it. The Factory and Workshop Act of 1901 strictly limits the hours of employment for children in almost any kind of trade, the term "workshop", being interpreted very widely so as to include any premises in which manual labour is exercised for purposes of gain. But it is not, of course, concerned with outside occupations. To some extent this gap has been filled by by-laws regulating street trading, but there remain none the less certain kinds of work, such as the delivery of milk, parcels, or newspapers, which are not touched either by the Factory Acts or by municipal by-laws. The Education Acts are concerned more with the attendance of children at school than with what happens to them out of school. There is a general prohibition in the Act of 1876 of the employment of children under 10 years old (subsequently raised to 12 years), but the value of this is impaired by exceptions in favour of employment which does not interfere with the "efficient elementary education of the children." A very similar exception is made in the Employment of Children Act of 1903. It is an exception which could not reasonably be supposed to cover such cases as those brought up before the Salford Council, but of which, unless the administration of the law is carefully watched, advantage can be taken. The remedy lies in this same Act of 1903, which confers upon local authorities full power to prescribe the age below which all employment is illegal and the number of hours beyond which employment is illegal. It is not to Salford's discredit in particular that the evil has there been so forcibly exposed, for it is common to all municipalities which have not put the Act of 1903 into force. But now that it has been exposed it will be very much to the discredit of any municipality which does not take steps to put an end to it.
OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

THE WORK OF MANCHESTER CHILDREN.

1,056 WORKERS UNDER ELEVEN YEARS OLD.

With a view to the adoption of by-laws under the Employment of Children Act, 1903, certain recommendations with regard to the employment of school children for wages out of school hours have been approved by the Manchester Education Committee. These recommendations will now go to the Sanitary Committee of the Corporation for consideration and afterwards to the City Council. If approved by these bodies the recommendations will still have to pass the Home Office.

The Chairman of the Education Committee at yesterday's meeting said the subject had been under consideration for several months. A comprehensive inquiry was undertaken at the beginning of the year, and every care was taken to ensure the accuracy of the return. The return showed that in some cases the employment undertaken by school children was possibly not too heavy, and was necessary for the upkeep of the house. It most certainly showed, also, that many children—and very young children—were working an excessive number of hours. There were 1,056 children under eleven years of age engaged out of school hours for wages. Of these, 34 were seven years of age, 128 were eight, and 282 were nine years of age. The Committee recommend that no children under the age of eleven years shall be employed. The return also showed that 3,396 children of all school ages were working out of school hours for over 20 hours per week, and of these 127 children were working between 40 and 50 hours per week, and 17 children for 50 hours or more.

Not for More Than 20 Hours.

The Committee recommend that a school child may not be employed for more than 20 hours in any one week. Recommendations are also made as to the number of hours of employment on any one day, and the hours during which such employment is permissible. Suggestions, moreover, are made prohibiting altogether the employment of children in certain occupations—in barbers' shops, in licensed premises or registered clubs, in billiard or bagatelle marking, in the sale of programmes or other articles in any theatre, music-hall, picture-house, or registered place of amusement. In making these recommendations the Committee say they have endeavoured to take into account the point of view of the employer and to avoid causing any unnecessary hardship. But after all, Sir Thomas Shaw said, the interests of the child must come first, and he felt sure employers would be as ready as anyone to recognise this fact and to make what little sacrifices might be asked under the new conditions.

Sunday Work.

Alderman Turnbull said he approved of the recommendations with one or two exceptions, which he would discuss with the Sanitary Committee. It was proposed originally that a school child might be employed in the delivery of milk on Sundays for not more than three hours, and in the sale of newspapers. The latter clause had been deleted. He claimed to be a good Sunday man, but he did not agree with that deletion in certain cases.
DEVELOPING BEING YOUNG IN WORLD WAR ONE

Thematic developments

‘Being Young on the Home Front’ could have covered multiple themes relating to young people’s experiences during the First World War. There were multiple experiences that could depend on, among other factors, location, social and economic background, gender, religion, political views, education, and profession. Of course, young people’s experiences were also highly influenced by those of their parents and immediate family. Understanding the sheer variety of home front experience is something that should be emphasised too.

In our project time, resources and the participants’ interests inevitably limited us to just a handful of themes. In particular, we felt that it was important to be guided by the participants, what they most engaged with and what was relevant to their backgrounds. Thus, there are numerous themes that could be covered with different participants, especially if they are of different ages, live in quite different localities and have different connections to the war. Below are suggestions for other themes that could explored when looking at young people’s home front experiences in the war:

- Educational experiences: the impact of the war on schools and education; encouraging children to be good citizens and future soldiers;
- The care of children: with mothers and fathers away, who looked after the children;
- Health and welfare: how did the impact of war affect children’s health, and was their welfare now less of a priority;
- Children in care: what was life like for the large number of children who were orphaned by the war;
- Uniformed organisation: what were the experiences of young people involved in organisations like the Scouts and Girl Guides;
- Delinquency, crime and justice: societal responses to fears of rising juvenile delinquency; rising rates of crime and young people; youth justice;
- Propaganda: young people as the target for propaganda and the use of young people in propaganda targeting others in society;
- Playtime: the impact of war on the games played and the toys played with;
- Literature: the impact of war on the books that young people read.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of themes, but this will hopefully give those reading this guide ideas for what can be covered when engaging young people today.
Developing different practices

Given the groups involved in our project and our expertise, we decided from the outset that developing some form of cultural production would be our preferred outcome and chosen form of practice for engaging the young people involved. We also wanted to employ a cascade model, thereby using the arts to enable youth leaders and young people to explore untold historical contexts. Employing such a model allows for the project team to have an impact far greater than their efforts alone would allow for. There are, though, beyond the dance and dramas performed in our project a variety of practices that can be employed.

Using this project/model as a guide, we would encourage youth leaders, teachers and others to utilise multiple practices to explore the many different stories associated with the First World War and beyond that with other historical events, figures and themes. By offering genuine co-production and giving young people authorship or control of whatever they are producing, encourages interest, a sense of ownership and to get young people thinking differently. As we have seen, multiple questions can be asked of topics like this. Multiple practices can also be utilised as well.

The aim of this project has been to interrogate a period of history through different means, forms and lenses. Diverse practices will thus encourage young people to look at this past a different way. Drama and dance worked in our project, but here are suggestions for other forms that could be encouraged:

- Spoken word and performance poetry;
- Music and song;
- Art and sculptor;
- Film and photography;
- Documentary;
- Social media and blogging;
- Computer gaming, toys and play;
- Debate;
- Sport;
- Commemoration and exhibition.
USEFUL LINKS

Birmingham Children of War -
https://birminghamchildrenofwarblog.wordpress.com/about/

British Library’s World War One Collection - http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one

British Library: ‘Children’s Experiences of World War One’ -
http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles/childrens-experiences-of-world-war-one


Family Letters: Letters Home from Five Brothers During the First World War -
http://www.familyletters.co.uk/

Great War Archive - http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/gwa

International Encyclopaedia of the First World War - http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/home/

Lancashire County Council Materials –
http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/ww1.aspx

Manchester Evening News World War One Collection –
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