

Topic the role and lives of Afro-Caribbean soldiers during the First World War
Level B1
Time 60 minutes

Aims

- To develop students' ability to read for gist and specific information
- To give practice of speaking about war, diversity and politics

Introduction

This lesson is about West Indian Soldiers during the First World War. It provides students with information about the history of the West Indies and its relationship with Britain and the First World War. It allows students to practise reading and learn vocabulary related to the war.

Materials

Print one copy of the student worksheets for each learner.
There is also a PowerPoint file '**Soldiers from the Caribbean pictures for Task 1**', which you can use either to print or to project the photographs for discussion during **Task 1**.

Procedure**Warmer (5 mins)**

- You could find and display an image of the West Indies: the Bahamas, Honduras (formerly British Honduras), Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana (formerly British Guiana), Trinidad and Tobago, the Windward Islands (Saint Martin, Saba and Saint Eustatius), the Leeward Islands (the group of islands between Dominica and Puerto Rico).
Ask students:
 - *Where are these islands?* (In the Caribbean)
 - *What is their relationship to Britain?* (They were a British Colony/had Britain as their Government/are part of the Commonwealth)
- Write 'the Caribbean Indies, the West Indies and the British Empire Islands' on the whiteboard. Ask students to guess the name of the group of islands in 1914.
Answer: *The West Indies*. Tell them that 'the West Indies' was the name used to describe this group of islands.

Tip – the West Indies

While the West Indies is still the name of the cricket team from there, the region is now more commonly referred to as the Caribbean. Nowadays the term 'Afro-Caribbean' is preferred to describe the people.

- You could ask students to list other Commonwealth countries, or countries which used to be a part of the British Empire. You could also show students a map of the Commonwealth, for example:
http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/51/Commonwealth_of_Nations.svg/2000px-Commonwealth_of_Nations.svg.png

Task 1 – Discussing old photographs (10 mins)

- Display the PowerPoint slides ('**Soldiers from the Caribbean pictures for Task 1**'). Note – for each slide, you only need to click once and the photograph and then the three questions will appear (this takes about 6 seconds).
- Ask students to speak in small groups and answer the questions.
- Elicit as much vocabulary as possible from the images and encourage discussion.

Answers to Task 1

- *Picture 1: you can see three West Indian soldiers holding guns. There is also a cart and some sheds in the background. They fought for the British side in the war – the West Indies were part of the British Empire.*
- *Picture 2: you can see men in a trench. The trenches were used to protect soldiers from enemy attack. The trenches might have been dug by West Indian soldiers.*
- *Picture 3: the men are carrying bombs. It was a difficult job. It was probably boring and dangerous – they are carrying bombs and they probably did this for a long time.*

Task 2 – Reading for gist (5 mins)

- Explain that the students are going to find out more about the soldiers in the photographs. If the students expressed guesses or opinions about the soldiers during Task 1, you could also ask them to quickly read the text to see if these guesses were correct.
- Ask students to answer to read the text quickly and answer the two gist questions. Give feedback.

Answers to Task 2

- Men from the West Indies wanted to go to war.*
- Problems: didn't have right clothes, died of frostbite, arms and legs cut off, not treated the same as white soldiers, did worse jobs than white soldiers, got paid less*

Task 3 – Reading for detail (15 mins)

- Ask the students to read the text again and answer the questions. Ask students to check their answers with a partner before giving feedback.

Answers to Task 3

- The Western Front (Belgium, France and Germany), Italy, Jordan, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine, East Africa, Cameroon and Togo.*
- Men from the West Indies wanted to go to war because they 'wanted Britain to win, they thought the pay was good and they thought it would change the politics in the West Indies' (para. 2).*
- Ship changed direction to Canada, many soldiers had arms or legs cut off or died because they didn't have warm clothes.*
- Labouring, digging trenches, carrying weapons, building shelters, cleaning toilets.*
- The army was treating them worse than white soldiers – worse jobs and worse pay.*
- They wanted independence from Britain – to have their own Government.*
- Yes. Between 1960 and 1980 each of the West Indies became independent.*
- A group of 54 countries that were once part of the British Empire (e.g. the UK, Australia, Canada, India and Nigeria).*

Task 4 – Vocabulary (5 mins)

- Ask students to read the text again, find the words then match the words to their meaning. Ask students to check their answers with a partner before giving feedback.

Answers to Task 4

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. f
5. h
6. g
7. e
8. d

Task 5 – Discussion (10 mins)

- Ask students to work in groups of three. Ask them to read and discuss the questions.
- Facilitate a whole class discussion.

Suggested answers to Task 5

Possible places/countries that would like independence: Kurdistan (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey), Catalonia (Spain), The Basque Country (Spain), parts of the UK (Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales)

Extra activity

Encourage students to think about equality and diversity. Ask students to work in small groups and discuss in what ways they are similar or different. Encourage them to think about their likes and dislikes as well as characteristics (nationality, colour, religion, marriage, children, family, gender, etc). If possible, assist them to think about the importance of understanding diversity and treating everyone equally.