

# The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory

Final Project Report, May 2014



<http://www.intheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk>

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## List of abbreviations

AHRC	Arts and Humanities Research Council
A-level	General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
AQA	Awarding body, education charity and exam board in England, Wales and Northern Ireland
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CPD	Continued Professional Development
CWGC	Commonwealth War Graves Commission
Edexcel	UK exam board and awarding body, a subsidiary of Pearson Education Limited
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IoE	Institute of Education
IWM	Imperial War Museums
KS3	Key Stage 3
KS4	Key Stage 4
NA	National Archives
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OCR	Oxford Cambridge and RSA, a UK awarding body and exam board
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
POS	Programme of Study
SMSC	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development

### Photo accreditation:

**Front cover:** Student in Fricourt German war cemetery, France. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School and Peter Dowsett.

**p. 5:** Pupils with the school war memorial they helped restore. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School.

**p. 30:** Anna Phillips, Lee Facey and Andrew Metcalfe with the school war memorial they helped to restore. Photograph reproduced with the kind permission of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School.

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## Executive Summary

**This report details the results of a year-long exploratory research project funded by the AHRC, carried out by Dr Catriona Pennell (History, University of Exeter) and Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus (English Literature, Northumbria University). Its findings are based on a two-day workshop, three regional focus groups and an online survey, and restricted to secondary schools in England due to the exploratory nature of the research grant.<sup>1</sup> The target audience of this report is purposefully general; we are not writing exclusively for the academy or educational practitioners. Instead, we have aimed our findings at teachers, researchers, educationalists, museum education officers, university outreach teams, exam boards, textbook authors, policymakers and anyone else who may be interested in the way the First World War is taught in English secondary schools on the eve of the centenary.**

Our report approaches the teaching of the First World War from the perspective of cultural history and memory studies rather than from an educational point of view, and seeks to establish links between topics, methods and motivations in teaching the war and the way it is remembered. In the course of the project, we noted both striking differences and clear similarities across the two subjects under investigation, History and English Literature. Teachers across both subjects feel hampered by

time and curriculum constraints and sought to combine the teaching of cultural and moral awareness of the cost of the First World War with the teaching of its history and literature respectively. Although public criticisms of the teaching of this subject are usually directed at history teachers, such as recent debates over the use of *Blackadder Goes Forth* or canonical war poetry in teaching about the war, English teachers also feel affected by these controversies.

Our main findings can be summarised as follows:

- What emerged most forcibly from our workshop, survey findings and focus-group discussions was the strong sense of dedication to teaching the First World War among our participants, a self-selecting group of 451 teachers with a special interest in the conflict. Their commitment is echoed in many recent letters to the press and comments in social media.
- Our various interactions with these teachers confirmed that where popular representations such as *Blackadder Goes Forth* are used in the classroom, it is, more often than not, as a window into deeper discussion and with a critical understanding that the war, since its outbreak, has been subject to multiple and contradictory interpretations.
- In the case of History specifically, the emphasis placed on traditional First World War topics, such as the causes of the war, soldiers' experience, the trenches, and/or the Western Front is a result of key stage, curriculum content and exam board specifications, rather than a refusal by teachers to integrate broader and more complex topics into their teaching.
- Training and CPD emerged as fundamental to these highly committed teachers, allowing them to stay up-to-date with pedagogical, historical and/or literary thinking. Therefore, this is perhaps the key interface where teachers at secondary and university level can interact in order to allow the most recent research into First World War history and literature to penetrate the classroom. We hope our report will act as a 'call to action' for academics to get involved with schools during the centenary period, offering podcasts, guest lectures, abstracts of their articles, or simply a chat with a local teacher (amongst many other forms of interaction) about ways to integrate recent First World War scholarship into their teaching practice.
- However, we also acknowledge that we have only seen a snapshot of First World War teaching; our findings are restricted by the self-selecting and enthusiastic nature of our participants. On the whole, we have been exposed to excellent and innovative teaching. Those teachers who (for whatever reason) are less committed to the study of the First World War and its literature may well rely on traditional interpretations and methods in their teaching. At the very least, they are unlikely to give up

<sup>1</sup> Details of the grant scheme can be found at <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Funding-Opportunities/Pages/Care-for-the-Future-Exploratory-Awards.aspx> [sic] [Last accessed 2 May 2014].

## Executive Summary continued

their free time to take part in a research project of this nature.

- One of the most fundamental questions for teachers appears to be the remit of their respective discipline. As both History and English teachers lay claim to teaching the cultural history of the war, whether through literature or non-literary sources, this can result in friction as well as unnecessary overlap between the two subject areas. The issue is aggravated by (and in turn partly causes) the current dearth of systematic cross-curricular work. In response to recent criticisms that ‘the war [is] “only ever taught as poetry now”’,<sup>2</sup> we would suggest that teaching the war through poetry need not be problematic if History and English Literature were enabled to better work together in contextualising individual literary responses to the First World War.
- Though by no means shared by all teachers, there appears to be a widespread sense of obligation to combine the teaching of the war’s history and/or literature with developing pupils’ capacity for empathy and a moral stance on warfare generally. This is potentially problematic in the sense that teaching the First World War with an emphasis on suffering risks blinkering pupils to the diversity of the war’s experience. Some of our respondents felt strongly that conveying the complexity of the war’s experience

is important and endeavoured to achieve a balance between investigating suffering and sacrifice and war as a catalyst for personal and social development, despite restrictions to teaching time and content. As such, they contribute directly to a re-shaping of the war’s popular memory by broadening new generations’ understanding of what the First World War entailed.

Setting aside the plethora of practical challenges which teachers face, the key challenge as well as the greatest opportunity in teaching about the First World War is finding ways of making the war matter to each new generation of pupils. Teaching plays a vital part in perpetuating and indeed shaping the popular memory of the war, but its effectiveness depends on making the past relevant to the present and future. The vast majority of our respondents recognised this and responded to the challenge by, for instance, drawing their pupils in by establishing family or local links to the war, a strategy that also informs the government-sponsored IoE WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours, which emphasise preparation and experience with regional focus.

<sup>2</sup> “‘Poetry is no way to teach the Great War’ Paxman says schools should address the important issues rather than fixating on horror, writes Nicola Woolcock.’ *The Times*, 14 March 2014, p. 3.



## Introduction

**Nearly a century on, the First World War remains one of the most prominent moments in modern history. Its ubiquity in public discourse demonstrates its enormous staying power, and its ability to speak to each new generation afresh. As such, the First World War has become part of British (and particularly English) cultural memory and national consciousness. This also entails its use as a moral as well as historical lesson, as the war's historical and literary legacies have been frequently invoked in both pacifist and patriotic discourses.<sup>3</sup> However, its perception and commemoration have been subject to on-going change, and this process continues as every new generation reinterprets the war's literary and cultural legacy from their own perspective.**

'The First World War in the Classroom: Teaching and the Construction of Cultural Memory', funded by the AHRC as part of their research theme 'Care for the Future', was an exploratory project aimed at gaining initial insights into the contribution

made by teaching the history and literature of the First World War to the way the war is remembered. With its emphasis on transmission of the war's historical and literary heritage from teachers to students,<sup>4</sup> our project fitted well with the AHRC theme, as teaching is, after all, a process of preserving knowledge about the past for future generations. Our project considered secondary schools in England as sites of intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge that link the past with the present, carrying its essence forward into the future. It scrutinised the role of schools in transmitting and (re-)interpreting the literary and cultural legacy of the First World War and the values and lessons that are drawn from this momentous historical event. The focus of the project was on encouraging dialogue and diversity; our aim was to get teachers and researchers to talk to each other and find practicable and fruitful ways of bringing new insights about the war and its literature into the classroom. Ultimately, we hope to see an increase in cross-curricular teaching as well as a diversification of teaching about the war and its literature in a bid to challenge reductive stereotypes promoted in media coverage and political discourse, and to

tackle the limitations inherent in working with only canonical texts and topics.

In the light of the war's approaching centenary, we explored how the First World War as a defining part of national consciousness and cultural memory continues to be transmitted into the future, particularly at a time of change for the English education system. Given that the First World War seems set to remain a crucial part of English national self-understanding, we need to ask what memories of the war are being passed from teachers to pupils, what narratives are included or left out, and what implications this may have for future generations' understanding of the war. These are crucial questions, as illustrated in media responses to David Cameron's pledge of £50 million to Britain's centenary commemorations (11 October 2012), which prompted headlines such as 'Learn the right lessons from history' and 'Remember: it wasn't great'.<sup>5</sup> In January 2014, the memory of the war was dragged into current political debates between the Labour and Conservative parties triggered by the Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove's, comments in the *Daily Mail*

<sup>3</sup> The two poles of contemporary debate are perhaps best illustrated by contrasting former Children's Laureate Michael Morpurgo's comments on trans-national mourning and reconciliation with those of Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, on patriotic remembrance: see Michael Morpurgo, 'First world war centenary is a year to honour the dead but not to glorify', *Guardian*, 1 January 2014, [www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/01/first-world-war-centenary-michael-morpurgo](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/01/first-world-war-centenary-michael-morpurgo) [Last accessed 21 April 2014]; Michael Gove, 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?', *Daily Mail*, 2 January 2014, [www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2532923/Michael-Gove-blasts-Blackadder-myths-First-World-War-spread-television-sit-coms-left-wing-academics.html) [Last accessed 21 April 2014]

<sup>4</sup> Throughout this report, we are using the terms 'student' and 'pupil' interchangeably to refer to secondary-school pupils. Where we are referring to university students this is stated explicitly.

<sup>5</sup> See 'First World War: Learning the right lessons from history', *Guardian*, 12 October 2012, [www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/11/first-world-war-centenary-commemorations](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/oct/11/first-world-war-centenary-commemorations) [Last accessed 14 October 2012]; 'Remember: it wasn't great', *Sunday Herald*, 14 October 2012 [www.heraldscotland.com/comment/tom-shields-on/remember-it-wasnt-great.19134750](http://www.heraldscotland.com/comment/tom-shields-on/remember-it-wasnt-great.19134750) [Last accessed 14 October 2012].

## Introduction continued

accusing left-wing academics of peddling myths about the war that denigrate patriotism and courage by depicting the conflict as a 'misbegotten shambles'.<sup>6</sup> If, as these stories suggest, there is a right and a wrong way of remembering the war during the centenary, we need to consider what these might be, and what role teachers and the curriculum play in the process of putting the next generation in touch with the war's legacy.

The active phase of the project ran from February 2013 to May 2014 and encompassed an initial two-day workshop for secondary-school and Further Education teachers, academics and museum education officers, as well as three regional focus groups and an online survey. The target audience of the resulting report is aimed at a variety of audiences including (but not restricted to) teachers, researchers, educationalists, museum education officers, university outreach teams, exam boards, textbook authors, and policymakers. The research was undertaken by Dr Catriona Pennell (History) at the University of Exeter and Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus (English Literature) at Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne. Our main aims and objectives were:

- To explore the ways in which the First World War, as a topic relevant to both History and English Literature, is taught in English secondary schools in both subject areas, particularly in the GCSE and AS/A-level curriculums.
- To understand the ways in which the teaching of the First World War contributes to the formation of a specific cultural memory of the war and a literary canon that emphasises a select group of poet 'truth speakers' above all other witness testimony of the war.
- To consult with teachers, academics and educational policy-makers via a workshop, online survey and focus groups to gain greater understanding of what is already happening in secondary-school classrooms.
- To create a dialogue between schools, universities and professional organisations.
- To develop lasting outputs (such as an interactive website and project report) that encourage continued dialogue between secondary and university level teachers.
- To be in a position to start making recommendations about the way the subject is taught and the content coverage in History and English Literature.
- To lay the foundations for further research to examine the way the First World War is taught in schools and universities across the UK and Ireland – including Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland – which takes into account the different education systems, and the

different ways in which the First World War is remembered in these four areas noting the specificity, in particular, of the difficult relationship the Republic of Ireland has historically had with the memory of the First World War.

Progress of the project was monitored in a series of steering committee meetings. The teacher steering committee consisted of six teachers with between one and nineteen years' teaching experience from Comprehensive, Independent and Faith schools in Cornwall, County Durham, Hampshire, London, Norfolk and Oxfordshire, while the academic steering committee was comprised of researchers and professionals with expertise in the field: Adrian Barlow, Chairman of the English Association; Professor Jackie Eales, President of the Historical Association; Dr Dan Todman (History), Queen Mary, University of London; Dr Jane Potter (English Literature and Publishing Studies), Oxford Brookes University, and Dr Paul Bracey (Education Studies), University of Northampton. We would also like to thank other colleagues who have supported the project along the way, including Rebecca Sullivan (CEO of the Historical Association), Dr Santanu Das (King's College, London) and our collaborators at the IoE: Professor Stuart Foster, Dr Alice Pettigrew, Jerome Freeman and Anna Warburton, as well as Olga Cara, who undertook the data analysis for our survey.

<sup>6</sup> See 'Why does the Left insist on belittling true British heroes?', *Daily Mail*, 2 January 2014, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-2532930/MICHAEL-GOVE-Why-does-Left-insist-belittling-true-British-heroes.html> [Last accessed 11 January 2014]; 'The first world war centenary should be about shared understanding, not political point-scoring', *Guardian*, 11 January 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/10/first-world-war-centenary-understanding-not-political-point-scoring> [Last accessed 11 January 2014]

## Introduction continued

Last but not least, a word of caution: our project – and this report – are not designed to be exhaustive accounts of the state of teaching in England, and they do not approach their subject from an educational point of view. Our intention was to glean a selective, snapshot view of classroom practices, motivations and

interests in so far as they throw light on the cultural history of the war in the present moment. Our recommendations and reflections at the end of this report are concerned with the legacy and memory of the war more broadly as disseminated in secondary schools, rather than offering particular practical suggestions. We do

hope, however, that the qualitative and quantitative data gathered and presented here will facilitate future, more practice-oriented projects, and will stimulate further research into links between the war's cultural memory and the way it is taught.





## Wider Context of Our Research

Our project is set in the context of a diverse and changing system of secondary education in England, which poses a number of challenges for research into educational practice. For state-maintained schools, topics covered are partly prescribed by the National Curriculum,<sup>7</sup> and partly determined by their choice of exam board for GCSE, A-level, or equivalent qualifications such as the IBacc. Since different exam boards also offer a number of different options for each qualification, and as teachers are often able to choose from a wide variety of texts and/or sources within each option, it is particularly difficult to ascertain what topics and materials find their way into the classroom. To compound these difficulties, only state-maintained schools are bound by the National Curriculum, whereas the rapidly rising numbers of Free Schools, Academies and Independent Schools are not, although they do have to choose from the same range of approved exam boards and qualifications at KS4 and Sixth Form.

In the 2007 National Curriculum for English at KS4, the First World War featured only as a potential topic, in that authors such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas, R.C. Sherriff and Pat Barker were named as examples of twentieth-century and contemporary writers whose works were suitable for study. However, the 2007 National Curriculum for English at KS4 ceased to be statutory as of 1 September 2013, with schools expected 'to develop their own curricula for English that best meet the needs of their pupils, in preparation for the introduction of the new national curriculum from September 2014'.<sup>8</sup> Drafts of the new English curriculum for KS4 initially explicitly included 'representative poetry of the First World War' under subject content,<sup>9</sup> but changed this to the more generalised stipulation of 'a selection of poetry since 1850' and 'British fiction or drama since the First World War' in the subsequent draft GCSE subject content and assessment objectives.<sup>10</sup> The finalised version of the English KS4

curriculum for English for implementation in September 2015 is at present still under consultation, but it seems unlikely to return to a more explicit inclusion of First World War literature. This implies that the choice of whether or not to include First World War-related material into teaching at KS4, as at Sixth Form level, will remain largely the choice of individual teachers, prompted either by particular interest in the topic or by a particular choice of exam board option at each level.

History, by contrast, is an optional subject for pupils in English secondary schools above fourteen years of age (KS3).<sup>11</sup> In the 2007 National Curriculum for History at KS3, the 'nature and impact of the two world wars and the Holocaust' were specified as 'aspects of history' that all pupils should be taught.<sup>12</sup> However, the National Curriculum is in a period of major reform and subject to frequent reconfiguration; the latest version is due to go live in September 2014.<sup>13</sup> So far, the National Curriculum

<sup>7</sup> The National Curriculum in England – in place in different iterations since the 1988 Education Reform Act – outlines which subjects are compulsory at which key stage in state-maintained primary and secondary education, what broad areas should be covered within each subject and what levels of attainment students should reach at the various stages, whilst allowing schools some flexibility in how these requirements are implemented: 'For each subject and for each key stage, programmes of study set out what pupils should be taught, and attainment targets set out the expected standards of pupils' performance. It is for schools to choose how they organise their school curriculum to include the programmes of study.' Source: Department for Education, 'About the school curriculum', Last updated: 28 January 2013, <https://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/b00200366/abt-schl-curric> [Last accessed 7 January 2014].

<sup>8</sup> See Department for Education, 'Secondary National Curriculum until 2014', Last updated: 5 August 2013, <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/secondary/b00199101/english> [Last accessed 7 January 2014].

<sup>9</sup> See Department of Education, 'English Programme of Study for Key Stage 4, February 2013', <https://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/e/english%20-%20key%20stage%204%2005-02-13.pdf> [Last accessed 7 January 2014], p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> See Department of Education, 'English Literature GCSE subject content and assessment objectives', June 2013, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/206144/GCSE\\_English\\_Literature\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206144/GCSE_English_Literature_final.pdf) [Last accessed 7 January 2014], p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> It has been mandatory from ages 5-14 years since 1995. Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802151252/https://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/h/history%202007%20programme%20of%20study%20for%20key%20stage%203.pdf> [Last accessed 16 April 2014]. As this was the most recent confirmed version of the National Curriculum for History at the time of our survey, it has formed the basis of our analysis.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/nationalcurriculum2014> [Last accessed 21 February 2014].



## Wider Context of Our Research continued

guidance for History remains consistent in specifying the Holocaust as prescribed content at KS1-3; the First World War (and Second World War) have been relegated to non-mandatory subjects.<sup>14</sup> At KS4 and above, the content is set by the exam boards,<sup>15</sup> guided by government guidelines. Taking the Edexcel GCSE specification as an example, the First World War appears as an optional part of 'History A' (Modern World History) and 'History B' (Schools History Project).<sup>16</sup> Sixth Form (or KS5) History is also made up of four units (the fourth being an independent study chosen by the centre) and, overall, consists of many more options than at KS4. For example, the exam board AQA specification alone includes forty-four options within units 1-3. Taking the narrow view that the First World War is limited by the chronology of 1914-1918, the topic could appear in nine of these forty-four options.<sup>17</sup> Even in the context of the on-going GCSE and A-level reforms, the First World War is likely to remain as a topic across all exam boards. According to one exam board Product Manager for History, who attended the original workshop:

“ There is no core or compulsory content that awarding organisations have to include in their specifications for either GCSE or A-level, though the content they offer has to meet certain criteria – for example, requirements for chronological and geographical breadth within a student’s course and for a minimum percentage of British history. It seems highly likely that most, if not all, awarding organisations will continue to offer the First World War in some way in their new specifications, whether as a discrete topic or as part of a broader topic area. Teachers and other stakeholders would expect it to be available amongst the options – and would be shocked were it to be completely absent. It also continues to be popular with students.<sup>18</sup> ”



<sup>14</sup> See [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/239075/SECONDARY\\_national\\_curriculum\\_-\\_History.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239075/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_History.pdf) [Last accessed 9 April 2014]

<sup>15</sup> For History (in England), these are Edexcel, OCR, and AQA.

<sup>16</sup> Edexcel's Schools History Project is a GCSE qualification consisting of four equally weighted units (assessed through examination and controlled assessment) that encourages students to study history from four different angles: change and continuity over a long period of time; in-depth study of a short period; source analysis; and different views of history. For more information, see <http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gcse/gcse09/history/b/Pages/default.aspx> [Last accessed 21 February 2014].

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/history/a-level/history-2040> [Last accessed 21 February 2014].

<sup>18</sup> Response from workshop participant to query via email, 22 April 2014.



## The Survey

### Assembling and testing the survey

**The centrepiece of our project was our online survey with separate pathways for teachers of History and English Literature, which was developed in close collaboration with a number of teachers as well as experts at the IoE. The questions were partly modelled on the IoE research questionnaire that informed their Holocaust Education programme,<sup>19</sup> and the survey remained open for just over four months, from 21 June to 1 December 2013.**

In the latter stages of developing the questionnaire, we took the decision to combine our research into teaching practice with the IoE's research into battlefield trips practice, necessitated by their responsibility for the government-sponsored WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme, which aims to provide the opportunity for a minimum of two pupils and one teacher from every state funded secondary school in England to visit battlefields on the Western Front starting in 2014.<sup>20</sup> As a result, the final survey was split into two parts, the first and longer of which looked at teaching practice, experience, aims and motivations, and the second of which asked teachers to comment on existing practice

and ideas about visits to the battlefields. The full and finalised version of the survey is included in this report as **Appendix I**.

The teaching-based part of the questionnaire underwent a process of gradual development and refinement. The first basic version of 42 questions, which did not differentiate between subjects, was circulated among participants at the initial London workshop in advance of the event, and discussed in three breakout groups. Feedback was detailed and although not every criticism could be acted upon due to inevitable technical constraints,<sup>21</sup> a variety of important changes were implemented as a result of this feedback. These changes included:

- Creation of pathways for different subjects;
- Abbreviation of initial information and consent sections to allow teachers to progress to the survey faster;
- Highlighting reasons for teachers to respond to survey by stressing that greater knowledge of teaching practice will ultimately benefit all;
- Clarification of our parameters for what we mean by the terms First World War / First World War literature at the outset of the survey;

- Move away from tick boxes to scales (from 'very important' to 'not important at all');
- Addition of faith schools to list of options for 'kind of institution you teach at';
- Replacement of drop-down menu of regions in favour of free-text box in which teachers could state the postcode of their school, which allowed for more nuanced and accurate information on geographical reach;
- Expansion of questions on resources used for teaching;
- Inclusion of questions on interdisciplinary / cross-curricular teaching, staying up to date with academic research, books held in stock cupboard (English Pathway only) and plans for the centenary;
- Allowing respondents to state exam boards and courses used as well as querying themes and topics alongside which the First World War is taught to capture the highly varied contexts in which it appears in the syllabus;
- Allowing respondents to state their position in the school, as a teacher's view might be very different to the Head of Department;

<sup>19</sup> See Alice Pettigrew, Stuart Foster, et al. *Teaching about the Holocaust in English Secondary Schools: An empirical study of national trends, perspectives and practice* (London: Institute of Education, 2009), p. 7. The report can be accessed here: [www.hedp.org.uk/\\_files/Documents/Research/hedp\\_research\\_report.pdf](http://www.hedp.org.uk/_files/Documents/Research/hedp_research_report.pdf) [Last accessed 17 October 2012].

<sup>20</sup> See [www.ioe.ac.uk/study/87073.html](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/87073.html) [Last accessed 12 January 2014].

<sup>21</sup> Suggestions we were unable to implement or which had to be reversed at a later stage because of technical limitations, concerns over the ability to analyse the resulting data, or a disproportionate increase to the length of time it took to fill in the questionnaire, were mainly concerned with allowing teachers to respond to each question multiple times for each year group at which they teach, and establishing a broader teaching philosophy beyond teaching of the First World War and/or its literature. We were also unable to accommodate desirables alongside actual teaching practice in a bid to keep survey length down, as this latter point was felt to be crucial. A separate survey for teachers in training was rejected as overly complicating responses and data analysis, given that the separate survey would also have to have had two different pathways.

## The Survey continued

- Reduction of free-text answers in favour of drop-down menus or multiple-choice questions.

A second round of teacher feedback was gleaned via a pilot (in hard copy) with the six members of our teacher steering committee, whose main input can be summarised as follows:

- Length and scope of the survey were considered appropriate and workable;
- Initial information needed to clarify what kind of experience we were looking for (i.e. personal or school-related, current or past experience), and whether we were looking for First World War-specific answers in all cases or also general information (e.g. in questions on methods and approaches);
- More questions needed to allow respondents to differentiate between year groups, levels or key stages;
- More questions needed to allow rating individual options on a scale.

Based on the experience of the IoE Holocaust study, we decided to run at least one online pilot before distributing the final survey. A pilot version (History Pathway only) ran from 31 August to 18 June 2013, with 31 respondents, recruited from a pool of testers through the IoE and participants

of the initial project workshop. The pilot version had 61 questions (including a number of optional questions), 22 of which were related to the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours project. As the initial version was felt to have too many free-text answers, which are time-consuming and difficult to analyse meaningfully, we used free-text answers in the pilot to compile options for tick boxes for more manageable data. While we were conscious that a shorter survey would attract more respondents, we took the decision to not cut back further on questions, as the purpose of the survey was an in-depth understanding of teaching practice rather than a superficial overview. Instead, we endeavoured to employ the user-friendliest format for questions. Both the online pilot and the final survey were distributed via Bristol Online Surveys, an online survey tool created by the University of Bristol that is widely used by universities and research institutes in the UK and whose data protection and security features allowed adherence to the research ethics standards prescribed by our respective institutions.<sup>22</sup>

The revised English Pathway comprised 65 questions, the revised History Pathway 63, 24 of which respectively were dedicated to gaining information on practice and experience relating to battlefield tours.<sup>23</sup> Not all questions were compulsory, and

respondents were able to skip whole sections that were not applicable. The final online version of the survey was divided into 9 sections:

1. Information and consent
2. Personal details (demographic information)
3. Teaching role and context
4. Teaching practice, aims and methods
5. Teaching rationale
6. Extra-curricular activities
7. Knowledge base and training
8. Battlefield tours to France / Belgium
9. WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project<sup>24</sup>

### Publicising the survey

Where the IoE's Holocaust survey was able to draw on established organisations and museums specialising in Holocaust education and commemoration, on existing networks of contacts within education studies, as well as on purchased electronic databases of secondary-school contacts for purposes of publicity and recruitment of participants, our means of publicising the First World War in the Classroom survey were limited by greater budget constraints and less well developed networks among teachers and educational experts.<sup>25</sup> The

<sup>22</sup> The survey questionnaire and information and consent pages underwent research ethics approval at both the University of Exeter and Northumbria University. Full anonymity of all participants was ensured, and contact information (which was provided voluntarily by participants prepared to engage further with the project) was kept separate from other survey results.

<sup>23</sup> Please refer to **Appendix 1** for a full list of questions.

<sup>24</sup> This final section offered two pathways depending on whether or not respondents were interested in learning more about the project.

<sup>25</sup> The IoE Holocaust Education Development Programme was commissioned and funded by The Pears Foundation and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, who jointly pledged £1.5 million over a period of three years to the project. This sum has to be set against the much smaller budget of £30,014 available to our AHRC-funded project, bearing in mind also that 'The First World War in the Classroom' was designed from the outset as an exploratory rather than an exhaustive research project.

## The Survey continued

survey did benefit, however, from publicity via the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project mailing list, compiled and provided by the Department for Education, which enabled the IoE to contact all heads of state-funded secondary schools in England on our behalf. For a full breakdown of publicity measures, please refer to **Appendix 2**.

### Demographic and teaching profile of respondents: how meaningful is our sample?

The response rates for the survey were lower than originally hoped for, with 45 completed plus 53 partial responses for English and 228 completed plus roughly 125 partial responses for History. Overall, two factors are likely to have been the most significant obstacles to achieving a higher response rate: firstly, the difficulty of targeting teachers directly (rather than through heads of school), meaning that information about the survey, in many cases, may never have reached individual potential respondents. This assumption is backed by the high number of Heads of Department who responded, which suggests that where information about the survey did not stall at Head of School level, it may often not have penetrated further than to the Head of Department for History or English.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, the length of

the survey may have acted as a deterrent to notoriously hard-pressed teaching professionals, particularly those juggling family or care commitments with a full-time teaching load. In addition to these general factors, the significantly lower uptake on the part of English teachers may in part result from the fact that war literature may conceivably often be taught with a view to particular literary issues rather than with a view to its historical context. Consequently, teachers who, for example, use war poetry to teach poetic technique and analysis may not have felt called upon to complete the survey, as they may not consider their teaching as teaching specifically of First World War literature.

In evaluating how representative a sample our 451 respondents constitute, four mitigating factors have to be borne in mind. The most important of these are:

1. Wide geographical spread achieved
2. High number of Heads of Department responding
3. Overall spread of sample across genders, teaching experience, employment status and ethnic origin
4. Depth of reflection contained within individual responses

The survey data reflects a wide geographical spread (see **Table 1** overleaf) for both pathways, with Yorkshire (comprising North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire), Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Greater London unsurprisingly leading in numbers as the geographically largest and the most populous areas in England respectively.<sup>27</sup> Respondents were asked to state their school's postcode to help identify their relative location. Not every respondent stated this information, which was not obligatory, but on the basis of the information submitted and after eliminating instances where two or three teachers from the same school responded (four in the English Pathway, eight in the History Pathway), the History Pathway alone represents views from at least 307 schools in 43 counties, with an additional 60 schools in 28 counties covered by the English Pathway, as can be seen in the breakdown of geographical location below. The table has been ordered by ascending number of responses for each pathway per county, stating absolute numbers for responses:

The overall figure of at least 307 History departments and at least 60 English departments has to be set against the total number of 4,204 state-funded schools

<sup>26</sup> The problem of a perceived overload of requests for assistance frequently hampers educational research in a professional environment where teachers routinely receive far more requests than they can easily deal with. A Head of Department who participated in piloting educational research carried out by Bethan Marshall stated his policy concerning research questionnaires in a face-to-face interview: 'You see I might have filtered a questionnaire out and never given it to the department. I mean there are loads of things that come in that I don't pass on. I'll look at them and just say this is a waste of our time.' In Bethan Marshall, *English Teachers – the Unofficial Guide: Researching the Philosophies of English Teachers* (London; New York: Routledge Falmer, 2000), p. 144. By this logic, any Head of Department (or Headteacher) who did not consider the First World War or its literature a priority topic is unlikely to have forwarded our survey information to their team.

<sup>27</sup> The higher response rates in the English Pathway for County Durham and Tyne and Wear may be explained by good connections between the research team and local English teachers.

Table 1: Responses in absolute numbers by pathway and county

History Pathway	English Pathway
Isle of Wight (1)	Berkshire (1)
Isle of Man (1)	Buckinghamshire (1)
Berkshire (1)	Cambridgeshire (1)
Northamptonshire (1)	Cheshire (1)
Nottinghamshire (1)	Cornwall (1)
Shropshire (1)	Cumbria (1)
Gloucestershire (2)	Greater Manchester (1)
Norfolk (2 responses, 1 school)	Kent (1)
Northumberland (2)	Lancashire (1)
Bedfordshire (3)	Rutland (1)
Leicestershire (3)	Surrey (1)
Cumbria (3)	Sussex (East and West) (1)
Suffolk (3)	Warwickshire (1)
Warwickshire (4 responses, 3 schools)	Wiltshire (1)
Bristol (5 responses, 4 schools)	Devon (2)
Derbyshire (5)	Essex (2)
Dorset (5)	Hertfordshire (2)
Herefordshire (5)	Norfolk (2)
Merseyside (5)	Somerset (2)
Staffordshire (5)	Suffolk (2)
Worcestershire (5)	Oxfordshire (4)
Lincolnshire (6)	West Midlands (4)
Cheshire (7)	Herefordshire (4 responses, 3 schools)
Cornwall (7)	Hampshire (5 responses, 4 schools)
Oxfordshire (7)	Tyne and Wear (5 responses, 4 schools)
Somerset (7 responses, 6 schools)	Greater London (6 responses, 5 schools)
Wiltshire (7)	County Durham (6)
Buckinghamshire (8)	Yorkshire (8)
Cambridgeshire (8)	
Devon (8)	
Hertfordshire (8)	
County Durham (9)	
Tyne and Wear (9 responses, 8 schools)	
West Midlands (9)	
Sussex (East and West) (9)	
Hampshire (10)	
Essex (11)	
Surrey (11 responses, 10 schools)	
Kent (13)	
Greater Manchester (14)	
Lancashire (15)	
Yorkshire (25 responses, 21 schools)	
Greater London (50 responses, 46 schools)	Total number of counties covered across both surveys: 45

## The Survey continued

with secondary-age pupils in England as of December 2013, including academies and free schools,<sup>28</sup> and 2,413 independent schools captured in the January 2013 school census.<sup>29</sup> If based on these figures one assumes an approximate total number of secondary schools in England of 6,617, our sample represents around 4.6% of all History departments and 0.9% of all English departments in secondary schools in England. Both pathways taken together, 89% of respondents taught at state-maintained schools, as opposed to 9.9% independent-school teachers and 0.2% in Adult Education, which compares with 63.5% state-funded schools as opposed to 36.5% independent schools in England in 2013.<sup>30</sup> The somewhat disproportionate representation of state school teachers may at least in part have resulted from an inherent bias in our main publicity channel for the survey, which was a mailing list of state-maintained schools compiled by the Department for Education that did not include independent schools. If one considers our respondent rates in terms of schools or departments represented in the survey rather than as a collection of

individuals, our sample offers a reasonably good insight into teaching practice across England despite the relatively low overall numbers. An approach that focuses on departments rather than individuals represented is supported by the high percentage of respondents who were Heads of Department (29.3% for the English Pathway and 52.9% for the History Pathway) and who may be seen to speak for the subject in their school rather than simply their own personal experience.<sup>31</sup>

Respondents to the survey covered a broadly representative balance of gender, teaching experience, employment status and ethnic origin across both pathways (see **Appendix 3**) as compared to figures from the third annual School Workforce Census in November 2012, although it has to be noted that the census figures cannot provide an exact means of comparison, as they exclude independent schools and do not tally exactly with the timing of the survey. The first noticeable feature of our sample is the marked predominance of female over male respondents: in English Literature, female respondents outnumbered male by 66 over 24

(representing 73.3% over 26.7%), while in History 259 female as opposed to 170 male teachers filled in the survey (60.4% as opposed to 39.6%). These figures are in keeping with the composition of the overall work force of regular, qualified and trainee teachers in publicly funded secondary schools in England, which was recorded at 85,400 male and 146,400 female teachers (including both full- and part-time) in the third annual School Workforce Census in November 2012.<sup>32</sup>

Distribution of full-time versus part-time teachers among our respondents across both pathways corresponded roughly to overall distribution across the teaching profession in England, with 89% full-time and 11% part-time or agency among survey respondents as compared to 81.4% full-time and 18.6% part-time among all regular, qualified and trainee teachers in publicly funded secondary schools in England. There was more evidence of part-time employment in the English Pathway (73.2% FT, 26.8 PT or agency) as opposed to a greater bias towards full-time employment among History Pathway respondents (92.9% FT, 7.1%

<sup>28</sup> Source: Email inquiry to the Department for Education, Curriculum Policy Division, 30 December 2013.

<sup>29</sup> See Department for Education, National Statistics on schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2013, last updated 12 July 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2013>, specifically 'National tables: SFR21/2013', table 2a [Last accessed 7 January 2014].

<sup>30</sup> It is worth noting that although the survey was open to teachers in all forms of secondary and further education institutions, only a small proportion of our respondents (6 in the English Pathway and 1 in the History Pathway) taught at Further Education Colleges. Similarly, very few respondents (2 in English, 9 in History) taught in special needs schools. This is also reflected in one respondents' general comment on the survey, in which they pointed out that the survey questions were in places too 'black and white' and consequently not applicable to a special needs school because the curriculum content varies depending on the pupil intake. As such, the survey findings are most representative for mainstream secondary schools.

<sup>31</sup> This assumption is backed by anecdotal evidence from at least one Head of Department who stated in a follow-up conversation that he had consulted his colleagues before filling in the survey.

<sup>32</sup> See Department for Education, Statistical first release about the school workforce in England, November 2012, Main tables: SFR15/2013, Table 3: 'Head count and full-time equivalent numbers of regular qualified and unqualified teachers, occasional teachers, teaching assistants and support staff in publicly funded schools by sector, November 2012, England', last updated 25 November 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-workforce-in-england-november-2012> [Last accessed 8 January 2014].

## The Survey continued

PT or agency).<sup>33</sup> The fact that only 1.2% of our respondents were trainee teachers is broadly in line with the overall figures of 4.5% unqualified (i.e. trainee) teachers across publicly funded secondary schools in England in November 2012. Both the high-pressure nature of teacher training and the emphasis placed on teaching experience by our survey publicity may have additionally discouraged trainee teachers from responding, explaining the lower percentage figure compared to national figures.

Last but not least, national figures for state-maintained secondary schools and secondary academies on teachers' ethnic background tally roughly with our sample, in that the vast majority of teachers are white British, white Irish or from other white backgrounds: numbers lie at 91.7% nationally, as compared to 94.4% in our English Pathway and 94.6% among History Pathway respondents, allowing for respondents to both the School Workforce Census and our survey (0.9% and 2.1% respectively) who refused to state their ethnicity.<sup>34</sup> Although these figures are not surprising given national figures, they nevertheless prompt questions as to the impact of an overwhelmingly white British or white Irish body of History and English teachers on the teaching of the First World War. As we will discuss in greater depth below, two of the main challenges for teaching the war in the years ahead will be to establish connections between the

present reality of pupils and the war as an ever receding historical event, and to widen coverage of the war to reflect its truly global nature.

Despite the correspondence between overall figures across England and our sample, in interpreting our data one has to bear in mind the highly self-selecting nature of our respondents, who had to be sufficiently passionate about teaching First World War literature or history to fill in a substantial questionnaire that required in-depth reflection. Although respondents did not have to answer all questions, particularly in the sections on Battlefield Tours, at 65 and 63 main questions respectively (compared to 54 questions in the IoE Holocaust survey), both the English and History Pathways demanded a considerable time investment of at least twenty minutes, mounting up to half an hour or more depending on how much detail respondents were willing to provide. Including follow-up questions that depended on respondents' answers to a main question, each pathway included 37 'easy' questions (i.e. simple tick boxes, multiple choice or selection lists) and between 37 and 39 'hard' or complex questions (i.e. multiple answer, rating grids or free-text responses). These latter types of question required careful reading and potentially very detailed responses likely to discourage teachers who were particularly pressed for time and/or not sufficiently interested in reflecting at length on their

teaching of the First World War. While the depth of reflection required is likely to have significantly reduced the overall number of respondents and will almost inevitably also have caused respondents to abandon the questionnaire before completion, we feel that it is precisely this depth that makes the data gathered particularly meaningful. Although an in-depth survey captured only a small proportion of teachers who teach First World War history and literature, it is likely to have appealed to teachers who are particularly invested in the topic and thus offers an insight into current best practice.

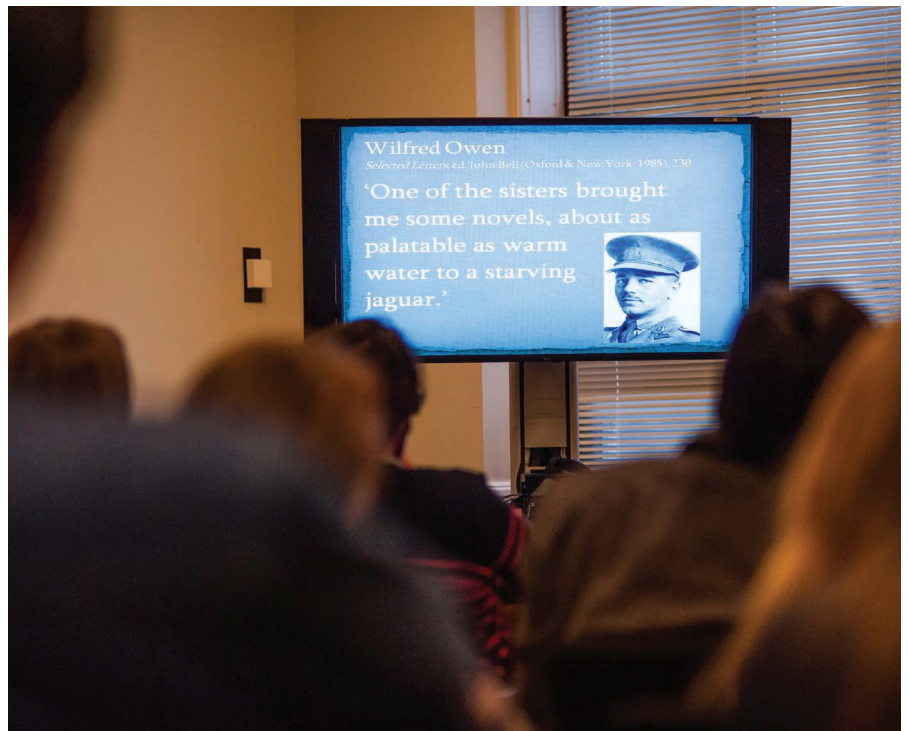
Both pathways attracted a number of erroneous responses from respondents not based – as stipulated – at schools in England. For the History Pathway, we identified 5 'rogue' responses out of the total of 352 from Wales, Scotland and Hungary; for the English Pathway, 13 out of a total of 98 responses. It seems significant that despite equally explicit labelling for both pathways, the English Pathway had a much higher number of respondents from outside England compared to the five in the History Pathway, including respondents from not only Scotland, Ireland and Wales, but Italy, the Netherlands, Australia, Indonesia, Hungary, Greece and the British Forces in Germany. This may in part explain the high percentage of incomplete responses in the English Pathway of 54% (as opposed to 35% incomplete responses in the History Pathway), as respondents not based in England would quickly have

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Table 5: 'Proportions of the head count of regular qualified and unqualified teachers in publicly funded schools by sector, grade, gender and ethnic origin, November 2012, England.' The table provides absolute figures in the headcount, which have been converted into percentages for ease of comparison on the basis of comparing figures for full-time and part-time teachers to the overall number of teachers.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Table 5. The percentages used combine all those census respondents in the two categories of LA maintained secondary schools and secondary academies who stated a white background.

## The Survey continued

realised the impracticality of filling in the survey without knowledge of the English secondary system. It may also suggest – although such an assumption is hard to verify without a targeted follow-up inquiry – that teaching First World War writing may be particularly suited to being taught to international audiences, possibly linked to the idea that the poetry of the war in particular has come to serve less specifically historical purposes and has instead come to be read as anti-war poetry per se.<sup>35</sup> However, one also has to bear in mind that this perceived universality itself is the result of a selective focus on a particular kind of canonical war writing: while some now canonical war texts, such as the best-known poetry of Wilfred Owen or Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), have been enjoying enduring international success precisely because they facilitate universalised pacifist readings across national boundaries, many other texts – such as 'Sapper' H.C. McNeile's Bulldog Drummond novels – were written to target very specific national audiences and have never been internationally received to the same extent.<sup>36</sup>



<sup>35</sup> See e.g. Edna Longley, 'The Great War, history, and the English lyric', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Literature of the First World War*, ed. Vincent Sherry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 57-84, particularly p. 59; Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon, 2005), particularly chapter 5 'Poets'; or Esther MacCallum-Stewart, "'If they ask us why we died': Children's Literature and the First World War, 1970-2005", *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31.2 (2007), pp. 176-188, particularly p. 179.

<sup>36</sup> On the mutual reception of English and German war writing, see e.g. *Intimate Enemies: English and German literary reactions to the Great War, 1914-1918*, eds. Franz Karl Stanzel and Martin Löschnigg (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1993). New research on cross-national reception of First World War literature that includes modern re-writings of the war is currently undertaken by Dr Nóra de Butelér at Trinity College, Dublin, funded by a Government of Ireland Postdoctoral Fellowship. See also recent scholarship on specifically Australian literary responses to the First World War that often differ markedly from British war writing, e.g. Ffion Murphy, and Richard Nile, 'Writing, Remembering and Embodiment: Australian Literary Responses to the First World War', *M/C Journal*, 15.4 (2012), n.p.; Christina Spittel, 'Remembering the War: Australian Novelists in the Interwar Years', *Australian Literary Studies* 23.2 (2007), pp. 121-139.





## Survey Findings – General Findings

**In the following, we offer an extensive summary of our findings from the survey and some initial speculative interpretation. Results are broken down into pathways for more subject-specific questions, and treated comparatively where we felt this was more useful. Our discussion of many individual points continues in subsequent sections that outline the focus group discussions and our final reflections and recommendations.**

### Cross-curricular collaboration

Given the steadily increasing emphasis placed on interdisciplinarity in Higher Education, we were surprised to find that interdisciplinary or cross-curricular teaching is by no means as common in the secondary-school context as one might expect (see **Table 2**). Our focus group discussions addressed this phenomenon

at length, and suggested that although some schools organise very successful collaborations, these are not the norm, and tend to be limited to project weeks, battlefield trips or assemblies – in short, they tend to happen outside the classroom in the strictest sense. This lack of regular, classroom-based interdisciplinarity does not appear to be grounded in an aversion to think beyond the boundaries of one's own subject: rather, practical factors were highlighted by focus group and workshop participants as the most common obstacles to successful cross-curricular teaching. The main obstacles identified were:

- Lack of communication between departments;
- Limited time, coupled with the need to cover a large amount of material in one's own subject;
- Difficulty of reconciling two departments' schemes of work and choice of exam boards / courses.

Out of 58 respondents to this question in the English Pathway, an overwhelming majority of 46 (or 79%) stated that cross-curricular teaching did not (or did not always) happen at their school. Similarly, 170 out of 261 History Pathway responses (that is, 65%) to this question were negative, amounting to a clear majority. While collaborations between English and History were the most commonly stated in both pathways, we were interested to note that it is not necessarily just these two subjects working together: 6.6% of schools that do have cross-curricular teaching initiatives involve more than two subjects, which focus groups revealed to range from the more obvious, such as Modern Foreign Languages, Music, Religious Education or Art, to the less expected, including Chemistry, Personal, Social and Health Education, and Physical Education.

**Table 2: Does your school engage in cross-curricular teaching with regard to the First World War?**

(Total numbers of respondents are stated on the left, percentages on the right.)

	English Pathway		History Pathway		All	
No	22	37.9	71	27.2	93	29.2
Unsure about school policy on this point	2	3.4	17	6.5	19	6.0
Does not discourage, but does not happen	8	13.8	27	10.3	35	11.0
Encourages it, but does not always happen	14	24.1	55	21.1	69	21.6
Yes, across English and History	9	15.5	64	24.5	73	22.9
Yes, across English and another subject (not History)	1	1.7	1	0.4	2	0.6
Yes, across History and another subject (not English)	1	1.7	6	2.3	7	2.2
Yes, across more than two subjects	1	1.7	20	7.7	21	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

As one comment in the English Pathway points out, in most schools 'cross-curricular teaching tends to be arranged on an ad hoc basis and depends very much on individual staff members taking the initiative'. A number of further comments confirmed that cross-curricular teaching was occasional and hampered particularly by timing and 'curriculum constraints', even where willingness was there. This may be less of a problem for adult learning and Further Education colleges on the one hand and academies and independent schools on the other, where teachers potentially have greater freedom to coordinate schemes of work. We also saw evidence in the free-text comments that several schools were in the process of developing new collaborations, often linked to a new Head of Department taking over. Curriculum and timing restraints also serve to explain why extra-curricular activities and trips are such a popular forum for cross-curricular initiatives, as these kinds of events allow teachers and students greater freedom to think outside the box and escape from the demands of individual subjects.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The centenary is likely to generate at least temporary new cross-curricular initiatives with regard to teaching about the First World War, as schools avail themselves of opportunities for support and a heightened sense of motivation to develop new projects. One current example is a new cross-curricular initiative underway in the wake of the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme at Ormiston Rivers Academy in Burnham-on-Crouch, involving subjects from History and English to Drama, Citizenship and Music.

### When is the First World War taught?

As **Figure 1** shows, there is some variation as to when the First World War is taught in secondary school depending on subject. Nearly 80% of all History Pathway participants considered KS3 the 'main level' at which they teach the war, as opposed to just below 50% of English Pathway respondents. Given that – at least on the basis of our rather limited sample of English teachers – teaching of First World War literature is more evenly spread between KS 3, KS4 and Sixth Form, whereas most History departments appear to cover the topic in the greatest depth at KS3 already, it initially seems surprising that focus group participants felt the teaching of First World War literature preceded the teaching of the war's history. However, these complaints may simply be attributable to the fact that there is also some iteration in teaching the war in each subject: even where First World War writing is not taught in any great depth at KS3, the students may have already worked with a small selection of, for instance, First World War

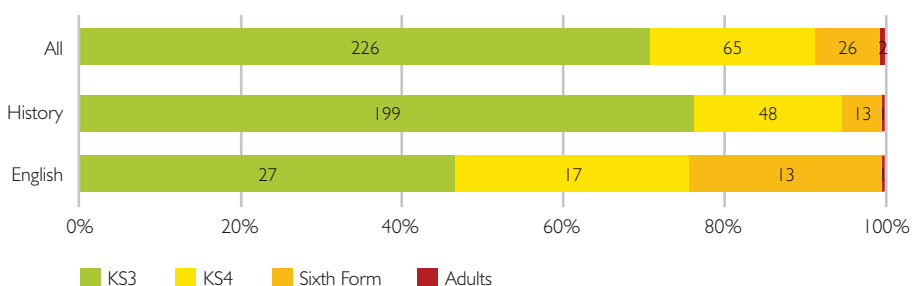
poems or a contemporary novel on the subject of the war as part of a unit on a different topic (e.g. poetry analysis). Generally speaking, our results suggest that iteration is very common, and that the war may be encountered at different stages with different emphases, naturally also dependent on schools' (or departments') choice of exam boards and modules.

### What methods are used for teaching First World War history and literature?

Our main interest in asking teachers about methods and activities used in their teaching was to establish whether a topic like the First World War and its literature prompts new and different ways of approaching student learning, and to compare methods across both subjects. For the most part, methods and activities stated in both pathways offer a balanced mix of approaches, from information dissemination through teacher talks to peer-to-peer learning through group work, student presentations and pupils' own research projects, particularly in

**Fig. 1: Please specify what you consider the 'main level' at which you teach the First World War.**

(Total number of responses in each pathway and overall by key stages)



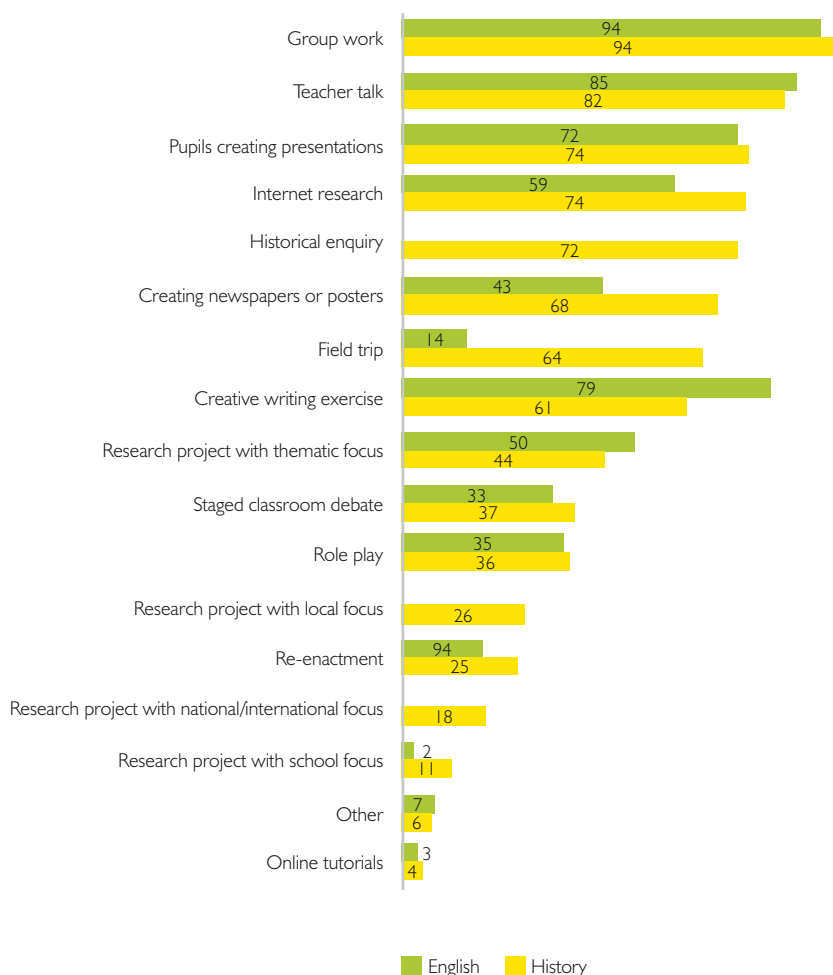
## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

History (see **Figure 2**). Interactive creative activities such as staged debates, role play or re-enactment also featured, if to a lesser extent, and are likely to be used occasionally, perhaps as part of a motivational strategy. Field trips appear to be far more frequently undertaken by History classes than their English Literature counterparts, possibly explained by the fact that there are generally more ‘historical’ than literary sites to visit. Named activities stated in the ‘other’ category in the English Pathway included performances based on war poetry, literary analysis, looking at and discussing artefacts, and activities on speaking and listening, particularly oratory/speech-making. Some of these are echoed by ‘other activities’ stated in the History Pathway, most notably the visual performance of poems and analysis of artefacts. Other named activities range from the expected (textbook activities, coursework, controlled assessment, essay-writing, family history projects and source analysis) to the less common (transcribing original letters, students creating their own films about the war), to the downright unusual: one can safely assume that not every secondary-level History department is able to facilitate archaeological excavation exercises or the construction of scale models of First World War trenches.

Taken in their totality, our survey responses indicate a wide variety of traditional and innovative approaches to teaching the war, and credit seems due to teachers and departments for the range and originality of approaches taken. While naturally not every school can support all of the methods and activities listed above, and not every teacher will have the time and/or inclination to supervise student projects

**Fig. 2: What methods/activities are you likely to use, or have you used in the past, to teach the First World War?**

(Comparative breakdown of methods and activities used for teaching in English and History Pathways by percentages)



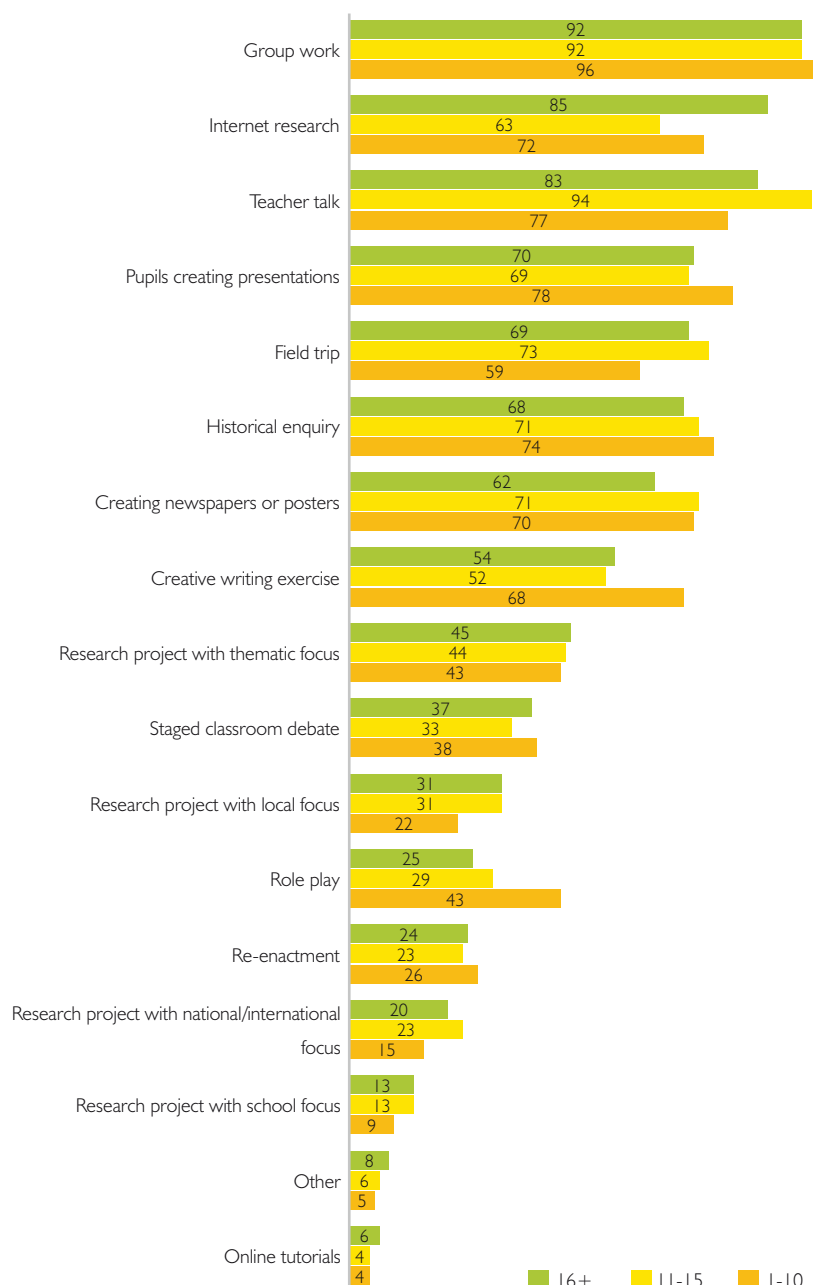
## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

such as film-making, in-depth research projects and performances, our sample shows these activities to be examples of current best practice.

Interestingly, creative writing exercises seem to be not significantly less popular in History than in English teaching, and in both pathways creative exercises are apparently on the rise among less experienced teachers in particular. Of respondents with less than ten years' teaching experience, 68% of History teachers stated that they are likely to use creative writing in their teaching, as compared to 85% of young English teachers. In the case of History, this compares to only 52/54% of teachers with 11-15 or 16+ years' teaching experience, and an even steeper dip of 57/79% in the English Pathway (see **Figure 3** and **Figure 4** overleaf). Given that this makes creative writing exercises the second most popular method used by our English Literature respondents, and the eighth most popular among History respondents, the survey results seem to contradict comments by some survey respondents who participated in our focus groups and who claimed that creative writing exercises were on their way out.

**Fig. 3: What methods/activities are you likely to use, or have you used in the past, to teach the First World War?**

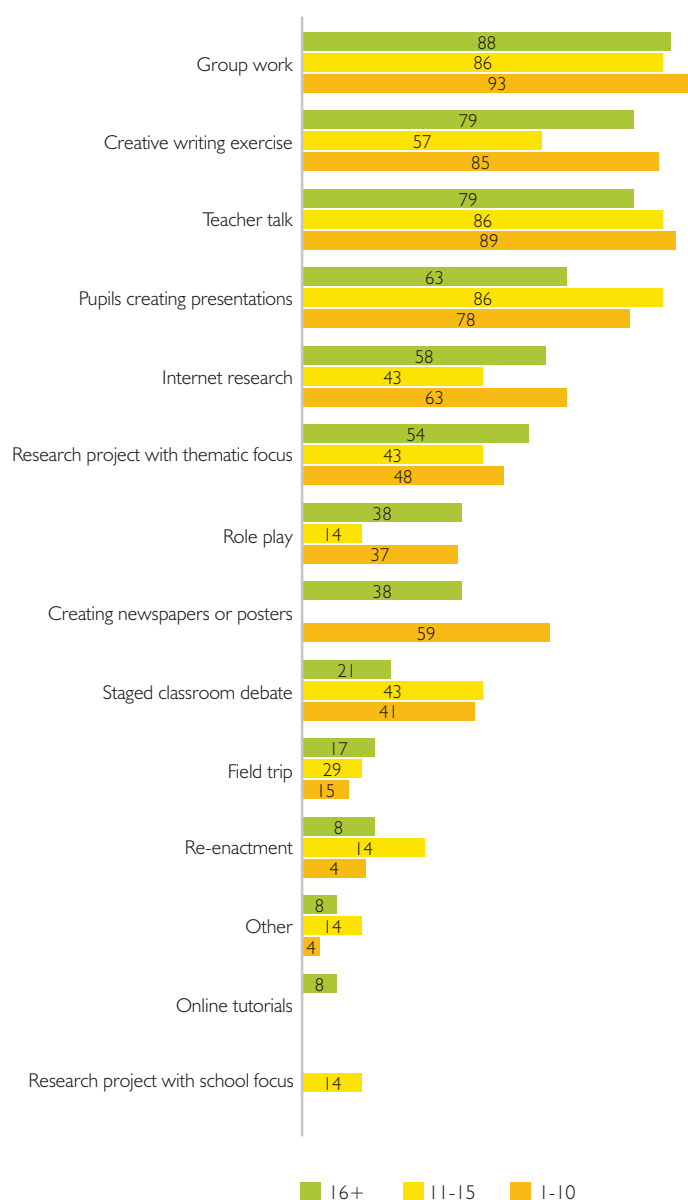
(Comparative breakdown of methods and activities used for teaching in History Pathway by years of experience in percentages)



## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

**Fig. 4: What methods/activities are you likely to use, or have you used in the past, to teach First World War literature?**

(Comparative breakdown of methods and activities used for teaching in English Pathway by years of experience in percentages)



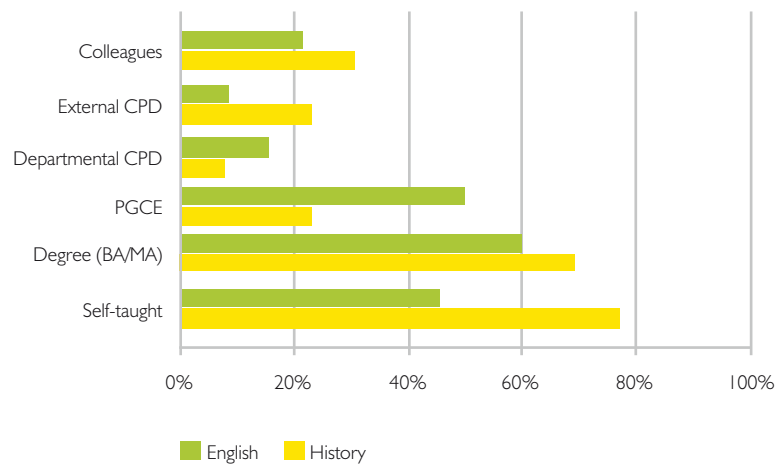
## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

### Knowledge base and training

It seems a rather obvious observation to make that teachers who teach the First World War's history and literature have to learn about it themselves first. An important part of our survey was to establish how and in what contexts this acquisition of knowledge for teaching takes place, and how confident teachers themselves feel about their knowledge base. When asked whether they had had any specific training on teaching the First World War, only 29% of a total of 283 teachers who had answered this particular question stated they had received specific training, with figures closely matched across both pathways (see **Table 3**):

**Fig. 5: Forms of training in percentages for English and History Pathways**

(multiple answer question, percentages do not add up)



**Table 3: Absolute numbers and percentages of respondents on specific training of teaching the First World War.**

	English Pathway		History Pathway	
Yes	13	27.1	70	29.8
No	35	72.9	165	70.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>100.0</b>

These figures suggest that for most teachers, any particular knowledge about the First World War and/or its literature is acquired through private study (and thus personal dedication), or during degree-level studies prior to commencing teaching. Such an assumption is backed by the high number of respondents who identified their university degree courses, PGCE or self-directed study as their main form(s) of training, as illustrated in **Figure 5**.

The fact that knowledge for teaching the war is usually either gained before the start of one's professional career or through self-directed study on the job did not seem to adversely affect respondents' level of confidence in their training. Asked whether they felt 'knowledgeable about First World War literature', an overwhelming 92% of English Pathway respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, as opposed to 6% who neither agreed nor disagreed, and a

solitary respondent who stated outright that they did not feel knowledgeable. Figures for the History Pathway echo the English response: the vast majority of 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt knowledgeable about the First World War, and only two respondents in absolute numbers admitted that they did not feel knowledgeable. This nearly unanimous statement of confidence despite the absence of regular training provided by respondents' departments or by external organisations can at least partly be explained by the fact that our respondents were likely to take a particular interest in the war and to have devoted a good deal of time to its study. More generally, however, it is an essential part of any teacher's job to find their own way into new topics, since no university degree can make experts on every topic out of every teacher. Departmental or external training can be difficult to organise

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

and accommodate within teachers' busy schedules, and as a result self-directed study undertaken as and when possible usually offers the most feasible, flexible means of acquiring knowledge necessary for teaching.

The question arises, however, where this knowledge is sourced, and in particular how much of it is derived from reading scholarly, research-informed sources as opposed to non-academic sources of information about the war. Interestingly, respondents were not quite as confident with regard to their reading as in their statement of their knowledge base more generally: only 71% of English Pathway respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had 'read widely on First World War literature beyond school textbooks', as opposed to the 92% positive responses to the question about general knowledge about the war, mirrored by 83% (as opposed to 95%) of respondents in the History Pathway. This suggests that other sources of information beyond independent reading are likely to factor noticeably in the process of acquiring knowledge for teaching the First World War, and while the nature of such sources must necessarily remain somewhat speculative, they may reasonably be assumed to include media coverage, television documentaries and information gleaned from internet research, field trips and battlefield tours, as well as preparatory research carried out for such trips. Indeed, named resources that found their way into free-text responses to a number of different questions on reading, resources and training included references to the BBC History website, guide books, films, plays and documentaries as well as photography exhibitions, but also the preparation of

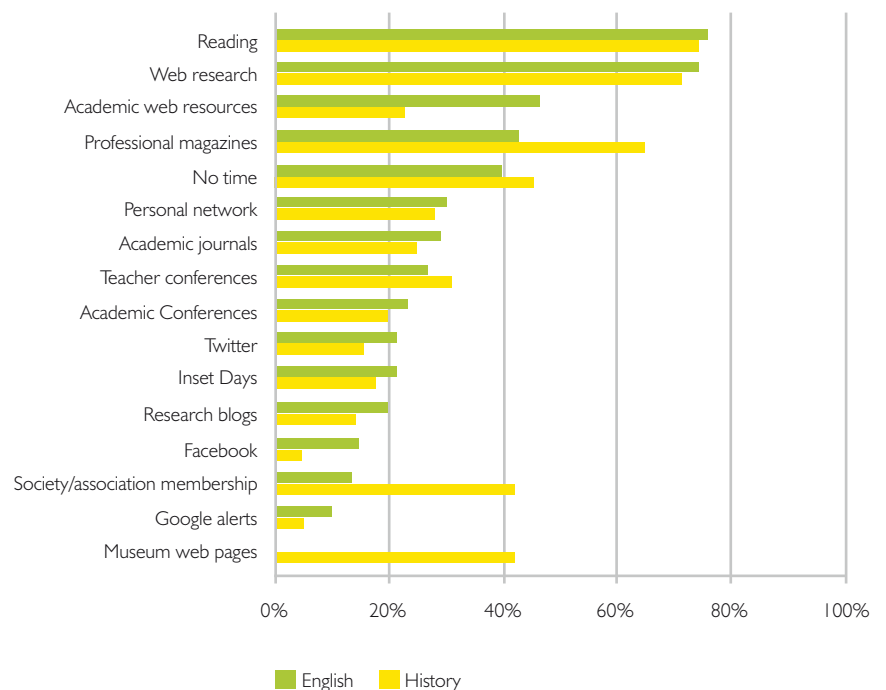
battlefield trips and CPD for colleagues, independent research in local museums and archives, personal networking with experts in the field, and attendance at CPD workshops and seminars. One History respondent 're-wrote, and directed, a school performance of "Oh! What a Lovely War"', demonstrating a more creative take on expanding one's own (and students') knowledge base.

What means, then, are at teachers' disposal to keep up-to-date with new research in their subject? We asked our respondents

to rate a number of channels and media for keeping in touch with current research and approaches on a scale from 'very important' and 'important' to 'not that important' and 'unimportant', and found that reading and web research are the most popular means of acquiring new knowledge about developments in the fields of History and English Literature respectively across both pathways (see **Figure 6**). These are broad categories that can encompass a wide range of sites and materials, and will be explored in greater detail below.

**Fig. 6: In general, how do you stay up-to-date with academic approaches/research**

(Responses stating 'important' and 'very important' from both pathways in rounded percentages – multiple answer scale, percentages do not add up)



## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

**Table 4: In general, how do you stay up-to-date with academic approaches/research**

(Top five of ways to stay up-to-date with current academic research/approaches, split by pathway in percentages)

English Pathway		History Pathway	
94%	Reading books other than textbooks	92%	Reading books other than textbooks
91%	Web research	88%	Web research
57%	Academic web resources (e.g. Oxford University digital archives or podcasts)	80%	Professional magazines (e.g. <i>Teaching History</i> , <i>BBC History Magazine</i> )
53%	Professional magazines (e.g. <i>The Use of English</i> )	59%	Museum web pages
37%	Personal network from previous study (e.g. PGCE or MA cohort)	52%	Membership in society or professional association (e.g. Historical Association)

However, opinions diverged on other sources of information, as a comparison of the top five ways of staying up-to-date illustrates (Table 4).

Fewer of our English Pathway respondents seemed to be taking advantage of the benefits of professional organisations for teachers in their subject, first and foremost the English Association, as opposed to History Pathway respondents' comparatively greater reliance on professional associations and particularly their publications for staying in touch with new research. It has to be noted, however, that our sample may have been biased by a particularly strong online publicity campaign on the part of the Historical Association, compared to the potentially smaller reach of our publicity in the paper-based English Association newsletter. On the other hand, use of university and museum web pages, which can encompass archival materials, podcasts and learning resources as well as introductory articles, was closely matched across both pathways, with a greater likelihood on the part of History teachers to consider museum

web pages (59% important or very important) more crucial to their practice than academic web resources (29% important or very important). Social media such as Twitter and Facebook fared better among English Pathway respondents at 26% and 17% respectively, as opposed to 19% and 6% respectively in the History Pathway. Conferences, whether academic or professional, fared similarly in both pathways, with 33% of English Pathway respondents considering teacher conferences important or very important (compared to 38% in the History Pathway), and 29% of English Pathway respondents stating academic conferences in their subject as an important or very important means of CPD, compared to 24% of History Pathway respondents. The great emphasis placed on reading and (free) web resources in our sample may derive from the fact that these ways of staying up-to-date are the most cost effective and flexible in terms of fitting into teachers' schedules: reading and web research can happen as and when teachers find the time, whereas attendance at conferences

is time-consuming, may clash with other commitments and can be costly, especially where schools do not cover the expense. Many History teachers may similarly see membership in a professional association as a cost-effective way of receiving up-to-date information in a timesaving, accessible format. The fact that 49% of English Pathway respondents and 56% of History Pathway respondents stated that they would like to keep up-to-date with current research, but find they do not usually have the time throws the issue of time and cost constraints into even sharper relief.

As figures above show, reading remains the single most important source of knowledge for teaching, and as such is worth investigating further. In a free-text follow-up option, respondents in both pathways were invited to name up to three examples of texts they had read and found useful. In the History Pathway, 58 respondents chose to state additional information in the free-text section on further reading, a complete list of whose responses can be seen in **Appendix 4** below. Many of these respondents stated



## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

more than the requested three sources, and in a number of cases (though not in all) stated non-fiction and scholarly sources alongside fiction or poetry. In other cases, respondents simply stressed the high number of sources they had consulted, with one History respondent noting, 'Too many to list. First studied [the First World War] with Norman Stone in 1971', adding for emphasis, 'I'm a historian!' Judging from the range and number of scholarly materials named in the History Pathway, this self-understanding as a historian as well as history teacher is common among teaching professionals. As **Figure 7**<sup>38</sup> overleaf shows, the clear majority of authors and texts named fall in the categories of either popular or scholarly historiography, oral history, or regimental history. Out of the 35 authors listed under 'popular and scholarly historiography', 14 could be classified as academics who have contributed to the 'regeneration' of First World War studies, pushing understanding of the war beyond the traditional post-Second World War view of 'mud, blood and poppycock' and towards new cultural, interdisciplinary, comparative and transnational approaches.<sup>39</sup> Although not a majority, it is certainly reassuring to see so many contributors to the most up-to-date historiography appearing on the list.

The most frequently stated historians were Gary Sheffield (mentioned 10 times by name), Richard Holmes and John Keegan (8 times each), as well as Niall Ferguson

(5 times). Martin Gilbert and Martin Middlebrook were also each mentioned by name 4 times, and Sir Hew Strachan and John Terraine 3 times each. Lyn MacDonald as the author of oral history books on the First World War almost drew even with Sheffield in popularity, being mentioned explicitly 9 times, and shared her popularity in the oral history genre with Max Arthur's *Forgotten Voices* (4). The range and temporal scope of historiographical reading revealed in our sample is impressive, ranging from very recent accounts (such as Christopher Clark's *The Sleepwalkers* [2012] and Kate Adie's *Fighting on the Home Front: The Legacy of Women in World War One* [2013]) to older and in some cases largely discredited studies like Alan Clark's contentious *The Donkeys* (1961) and A.J.P. Taylor's polemical but influential *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (1963). Scholarly studies are listed side-by-side with popular historical accounts, and where some teachers rely on historiographical reappraisals such as Dan Todman's *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (2005) and Adrian Gregory's *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (2008), others look to popular accounts like Adie's.

As many schools are not equipped with well-stocked libraries of their own, and as any additional reading encroaches upon teachers' leisure time, the choice of further reading must inevitably be determined by availability, affordability and

personal inclination or circumstances. It is not unreasonable to expect that many teachers will choose potentially more readable popular history books available in inexpensive paperback editions over expensive scholarly volumes aimed primarily at academics. The desire to combine further reading and recreation may also explain the surprisingly large number of fiction, poetry and life writing publications referenced by History Pathway respondents in our free-text option, which on the whole show a greater inclination towards memoir and adult fiction than the more mixed results in the English Pathway: History Pathway responses included 5 fiction titles (including one contemporary text, Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* [1929], next to modern novels such as *Birdsong* and *Regeneration*), two instances of poetry as helpful further reading, and nine volumes of memoirs and/or letters, ranging from classic accounts by veterans such as Ernst Jünger, Edmund Blunden, Vera Brittain and Frank Richards to the posthumously published war letters of Canadian soldier Mayo Lind. The wide temporal spread may also be indicative of the impact of the different age groups of our respondents: since reading tastes and preferences are likely to be influenced by one's own education, older respondents are more likely to have encountered accounts such as Clark's *The Donkeys* as part of their History degree than younger teachers.

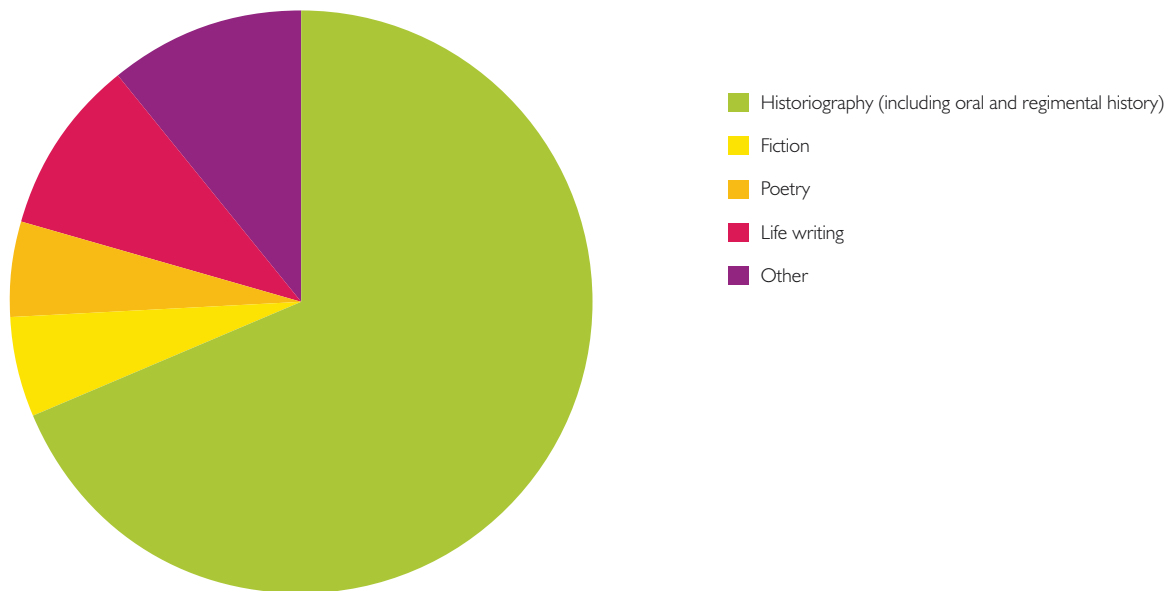
<sup>38</sup> The absolute numbers used in **Figure 7** refer to authors and texts named, but do not include multiple references to a particular author. Even where an author or text was mentioned several times, they have only been counted once.

<sup>39</sup> For more on the historiographical regeneration of First World War Studies, see Heather Jones, 'As the Centenary Approaches: The Regeneration of First World War Historiography', *The Historical Journal* 56.3 (2013), pp. 857-878.

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

**Fig. 7: Free-text responses History Pathway on helpful further reading**

(Distribution of authors and titles named by absolute figures)



Ten of our English Pathway respondents chose to use the free-text option to name specific texts they had read and found useful (see **Figure 8** overleaf). Echoing statements made in the History Pathway, one English Pathway respondent stated that their reading was 'Too numerous to recall' as 'many texts were studied for my dissertation in conflict literature'. Indeed, the ten respondents who stated their additional reading in the (optional) free-text box all stated at least two texts each. In notable contrast to the History Pathway, responses among English Pathway respondents (see **Appendix 4**) comprise mostly of fictional texts or life writing, which are divided between contemporary and modern materials on the one hand, and those written for adults as opposed

to young readers on the other. The most 'literary' texts cited were classic war novels or memoirs such as Blunden's *Undertones of War* (1929), which offers a significantly different and more nuanced approach to the war compared to Michael Morpurgo's children's novel *War Horse* (1982), which also featured in the free-text responses.

However, English Pathway respondents' reading also included some historical texts and two seminal works of literary criticism on the literature and culture of the First World War, Paul Fussell's often criticised but still influential *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) and Samuel Hynes's wide-ranging study *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1990). The fact that in a sample of only ten respondents Fussell's study was mentioned

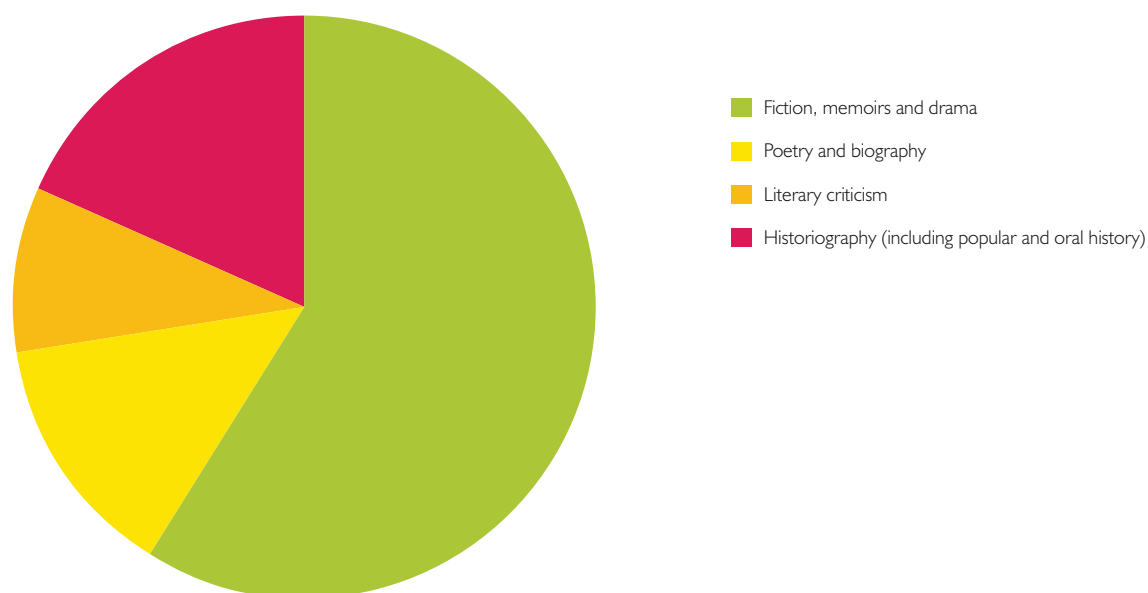
twice could be seen as an indication that his particular take on First World War writing – that it is to be seen as a move from innocent enthusiasm to disillusionment, characterised by a profound sense of irony – still holds significant sway. Among historiographical sources cited, Martin Middlebrook and Richard Holmes feature alongside Max Arthur's *Forgotten Voices* volume and a popular biography-cum-history, Ann Clayton's *Chavasse, Double VC* (2006), whose subject is Noel Chavasse, a former pupil of the school in question.

Overall, free-text responses from both pathways taken together paint an encouraging picture of a varied and wide-ranging culture of further reading, shaped by a variety of factors, from subject expertise, time and financial constraints

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

**Fig. 8: Free-text responses in the English Pathway on helpful further reading**

(Distribution by absolute figures of authors and titles named)



to teachers' own educational experience. It appears that in the absence of formal training and CPD opportunities, there is a clear willingness to read and engage with sources beyond those taught in the classroom, at least among teachers with a reasonable personal interest in the topic. Our reflections and recommendations at the end of this report will address some possible solutions for issues surrounding the availability and cost of reading and resources for on-going study of the First World War and its literature.

### Extra-curricular activities and battlefield trips

Another potentially important part of History teachers' knowledge base in particular is their familiarity with First World War-related sites. Many of our respondents stated that their participation in or organisation of a field trip had provided them with additional training/CPD with regard to the war, and consequently a look at how many teachers participate in such trips and what sites are visited complements our picture of teachers' knowledge base. A respectable 65% of English Pathway respondents and an

overwhelming 94% of History Pathway respondents stated that they had 'personally visited [...] First World War-related sites or museums', demonstrating how widespread a part of teachers' experience such visits are. Asked to which destinations trips were undertaken with students in their school, the majority of respondents in both pathways stated that there had been at least one trip to the Western Front (see **Table 5** overleaf), with much lower numbers going to visit local or national museums, cemeteries or memorials, or – in the case of English Literature – a live performance of a war-related play.

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

**Table 5: If there are First World War-related field trips at your current school, where have these been to?**

(English and History Pathway responses in absolute numbers and %)

Training	English Pathway		History Pathway	
Western front battlefields/cemeteries	23	60.5	133	69.3
Local cemeteries/memorials			12	6.3
Local museums	1	2.6	8	4.2
National museums	3	7.9	21	10.9
Local archive			1	.5
National archive			1	.5
Theatre (play)	6	15.8	10	5.2
External talk or lecture	3	7.9	1	.5
Other	2	5.3	5	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Besides accompanying school trips, however, many teachers appear to go on trips and visits to museums, archives and memorial sites in their own time or as part of private holidays. Asked to name up to three examples of First World War-related museums or sites they had visited, a total of 217 respondents across both pathways stated their destinations, in many (if not most) cases exceeding the stipulated maximum number of three. In line with the high number of school trips taken to the Western Front, the most popular destination for teachers' trips were the cemeteries, museums and battlefield sites of the Western Front (visited by 87% of respondents overall), with Ypres the most popular single destination in this category, and the German cemetery at Langemark expressly included as a stop by 4% of respondents in the History Pathway only.

An impressive 50% of all respondents had visited the Imperial War Museums (London and/or North), 5% had been to the National Army Museum, and 16% to other sites within the UK, including local and regimental museums, memorials, cemeteries and archives. A further 4% had visited other First World War sites across the world in a private capacity, including museums in Germany, the Netherlands and Bosnia-Herzegovina, an Italian war cemetery, the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, the Gallipoli battlefields, and the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. As **Figure 9** overleaf illustrates, History teachers seem to be somewhat more likely to have visited the Imperial War Museum or Western Front, but the gap is not a large one, and evens out when it comes to other (particularly local) sites and those located in other destinations around the world. The

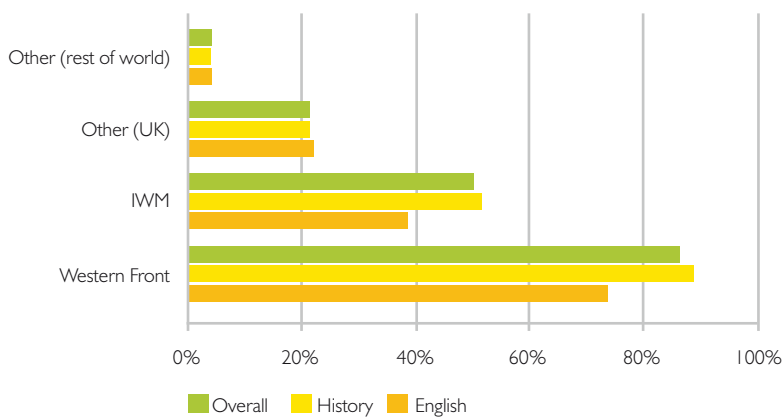
overall picture painted by our sample is one in which interested teachers are likely to seek out a variety of local, national and international sites related to the First World War, with History teachers potentially at a slight advantage, as they are more likely to lead a trip to the Western Front or a major museum in a professional capacity than their English Literature colleagues.

As well as establishing what kinds of trips and extra-curricular activities have taken place in the past, our survey sought to establish the types of event that might be organised by schools for the First World War centenary. 89.4% of respondents who answered this question across both pathways stated that their schools or departments were indeed planning to organise teaching-related or extra-curricular activities to coincide with the centenary. This decided majority indicates a widespread feeling that the centenary offers an excellent opportunity to foster student engagement. Field trips, remembrance events and special research projects (including oral history projects) were among the most popular activities planned in the History Pathway (see **Figure 10** overleaf), whereas English Pathway respondents indicated a greater preference for First World War-themed readings and drama projects or performances, in line with subject expertise. Invited guest speakers and community-based events appeared to enjoy equal popularity across both subjects, and comments in the free-text option for this question indicate that even where no specific planning had taken place at the time of the survey, a number of respondents across both pathways were hoping to organise events.

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

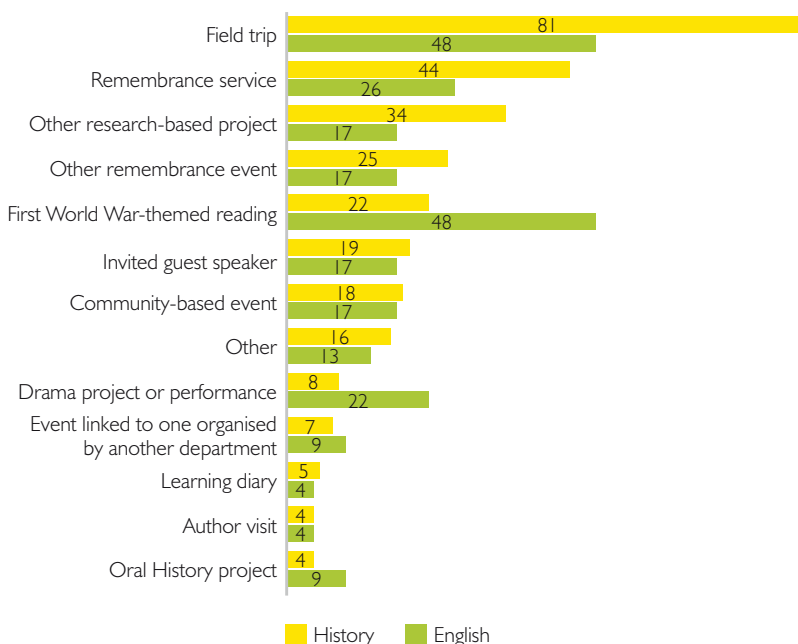
**Fig. 9: If applicable, please name up to three sites or museums you have visited**

(Responses for English and History Pathways and overall in %)



**Fig. 10: Are you planning to organise any teaching-related or extra-curricular activities to coincide with the forthcoming First World War centenary (2014-2019)?**

(Responses split by pathway and in percentages)



Among the responses in our free-text follow-up option were a wide range of very diverse activities and events, ranging from on-going or longer-term projects (such as exhibitions or a display board exhibiting a war-related event a day that happened 100 years ago between 2014 and 2018) and themed assemblies, to student competitions, theatrical and musical performances and composition projects, the creation of a DVD 'tracing the steps of local men who joined the war in 1914-15' and the designing of a war memorial for their school. At least one school represented was contemplating re-launching their battlefield trips in the wake of the centenary, and in several instances schools were planning to work with a local council, museum or archive. Several schools were intending to arrange all-school, cross-curricular activities, from day-long to week-long events. The variety and the innovative nature of many of these projects bear testimony to the potential of the centenary to create wider and deeper engagement with the war for a whole generation of students and teachers.

### The relationship between teaching and media representation and the 'Blackadder Debate'

Although our survey was concerned primarily with the teaching of the First World War and its literature, we naturally appreciate that teaching does not happen in a hermetically sealed space. Anyone engaged in teaching and instruction, regardless of level, will know that what is taught is not necessarily what is learnt. While there are a number of factors that contribute to this discrepancy, one important reason is outside influences, particularly media representations, from

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

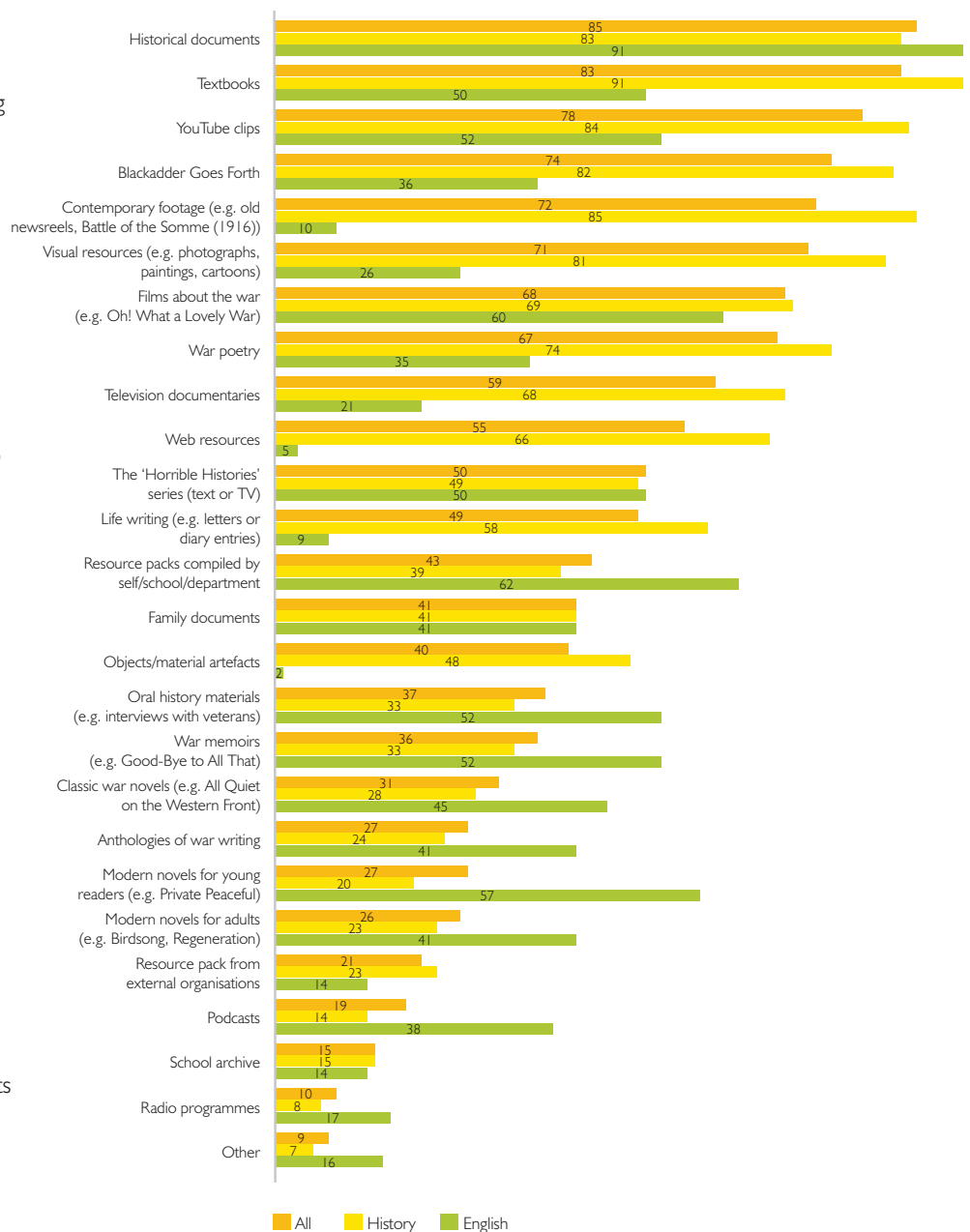
the Internet and computer games to films and documentaries. In our focus groups, a number of teachers voiced concerns that their teaching of the First World War had to compete with media representations of the war, and 90% of English Pathway respondents as well as 83% of History Pathway respondents stated that expanding students' knowledge of the war beyond media coverage was an important or very important goal of their teaching.

In the light of such concerns, our survey offered an excellent opportunity to investigate one particularly topical assumption about the teaching of the First World War in secondary schools in relationship to media representations, namely the use teachers make of the 1989 television comedy show *Blackadder Goes Forth*. A frequent accusation – last voiced by Michael Gove – has it that too many teachers rely on fictional, retrospective shows like *Blackadder* to convey perceived 'truths' about the First World War to impressionable students without sufficiently contextualising what students see on screen. Our survey revealed that *Blackadder Goes Forth* is indeed used by large numbers of teachers: as **Figure 11** illustrates, 74% of respondents overall stated that they had used *Blackadder Goes Forth* in their teaching, which amounts to 85% of History respondents and 36% of English respondents who answered this question.

What is more, a breakdown of respondents into years of teaching experience shows that the series is as likely to be used by more as by less experienced teachers. However, these figures in and of themselves do no more than indicate a

**Fig. 11: What resources have you used to teach the First World War?**

(Responses overall and split by pathway in percentages)



## Survey Findings – General Findings continued

continuing popularity of *Blackadder Goes Forth* as a teaching tool, whereas they cannot tell us how and to what purpose teachers employ the series. History teacher Louise Birch picked up on two central points in the 'Blackadder debate' in an online article for *The History Vault*, namely the exclusion of History teachers from the public debate in the media, and the resulting misinterpretation of how material like *Blackadder Goes Forth* is used:

“ If history teachers were given the opportunity to defend themselves in the national media instead of being side-lined to social media such as twitter it would immediately become obvious that this perception of history teaching is wrong. Yes, teachers do use Blackadder in the classroom, but they do not teach Blackadder as fact. Certainly the way I use Blackadder is to teach pupils how to conduct an enquiry. Pupils recognise Blackadder as being satirical and furthermore recognise it as one version of history. The skill of recognising differing interpretations is one which is at the forefront of history teaching today. [...] Pupils are encouraged not to passively accept all they are told and to question evidence. [...] I am firmly convinced that pupils being taught source skills is not only desirable, but essential. The fact that the history profession is unable to explain through the

national media how history is taught is the most frustrating thing to endure.<sup>40</sup> ”

In line with Birch's comments, we endeavoured to shed light on ways in which *Blackadder* is used in focus group interviews and by querying the use of *Blackadder* with survey participants directly in a follow-up email. The responses we received show that while some teachers will indeed be using *Blackadder* in what might be considered anachronistic ways, they are unlikely to do so out of laziness (or, as suggested by Gove, lack of patriotism), and many teachers use extracts from the series in very targeted, contextualised and/or reflective ways, whether to stimulate debate, encourage students' critical thinking, or to capture their interest before proceeding to work with contemporary sources. For instance, an English teacher survey respondent stated that she had 'used *Blackadder* and *Oh! What a Lovely War*, but only briefly, to encourage discussion on when is a good time to write about the war for "entertainment" purposes'. In another case, an English teacher used *Blackadder* to impress on students the human cost of war, stating via email:

“ When I used to teach WWI I always used Blackadder in a rather serious way, making the point of the ludicrous nature of the war that saw so many die for so little gain and focusing on the ironic treatment of the war in the show's black humour

and the fact that it presented a far less biased view of the war than some other texts. For me the benefit of using Blackadder stems from the fact that it shows the unshirking bravery of those literally of the front line in contrast with the madness of the way on which the war was run from above. I don't think teaching something as difficult as a history of war should be done in a way that glamourises the violence or over emphasises the patriotic aspects of fighting without also considering the flip side of the sacrifice and suffering endured by all involved. Blackadder seems to me to strike a balance here, as well as provide a very visual portrayal that has real impact with students, often something they struggle with when just studying text based resources.<sup>41</sup> ”

While historians are likely to consider this a dated, 'lions led by donkeys' approach to using the show, it stems from a desire to add moral purpose to the study of the war's literature on the one hand, and facilitate student engagement by employing visual media to supplement written text on the other. This particular use of *Blackadder* also defies Gove's complaints about unpatriotic defeatism, in that emphasis is placed not simply on futility, but also on courage and endurance.

Looking at the teacher statements above as well as our focus group discussions,

<sup>40</sup> Louise Birch, 'History in the Classroom: A Teacher Speaks', *The History Vault* 5 (February 2014), <http://www.thehistoryvault.co.uk/history-in-the-classroom-a-teacher-speaks/> [Last accessed 24 February 2014].

<sup>41</sup> Response from survey participant to query via e-mail, 10 January 2014.

## Survey Findings – General Findings continued



which are outlined in greater detail below, one can envision an approach that combines literary texts with shows like *Blackadder Goes Forth* more fruitfully (and in a historically sensitive manner) by debating with students in how far each text and the show reflect their time of production. Another English teacher, who attended the London focus group, was doing precisely this: she uses the final episode of *Blackadder* in contrast with R.C. Sherriff's 1928 play *Journey's End* to show continuities and developments in representations of the war.

Last but not least, some departments have a blanket policy against using *Blackadder Goes Forth*. As stated by another survey participant, a History teacher and Assistant Head, his school has 'not used [*Blackadder*] as a resource for many years as it now seems dated and the humour does not appeal to our students.' He points out that the show's 'historical accuracy was always tenuous' and makes the important point that whatever teachers choose to show in class, modern pedagogical methods do not include 'show[ing] whole programmes or allow[ing] undirected viewing as a teaching

strategy'.<sup>42</sup> In summary, there are as many ways of using (or not using) *Blackadder Goes Forth* and similar material as there are departments or indeed individual teachers. Any attempt at generalising how or why such sources are used risks misrepresentation. Moreover, even where classroom practice tallies with assumptions about content and/or bias, teachers' motivations are not necessarily those ascribed to them by external commentators, as in the case of the respondent above.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.





## History Findings

### In what contexts is the First World War taught in History classrooms?

The majority of History Pathway respondents (76%) indicated that KS3 was the 'main level' where they taught the First World War. As most History teachers would agree that the First World War is an important topic that all students in the UK should be exposed to, it needs to be taught before History becomes an optional subject at KS4 and above.<sup>43</sup> The National Curriculum has been adjusted to ensure that key national and international events are included prior to GCSE options. The First World War tends to be covered in Year 9 (KS3) owing to it being a twentieth-century topic and the curriculum being largely chronological between Years 7 and 9. Beyond KS3, as explained above, the First World War is one of many options (either as a stand-alone topic or as part of a broader survey) available to teachers via exam board specifications. At both KS4 and Sixth Form the most popular exam boards amongst History Pathway respondents were Edexcel and AQA, both of which feature the First World War in multiple

topics on their specifications and, as seen in the comment from an exam board Product Manager for History above, will continue to do so.<sup>44</sup> Overall, it is a combination of key stage attainment and exam board specifications that determine the context within which the First World War appears in History classrooms.

Where the First World War is taught, it is most commonly – by some distance – within a context of twentieth-century (Modern World) history (see **Figure 12** overleaf). At KS3 this can be explained by the chronological structure of years 7 – 9. Owing to the pressure at KS3 to cover important aspects of history before the subject becomes optional, teachers often call their Year 9 history modules 'twentieth-century' history, or something similar. At KS4 (GCSE) all exam boards offer some version of 'Modern World' history as a specification option. Across the three main boards (AQA, Edexcel and OCR) these tend to be the most popular and there is little variation between AQA Modern World and those offered by Edexcel and OCR.<sup>45</sup> It is logical that the First World War would appear within these specifications.

After that, our survey participants indicated that the First World War was likely to appear as part of a module on conflict/warfare as well as in tandem with the Second World War or German history. This contextualisation suggests that the First World War appears in the curriculum as a significant event that had major ramifications for the twentieth century (and beyond) and is therefore crucial to any understanding of the 'modern world'. It is comparatively less likely to be incorporated as a 'case study' example to examine thematic issues, such as diplomacy or medicine, although – naturally – any broad study of modern conflict could not overlook the First (or Second) world wars. This fits with a more general impression that any sense of understanding the twentieth century or 'modern world' is going to have to include the First and Second world wars.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>43</sup> GCSE history remains one of the most popular of the 'optional' subjects (33% of GCSE students took history in 2009 – 197,800 entries). In 2012, 75% of the schools that responded to the annual Historical Association's Secondary History survey reported more than a third of pupils were continuing with the subject at GCSE. See N. Sheldon 'History Examinations from the 1960s to the present day' at <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/project-papers/topics.htm> [Last accessed 16 April 2014] and <http://www.history.org.uk/news/index.php?id=1597> [Last accessed 7 May 2014].

<sup>44</sup> The results break down as follows: 61 respondents [KS4] and 50 respondents [Sixth Form] for Edexcel; 58 [KS4] and 37 [Sixth Form] for AQA. Please note that this question was multiple choice and therefore the percentages do not add up to 100.

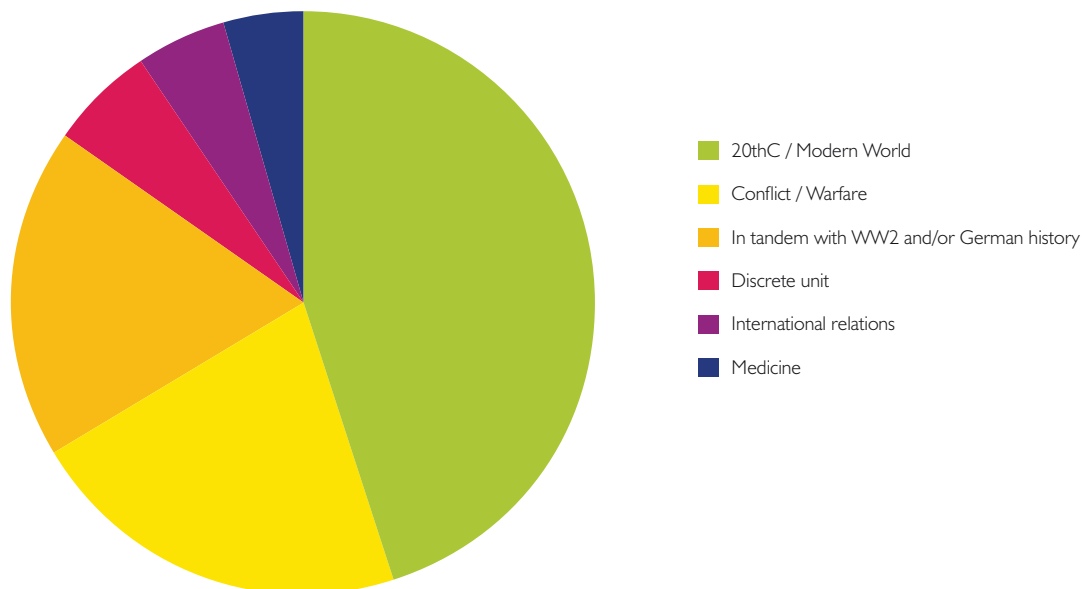
<sup>45</sup> See N. Sheldon 'History Examinations from the 1960s to the present day' at <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/project-papers/topics.html> [Last accessed 16 April 2014].

<sup>46</sup> A Gallup poll conducted in autumn 1999 revealed that respondents identified the First World War as the sixth 'most important' event of the twentieth century. Granted the poll reflects an American rather than British perspective, it is unlikely that a similar poll conducted in the UK would exclude the First World War from the top ten. See <http://www.gallup.com/poll/3427/most-important-events-century-from-viewpoint-people.aspx> [Last accessed 14 April 2014].

## History Findings continued

**Fig. 12: Contexts in which the First World War is taught according to free-text answers**

(History Pathway results, distribution by absolute numbers)



### What topics are taught?

More substantial information can be gleaned about the way the First World War appears in History classrooms when it is broken down into individual topics. Respondents were asked to identify, via multiple choice, the topics they covered at the main level at which they taught the First World War. As **Table 6** overleaf reveals, trench warfare was the most common topic for the 261 History Pathway respondents who responded to this question (96%). Origins/causes of the war

came a close second (94%) followed by the Western Front (85%). Taken together, this confirms a somewhat limited view of the war that focuses primarily on the trenches of the Western Front alongside diplomatic questions of causation and origin. The prominence of these topics, in part, reflects how survey respondents for History selected KS3 as the main level at which they taught the First World War. At KS3, the First World War tends to be approached traditionally via warfare on the Western Front, in particular the trench

experience. Teachers of secondary level history cannot be experts in all topics; it is unsurprising that the trenches and the Western Front (common features of popular understandings of the war)<sup>47</sup> loom large in their understanding of the First World War, and thus what they feel comfortable teaching. This is also, perhaps, a consequence of the increasing trend to replace specialist history teachers with general humanities teachers.<sup>48</sup> At KS4, which often takes a more political approach, students are exposed to issues

<sup>47</sup> In a recent YouGov survey of around 1,000 people in the UK, commissioned as part of wider report by the British Council, trenches were the most common image that they associated with the First World War, closely followed by death and loss of life. See *Remember the World as Well as the War* (February 2014), p. 6, available at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/remember-the-world-as-well-as-the-war-report.pdf> [Last accessed 22 April 2014].

<sup>48</sup> See <http://www.history.org.uk/news/index.php?id=1597> [Last accessed 7 May 2014].

## History Findings continued

such as causation and consequences of the war. The popularity of 'origins/causes of the war' as a self-contained topic reflects the importance of causation as one of the key concepts specified in the History: Programme of Study for Key Stage 3 (POS) for the National Curriculum (2007).<sup>49</sup> According to one History teacher, interviewed separately as they could not attend the focus groups, the causes of the First World War offer a neat and well-resourced example of historical causation that students can get to grips with easily.<sup>50</sup>

Topics that interpreted the war as part of a wider context of European and international events of the period (such as the Easter Rising of 1916 or the Russian revolutions of 1917), or examined the war 'beyond' the Western Front (other fronts or the war in Africa) were far less common (21% and 6% respectively). In between these two extremes lay topics relating to technological impact (76%), social history (women's changing position in society [70%] and war on the home front [69%]), as well as diplomatic issues surrounding the end of the war, including the Treaty of Versailles (74%). The First World War was also taught in relation to its consequences and ramifications (65%), not least its links to the Second World War (58%).

The prominence of 'propaganda' (84%) in this list was interrogated further during the focus groups. These discussions revealed how 'purpose' was one of the primary drivers of teaching the First World

**Table 6: Topics taught by percentage (History Pathway)**

History Pathway	
96%	Trench warfare
94%	Origins/causes of the war
85%	Western Front
84%	Propaganda
76%	New technology and its impact
74%	How and why the war ended
70%	Women's changing position in society
69%	War on the home front
65%	Change connected with and/or consequences of the war
58%	Links to Second World War
24%	War at Sea
21%	Other fronts
21%	Other events in the period (e.g. Easter Rising of 1916, Russian Revolution)
17%	Colonialism/Decolonisation
7%	Links to Boer War
6%	The war in Africa
5%	Other (specified as Conscientious Objectors; Impact on local area; War in the Air; Importance of an individual e.g. Haig; Interpretations over time)

War, in particular the utilisation of primary sources. According to one History teacher, who (at the time of the focus group) had been teaching for twelve years, this is because of literacy issues. By lending itself to visual sources propaganda as a topic allows the whole group, regardless of level, to develop their interrogation and analytical skills. As source analysis is the highest percentage of assessed work at History GCSE level and above, a topic that lends itself to developing such skills takes on added importance. This view was shared by another History teacher,

at a comparatively early stage in their career, who added that propaganda in the First World War, particularly recruitment posters, were so 'blatant and blunt' in their messaging that it was relatively easy for students to 'decode' and interpret.<sup>51</sup> In addition, propaganda, as a topic, lends itself to progression in students' learning. According to a recently qualified History teacher, students can build their analytical skills, starting with propaganda in the First World War, before moving onto the interwar period and Nazi Germany. In addition, many students find it an enjoyable

<sup>49</sup> See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802151252/https://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/h/history%202007%20programme%20of%20study%20for%20key%20stage%203.pdf> [Last accessed 16 April 2014].

<sup>50</sup> Face-to-face interview with History teacher conducted by research team, 17 April 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

## History Findings continued

and interesting topic that allows them to draw out their own interpretations and ask questions about persuasion, guilt, shame, and patriotism.

The focus groups also allowed History participants to list additional topics that were not included in the original survey. Interestingly, a number of teachers commented on how they had found the survey list revealing, identifying topics that they had not considered under the remit of 'the First World War'. A few additions were made: art; memorialisation and commemoration; changes in medicine and medical practice; American history (civil rights and feminism); and links with Religious Education and Philosophy teaching on the concept of 'just war' and morality. In summary, it would seem that the survey captured the main topics taught in History classrooms where the First World War appears and that quite a traditional range of topics focusing on the experience of the Western Front, the trenches, and the origins of the war remain dominant, particularly at KS3.

Teaching experience has some influence on the First World War topics that are covered by History teachers with their students. Although the top two topics – 'trench warfare' and 'origins/causes of the war' – were equally popular amongst teachers regardless of their teaching experience, those teachers who had been professionally active for ten years or less were more likely than teachers with 16+ years' experience to cover 'propaganda'

as a topic. This may be because the past decade has seen increasing emphasis on league tables and exam results and, as explained above, propaganda is a neat topic that encompasses key source analysis skills essential for success in exams. Other recent changes in emphasis – notably literacy and e-safety – can also help to explain the popularity of 'propaganda' as a topic amongst more recently qualified History teachers. As discussed, visual sources, such as propaganda posters, are accessible for students at all literacy levels. In terms of e-safety, analysing propaganda and trying to interpret what messages are being conveyed is an important skill to ensure young people use the Internet safely. As all subjects have to cross-reference others on the curriculum, this is one way that History can meet its ICT targets. Other topics that saw a distinct preference amongst more experienced teachers (16+ years' teaching experience) included 'How and why the war ended', 'War at Sea', 'Other events in the period', and 'Links to the Boer War' suggesting a preference to look at the war within its 1914-1918 chronological parameters or in a pre-1914 context. Interestingly, 'other fronts', which is a more recent addition to First World War historiography, was also preferred by more experienced teachers compared to teachers with 11-15 years' experience. Teachers with experience of ten years or less were more likely than their more experienced colleagues to teach topics that looked at the post-1918 period and the war's long-term ramifications, such as 'Links to Second World War' and

'Colonialism/Decolonisation'. The latter preference could be explained by increasing emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in the curriculum, particularly as a result of the Ajebo Report (2007).<sup>52</sup> The former is more ambiguous but is perhaps due to the mandatory study of the Holocaust in the History curriculum and the need to understand the long-term origins of the Second World War.

### What (re)sources are used for teaching the history of the First World War?

Despite misgivings voiced in the focus group discussions (see below), textbooks were the number one resource for teaching the history of the First World War listed by History Pathway respondents. The primacy of textbooks as a resource, accompanied by focus group disquiet about their usefulness, reflects an ambivalent attitude towards textbooks amongst history teachers more generally. Textbooks continue to be purchased in large numbers, but the ideal teacher is one who does not rely on the textbook alone.<sup>53</sup> The strong link between examinations and textbooks (often written by examiners) has increased the primacy of textbooks in the teaching of history, particularly at KS4; the more specific examinations have become the more reliant teachers have become on textbooks, reassuring students (and teachers) that they have met the requirements to pass the assessment. However, the position of the textbook in history teaching is a matter of debate

<sup>52</sup> See *Diversity and Citizenship Curriculum Review* (2007) [http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES\\_Diversity\\_and\\_Citizenship.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DfES_Diversity_and_Citizenship.pdf) [Last accessed 17 April 2014].

<sup>53</sup> W.E. Marsden, *The School Textbook: Geography, History and Social Studies* (London: Woburn Press, 2001).

## History Findings continued

**Table 7: Ranking of resources used by percentage (History Pathway)**

History Pathway	
91%	Textbooks
85%	Contemporary footage (e.g. old newsreels, <i>Battle of the Somme</i> )
84%	YouTube clips
83%	Historical documents
82%	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i>
81%	Visual resources (e.g. photographs, paintings, cartoons)
74%	War poetry
70%	Films about the war (e.g. <i>Oh! What a Lovely War</i> )
68%	Television documentaries
66%	Web resources
58%	Life writing (e.g. letters or diary entries)
50%	The 'Horrible Histories' series (text or TV)
48%	Objects/material artefacts
41%	Family documents
40%	Resource packs compiled by self/school/department
33%	Oral history materials (e.g. interviews with veterans) War memoirs (e.g. <i>Good-Bye to All That</i> )
28%	Classic war novels (e.g. <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> )
24%	Anthologies of war writing
23%	Modern novels for adults (e.g. <i>Birdsong</i> , <i>Regeneration</i> ) Resource packs from external organisations
20%	Modern novels for young readers (e.g. <i>Private Peaceful</i> )
15%	School archive
14%	Podcasts
1%	Radio programmes
7%	Other

and the sheer quantity and accessibility of other resources, such as CD ROMs of electronic material and the Internet, have usurped the position of the textbook in history teaching.<sup>54</sup> This view is reinforced by our survey results. Multimedia clips (often historical footage), the contentious *Blackadder Goes Forth*, historical documents and visual sources like photographs, reproductions of paintings and cartoons appear to also be in heavy use, as indicated in **Table 7**.

While textbooks combine primary and secondary materials, other resources top the list before war poetry or other literary

interpretations are mentioned, challenging the view that the history of the First World War is being taught entirely through war literature in the History context. Most strikingly, visual sources – whether a still or moving image – feature predominantly, far more so than text-based or spoken word resources (e.g. podcasts, oral history materials, or radio programmes). Spoken word resources, as one History teacher described, can often be boring, lengthy, and hard for even the highest ability students to engage with.<sup>55</sup> Overall, the primacy of visual sources is perhaps indicative of a more general trend in contemporary classrooms; in today's age of mobile

devices, Internet and computer games, young people are constantly stimulated visually while they are out of school. They are visual learners, in many respects, and respond better to the accessibility (and possibly the familiarity) of visual sources rather than the printed or spoken word. In addition, extracts from films, documentaries, YouTube clips or other footage can live up the classroom and bring energy to a topic, acting as an interesting entry point into further discussion. With technology, such as interactive whiteboards and tablets, becoming increasingly commonplace in the classroom, it makes the use of such material as simple as, literally, a flick of a switch.

That is not to say that visual resources have rendered all other types of source redundant in the teaching of the history of the First World War. Without a more in-depth dissection of the contents of textbooks and resource packs (whether compiled by individuals, departments, schools, or external organisations) it is difficult to comment on what they feature precisely. How up-to-date this material is (in particular, how reflective it is of current historiography) and how textbooks and resource packs are used is another matter entirely and would require a separate investigation.<sup>56</sup> While the teachers who participated in our focus groups were clearly sceptical of how useful textbooks could be, it is still possible that some history lessons are based heavily around this type of resource owing to its strong association

<sup>54</sup> See N. Sheldon, 'History Textbooks from 1965-2010' (2011) <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-in-education/project-papers/topics.html> [Last accessed 16 April 2014].

<sup>55</sup> Face-to-face interview with History teacher conducted by research team, 17 April 2014.

<sup>56</sup> See, as an example, *War, Nation, Memory: International Perspectives on World War II in School History Textbooks*, eds. Keith A. Crawford and Stuart J. Foster (Charlotte, N.C.: IAP Publishing, 2007).

## History Findings continued

**Table 8: Named references to non-web-based resources used in the History Pathway in absolute numbers**

(173 free-text responses in total)

History Pathway	
69	Textbooks
65	Film and television (incl. feature films, adaptations, TV documentaries, <i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i> , etc.)
53	Historical documents (letters, official communications, newspapers, etc.)
37	Artefacts / physical objects
26	Visual resources (posters, pictures, photographs)
23	Other books (academic, local history, oral history)
19	Fiction (incl. contemporary and modern novels for young readers and adults)
18	Local history resources (incl. school archives)
	Poetry
16	Local archives, memorials and museums
14	Family documents (teachers' and/or students')
9	Worksheets / booklets / resource packs designed by teachers or departments
8	Resource packs designed by external organisations
4	Visiting speakers (actors, experts, tour guides)

with exam boards, examiners, and thus examinations, as explained above.

The presence of life writing (letters or diaries), war memoirs, novels (modern and classic) and poetry, alongside film and television suggests that the teaching of the history of the First World War is not only about the event itself but how it has been interpreted and portrayed over time. It is unlikely that any of these sources are used in isolation; as a combination they make for a stimulating and revealing interrogation into the evolution of popular understanding of the war over time.

The widespread use of historical documents and artefacts/physical objects (see **Table 8**) in the teaching of the First

World War can best be explained by the fact that, as a discipline, source analysis plays a fundamental role. As a twentieth-century topic, there is a plethora of material available digitally and online and thus teachers have no difficulty in finding primary sources for their students to analyse and place in context. As a popular topic that has been on the curriculum since the advent of the National Curriculum, teachers are likely to have built up a significant resource base to be drawn on each year.

Length of teaching experience has some effect on the types of resources used in the teaching of the history of the First World War. Teachers with ten years' experience or less are more likely than their more experienced peers to utilise Terry Deary's

*Horrible Histories* series (whether text or television). This is most likely due to generational exposure. Assuming that teachers with ten years' experience or less are probably younger than their more experienced colleagues, and bearing in mind that *Horrible Histories* has only been on television since 2001 (although it has been available in print since 1993), this might explain the slight disparity in use.<sup>57</sup> Less experienced teachers are also more likely to draw on visual resources (e.g. photographs, paintings, cartoons) and historical documents in their teaching of the First World War compared with more experienced teachers. This may be connected to literacy issues and an emphasis on skills-based learning, highlighted above, with the need to get all students, regardless of ability, engaging with and analysing primary sources. It may also be because access to historical documents relating to the First World War has ballooned in recent years, just as the least experienced among our respondents were completing their training and undertaking their NQT years. That said it was more common, by a margin, for more experienced teachers (16+ years' experience) to utilise web resources so a generational argument has its limits. War memoirs and modern novels (whether for adults or children) were cited more frequently by more experienced teachers suggesting, perhaps, scepticism amongst newly qualified teachers in using such material. More experienced teachers identified objects/material artefacts, family documents and resources packs compiled by self/school/department more often than

<sup>57</sup> Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 39. See also <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/9857326/Horrible-Histories-20-years-of-entertaining-children.html> [Last accessed 15 April 2014]

## History Findings continued

**Table 9: Named references to web-based resources used in the History Pathway in absolute numbers**

(154 free-text responses in total)

History Pathway	
54	YouTube
50	BBC webpages
34	Commonwealth War Graves Commission webpages
30	National Archives webpages
24	Imperial War Museum webpages (incl. Centenary site) SchoolHistory.co.uk (© Andrew Field)
17	Spartacus Educational (©John Simkin / Spartacus Educational Publishers Ltd)
13	ActiveHistory.co.uk (© 1998-2014 Russel Tarr)
7	TES webpages Learning Curve webpages Webpages of other museums and archives (local museums, National Army Museum, Australian and Canadian War Museums, Wilfred Owen Archive)
5	Historical Association webpages ThinkingHistory.com (© Ian Dawson)
4	Leeds-Pal.com 'Horrible Histories' clips Own blogs
3	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i> clips British Pathé (1 only before it became subscription only) HistoryLearningSite.co.uk (© 2000-2013 Chris Trueman / HistoryLearningSite.co.uk) WorldWarI.com / Trenches on the Web
2	Ancestry.co.uk (1 through local library) British Legion webpages CasaHistoria.net (© 1998-2014 casahistoria) FirstWorldWar.com (© 2000-2009 Michael Duffy) Great War Forum JohnDClare.net (© John D. Clare) Oxford Digital Archives Peace Pledge Union webpages The Long Long Trail (1914-1918.net, ©1995-2013 Chris Baker/Milverton Associates Ltd)
1	BritishBattles.com FilmEducation.org History on the Net (©2000-2013 Heather Wheeler / Historyonthenet) Jutland interactive site Rudbeck IB History revision wiki Teachit History webpages TNA Education

their less experienced colleagues. This is perhaps due to longevity in a career with the opportunity to build up material ephemera (collected over the years or donated by members of the community), develop resource packs year-on-year, and have the chance to investigate one's own family history in relation to the First World War.

**Table 9** specifies the named web-based resources identified by History Pathway respondents. YouTube tops the list, further cementing the importance of easily accessible audio and video clips (whether music, television, film or otherwise) in engaging a History class with the First World War. The next four most popular websites – BBC, CWGC, NA, and the IWM – are all freely accessible and associated with reputable national institutions either connected with history more generally, or the First World War specifically. Used together, they contain accessible and easily digested introductions to a variety of topics (including current historiographical debates), factsheets, teaching resources, audio and video clips, further reading suggestions, and downloadable worksheets and primary documents. School-History.co.uk was also popular amongst History Pathway respondents; established in 2000 by a fellow secondary-school History teacher, Andrew Field, it describes itself as 'a safe and convenient place for history teachers and pupils to find information, download worksheets and basically have some fun using ICT!'<sup>58</sup> History teachers described the site as 'really accessible' for both teachers and students with lots of good quality primary source material in the form of gobbets. The First World War appears on this website, as one would

<sup>58</sup> See <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/authority.htm> [Last accessed 15 April 2014].

## History Findings continued

expect, in the section for year groups 9 and above, and what it offers, in terms of resources, tallies with the most popular topics taught selected by History Pathway respondents in **Table 6** above (trench warfare and origins/causes of the war). It also serves as a portal to direct teachers to other relevant websites (e.g. Spartacus Educational) that appear in the list in **Table 9**.<sup>59</sup> Clips from *Blackadder Goes Forth* (presumably accessed via YouTube or DVD) were cited in the free-text by three History Pathway respondents (just under 2% of respondents who gave free-text responses to this question). While a relatively low number overall, it is one of only two television or film clips mentioned by title in this list, alongside clips from *Horrible Histories* (four respondents or 3% of those who gave free-text responses to this question), suggesting some degree of prominence in the minds of those History teachers surveyed.

The top five methods and activities used to teach the history of the First World War were group work, teacher talk, pupil presentations, internet research, historical enquiry, and creating newspapers and posters. This latter exercise is perhaps connected to the popularity of 'propaganda' as a topic listed in **Table 6** above. Field trips and research projects with a local

focus were almost entirely reserved for History classes (as opposed to English). Understandably, creative writing featured more prominently amongst English Pathway respondents although it was by no means absent from History respondents. This proved to be a point of contention amongst teachers in our focus groups. Some NQT teachers inferred that their teacher training course leaders had dismissed these kinds of creative exercises as futile; they believed 'empathy' was not a key skill to develop amongst History students.<sup>60</sup> Other recently qualified teachers, however, strongly disagreed, having witnessed the opposite attitude amongst their PGCE tutors. When these types of activities, cited in the survey, were cross-referenced with length of teaching experience, it revealed that more creative, pupil-led activities (such as role play, creative writing, creating newspapers and posters, and pupil presentations) were identified by teachers with ten years' experience or less. Indeed, one of the least experienced (History) focus group participants stated that the one thing he wanted his pupils to take away from studying the First World War was the 'notion of empathy'. We might speculate, however tentatively, that more recent History teacher training programmes look favourably on creative exercises that help pupils put themselves 'in the shoes' of the

individuals and societies they are studying. Indeed, this would tally with the broader context of Ofsted's latest guidance on SMSC development, which all schools in England must demonstrate.<sup>61</sup> Empathy is a way for History teachers to contribute to their school's attainment in this area. Teachers with 16+ years' experience had a slight preference for field trips and research projects with a local focus (perhaps because they have taught in the same location for a longer period of time, thus building up local knowledge and networks). Teachers with more experience also preferred to utilise internet research, again challenging any notions of generational bias.

### History teachers' goals and motivations for teaching the First World War

An analysis of History Pathway responses to the question 'what are you trying to achieve in teaching First World War history' reveals a clear split between 'practical' subject-based objectives and 'value-driven' motivations that are more specific to the First World War (see **Table 10** overleaf).

The top six responses all fall into the former category – developing contextual understanding and critical skills, placing the war within a chronology of the twentieth century, and building a factual

<sup>59</sup> These findings echo those of an earlier investigation into the digital content available to support education and research into First World War studies. See 'Digital Content for the First World War: Understanding the requirements of education and research' (HEFCE, 2012), p. 8. See <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/digitisation/www1resourcesreport.pdf> [Last accessed, 7 May 2014].

<sup>60</sup> One NQT participant in the London focus group reported that he had been told by one of his PGCE tutors that empathising with people in the past was pointless, and that one might as well empathise with being a badger. While some History teachers in the group could at least relate to this comment, if not having heard something similar before, others found it shocking and unreflective of their training experiences.

<sup>61</sup> See Ofsted Subsidiary Guidance (updated April 2014) <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/subsidiary-guidance-supporting-inspection-of-maintained-schools-and-academies-september-2012> [Last accessed 17 April 2014].



## History Findings continued

**Table 10: What are you trying to achieve in teaching the First World War (i.e. what are your desired outcomes for your pupils)?**

(Percentage of respondents in History Pathway who rated goals as either 'very important' or 'important')

History Pathway	
97%	Development of contextual understanding
96%	Link First World War with subsequent events of the twentieth century
95%	Development of critical skills
90%	Provide pupils with key facts about the war
88%	Illustrate use / impact of propaganda
84%	Elicit a personal response from pupils
83%	Widen understanding of the war beyond what is usually covered in the media
82%	Educate pupils about the cost of war
80%	Demonstrate changes in attitude to war
76%	Illustrate the wide range of reactions to a major event
73%	Change the way we think about our society
70%	Demonstrate the futility of war
67%	Educate pupils about the social construction of values such as duty and sacrifice
63%	Illustrate step change in recent history
56%	Help explore personal development in reaction to hardship
27%	No particular personal aims – set by exam board

understanding of the conflict. These are equally applicable to any historical topic and reveal nothing unique about the teaching of the First World War. Instead they reflect, more generally, the key concepts and processes identified in the 2007 POS. History participants at the Exeter focus

group supported the conclusions drawn from the survey that it is practical skills (generic to the discipline of history rather than the subject of the First World War) that are their main drivers for teaching the topic. Interpretation, significance, contextualisation, and chronological

accuracy were all cited as objectives in the teaching of the history of the First World War.

Interestingly, 88% of History Pathway respondents who answered this question rated 'illustrating the use/impact of propaganda' as either an important or very important objective in teaching the history of the First World War. This continues a trend revealed in **Table 6** above and the weight placed on 'using evidence' as one of the three key processes specified in the 2007 POS.<sup>62</sup> One focus group participant summarised the applicability of the First World War as an historical topic: 'I'm motivated to teach First World War history because it's interesting, above all else... There's a lot for students to take away from it in terms of developing historical skills and engaging with source material.' Eliciting a personal response from pupils could also be evidence of 'communicating about the past', one of the general essential skills/ processes required for students to make progress in the subject.

But focus group discussions revealed there was something particular about the First World War that encouraged a connection, and thus reaction, from students. Because the First World War had such a wide-ranging impact, 'rippling down the UK's streets',<sup>63</sup> and touching nearly every British family in one way or another, it is an ideal subject to capture pupils' attention by hooking them into a personal story, family history or local connection. Some History teachers

<sup>62</sup> See <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130802151252/https://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/h/history%202007%20programme%20of%20study%20for%20key%20stage%203.pdf> [Last accessed 16 April 2014]

<sup>63</sup> Craig Henderson (Head of Programmes for BBC English Regions) being interviewed about the BBC's 'World War One at Home' project, *BBC History Magazine*, February 2014, p. 9.

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described how the field trips to European battlefields were then built around these local stories or even relatives. Even without these specific links, History teachers highlighted how the First World War was usually the first twentieth-century topic that students were exposed to; for the first time in their History classes they could almost feel a personal connection recognising, like never before, 'their lives in the lives of the people they are studying'.<sup>64</sup> One focus group participant passionately argued:

“ I don't know of another topic that has motivated students to make a connection with their past as much. Because it's impossible to do that with the other subjects – teaching the murder of Thomas Becket under Henry II, it's doubtful that you're related to one of the knights that sliced his head off. But in the First World War you can make that connection. Using digital resources or going home at night to talk about family experience,

[pupils] can make that connection so fast. ”

Even before the centenary put the spotlight on the First World War as an historical event, the conflict has retained a steady presence in popular media since the 1960s. In the past decade, it has acted as an engaging backdrop to a number of new and revived theatre productions (new examples include *Surfing Tommies*, *Versailles*, television dramas (*Birdsong*, *Downton Abbey*), films (*A Very Long Engagement*, *War Horse*), novels (John Boyne's *The Absolutist*, Helen Dunmore's *The Lie*), and children's literature (James Riordan's *When the Guns Fall Silent*, Michael Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful*), amongst many other examples.<sup>65</sup> As we have discussed, the centenary is placing the war firmly at the centre of current debates on education, remembrance and national identity,<sup>66</sup> as well as continuing to act as a canvas to explore fictional/semi-fictional stories for entertainment and educational purposes.<sup>67</sup> A significant proportion (83%) of History Pathway respondents who answered this

question identified an objective of their First World War teaching as being a chance to 'widen understanding beyond what is usually covered in the media', suggesting a sense of frustration with the way the war tends to be portrayed and a responsibility to broaden their pupils' awareness of the topic. Focus group discussions revealed that the popularity of the conflict in mainstream media was often a blessing to teachers who could use its 'presence' as a way to engage pupils in the topic. Media coverage of stories such as the death of veteran Harry Patch in 2009 or the destruction of CWGC war graves in Iraq following the fall of Saddam Hussein, acted as triggers for class discussions that linked the past to present issues.<sup>68</sup> While many teachers expressed concern that centenary coverage could turn their students 'off' the First World War through over-exposure, there was a hope that its predominance in popular culture during the centenary would spark discussion about memory, commemoration and the place of the First World War in national identity in their History classrooms. Other responses to this question suggested

<sup>64</sup> Face-to-face interview with History teacher conducted by research team, 17 April 2014.

<sup>65</sup> *Surfing Tommies* is a 2009 play by Alan M. Kent that toured nationally in 2011; *Versailles* is a 2014 play by Peter Gill; *Birdsong* was first broadcast on BBC in January 2012; *Downton Abbey* first aired on ITV in September 2010; *A Very Long Engagement* (in French: *Un long dimanche de fiançailles*) is a 2004 film, directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, *War Horse* is a 2011 film directed by Steven Spielberg (both based on popular novels); John Boyne, *The Absolutist* (London: Doubleday, 2011); Helen Dunmore, *The Lie* (London: Hutchinson, 2014); James Riordan, *When The Guns Fall Silent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael Morpurgo, *Private Peaceful* (London: Collins, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Mycock, 'The First World War Centenary in the UK: "A Truly National Commemoration"?' , *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 103.2 (2014), pp. 153-163.

<sup>67</sup> On 16 October 2013, the BBC announced its four-year World War One centenary season, which included (amongst other dramas) *37 Days* (BBC, March 2014) and *The Crimson Field* (BBC, April 2014). See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2013/world-war-one-centenary.html> [Last accessed 16 April 2014].

<sup>68</sup> See <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/britain-at-war/10438147/Iraq-cemetery-containing-graves-of-British-servicemen-is-destroyed.html> [Last accessed 16 April 2014]. Other recent First World War 'headlines' include 'First world war soldiers reburied with full military honours after 100 years', *Guardian*, 14 March 2014 (<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/14/first-world-war-soldiers-buried-100-years>) and 'Ypres: World War One bomb explodes killing two', BBC News, 16 March 2014 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-26654314>) [Last accessed 17 April 2014].

## History Findings continued

a more intimate relationship between an individual teacher's values and beliefs (in respect to war and peace) and their teaching of the First World War. 82% of History Pathway respondents who answered this question felt that it was either important or very important as an objective to 'educate pupils about the cost of war'. Added to the 70% of History Pathway respondents who wished to use their teaching of the war as an opportunity to 'demonstrate the futility of war', a significant proportion of respondents interpreted the First World War (or war more generally) in a negative way and this filtered into their teaching. One History Pathway respondent elaborated on this point in the free-text 'general comments' at the end of the survey:

“[...] the module we teach I feel misses out on crucial areas of the Home Front, especially on the people who objected to war. I feel that students would be more interested in the subject if we included those aspects and were given the opportunities to talk about oppositions to military conflicts. I feel that it would make the topic more useful and current, given recent conflicts the UK has been involved in and the varying support for those conflicts.”

Geographical location and pupil intake clearly have some bearing on the way the First World War is taught in History classrooms. At the focus groups, History teachers who taught in traditionally military

or naval areas, where family members of pupils were currently serving in the armed forces, had to show a degree of sensitivity to the 'blood and gore' of the First World War. This would, in turn, impact on any sense of teaching the war as a lesson on the 'cost of war'. Overall, the focus group discussions (along with some free-text entries in the 'general comments' section of the History Pathway) revealed a complex response to the First World War being taught as 'futile' or 'costly'. One respondent felt the inclusion of the word 'futility' made the question too 'loaded'. Another was keen to stress that 'horror and futility are quite clearly different things. Whilst the war may well have been horrifying, it was not necessarily futile.' This crucial distinction was picked up again in the focus groups (see below).

In addition, 67% of History Pathway respondents who answered this question believed teaching the history of the First World War provided an opportunity to 'educate pupils about the social construction of values such as duty and sacrifice'. The Exeter focus group revealed some disparity in teaching experience surrounding this issue. One teacher, with over twelve years' experience, felt that it was their duty as a History teacher to convey the level of sacrifice made by one generation for another and thus emphasise the significance of remembrance. Another participant, who was in their fourth year of teaching, felt that sacrifice was only one of many concepts associated with the First World War and that it was his responsibility, as a History teacher, to examine a

number of competing interpretations of the war. However, the survey results for this question, cross-referenced against length of teaching experience, indicated that teachers with ten years' experience (70%) or less were more likely than their more experienced colleagues to highlight this objective as very important or important. This may be due to the wording of the question; 'social construction of values' almost invites a post-modernist, deconstructive approach that may appeal to more recently qualified teachers who wish to interrogate, in order to destabilise, traditional concepts such as 'duty' and 'sacrifice'.

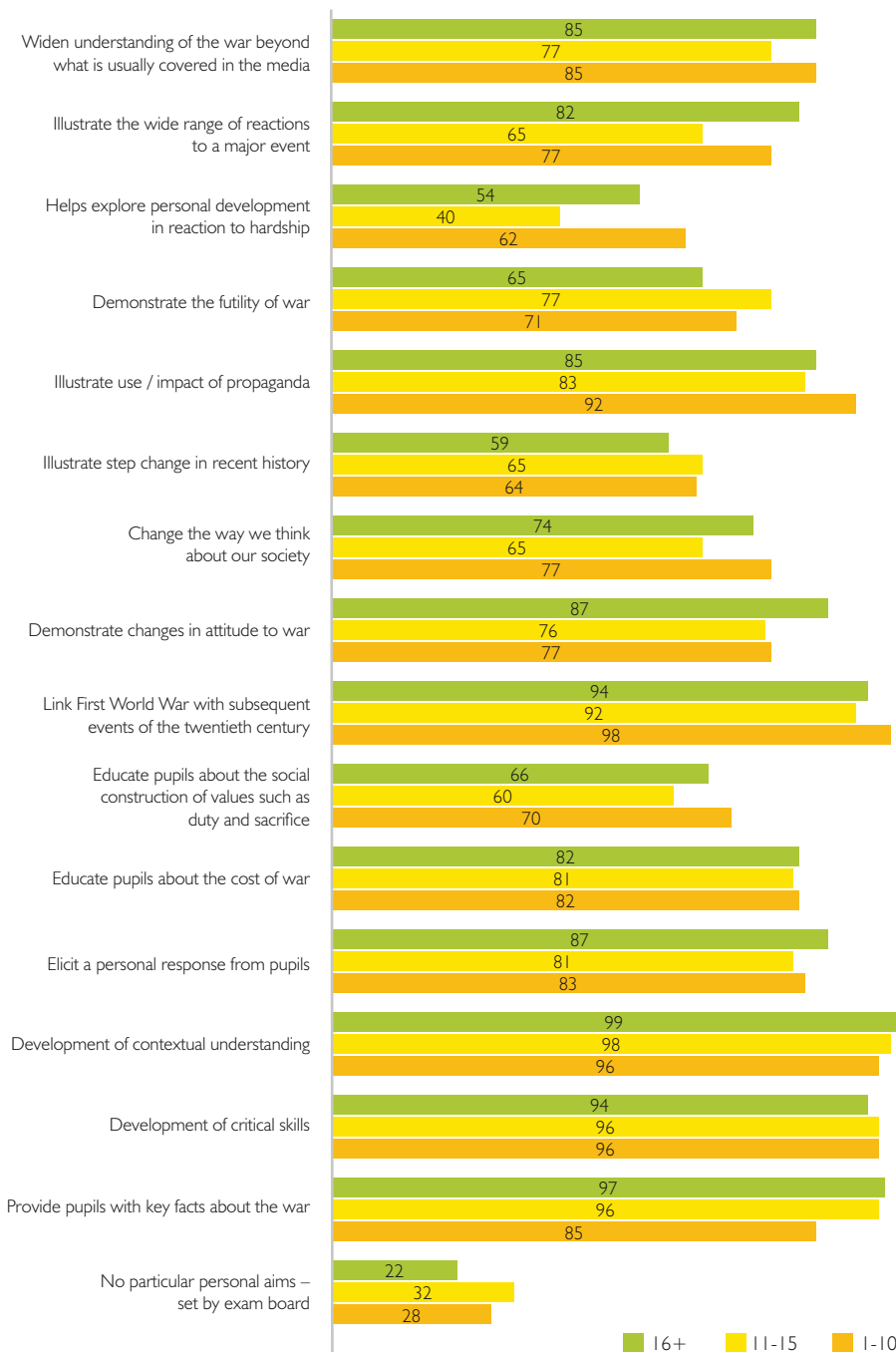
Length of teaching experience (see **Figure 13** overleaf) made little or no difference to the 'practical' subject-based objectives, such as developing contextual understanding or critical skills. Teachers with less than ten years' experience were less likely to teach the war in order to 'provide pupils with key facts' illustrating the tendency to move away from the passive memorising of 'facts' to more interpretive and active styles of learning. History teachers agreed that this was a result of the recent (2007) skills-based curriculum that has attempted to make history classes more relevant to contemporary pupils. History is now taught as a system of knowledge rather than a set of bare important facts.<sup>69</sup> Teachers with between 11-15 years' experience were less likely than their colleagues (less or more experienced) to teach the war to 'widen understanding...beyond what is usually covered in the media'. It was this same cohort who felt, more

<sup>69</sup> Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 40.

## History Findings continued

**Fig. 13: What are you trying to achieve in teaching the First World War (i.e. what are your desired outcomes for your pupils)?**

(History Pathway results by years of experience in percentages)



## History Findings continued

so than their colleagues (more or less experienced), that teaching the war 'to demonstrate the futility of war' was either important or very important (77%) as an objective. Assuming no major career breaks, this cohort would have completed their PGCEs somewhere between 1998 and 2002; their undergraduate degrees (presumably in History) roughly 3-4 years prior. Although it is difficult to draw conclusions without further interrogation of the views held by this cohort, this time period is certainly before 'revisionist' historiography of the First World War was widely available.<sup>70</sup> They would also have been at an age (at least) to be moved by the content of *Blackadder Goes Forth*, first broadcast on the BBC in 1989, even if they were not in a position to critique it. Teachers with ten years' experience or less were more likely to choose 'illustrate the use of propaganda' (92%) and 'helps explore personal development in reaction to hardship' (62%) as objectives. The former can be explained within the context already discussed, regarding links to literacy

and how propaganda, as a topic, lends itself to accessible and engaging source analysis that is popular amongst more recently qualified teachers. The latter objective is more intriguing, and could suggest a contemporary awareness of global conflict, refugees, invasion, and occupation owing to 24-hour news, social media, and live mobile feeds. Today's students, if they choose, can be continually connected to global crises and, perhaps, less experienced teachers feel it is their responsibility to link present-day hardship with historical precedents. This is, in part, a result of History's links to Citizenship; indeed, History is the main entry point for students to Citizenship as a discreet subject.<sup>71</sup> Creating a sense of empathy and connection is also currently championed by Ofsted (via its development of SMSC) who wish to see evidence of young people understanding the world from another's perspective.

<sup>70</sup> For example, Gary Sheffield's *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities* (London: Headline, 2001) was cited by many History workshop and focus group participants as a key text that encouraged them to start rethinking traditional interpretations of the First World War. This was not published until 2001.

<sup>71</sup> Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and heritage in contemporary popular culture* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 41.

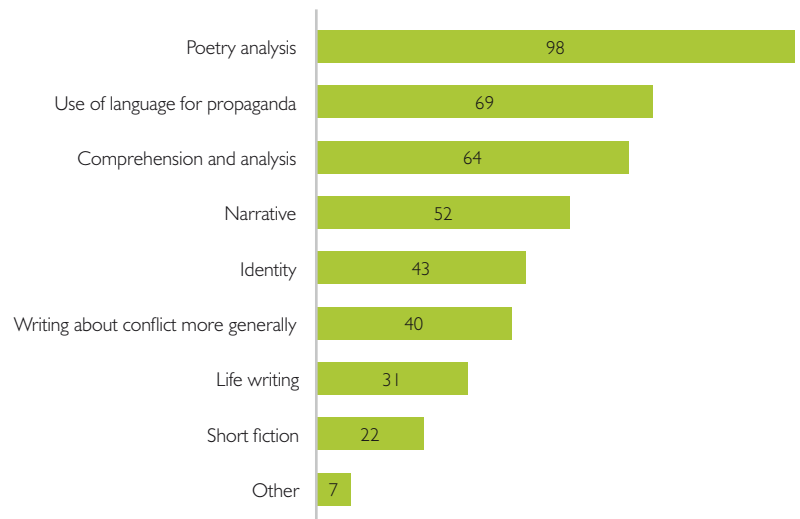
## English findings<sup>72</sup>

### In what contexts is First World War literature taught in English classrooms?

It is telling, and not perhaps entirely unexpected, that all 98 respondents to the English Pathway indicated they had taught the First World War in relation to 'poetry analysis', as illustrated by **Figure 14**. This context is followed nearly evenly by explorations of the relationship between language and propaganda (which tallies with the popularity of teaching about propaganda in History) as well as the more general development of 'comprehension and analysis' skills. These findings suggest that if they have a personal interest in the topic, teachers whose exam board(s) or scheme of work do not stipulate particular First World War texts may find ways of integrating a First World War-related text into more general units. This also applies to the next most stated contexts, i.e. teaching about 'narrative' and 'identity'. Conflict writing more generally is an obvious context for teaching First World War texts, but surprisingly only achieves the sixth place out of nine options, with 'life writing', 'short fiction' and 'other' topics making up the bottom three. Alternatives listed in the free-text option for 'other' topics comprised of four responses: 'biography' as a variation on life writing, 'creative writing', 'prejudice, morality, suffering', and 'trauma studies, shell shock, gender studies'. These more specific contexts and topics are likely to derive from teachers' personal interest or – in the case of trauma and shell shock – may be mirroring the popularisation of shell shock through Pat Barker's bestselling

**Fig. 14: What topics do you cover when teaching the First World War?**

(English Pathway responses in percentages)



*Regeneration* trilogy in the 1990s among others. They also illustrate, however, a central fact about the teaching of First World War writing that we will return to below, namely that it is unlikely to be taught entirely divorced from its historical and cultural context.

These findings are backed and refined by free-text answers to question 23, which asked teachers whether they taught the First World War as part of a larger series, unit or topic area, and requested them to specify which. Out of 53 free-text responses, 15 stated that they did not teach First World War writing as part of any larger unit, but included it as general context for other texts or twentieth-

century literature generally, and/or chose an individual First World War-related text as teacher's choice reading where it fitted in. Another four responses indicated that First World War literature featured in general (or unspecified) exam board units they had taught, with the remaining instances split between units on poetry analysis (16), First World War literature generally (2), First World War poetry specifically (2), conflict literature generally (7), and conflict poetry specifically (7) as illustrated in **Figure 15** overleaf.

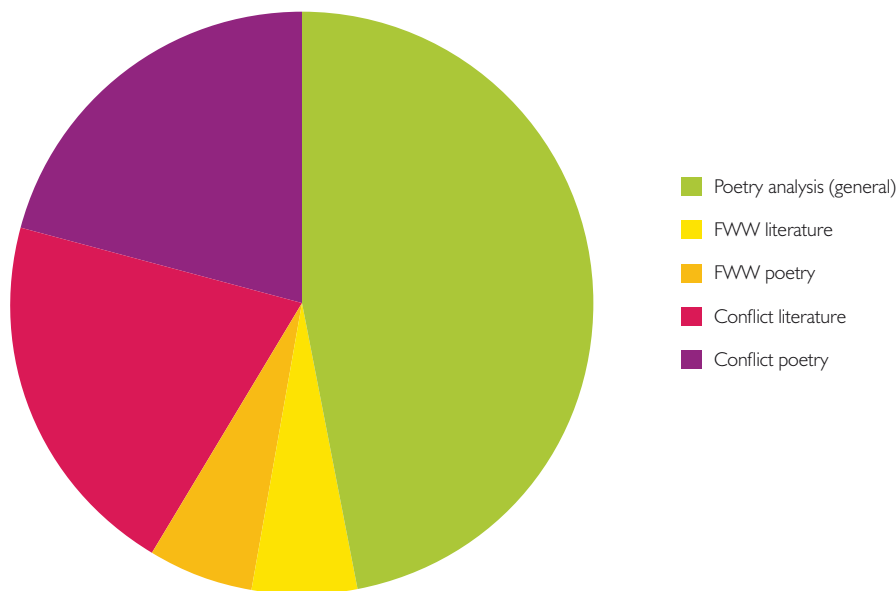
The overwhelming dominance of poetry analysis as the main context for teaching about First World War writing in our sample, closely followed by the more

<sup>72</sup> Please note that our English Pathway results are more limited and their interpretation more speculative than for the History Pathway due to the significantly lower number of respondents.

## English Findings continued

**Fig. 15: Contexts in which First World War writing is taught according to free-text answers**

(English Pathway results, distribution by absolute numbers)



specific but nevertheless generalised categories of 'conflict' writing and poetry, indicates that First World War poetry remains the main genre to which students are likely to be exposed during their time in school. While practical considerations make war poetry (as opposed to longer prose or drama) an obvious choice – poetry tends to be short, self-contained, and well suited to practising linguistic and stylistic analysis – its evident popularity does raise questions as to the balance achieved in teaching the First World War through literature and

links between popular memory of the war and its poetry in public perception. Military historians in particular have laid blame for false perceptions of the war at the door of the 'trench poets' – and those who teach them – for decades. Although few have voiced this criticism as polemically as Correlli Barnett, who claimed that the disillusioned canonical war writers had implanted a 'depressing, and as I believe, false, picture of the war and the Western Front [...] in the national mind',<sup>73</sup> the notion persists and only

recently led the BBC to query, in a BBC *iWonder* feature with contemporary poet Ian McMillan, whether 'poetry distort[s] our view of World War One'.<sup>74</sup> In the event, McMillan concluded that it does, but that we ought to value Wilfred Owen and other trench poets anyway for the immediacy and emotional power of their work. However, such a conclusion is only of limited use to teachers seeking to argue with Jeremy Paxman's recent complaint to an audience of teachers that 'the war was "only ever taught as poetry now"'.<sup>75</sup> What

<sup>73</sup> Correlli Barnett, 'The Western Front Experience as interpreted through Literature,' *RUSI Journal*, 148.6 (2003), pp. 50-56 (p. 50).

<sup>74</sup> 'Has poetry distorted our view of World War One?', Ian McMillan for BBC *iWonder* (© BBC 2014), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z38rq6f> [Last accessed 24 February 2014].

<sup>75</sup> "Poetry is no way to teach the Great War" Paxman says schools should address the important issues rather than fixating on horror, writes Nicola Woolcock.' *The Times*, 14 March 2014, p. 3.

## English Findings continued

is at stake here is perhaps best described as a question of subject remit, as Paxman's comments were levelled primarily at the use of war poetry in History teaching, but naturally concern English teachers as well. In the introduction to his recent *Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, Santanu Das points to the 'constant tension in First World War poetry criticism' as to 'whether the accent should fall on war or on poetry, on cultural history or on aesthetic value'.<sup>76</sup> This tension is not limited to poetry alone, but applies to other literary genres as well. Das's observation precisely encapsulates the vexed questions of whose job it is to teach war writing on the one hand, and what English teachers can expect (and be expected) to cover on the other. Andrew Bradford, Chair of examiners at OCR, pointed out in a comment on McMillan's BBC feature that poets can hardly be held responsible for readings of their work as history rather than literary texts. He also highlighted the particular remit of English Literature as it is taught in secondary education:

“ War poetry is nearly always included within the requirement for “literary heritage” in English Language and English Literature.

Our job is to offer interesting poems, which use vivid language and show how poetry works. It's not the role of English to give a wider and balanced picture of the war, although OCR have set poems that offer different responses to the war.<sup>77</sup> ”

Bradford's comment speaks directly to issues raised in our focus groups and discussed below concerning the mission and remit of English as opposed to History: he believes that English teachers will (and should) choose texts according to literary rather than historical criteria. However, English teachers cannot be expected to teach First World War writing without contextualising it, and it is precisely the kind of context offered in English Literature classes that History teachers and historians alike take issue with.

### What authors and texts are taught?

Just as war poetry continues to be the decidedly most popular genre for English teachers, the main representatives of First World War poetry in the classroom continue to be a handful of canonical poets: as **Figure 16** overleaf shows, Wilfred

Owen and Siegfried Sassoon remain the undisputed 'chart toppers', closely followed by Michael Morpurgo, a view corroborated by our insight into school stock cupboards as illustrated in **Figure 17** overleaf. With Morpurgo's novels for children and young adults and war poetry anthologies occupying five of the top six positions, the popularity of Owen, Sassoon and Morpurgo seems unlikely to decline in the foreseeable future, alongside another perennial favourite, R.C. Sherriff's inter-war play *Journey's End*.<sup>78</sup> Exam board stipulations aside, which must be seen as highly influential on teachers' choices, availability of texts also plays a crucial part. As one English teacher workshop participant pointed out, 'When an English Department feels impelled to teach the First World War, they are much more likely to look in the stock cupboard for possible texts than to go through the catalogues to find something to spend a couple of hundred pounds on'. In addition, these three writers seem to have particular interest for teachers as their emotional appeal and accessible nature render them likely to engage students. While this is not to say that no other texts and authors are equally suited to appeal to students, it is

<sup>76</sup> Santanu Das, 'Reframing First World War Poetry: An Introduction', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 3-34 (p. 13).

<sup>77</sup> Andrew Bradford on BBC *iWonder* with Ian McMillan, 'Has poetry distorted our view of World War One?', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/z38rq6f> [Last accessed 3 March 2014].

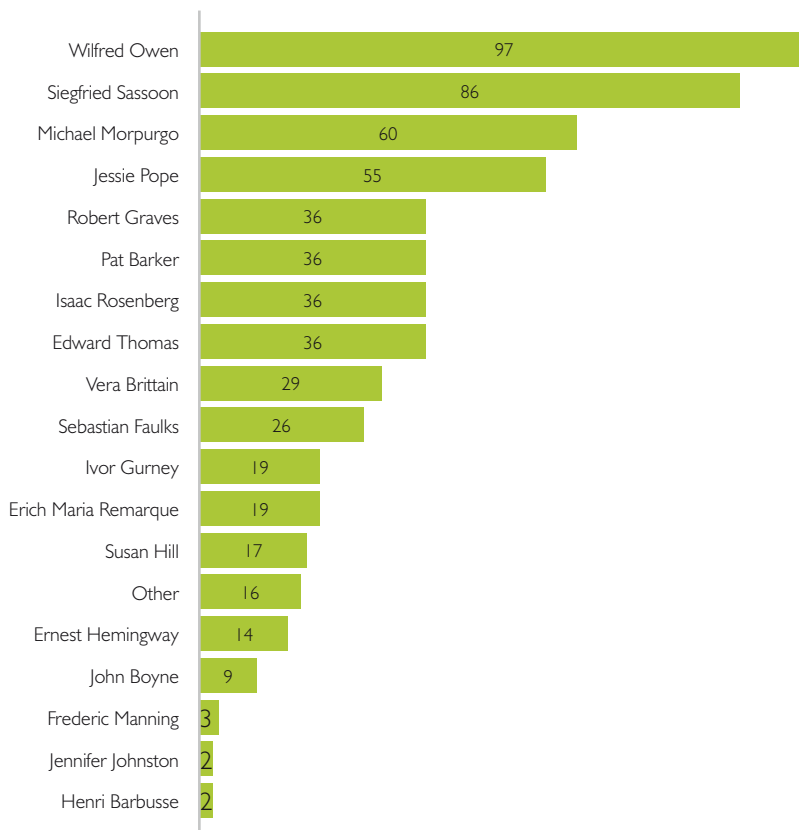
<sup>78</sup> The text of *Journey's End*, for instance, is currently available to teachers and students in at least two up-to-date editions: a Penguin Modern Classics paperback edition of just the play's text and minimal supplementary materials (i.e. scene synopses and basic information about first cast and performance); and a Heinemann Educational edition in hardback, which supplements the text with a critical introduction, notes and exercises explicitly aimed at student readers. In addition, teachers and pupils alike benefit from a range of readily available study guides, including Robert Gore-Langton's *Journey's End: The Classic War Play Explored* (London: Oberon, 2013), Najoud Ensaff's *Journey's End: York Notes for GCSE* (Harlow: London: Longman; York Press, 2006), Wendy Lawrance's *Great War Literature GCSE Study Guide on Journey's End* (Chichester: Great War Literature Publishing, 2004), and *Great War Literature A-Level Notes on Journey's End* by the same author (Chichester: Great War Literature Publishing, 2006).



## English Findings continued

**Fig. 16: Which authors are you likely to teach?**

(English Pathway results overall in percentages)



not surprising that older or more complex texts, or texts that are written explicitly for an adult audience, are significantly less popular. Since fewer respondents taught First World War writing in Sixth Form, it seems logical that fewer seem to be using long and challenging memoirs like Brittain's *Testament of Youth*, complex contemporary material like Frederic Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, or explicitly adult-themed novels like Faulks's *Birdsong*.<sup>79</sup> These choices may also in part result from a feeling that accounts of the war written by and for adults are arguably less likely to foster pupils' engagement with the text, following the reasoning that 'adolescents who are often unmotivated to read' are more likely to respond to Young Adult Fiction as books that 'focus on characters, settings or situations familiar to them'<sup>80</sup> and thus facilitate greater identification with characters nearer to them in age. In terms of gender balance, the female war poet Jessie Pope makes an appearance as the author that respondents were fourth most likely to teach, but seems prone to being taught as a 'jingoistic' counterpoint to the male trench poets.<sup>81</sup> Working-

<sup>79</sup> These three texts were among the multiple-choice options offered in the English Pathway for the question on which authors respondents were likely to teach. Vera Brittain's memoir *Testament of Youth* was first published at the tail end of the so-called 'war books boom' in 1933 and was turned into a highly successful and influential BBC mini-series in 1979. A new version directed by James Kent and featuring an international star cast is currently being filmed for release in 2015 and is likely to stimulate considerable popular interest in the memoir (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/testament-of-youth>). However, the length and detail of the original text is likely to act as a deterrent particularly for many young readers to move beyond the adaptation. Faulks's modern First World War tale *Birdsong* (1993) is more likely to continue to appeal to a mass readership, as it combines depictions of the war's horrors with accessible language and a conventional romance plot, and was likewise turned into a successful BBC mini-series in 2012, albeit sacrificing large portions of the novel set in the 1970s that dealt with the aspect of memory and remembrance. Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune: Somme and Ancre, 1916* (1929, re-published in an expurgated version as *Her Privates We* in 1930), is the most difficult read of the three and arguably unsuitable for younger pupils both on account of its explicit language and violence, and due to the complexity of its literary and cultural allusions.

<sup>80</sup> Janet Alsop, 'Identification, Actualization, or Education: Why read YAL?', in *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms: Contexts for the Literary Lives of Teens* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 7.

<sup>81</sup> Pope is frequently included in anthologies and textbooks either with recruitment poems such as 'The Call', which form a convenient patriotic counterpoint to Owen's 'Dulce Et Decorum Est', or with her poem 'War Girls', used to illustrate the diversity of women's involvement in the war effort. See for example David Roberts's anthology *Minds at War: The Poetry and Experience of the First World War* (Burgess Hill: Saxon, 2003), which first appeared in 1996 and is explicitly targeted at an audience of teachers and pupils, as well as Christopher Martin's *War Poems* (London: Collins, 2004), which targets both GCSE and A-level students.

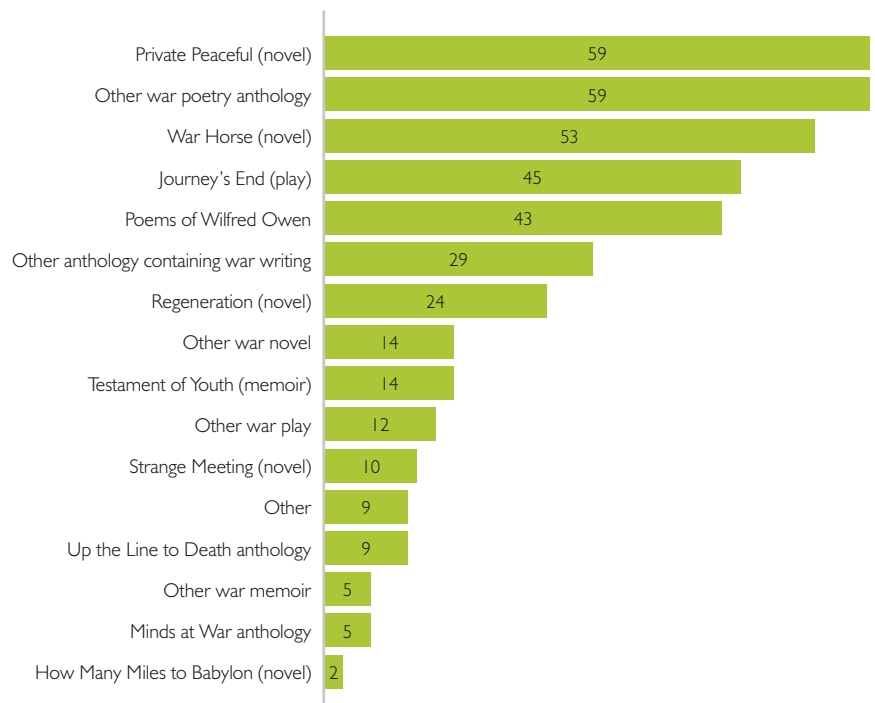
## English Findings continued

class poet Isaac Rosenberg seems to be increasingly popular, and free-text answers also revealed that some teachers allowed for more individual choice by asking pupils to research and choose which writers they wish to focus on. More unusual writers named by respondents in the free-text section were nurse-poet Eva Dobell, socialist Margaret Cole, and New Zealander James Keir Baxter, while more traditional choices were also stated, including R.C. Sherriff, Rupert Brooke, Rudyard Kipling and Thomas Hardy.

Given that teacher training and teaching methods are changing continually, it is particularly interesting to cross-reference data on authors taught against years of teaching experience. What and how teachers teach is at least partly determined by their own educational background: as Stephen Ball has noted, 'the teacher's own experience as a pupil' as well as 'their university or college training' are among 'the most profound influences upon the English teacher'.<sup>82</sup> While overall trends are similar in the case of most authors across different age groups (working as above on the assumption that, in the majority of cases, more experienced teachers tend to be older than their less experienced colleagues), some interesting differences emerged as broken down in **Figure 18** overleaf. In terms of poetry, less experienced respondents were more likely

**Fig. 17: Which of these books does your school have a set of in your stock cupboard?**

(English Pathway results in percentages)



to teach Sassoon than Owen compared to more experienced teachers, and even more significantly, less experienced teachers were more likely to teach Isaac Rosenberg or Ivor Gurney as alternatives to Owen, while they were less likely to opt for Jessie Pope or Edward Thomas than their more experienced colleagues. These choices may in part reflect gradually changing tastes in

war poetry, in that Rosenberg, for instance, has received steadily increasing critical attention since the 1970s and younger teachers are thus increasingly more likely to have encountered him in the course of their own education as critical acclaim filtered into secondary and university syllabi.<sup>83</sup>

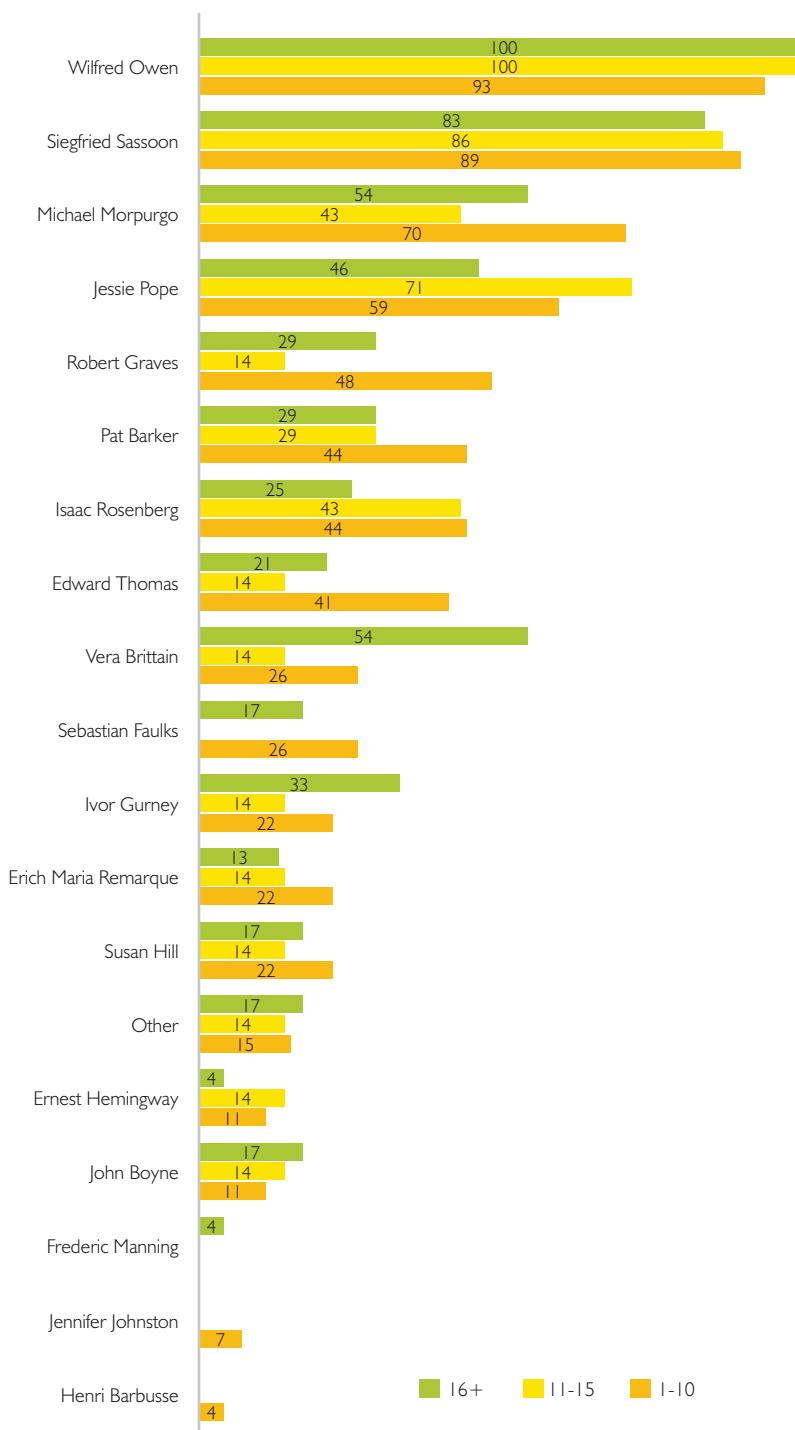
<sup>82</sup> Stephen J. Ball, 'English for the English since 1906', in *Social Histories of the Secondary Curriculum: Subjects for Study*, ed. Ivor Goodson (London: Falmer, 1985), p. 81.

<sup>83</sup> In the mid-1970s, the first two book-length critical biographies of Rosenberg – Joseph Cohen's *Journey to the Trenches: The Life of Isaac Rosenberg, 1890-1918* (New York: Basic Books; London: Robson Books, 1975), and Jean Liddiard's *Isaac Rosenberg: The Half Used Life* (London: Gollancz, 1975) – were followed by a new edition of Rosenberg's *Collected Works* in 1979, edited by Ian Parsons, who used Sassoon's foreword to the first, 1937 edition of Rosenberg's works compiled by Gordon Bottomley and Denys Harding. A new full-length biography, Jean Moorcroft Wilson's *Isaac Rosenberg: The Making of a Great War Poet: A new life* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson), appeared in 2008, and even more recently, Rosenberg's by now canonical status was affirmed by his publication alongside Wilfred Owen and Ivor Gurney in a new Penguin paperback anthology, *Three Poets of the Great War: Ivor Gurney, Isaac Rosenberg and Wilfred Owen*, edited by Jon Stallworthy and Jane Potter (London: Penguin, 2011).

## English Findings continued

**Fig. 18: Which authors are you likely to teach?**

(English Pathway results split by years of experience in percentages)



Furthermore, there is some evidence of increasing diversification, as younger teachers seem to include a greater variety of contemporary (that is, eyewitness) writers in their teaching of First World War literature, from the frequently used Rosenberg, Vera Brittain and Robert Graves, as well as less frequently taught writers such as Manning, Erich Maria Remarque or Henri Barbusse, who also offer other national viewpoints. That some writers conversely decrease in popularity is perhaps not only a reflection of changing fashions in teaching, but also a necessary result of such diversification, as classroom time for any given topic is limited, and one writer has to make way for another when a new author is introduced.

As already noted above, a teacher's choice of writers and texts is naturally also influenced by where texts can be sourced, and in many cases determined by the kind of anthology used for teaching. The high number of respondents who reported that their school's stock cupboard contained poetry anthologies supports this point. Although it is somewhat more difficult to determine what kinds of anthologies are being used, our survey offered insight into a good selection of publications via free-text responses and specific multiple-choice options. Named examples included both older selections such as Brian Gardner's now classic (and somewhat controversial) anthology *Up the Line to Death* (1964), Christopher Martin's teaching anthology *War Poems* (1990; second edition 2004), David Roberts's *Minds at War* (1996), the somewhat revealingly titled collection *101 Poems against War* (eds. Matthew Hollis and Paul Keegan, 2003), and more specialised publications such as Catherine Reilly's *Scars Upon My Heart: Women's*

## English Findings continued

*Poetry and Verse of the First World War* (1981) or the collected poems of Wilfred Owen. Free-text responses also provide evidence of AQA, Edexcel and OCR exam board anthologies being used. Our main concern regarding the widespread use of poetry anthologies was in how far their editors' selection influences how teachers teach and students learn about the war: where the selection of poems is particularly limited, and/or where a simplistic narrative is constructed by the way the poems are introduced and arranged into chapters, students are unlikely to appreciate the diversity and complexity of literary responses to the First World War.<sup>84</sup>

A major caveat in interpreting our survey results is that exam boards necessarily continue to have a strong influence on what texts and authors are studied at KS4 and Sixth Form: where teachers are following a prescriptive GCSE or A-level course that stipulates particular texts, exam board choice of texts and authors may overrule the teacher's individual judgement. In addition, the diversity of backgrounds and developments in professional practice, as well as the small size of our sample, render it difficult to make any definite pronouncements as to what the changing preferences above might mean for the future of First World War literature in the classroom. However, if the trends described above are indicative of larger developments in English Literature classrooms in England, they seem to betoken a certain modernisation and diversification. We can speak of a modernisation (or updating) in the sense

that an increasing popularity of modern, retrospective writing about the war evidenced among younger teachers in our survey may reflect a desire to ensure easier access to the topic of the First World War, particularly (in Morpurgo's case) for younger students. This point will be developed further in the discussion of our focus groups below.

### What resources are used for teaching First World War literature?

Our questions on methods and resources used in teaching First World War literature led to complex and at times intriguing results. In terms of literary texts taught, the same texts that were stated as most likely to be taught for the most part also appeared in the list of resources used at comparable ranks (see **Table 11** overleaf): more teachers stated that they were likely to teach modern novels about the war written for young adults than novels for adults, either modern or contemporary. However, war memoirs seemed to fare better in this question than one might expect on the basis of authors stated, while the low ranking of war poetry amongst resources taught can perhaps best be explained by looking at it in combination with 'anthologies of war writing', 'resource packs compiled by self/school/department' and 'resource packs from external organisations', as these are likely to also contain war poetry.

While one might expect English teachers to rely primarily on work with literary texts,

survey responses indicate a widespread use of supplementary materials. As **Table 11** shows, the category 'historical documents' (which may also, of course, include facsimile drafts of poems) comes out on top of the list of resources used, suggesting that the vast majority of English teachers employ some form of non-literary contextual materials alongside literary primary sources. Given this evidence, it appears that English teachers – particularly those with a strong personal interest in the First World War – will not limit themselves to teaching a literary text about the war in isolation, but will endeavour to provide students with contextual knowledge to aid their understanding and appreciation of the text(s) in question. Oral history materials, which also rank high on the list of resources used, likewise contribute to such contextualisation, as does work with family documents.

Besides offering valuable context, such resources may be useful to prompt students to engage with First World War writing in the first place. Our focus group interviews revealed, for instance, that many teachers like to use their own family history of the First World War as a hook to capture students' attention, and where this is not possible, a film screening, *Horrible Histories* episode, YouTube clip or excerpt from *Blackadder Goes Forth*, a wartime letter or similar items may fulfil the same function. Consequently, while concerns may be raised over the historical accuracy offered by a number of these resources, one has to bear in mind that even a limited or biased resource can be used to teach

<sup>84</sup> See also former English teacher Dr George Simmers on teaching anthologies: 'How the First World War is Taught', *Great War Fiction* blog, 21 January 2014, <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/2014/01/21/how-the-first-world-war-is-taught/#more-3728> [Last accessed 12 February 2014].

## English Findings continued

constructively and to raise student interest in the topic.

The fact that textbooks fared much worse in the English Pathway compared to History Pathway responses can potentially be explained by the fact that, as we have seen above, there are fewer official entry points for teaching the First World War in English than in History. The comparatively higher number of English respondents who use self- or school-compiled resource packs complements the lower figure for textbook use. Multi-media resources also proved popular, as respondents employed a range of different media, from YouTube clips and podcasts to radio programmes and web tutorials. A free-text follow up on the resource question helped to shed light on the diversity of online resources in particular, with Oxford University's First World War Poetry archive the most popular choice for teachers (12 explicit references), not least because of its facsimile drafts of Owen's poetry.<sup>85</sup> The BBC History web pages on the First World War were the next most popular web-based resource, on a par with YouTube clips.<sup>86</sup> All in all, free-text responses alone identified nineteen separate and rather diverse web-based resources, demonstrating that English teachers already make extensive use of online resources.

In terms of non-web-based resources, the picture gleaned from our sample was, if anything, even more diverse. Free-text answers on these resources shed light on some of the categories in **Table 11**.

**Table 11: Ranking of resources used by percentage (English Pathway)**

English Pathway	
91%	Historical documents
62%	Resource packs compiled by self/school/department
60%	Films about the war (e.g. <i>Oh! What a Lovely War</i> )
57%	Modern novels for young adults (e.g. <i>Private Peaceful</i> )
52%	War memoirs (e.g. <i>Good-Bye to All That</i> )
	YouTube clips
	Oral history materials (e.g. interviews with veterans)
50%	Textbooks
	'Horrible Histories' series (text or TV)
45%	Classic war novels (e.g. <i>All Quiet on the Western Front</i> )
41%	Modern novels for adults (e.g. <i>Birdsong</i> , <i>Regeneration</i> )
	Anthologies of war writing
	Family documents
38%	Podcasts
36%	<i>Blackadder Goes Forth</i>
35%	War poetry
26%	Visual resources
21%	Television documentaries
17%	Radio programmes
16%	Other
14%	Resource packs from external organisations
	School archive
10%	Contemporary footage
9%	Life writing (e.g. letters or diary entries)
5%	Web resources
2%	Objects/material artefacts

<sup>85</sup> See the Wilfred Owen Collection, *The First World War Poetry Digital Archive*, University of Oxford, <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/wwlit/collections/owen> [Last accessed 19 April 2014].

<sup>86</sup> Specified Youtube clips included newsreel footage, extracts from *World War I in Colour*, a BBC documentary on Wilfred Owen and another documentary on the Battle of the Somme.

## English Findings continued

Named films and television programmes included Steven Spielberg's *War Horse* adaptation and *Blackadder Goes Forth* with 3 explicit references each, as well as the BBC adaptation of *Birdsong* (1) in extracts, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1), the television documentary series *World War I in Colour* (narrated by Kenneth Branagh) (1), *The Trench* (1), *Oh! What a Lovely War* (film) (1), and the BBC documentary *The Somme: Defeat to Victory* (1). Hints at the breadth of material entailed in the 'historical documents' category included transcripts of speeches (for example, Lloyd George's 'Pinnacle of sacrifice' speech), facsimile newspapers from the period and oral history interviews collected in the IWM's *Forgotten Voices of the Great War*. Life writing was specified as Siegfried Sassoon's memoir *Siegfried's Journey* and Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*, with further references to the letters of Wilfred Owen and other personal letters. Other resources named were highly diverse, and included the use of material objects (coins, medals and poppies) as well as posters purchased at the Imperial War Museums, Royal British Legion Remembrance materials, photographs, keyword sort cards and family anecdotes. Last but not least, free-text answers on resources used also offered some insights into additional reading that English teachers undertake in preparation for teaching First World War literature, with specific references made to a wide spectrum of texts. Examples ranged from scholarly articles and literary biographies<sup>87</sup> to teaching-oriented publications, including History textbooks

**Table 12: Named references to web-based resources used in the English Pathway in absolute numbers**

English Pathway	
12	Oxford University First World War Poetry archive
5	BBC History webpages YouTube clips
2	Imperial War Museum website Poetry.org poetryarchive.org
1	BBC Learning Zone BBC Bitesize ('Dulce et Decorum') War Poets Association website Wilfred Owen Association website Greatwar.co.uk Warpoetry.co.uk Teachit.co.uk 'A poem a day for year 11' Blog (modelled on AQA Conflict Poetry) 'Move Him into the Sun' Great War Poetry Blog War Graves Commission online resources TES Connect First World War Poetry resources Cambridge interactive resources Fordham Jesuit University of New York internet Modern History Sourcebook on World War One Poetry

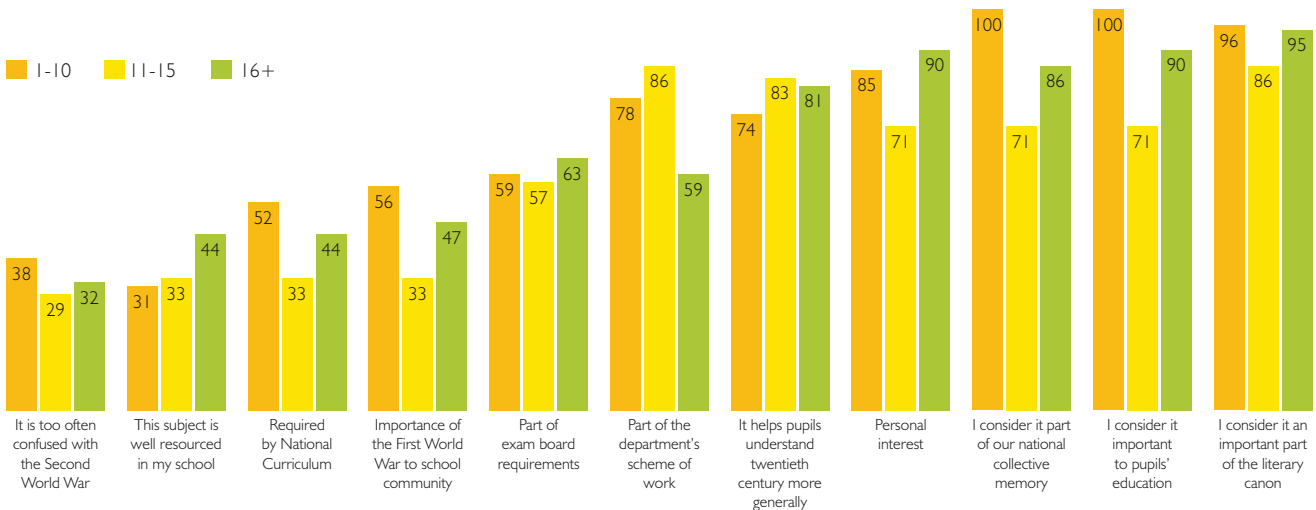
and, in one instance, York or Cliffs Notes. In evaluating such additional reading, one also has to consider cost and availability as outlined above. Some schools can draw on well-resourced libraries with subscriptions to scholarly journals or databases, or can afford expensive learning software, whereas the majority of teachers (particularly in state-maintained schools) are dependent on local libraries, freely available or at least affordable texts.

<sup>87</sup> Specifically, two respondents named Anne Whitehead's essay 'Open to Suggestion: Hypnosis and History in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*' [*Modern Fiction Studies* 44 (1998)] and Dominic Hibberd's *Wilfred Owen: A New Biography* (2002) respectively as background reading they had used.

## English Findings continued

**Fig 19: Where you do teach First World War writing, what is your main motivation?**

(English Pathway responses rating answers important or very important in percentages, broken down by years of teaching experience)



### English teachers' goals and motivations for teaching First World War literature

As we have seen above, there is less widespread formal obligation for English teachers to teach First World War writing than there is for History teachers to teach the war's history. This is in line with the motivations stated for teaching war writing by our sample of respondents: across all three levels of experience, adherence to the National Curriculum, exam board stipulations or a department's scheme of work scored lower than personal interest or the belief that the First World War and its writing form an important part of students' education, of national collective memory, or of the English literary canon. Overall, our results indicate that First World

War writing is taught for a variety of reasons at all levels of experience, from practical considerations such as availability of resources to broader concerns such as the importance of First World War writing to an appreciation of English literature and culture more generally (see **Figure 19**).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there appears to be some variation in motivation for teaching First World War writing according to respondents' level of teaching experience, which may reflect generational differences. Notably, the most experienced among our respondents seemed to feel proportionally least obligated to teach war writing by departmental schemes of work. Most and least experienced teachers stated a higher level of personal interest and attached greater importance to the

position of First World War writing in the literary canon than the middle group. The most experienced teachers of 16+ years' experience also valued availability of resources the highest. On the other hand, teachers with the least experience of 1-10 years attached the proportionally greatest importance to First World War literature as a contributor to national collective memory, a crucial part of pupils' education overall, and part of the English literary canon. Some overall low responses, such as the relative importance of the war to the school community, may also have been influenced by the fact that many publicly funded schools did not exist at the time of the First World War in their present form, and hence have no 'roll of honour' to commemorate.

## English Findings continued

As **Table 13** illustrates, responses on goals for teaching on the whole corresponded with the stated motivations for teaching. Asked to rate sixteen potential goals on a scale from 'very important' and 'important' to 'not that important' and 'unimportant', respondents indicated preferences for a mixture of subject-specific, practical, cultural and broadly speaking ideological goals.

In English as well as History, respondents at all levels of experience rated the importance of developing pupils' contextual understanding highly, with 98% agreement among English Literature respondents overall. In the English Pathway, eliciting a personal response from pupils was considered as important by an even greater number of respondents, as was demonstrating changes in attitudes to war. The next most important goals were the development of critical skills, demonstrating changes in poetic language and technique, and widening pupils' understanding of the First World War beyond common media coverage. While the 86% positive rating for demonstrating the war's futility and the way in which it changed thinking about war more generally does perhaps not surprise, given established narratives of a move from misguided patriotic enthusiasm to bitter disillusionment, the 88% of respondents who rated investigating notions of duty and sacrifice in literary texts as important or very important goals for their teaching indicate the flipside of this coin. Responses from our sample of respondents indicate that many English teachers do not wish to limit their teaching of First World War literature to purely technical or aesthetic considerations, despite the fact that History teachers in our focus group interviews felt that English teachers' remit ought to

**Table 13: Percentage of respondents in English Pathway who rated the goals below as either 'very important' or 'important'**

English pathway	
98%	Elicit a personal response from pupils Development of contextual understanding
96%	Demonstrate changes in attitude to war
92%	Development of critical skills
90%	Demonstrate changes in poetic language/technique Widen understanding of the war beyond what is usually covered in the media
88%	Educate pupils about how texts form or reflect values such as duty and sacrifice
86%	Show how it changes the way we think and write about war Demonstrate the futility of war
84%	Explore the effect of intense / common experience on literature
80%	Illustrate the wide range of reactions to a major event
78%	Illustrate use of literature for propaganda Educate pupils about the cost of war
72%	Explore personal development in reaction to hardship
62%	Illustrate step change in modern literature
34%	No particular personal aims – set by exam board

be limited to strictly literary concerns. On the contrary, there is strong evidence in our data that at least for teachers with a personal interest in the war, its literature is not used purely for literary or linguistic analysis, but also becomes a vehicle for addressing more general concerns about war, language, history and society. Indeed, the broad mix of goals identified as important in the English Pathway indicates a split between a number of areas besides practical concerns: an interest in aesthetic or literary aspects of war writing, but also a dedication to teaching cultural history, conveying a 'moral' lesson or fostering empathy, and general skills development



## English Findings continued

aims. Such a split is not necessarily limited to the topic of First World War writing, as the remit of English teaching has been the subject of heated debates since the inception of English as a school subject. English teaching has variously been connected with the idea of developing wider skills in cultural analysis and encouraging 'critical literacy' beyond the confines of literary texts, fostering character development and social awareness, or equipping students with social and 'life skills'.<sup>88</sup> Differences in understanding the particular remit of English as a subject are likely to come to a head in the context of cross-curricular teaching, as outlined above, despite arguably close connections between English and History through 'the shared concern for imaginative empathy that powerfully connects English with the humanities'.<sup>89</sup> If English practitioners are more generally divided as to the core mission of the subject, an emotionally and culturally charged topic such as the First World War seems likely to polarise such debates. It should come as no surprise, however, that the vast majority of our respondents seem to implicitly endorse Roger Knight's belief that 'to teach English is unavoidably to teach cultural history',<sup>90</sup> an understanding of teaching First World War literature that seemed to be perceived negatively by many of our History respondents.

Interestingly, there were further indications of generational change as less experienced teachers of up to ten years' teaching experience rated certain goals significantly higher than their more experienced colleagues: most notably, an overwhelming 92% of all respondents in the least experienced category considered it important to educate their pupils about the cost of war through their teaching of the war's literature, as opposed to 68% and 50% respectively for teachers with 16+ and 11-15 years' teaching experience. Conversely, the most experienced group of respondents attached proportionally greater importance to illustrating the wide range of reactions to a major event as reflected in literature, and to demonstrating how the First World War changed the way we think and write about war more generally. The middle group of 11-15 years' experience spiked noticeably on only one response, in that it attached the greatest importance to demonstrating the futility of war, just as in the History Pathway results. This response forms an important contrast to the option of educating pupils about the cost of war, which is also explored in our discussion of the focus groups below, in that futility and cost are not necessarily perceived to be one and the same thing.

<sup>88</sup> On the perennial debate concerning the remit of English teaching, see Bethan Marshall's account of the history of the subject. Differing views of what teaching English entails also inform her formulation of different teaching philosophies, which embrace concerns such as the teaching of cultural history, personal development etc. to varying degrees – see Bethan Marshall, *English Teachers – The Unofficial Guide: Researching the Philosophies of English Teachers* (London; New York: Routledge Falmer, 2000), particularly chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>89</sup> David Stevens, *Cross-Curricular Teaching and Learning in the Secondary School: English – The Centrality of Language in Learning* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 84.

<sup>90</sup> Roger Knight, *Valuing English: Reflections on the National Curriculum* (London: David Fulton, 1996), p. 80, quoted in Stevens, *Cross-Curricular Teaching and Learning in the Secondary School*, p. 85.



## The Focus Groups

**Our focus groups were designed to follow up and enrich survey results through a free discussion of questions arising from survey responses and some issues that could not be accommodated meaningfully in the survey itself. Participants were recruited from a pool of teachers who had filled in the survey as of 11 July 2013 and had stated their interest in becoming involved in follow-up activities. The three focus groups took place on 10 and 17 August 2013 in London, Exeter and Newcastle upon Tyne, and were attended by a total of eighteen teachers: four English teachers, thirteen History teachers, and one History teacher who also taught English. The uneven split between subjects among focus group participants reflects and resulted from the equally uneven distribution of survey participants.**

The discussion at these August focus groups was loosely structured by a number of general as well as subject specific questions. The general questions partly sought feedback on the survey itself, and partly echoed some of the issues raised in comments on the survey. They were designed to probe a little more deeply as well as facilitate debate among fellow professionals:

1. What did you like about the survey? What did we not ask you that you'd like to tell us about? What did the survey not capture about your teaching practice?
2. What are your aims when teaching the First World War and its literature?
3. Definitions and parameters: what do you understand by the First World War? What does it involve?
4. The 'nuts and bolts': practical issues (content, resources, time, external influences)
5. Challenges when teaching the First World War and its literature
6. Cross-curricular/cross-fertilization: How do teachers talk to other teachers about teaching the war, and how can we help improve communication?
7. Visits to battlefields: are you interested? What do you want out of them?
8. Commemorative period: will this be an aid or a challenge to teaching about the First World War? Has it shifted your teaching aims on the topic? What is the role of the media? What are your concerns?

### General discussion points

***What did you like about the survey? What did we not ask you that you'd like to tell us about? What did the survey not capture about your teaching practice?***

Teachers attending the London focus group noted positively that the survey was the first initiative related to the First World War that had been brought to their attention that offered something concrete to participate in, excepting small local initiatives, of which they were often not kept abreast. Particular importance was attached to the fact that the survey's aim of 'joining up ideas' was valuable in the midst of a host of disparate centenary initiatives. Teachers felt that the survey came at exactly the right time of the year, as teachers tend to be able to think about issues not directly related to their teaching practice only in the weeks after the May half-term and the first three weeks in September.

On the downside, participants at both the Exeter and London focus groups found some of the technical decisions made regarding the survey limiting. While teachers at the Exeter focus group found the survey very thorough, they criticised the lack of general free-text responses noting that the set answers were 'too restrictive'. One teacher also felt that it should have been distributed in hard-copy to allow him to go back and develop answers. London participants raised the problem of the survey not sufficiently capturing differences in teaching at different levels and the difficulty of having to choose a 'primary' level to focus on. The general feeling was that teaching the First World War repeatedly at different levels was an

## The Focus Groups continued

asset rather than a problem, as it allows teachers to build on previous knowledge. One teacher explained that she teaches the First World War twice, once from a British perspective in year 8, then from a German perspective in year 9, both times covering different aspects of the war and endeavouring to address students' problems with context. Problems only seemed to arise where there are clashes between how the war is taught in different subjects: one teacher at a Wiltshire comprehensive school complained that they had to 'un-teach' in history what their English Literature colleagues had taught before them. Additionally, one teacher in the Newcastle focus group picked up on the fact that the survey, in at least one instance, invited an equation of futility with the horror of war. It was felt that futility is not the same as considering the death toll of the war. Interestingly, this feedback echoed comments made in the survey itself by both History and English teachers. One English teacher, whose husband is in the military, had stated:

“ I really didn't like this question's wording: Illustrating the horror/futility of war. It implies that these two things are synonymous and that the futility of war, all war, is a given. Whilst I appreciate that a sense of futility and disillusion pervades much scholarship and literature related to WWI, as the wife of a serving member of the armed forces, I do not like the implicit suggestion that the sacrifices my husband and those like him make on a daily basis are born of "futility". ”

It was also agreed at the Newcastle focus group that talking about loss and talking about futility is not one and the same thing. While there is still a strong focus on loss in how the First World War is taught in schools, and while battlefield trips especially try to highlight the scale and impact of these losses, the emotional response this often triggers was seen by teachers attending the London meeting not as a knee-jerk reaction or promotion of empty pathos, but as a means of encouraging pupils' interest and a way of making them take in other lessons and less emotionally gripping content. The emotional response thus potentially precedes more analytical and dispassionate engagement, and importantly also extends to German war dead.

### **What are your aims when teaching the First World War and its literature?**

The broad consensus on this question seemed to be that the First World War is taught primarily because it was the first of its kind, and because it offers the key to teaching pupils about the twentieth century more generally, from understanding cultural, political and geographic change to the rise of the USA as a world power and the changing role of the media. One teacher pointed out, however, that although he agrees with the centrality of the First World War to modern history, this is perhaps a particularly British perspective, as many of the changes we assume were caused by the First World War are specific to Britain and the Empire. He also pointed out that the First World War was the 'first of its kind' for Britain more so than other (European) countries in the sense that it was the first time that British troops

fought abroad on such a scale and that fighting happened so close to home, unlike countries such as France or Germany, who had experienced warfare close to home or on their own soil repeatedly before 1914. On being asked how much they taught not just about those who died in the war but those who survived, most participants focused on survivors who were physically or mentally affected by active service (such as maimed veterans, shell-shock victims, grieving parents, or the development of facial reconstruction surgery). However, others also taught about at least partially positive effects of the war, such as change for women and other social developments, and/or explored with pupils whether the First World War could be seen to have caused the second, for instance by interrogating the 'war guilt clause' of the Treaty of Versailles. Participants agreed that along with their pupils, they appreciated any exam board modules (such as Edexcel's 'Experience of War') that do not focus exclusively on 'the battles', but look at the war's social context and consequences.

On a related note, our discussions addressed conflicting intentions of commemorating and remembering the war more generally: the moral and emotional aspect of wanting to illustrate the negative impact of war, to honour the dead, and to prevent attitudes conducive to future wars on the one hand, and the interest in the war as history, as part of the twentieth century and the origins of modern society and politics on the other. It was felt that there are many different attitudes about the First World War out there and many different ways it is being taught, with teachers commenting that where one

## The Focus Groups continued

teaches matters: for instance, teachers at schools with a high volume of children from military families, or schools with a high percentage of pupils from diverse ethnic backgrounds, would have to approach the First World War differently to capture their students' interest.

### **Definitions and parameters: what do you understand by the First World War? What does it involve?**

It was generally agreed among London participants that the war was taught directly and indirectly in a range of contexts, and that teachers sometimes did not even consciously recognize that they were in fact teaching it. One teacher reported that it struck her after filling in the survey that the First World War also featured in her unit on Irish independence, which she had not considered as she was filling in the survey. At the same time, teachers attending the London focus group felt strongly that teaching issues related to or touching on the war, including its effects or context, was not necessarily the same as teaching the war, and seemed to make a clear distinction between the events of the war itself and its broader context. In an interesting contrast to the London focus group meeting, all Newcastle and Exeter participants seemed clear that teaching events that happened concomitantly with or were in some way related to the First World War also counted as 'teaching the First World War'. Particular named examples were the 1916 Easter Rising and the Russian Revolution of 1917.

### **The 'nuts and bolts': practical issues (content, resources, time, external influences)**

Practical issues abounded in the view of our focus group participants. Time constraints were mentioned repeatedly at all three focus groups, particularly for History teachers, and were contingent upon year group and school type. Some teachers pointed out that the time available is often further reduced by losing hours to assemblies, school trips, exams, CPD events and similar activities, and that even those lessons available could often be rendered virtually useless if they were scheduled at the end of the day – particularly towards the end of the week – when pupils are too exhausted to take in much of what is taught. Mixed ability groups and the lack of classroom support through Teaching Assistants were also flagged up as detrimental. There generally seemed to be a good deal of built-up resentment among participating History teachers in all the focus groups concerning the fact that while Mathematics and English are prioritised as core subjects, History is side-lined and not given enough classroom time or resources, despite being a popular subject with pupils in most schools. The consequences of such resentment appeared to be a frequent lack of communication and counter-productive rivalry between History and English departments, preventing in some cases (though naturally not all) a fruitful working relationship.

Overall, focus group participants seemed satisfied with their ability to choose the direction and content of their teaching of the First World War, although the degree

of freedom varied as some schools had a stricter 'textbook only' policy than others. History teachers at the Exeter focus group emphasised the greater degree of freedom at KS3, as material taught at KS3 is not examined. However, English teachers at the same focus group felt constrained by their school's choice of anthology inherited from their predecessors with management reluctant to deviate from or replace this resource. The main practical issue in both History and English Literature was clearly identified as the need to choose some topics over others within the limited time available. Whether the First World War survives in the syllabus seemed likely to be determined by two factors: firstly, how crucial teachers – and especially heads of subject – feel the First World War is to laying the groundwork for teaching other topics and skills, and secondly, what expertise is available in the respective department. Changes in the teacher pool of a given school can cause a fundamental rethinking of how a subject is taught, which may mean that a topic such as the First World War could potentially end up disappearing, unless it is stipulated by the National Curriculum or exam board. In one school represented at the London focus group, the war was still being taught in History as it was considered crucial to the history of the twentieth century, but in the same school First World War poetry had just been removed from the English Literature syllabus as not sufficiently important, despite the fact that war writing was still very much a presence in English lessons at other schools represented at the London and Exeter focus groups.

## The Focus Groups continued

In terms of resources, the general view seemed to be that there was too much available rather than too little, and that what was needed was a guide through the jungle of resource packs, digitally available sources, textbooks and online tutorials rather than additional resources.<sup>91</sup> Attending teachers were also unanimous in their view of wanting to avoid 'death by worksheet', while an NQT-year English teacher at the London focus group flagged up the difficulty of avoiding generic materials where there is a strict school policy in favour of textbook use, and where teaching commitments – especially for new teachers – are too demanding to design individualised lessons for every topic. English and History teachers at the Exeter focus group highlighted the importance of audio-visual resources in capturing their students' attention.

A final point made by several teachers at the London and Newcastle focus groups was that of negotiating potentially distressing material, with frequent references to teaching the Holocaust, as teachers saw parallels between the teaching of both topics in terms of students' emotional response. While participants mostly agreed that one cannot omit teaching something altogether just to avoid potential student distress, and one teacher argued that a shocking image can be particularly useful to capture pupils' attention, there was a consensus that materials and particularly

images have to be chosen carefully to be age- and classroom-appropriate.<sup>92</sup>

### **Challenges when teaching the First World War and its literature**

Teachers at the London focus group unanimously complained that their pupils had a tendency to default back to media representations of the First World War, despite their best efforts to nuance and challenge their understanding of the war, its causes, effects and (in some instances) benefits. A number of the teachers present seemed to be regarding their work as 'myth-busting' in its own right, but stressed that what pupils are taught and what they learn are often two entirely different things, not only with regard to the First World War. English teachers at the Exeter focus group talked about the challenge of students who enter their GCSE or A-level classes with preconceived ideas about the war established at KS3 History. Some students complained about having 'done Owen' or 'this isn't a history lesson'. Interestingly, a History teacher at the same focus group appeared envious that these students had some prior knowledge (even if it was acting as a barrier to future learning); he highlighted the lack of prior learning and low literacy was a challenge to his teaching of the history of the war. As a result, his students reportedly often talked about Hitler when he introduced the topic of the First World War.

Another major challenge was clearly posed by cultural and ethnic diversity and differences in the pupil population of each individual school. One teacher at the London focus group, whose school was located in an area with a particularly strong military presence and the majority of whose pupils were from military families, reported how her teaching had had to change to accommodate the different stance of these pupils on military matters. To her students, the First World War was still relevant because of what their parents or siblings were doing, and they saw the First World War in the light of present-day military operations. As a result, discussions of poetry such as Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' differed considerably from what might happen in other classrooms, as these pupils with military backgrounds rejected any message of futility and disagreed with Owen's interpretation of war. The same is to be expected where the teachers themselves come from a military background, as at least one of our focus group participants was ex-military himself and was still teaching students in military academies as well as pupils in a school for boys with behavioural difficulties. On the other hand, teachers from schools with a high number of students from immigrant backgrounds reported that it was much harder for them to make their pupils see the war as relevant to their own lives and histories, excepting only some pupils

<sup>91</sup> To draw attention to the breadth of available content as well as to encourage collaboration between people working on them, JISC (a charity that champions the use of digital technologies in UK education and research) funded a project, led by King's College London, to develop a new online resource 'UK World War One Collections'. The database allows researchers and content managers to search for UK university, archive, library and museum holdings relating to the conflict. It can be found at <http://jiscww1discovery.net/> [Last accessed 7 May 2014].

<sup>92</sup> This point was echoed by the Editorial Executive of the new BBC Four The Great War Interviews Collection, who was concerned about the graphic content of some veterans' recollections and their suitability for use in secondary classrooms. Via e-mail with the research team, 18 March 2014. See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcfour/collections/p01tj6p/the-great-war-interviews> [Last accessed 7 May 2014].

## The Focus Groups continued

of Middle Eastern origin, who made the connection between on-going tensions in the region and the immediate aftermath of the First World War. A History teacher at the Exeter focus group acknowledged the difficulty of including 'hidden' histories – in other words, the experience of those other than the white, male 'Tommy' on the Western Front – at KS3.<sup>93</sup> Another History teacher at the London focus group further reported on the success of her dedicated lesson on the question of whether the Empire should have helped the war effort or not to engage all pupils.

### **Cross-curricular/cross-fertilization: How do teachers talk to other teachers about teaching the war, and how can we help improve communication?**

Somewhat surprising to us in the light of HE enthusiasm for interdisciplinarity, cross-curricular teaching seemed to be a contentious issue among many of our focus group participants. In the Newcastle focus group, criticism was voiced particularly freely in the absence of English teachers among the participants. Most of the participating teachers felt that it was unfortunate that English Literature colleagues frequently teach First World War literature (such as Morpurgo's *Private Peaceful*) in the year or term before the First World War is covered in History (although this perception seems to be at odds with the fact that most English Pathway respondents stated KS4 or Sixth Form as the 'main level' at which they

taught war literature), since this means students potentially pick up incorrect information and/or come to their History lessons with a fixed, narrow or prejudiced view of the war. Participating History teachers voiced concerns that English teachers, whose training centred on literary and linguistic analysis, often did not have sufficient contextual expertise to teach around First World War texts. Where English teachers fall back on teaching context through a limited selection of texts and/or media images, this was seen to potentially lead to misinformation.

At the same time, misgivings about cross-curricular teaching were also based on the fact that English and History teachers approach First World War texts from different, not necessarily compatible perspectives: where History teachers saw themselves interested in a First World War poem in terms of what it says, they felt that an English teacher would be primarily interested in how it says it. The difference was seen to be whether one looks at a literary text as a source of cultural history or as an example of literary expression. Interestingly, survey results from the English Pathway (as discussed above) seem to disprove the latter point, as there were clear indications that most of our English Pathway respondents valued contextual teaching and the war's cultural history equally highly as literary analysis. History teachers in the London focus group also voiced their annoyance that certain historical topics – such as the Holocaust and the First World War – were 'hijacked'

by other subjects. Three teachers reported that all resources for the annual events surrounding Armistice Day were put together by the English Department and usually centred exclusively on Owen and Sassoon, whereas other schools used materials provided by external organisations such as the British Legion (albeit with mixed success). On the other hand, we were also given evidence that assemblies can be used for successful cross-disciplinary commemorative projects where school and teachers are willing.

Overall, participating History teachers at the London and Newcastle focus groups voiced a desire to be consulted by their English Literature colleagues more, and would like to restructure teaching so that First World War literature and history are, where possible, taught at the same time rather than in two different year groups. While this sense of shared workload was welcomed by English teachers at the Exeter focus group, the History teachers remained reticent because of concerns about perceived lack of contextualisation in Literature classes. According to one Exeter participant:

“ I get a little bit itchy when I hear about activities in English, to be really honest. If I hear about activities – where's the context?! [...] I think it would be difficult to work with English. I don't see it as something precious but I worry about that at times [...] Because it is my job to help them [the students] develop context [...] If I hear someone

<sup>93</sup> A potential solution here is to use source material on colonial soldiers' experiences on the Western Front, such as transcripts of Indian soldiers' letters home collected in *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' letters, 1914-18*, ed. and intro. David Omissi (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999). This particular volume also enables discussions about censorship, as the letters included survived in the form of censors' records.

## The Focus Groups continued

talking about the First World War then perhaps I want to correct them. There are some issues [with collaborative working] there. ”

Instead, History teachers at the Exeter focus group had sought collaborations with their Art and Drama colleagues. One teacher in the Newcastle focus group had attempted to achieve cross-fertilization in her capacity as both History and English teacher, but had failed to convince colleagues that such a change would be mutually beneficial. While it was appreciated that cross-curricular teaching might work well with older students and in a university context, most participants saw too many practical obstacles for their own teaching practice. With some exceptions, the majority of participants felt that it was all too easy to confuse fourteen- or fifteen-year-old pupils with differences in approaches between subjects to make cross-curricular teaching of the First World War feasible. One teacher expressed disappointment that under the pressure of league tables secondary schools had clearly moved away from thinking about education to thinking just about qualifications, resulting in the loss of a joint-up approach more generally.

Participants at all focus groups, however, also reported some genuinely innovative examples of interdisciplinary teaching initiatives surrounding the First World War. At the Exeter focus group, themed days around the war had enabled students to interweave their historical understanding with a complex Mathematics exercise constructing graphs and tables related

to casualties in the local area. In one school, the ICT department had created a mapping and database project, in the course of which pupils mapped local war dead, their locations and backgrounds, to simultaneously learn important ICT skills and discover more about the local impact of the First World War. This can serve as a good example of how a popular topic such as the First World War can be used as an incentive to acquire a whole range of skills. In another school represented at the London focus group, their recurring trip to the battlefields was structured in a fundamentally interdisciplinary/cross-curricular manner, in that teachers in any subject were encouraged to participate in the trip on the condition that they devise a subject-specific project as part of the trip. This led to a host of exciting projects, from pupils exploring German commemorative sculpture (Käthe Kollwitz), composing war songs, PE projects surrounding war and sports, the science of war, drama, etc. However, constraints, such as time and exam syllabi, were highlighted by Exeter focus group participants as obstacles to their ability to engage in creative interdisciplinary projects. The bottom line was ‘you can go off on tangents but you have to bring them [the students] back into line for the exam.’

### **Visits to battlefields: are you interested? What do you want out of them?**

While some schools represented at the focus groups already had long-standing battlefield trips in place, others were keen to set up a trip. Teachers reported heightened emotional responses on the

part of pupils when faced with personal links, such as a visit to the war grave of a relative, and others confirmed that they specifically endeavour to incorporate such links into the planning of their trips. There was broad agreement that trips are indispensable as space for innovative teaching, rousing pupils’ interest, and collaborating with colleagues in other subjects. Teachers clearly took pupils on these trips with a view to inspiring them, and this, on the whole, seemed to work well. Although some teachers reported that pupils themselves sometimes questioned the reasons for going on a battlefield trip, the unanimous feeling was that in the end pupils always returned enthused about the topic of the First World War in a range of different ways. As a general rule, schools seemed to try their best to accommodate either pupils’ personal family links to the war, or explicit regional links, from looking up the graves of family members, to old boys’ graves, to graves of people listed on a local war memorial. These individuals are generally researched in depth prior to the visit, and even the most hardened youngsters appeared to show a strong emotional response and a high level of interest when faced with such personal links to what initially seemed like a remote event. This is less an attempt to create artificial empathy, and more a matter of making the war relevant to young people whose only personal knowledge of war is post-9/11 and limited to the ‘war on terror’.

## The Focus Groups continued

### ***Commemorative period: will this be an aid or a challenge to teaching about the First World War? Has it shifted your teaching aims on the topic? What is the role of the media? What are your concerns?***

The main concern of our participants was that the centenary might quickly lead to 'war fatigue' in the face of a media barrage and constant commemorative events, and that the official centenary commemorations would be simply a celebration of British victory and overtly 'jingoistic'. History teachers at the Exeter focus group were sceptical of government-led commemorations, but hopeful that the period, more generally, would create renewed energy around the topic with the release of resources, stories, and information that would stimulate new teaching ideas. One English teacher at the Exeter focus group, however, empathised with her students who she felt would be expected to 'respond' to the media onslaught before they had had a chance to study the war and its literature in any depth. She was concerned about the 'heightened sense of responsibility on them'. One teacher at the Newcastle focus group referred to a visit to Langemark German war cemetery and Austro-Hungarian war memorials in the course of a battlefield trip and the beneficial effects of seeing these alongside British and Commonwealth sites, and expressed a desire to see balanced centenary commemorations. At the same time, other participating teachers at the Newcastle and Exeter focus groups stressed that a balance would have to be

found between a more nuanced teaching of the war's experience in all combatant nations and an acknowledgement that the First World War was fought for very specific reasons on the British side, and that these reasons should also be remembered alongside the losses and suffering. All teachers at the London and Newcastle focus groups expressed great interest in events in schools, such as talks by visiting speakers, but felt such events had not been announced as yet. One teacher further queried what was going to happen at the end of the centenary, and whether the First World War would simply drop off the radar.

To avoid war fatigue and bias, local issues and a critical investigation of received wisdom about the war were regarded as approaches that pupils can really engage with. When asked whether they thought teaching of the First World War would survive in the curriculum, teachers agreed that they might end up teaching the impact of the war rather than the details of specific battles, day-to-day home front, etc. Any centenary events, it was suggested, should challenge existing popular images and look at aspects of the war hitherto neglected, such as both new international (e.g. colonial, or Belgian) angles and new local inquiries, in a bid to make the war relevant to today's generations of pupils. The fact that many teachers who attended focus groups used either their own family history or a local case study as a route into the First World War for their pupils (including those who did not have their own family links to the conflict) seems to indicate that making the war matter is a fundamental concern.

### **Subject-specific discussion for English Literature**

Questions specifically for English teachers queried the popularity of contemporary novels for teaching, particularly works by Michael Morpurgo and Pat Barker, which had been revealed in survey responses to that date. We also asked about pupils' responses to such contemporary writing, especially fiction for children and young adults. Further questions addressed the use of creative writing exercises and purpose thereof, topics covered using First World War writing, and motivations for choosing some First World War writers over others. Last but not least, we were interested in finding out why, judging from survey responses, so many teachers feel that First World War writing is an important part of the canon and of national memory, but do not necessarily agree that it is important as a step change to modern literature. Due to the low numbers of English teachers attending, not all of these questions were debated, and those that were discussed were debated with substantial input from History teachers as well as the English teachers present.

Asked why there were no English Literature colleagues present at the Newcastle focus group, a number of potential explanations were offered by the History participants, one of whom also regularly taught English Language and Literature. Some felt that English Literature teachers were less interested in the First World War specifically, as their teaching of one or two First World War texts were supposedly 'just another book' to them rather than driven by an interest in the



## The Focus Groups continued

context. Secondly, it was pointed out that not every school teaches First World War literature, further reducing the amount of interest, and even where First World War writing is taught, there may be very little time to focus on it, as some schools teach it at a stage where language and literature are taught combined and where alternating lessons do not leave a lot of time for focusing on the First World War text itself, let alone its context. Another explanation offered was that of a difference in approach and interest on the part of English Literature teachers as opposed to History teachers. Where History teachers look at the war and its context, English teachers, it was felt, are interested in the 'technical' aspects of any kind of writing, including First World War writing – in its forms of expression, its language and layout. This difference, it was felt, did not leave much room for discussing content and context, and was seen to be at least partly due to exam board requirements for English Literature. Survey results concerning English teachers' goals and motivation for teaching First World War literature go some way towards contesting this notion, however, in that their aims were split evenly between literary analytical and generic skills, cultural or (for want of a better word) moral aims. Our history participants' explanation is nevertheless interesting in so far as it further indicates that many History teachers see cultural analysis as their exclusive remit, a view that corresponds with some History participants' indignation at English colleagues

who do decide to teach historical context alongside literary texts.

Judging from survey results, Morpurgo's novels are favourite texts for teaching First World War writing to younger pupils, followed at some distance by Pat Barker and Sebastian Faulks for older students (see **Figure 18** above). The two English teachers who attended the Exeter focus group reported that in their experience students responded very well to contemporary fiction like Barker's and Morpurgo's, potentially because the language in which the texts are written is more contemporary and hence more accessible, and because the texts' modern feel facilitates identification. Morpurgo in particular seems to have great appeal to younger students at KS3 due to his 'vivid' imagery and the 'pictorial experience' offered by his books, which can function as an emotional 'hook to associate yourself with the situation' and allow students to 'relate to another youngster'. The same teacher, however, also deplored the fact that original, 'raw' voices of the First World War have been filtered in the meantime and are not accessible for students and teachers, who instead have to rely on 'the kind of sanctioned view' of the war's experience offered by Morpurgo and others. Her criticism of Morpurgo echoes both research into the particular appeal and pitfalls of children's and young adult fiction in teaching, and MacCallum-Stewart's concern that modern, retrospective

children's writing about the First World War fundamentally 'suffers from the desire to say the right thing'.<sup>94</sup> MacCallum-Stewart argues that many modern children's books combine anachronistic evaluations of characters' actions and feelings with a blatant over-simplification of the conflict, albeit owing to the commendable desire to instil an abhorrence of war in young readers.

Despite the evident popularity of contemporary fiction in teaching as seen from survey responses to date, teachers attending the London focus group were also very critical of contemporary writing, particularly writing about the First World War for children and young adults. From the history side came a sense of wariness towards any 'books almost written to teach history', with particular reference to the example of John Boyne's *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, though not First World War-related, and their popularity was explained by the ready availability of both the texts themselves and large amounts of notes, films and resources to aid teaching and preparation.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, teachers at the Exeter focus group cited a balance of different attitudes towards the war and psychological and emotional appeal – 'something that you're going to leave the students with' – as an important factor in choosing materials, emphasising the need to bring students on board with what is studied to facilitate more effective learning. Contemporary fiction in the vein

<sup>94</sup> Esther MacCallum-Stewart, "'If they ask us why we died": Children's Literature and the First World War, 1970-2005', *The Lion and the Unicorn* 31.2 (2007), p. 182.

<sup>95</sup> It is worth noting that John Boyne has also recently published a children's novel set in the First World War, *Stay Where You Are and Then Leave* (London: Doubleday, 2013). However, our focus group participants did not mention it suggesting that popular outputs take some time to reach mainstream attention.

## The Focus Groups continued

of Boyne, or more relevantly Morpurgo, though it clearly appeals to pupils, was felt to be unhelpful because it encourages and reinforces the very preconceptions about the First World War that many (if not by all means all) teachers are trying to break. In discussing ways of acknowledging the popularity of these texts but improving teaching practice, it was suggested that contemporary fiction about the First World War could be taught as part of a historical inquiry of how the First World War is remembered over time, rather than using such retrospective fictional accounts as false evidence of how things were, or might have been, at the time. It was pointed out by one experienced Head of English that her main difficulty is in getting pupils to distinguish between different forms of writing and different genres in which the war is addressed in meaningful ways. She reported that her pupils often struggle to see the difference between a letter or diary entry and a later memoir or autobiographical novel, taking everything at face value without considering audiences and the passage of time and reflection. An understanding of such differences was clearly seen as an important learning outcome in teaching First World War writing.

While creative writing exercises still appear to be widely used – judging from both survey responses and anecdotal evidence from the focus groups – they were regarded by most participants of the London and Newcastle focus groups as old-fashioned and meaningless. While these exercises still serve a purpose in English lessons in contributing to the development of literacy skills, they were flagged by at least one teacher as hard to mark, and their

focus on creating empathy with the past was seen by some as a futile exercise and as leading to the mere repetition of clichés reported elsewhere in the focus group discussion. However, English teachers at the Exeter focus group discussed their usefulness in terms of encouraging independent research and creating a connection to a particular writer.

### Subject-specific discussion for History

Subject-specific questions for History teachers in the first instance asked participants to elaborate on the main motivating factors for teaching the war in the survey, i.e. the sense that the First World War is 'important to pupils' education', and that it is 'part of our national collective memory'. We also asked History teachers whether they felt that their teaching of the First World War was driven by purpose, in that the two most popular materials stated in the survey to date – primary sources and textbooks – might be seen to represent the two poles of source analysis skills development on the one hand and knowledge-based learning on the other. On a related note, we queried the usefulness of textbooks endorsed or sold by exam boards, and asked teachers to specify how and why (if at all) they make use of other popular resources such as war poetry, contemporary footage (e.g. newsreels), YouTube clips, excerpts from *Blackadder*, photos, paintings and cartoons. We also asked teachers to list additional topics covered in First World War history that were not listed on the survey. These have been outlined in our History findings above. Lastly, we invited participants generally to comment on why

the First World War has traditionally been a historical topic of interest for pupils, and whether/why it continues to be relevant.

The question of motivation for teaching the First World War was raised at the London and Exeter focus groups, and one teacher at the London focus group reported on the heated debate in her school as to whether the First World War should continue to be taught in the face of many other pressing subjects. The war was kept on as part of the History (though not English) syllabus in the end partly through her own intervention as Head of History, and partly because she could make a good case for the war's key role in explaining the twentieth century. As far as the London focus group were concerned, the First World War holds an important place in recent (cultural) history, but increasingly competes with other aspects of national collective memory, specifically the Second World War.

The use and relative merits of textbooks and individual primary sources prompted lively debate in all three focus groups. While textbooks are, as might be expected, of varying quality and most teachers will appreciate using them to offer a basic framework or a source of research material for their pupils, a common opinion was that any textbook has to be supplemented with additional materials. As one Exeter participant highlighted, there is not a single textbook specifically for the First World War; it usually appears as part of a broader twentieth-century volume. The other History teacher present emphasised the distinction between enquiry driven and traditional textbooks, the former being of more use to his teaching practice.

## The Focus Groups continued

Primary sources were certainly seen as important to skills development, but it was felt equally strongly that looking at primary sources is 'the whole point of history', as a Newcastle participant put it. As a result, primary sources are used widely and early on, starting with controlled assessment exercises in year 7. At the same time, as another Newcastle participant pointed out, history teaching has to strike a balance between looking at sources and developing generic analytical skills, and ensuring pupils have the knowledge needed to fully understand and situate the source, meaning that source skills always have to be taught alongside a narrative understanding of history.

Strong emphasis also seemed to be placed on securing student engagement through the use of appropriate primary sources, rather than just developing generic source analysis skills. Teachers at both the Exeter and London focus groups cited individuals from the local area that were used as a basis for in-depth enquiry. One teacher at the London focus group gave the specific example of the account of a sixteen-year-old blacksmith from his region, whose time in the army during the First World War allowed him to learn new skills and to travel to India via the Suez Canal, an account of life during and after the war that fascinates pupils because it is new and challenges their preconceptions about inevitable death on the Western Front. Sources like these, held at the local record office and in regimental archives, allowed his students to gain an individual perspective that differs from the

image of the war established in the media, and engage young people because they are grounded in their own region and concern someone roughly their own age. In this sense, primary sources can serve to convey that the First World War is not just about those who died, but also about those who survived and lived with its impact, whether positive or negative.

In terms of finding and selecting primary sources, individual participants at the London and Newcastle focus groups recommended the National Archive resources on the First World War (which are apparently modelled on OCR requirements), and John D. Clare's revision site for GCSE students of modern history. Written sources were felt to be safer than pictorial ones in terms of learning outcomes and avoiding emotional upset, while images can potentially serve well as a 'hook' to get pupils on board. Participants were also vocal about practical limitations on using self-sourced materials as opposed to textbooks, such as the cost of photocopying, which can potentially be circumvented by laminating important resources, as practised by one teacher to keep down cost. Teachers also used the CWGC database as well as local papers to search for local sources. One teacher noted how local papers often published letters from soldiers, especially last letters. The Western Front Association magazine *Stand-To!* was cited as a good source for material. History teachers at the Exeter focus group discussed ways of collating information about what local museums

hold and are willing to loan out to neighbouring schools.<sup>96</sup>

As for textbooks, opinions on individual publications appear to differ depending on what teachers hope to get out of them. As an example, Ben Walsh's *OCR GCSE Modern World History* (published by Hodder Education) was popular with teachers at the Newcastle focus group who prefer coursework, but less so with those who prefer exam-based assessment options. Heinemann textbooks were seen as useful by some, but were criticised at the Newcastle focus group for offering an overly complex and demanding mix of sources. Generally speaking, feedback on exam board textbooks at the London focus group was not overly complimentary, including criticism that they were frequently too expensive, particularly in cases such as the AQA Modern World GCSE course, which requires the purchase of three separate textbooks. In the London and Exeter focus groups, the view of exam board textbooks seemed to be that they are used primarily by teachers who are either less engaged or most pressed for time. One London participant commented on treatment of the impact and context of the First World War in textbooks that she '[hadn't] seen a textbook yet that does any of this justice'. An Exeter participant identified a KS4 textbook on Britain and the home front as 'the most comprehensive textbook I've seen on the First World War', but criticised it for only focusing on Britain. Independent sources or resources developed by teachers themselves were

<sup>96</sup> The research team immediately followed up this suggestion by contacting local museums and national bodies, such as the National Museum Director's Council and the Museum Association. This led to an appeal being placed on the IWM's 1914.org online noticeboard as well as via the Museum Association's twitter feed. Unfortunately, no offers of collaboration came forward.

## The Focus Groups continued

seen as usually better, because they were less simplistic and 'one-dimensional' than those provided by exam boards. As at the Newcastle focus group, another criticism voiced in the London meeting was that exam boards had a tendency to provide overly simplistic sources to pupils in the run-up to exams, only to then confuse and disadvantage them with complex source comparisons in the exam paper. All teachers agreed that the exam syllabus kills the ability to analyse the war properly, that the recommended sources are chosen by people who have not been in the classroom recently and that there is a mismatch between these sources and the often obscure material cited in the exam questions, resulting in 'exams [that] are not testing history'. Positively noted was OCR's coursework module, however, which allowed pupils to develop valuable independent research skills using the First World War and choosing individually tailored topics, citing the example of a Turkish-origin student who was able to research Turkish involvement in the First World War.

There was broad agreement at all three focus groups that the First World War continues to be interesting and relevant to students. One teacher in the Newcastle focus group suggested that it is war generally that interests and fascinates pupils, particularly the two world wars. This is largely, however, true of mixed or

all-boys schools, whereas all-girls schools were seen to pose a challenge in terms of engaging pupils with the topic of war. The war was seen by all as a genuine watershed moment, and one teacher at the London focus group described it as a transitional moment that explains subsequent events of the twentieth century and ultimately our modern world. Teachers stressed that although boys in particular are keen on the 'blood and guts' of war, they are also interested in learning more about its 'social side'.

According to several participants in the Newcastle focus group, both the First and Second World War are frequently taught in English primary schools, meaning that secondary-school students ideally already have a basic awareness of the two conflicts and are interested in learning more. Where the Second World War can still be taught more easily through speaking to grandparents or using visiting speakers, it was felt to be more difficult to establish personal connections to the First World War. However, local resources and the exploration of family links, or links to e.g. local football clubs who sent players to the front, can be very useful to personalise the war and give meaning to the vast and impersonal figures pupils are otherwise confronted with. Although the First World War is no longer within reach of living memory, it was felt that the wealth of surviving photographs of the First World

War make it a unique event and facilitate a sense of connection, particularly where pupils' family photographs make links between past and present generations visible in inherited facial features, or where local sources draw attention to the fact that those who experienced the First World War lived in the same houses and moved in the same spaces as today's pupils.<sup>97</sup> These views were shared by participants at the Exeter focus group.<sup>98</sup>

Teachers further listed a sense of collective memory, television, films and contemporary books as reasons why the First World War still appeals to students, but also noted a shift in recent years because of new conflicts and returning veterans. These diluted interest on the one hand, but also strengthened the already strong emotional appeal of war as a topic for study. The question of the war's relevance was suggested as an interesting and potentially useful exercise to be raised with one's students: from one teacher's account, her pupils had got very upset by the suggestion that funding might be withdrawn from war cemeteries, and the issue had prompted a debate very similar to that relating to Auschwitz's continued existence as a memorial site. Military charities such as the British Legion and Help for Heroes were seen to contribute to the wide acceptance of a need for remembrance, while at the same time perhaps implicitly challenging why the First World War has to

<sup>97</sup> Some local initiatives – such as the ICT school project described above or the Heritage Lottery funded Tynemouth World War One Commemoration Project (see <http://www.tynemouthworldwarone.org/>) exploit such geographical proximity explicitly through mapping exercises.

<sup>98</sup> This is very much the ethos of the ground-breaking 'Lives of the First World War' project, launched in May 2014 by the Imperial War Museum. It will bring together material from museums, libraries, archives and family collections from across the world in order to tell the First World War story of 8 million men and women from Britain and the Commonwealth. For more information see <http://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.org/> [Last accessed 7 May 2014].

## The Focus Groups continued

be remembered more than other, more recent wars. If nothing else, it was felt that these charities call to mind recent and on-going military conflicts and show young people that war continues to be a reality today, serving perhaps to make learning about the First World War appear more relevant to them.

Generally it was felt that the sense of the war's continued relevance derives from a number of factors, from family history (and greater interest in genealogy) to intensive presence in the press and on TV, to the war's treatment in contemporary and particularly children's fiction. One teacher noted and others agreed that at least some pupils were fairly likely to have read some Michael Morpurgo in their own time prior to being taught about the First World War in school. The centenary as well as recent events such as the death of Harry Patch were seen to intensify media coverage and pupils' exposure to such coverage.

In summary, face-to-face discussions with History teachers during the focus groups revealed a level of scepticism and reservation regarding the government-led centenary plans. The teachers who were involved in the focus groups found our AHRC project worthwhile because it offered 'concrete' opportunities to get involved and develop teaching practice, with tangible outcomes for their day-to-day work. However, as noted above, the participants in the focus groups were self-selecting volunteers. Furthermore, discussions with History teachers highlighted the importance of teaching the First World War in terms of helping pupils

understand its significant impact on the rest of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A sense of locality was also stressed, both in terms of finding a 'hook' for pupils who are distanced from the event but also those teachers working in military/naval areas being sensitive to notions of 'futility' when teaching the children of those currently serving in the armed forces.





## Reflections and Recommendations

**Before concluding this report, it is necessary for us to first reflect on our capacity to pass judgement and make recommendations regarding the teaching of the First World War in History and English Literature classrooms in England. We are history and literary scholars, not educationalists. Neither co-author has completed a PGCE, nor do we have first-hand experience teaching in secondary schools, Further or Adult Education. However, we have both achieved postgraduate level qualifications in university teaching practice and have amassed over five years teaching experience at undergraduate and postgraduate level, albeit free of the constraints of the National Curriculum. We have spoken to and consulted a lot of teachers over the course of our research and, in our capacity as departmental Outreach Officers at our respective institutions, our commitment to dialogue and interaction with local teachers continues. Our leadership of this project has also led to involvement in wider educational policy issues, particularly the current reform of A-level specifications.**

We have made every effort to understand the constraints and obstacles faced by teachers of History and English Literature and hope that our recommendations are taken in good faith, as part of an atmosphere of dialogue and sharing best

practice that have been the cornerstones of this research project since its inception. The interaction and intellectual exchange with teachers, education scholars, exam board representatives and fellow academics that the project entailed has been a deeply interesting and enriching experience for us. While our research was exploratory in nature and necessarily limited in scope, we trust that our results go some way towards illustrating the diversity of content, attitudes and approaches of First World War teaching in English secondary schools.

### General reflections

The response rates for our survey were lower than originally hoped for, with 45 completed plus 53 partial responses for English and 228 completed plus roughly 125 partial responses for History. Our sample, however – notwithstanding the fact that it consisted of a self-selecting audience of particularly motivated teachers – paints a highly diverse picture of teaching the history and literature of the First World War that renders generalisations problematic, and serves our intended function as a selective snapshot of teaching practice across two subjects. Conversations with participants at our workshop and focus groups helped us nuance some of our findings, and particularly aided us in understanding key structural issues underlying the teaching of First World War history and literature in secondary schools.

One of the most fundamental concerns illustrated by our findings is that of the remit of teaching in each subject. Teachers

teaching First World War-related material seem to be subject to a four-way split in terms of motivations for and perceived demands on their teaching. For English teachers, the four corners of the imaginary square are (1) literary or aesthetic concerns (i.e. the teaching of war writing as literature), (2) concerns over English literature and language as carriers of cultural history, (3) the desire to teach a 'moral' lesson (i.e. either cautioning pupils against the cost of war or stressing its futility) and/or developing pupils' sense of empathy,<sup>99</sup> and (4) the need to engage students and develop their generic critical skills. History teachers share the latter two – skills development and engagement/critical skills development. However, rather than aesthetic concerns and conflicts as to the cultural history remit of their teaching, History teachers have to grapple with meeting demands on their teaching of factual historical knowledge as opposed to a broader cultural understanding. These conflicting aims and demands in part reflect wider subject-specific debates on approaches to teaching, but are most likely aggravated by the particular nature of the topic and its central position in popular memory. Somewhat fittingly, teachers' transmission of memory through their pedagogic practice is directly influenced and in many cases complicated by their own 'memory' of the war, evident in the fact that strong personal links to the conflict in the form of well-transmitted family history or personally-researched local connections increase motivation to teach the war and also potentially increase a desire to

<sup>99</sup> The emphasis placed on developing empathy via the study of the First World War is perhaps most concerning. If students are encouraged to empathise with a First World War fighting soldier or grieving widow, it would take a hard-hearted individual not to feel sorry for them, which, in turn, could fuel notions of futility and horror in response to the war more generally that may ultimately prevent pupils from appreciating the diversity and complexity of the war's experience at the time.

## Reflections and Recommendations continued

combine subject-specific teaching with the conveying of a moral message about war, whether affirmative or condemnatory. The Exeter focus group revealed how generational differences can influence a History teacher's approach to the subject. One NQT, in his early twenties, emphasised his desire to 'stand back' from the commemorative period and treat it as an opportunity to help his pupils critically engage with competing interpretations and viewpoints based on a number of sources of information. In contrast, another History teacher, in his forties and qualified for over a decade, kept returning to the significance of sacrifice and remembrance when reflecting on what motivated him to teach the history of the First World War. He demonstrated an emotional connection to the conflict that drove his practice and that may derive from the comparatively greater proximity to the war in terms of family history occasioned by a twenty-year age gap.

While our focus group discussions indicated that there seems to be some debate as to the precise remit of English as opposed to History teachers in terms of teaching and shaping cultural memory of the war – mirrored in public pronouncements about the value of war literature to understanding the conflict<sup>100</sup> – English teachers as well as their History colleagues appear to feel a commitment towards influencing their pupils' wider understanding of the war beyond its literary expression. During the January 2014 controversy about the use of 'biased' materials in teaching sparked

by the Secretary of State for Education's comments on *Blackadder Goes Forth*, one English teacher felt moved to comment in the letter pages of the *Observer*:

“ I have taught English in several state comprehensives, to students of many different abilities and nationalities, for more than 30 years. The most compelling texts were invariably those which emphasised the horror and futility of the first world war [sic]. The literature of endurance, heroism and despair has captured the imaginations of students from all cultures and ranges of ability. [...] I taught Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse* to a group of year eight students who had hitherto shown no interest in reading. They were gripped by the intensity of the battle scenes, and the relationship between man and horse. A mixed-ability year seven class impressed Ofsted because all the students were able to reinterpret *Dulce et Decorum Est* in their own words. The power of this literature is that it conveys so poignantly the horror, the shocking loss of life, and the anger and frustration of the poets, novelists and dramatists. These great writers have not "belittled Britain", Mr Gove, they have immortalised the Great War, they have passed on their reflections to all our children. I, and all my

colleagues, will continue to do the same. ”

Tilly Baker, Brighton<sup>101</sup>

There is a clear sense of mission here that also emerged from much of our findings: a sense that the First World War continues to matter for a variety of reasons, from appreciation of sacrifice or illustration of the horrors of war to an understanding of the modern world and to the war's centrality in British cultural expression. Although the teachers who participated in our project have to be seen as a self-selecting group of individuals who are particularly committed to passing on the war's legacy, their views confirm close links between teaching and memory building, in that the transmission of knowledge and the reaffirmation of importance which take place in many classrooms across England (and the wider UK) contribute directly to the next generation's understanding of the First World War, and determine to a large extent whether or not the war continues to be perceived as relevant.

### Practical variables affecting the teaching of First World War history and literature

Focus groups and survey results alike indicated that practical variables strongly affect the teaching of the First World War as a topic in both History and English Literature. Such variables include time allocation, type of school, age group/key stage (and whether First World War-related knowledge is being assessed at GCSE or

<sup>100</sup> See e.g. the abovementioned comments by Jeremy Paxman on the suitability of war poetry for teaching: "Poetry is no way to teach the Great War" Paxman says schools should address the important issues rather than fixating on horror, writes Nicola Woolcock.' *The Times*, 14 March 2014, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/2014/jan/12/the-big-issue-first-world-war-teaching> [Last accessed 18 January 2014].

## Reflections and Recommendations continued

higher), and the enthusiasm for/dedication of the teacher to the topic. For History teachers, in particular, the range of subject expertise required to teach their subject at secondary level means inevitably that there will be gaps in knowledge. Generalists cannot be experts in everything, and it appears to be personal interest in the First World War (as with any area of history) that impacts most on how much a teacher will invest in it as a topic. Furthermore, as the First World War features most prominently at KS3, the subject is diluted by lack of time and thus depth of study. Region or locality is also an important variable, for instance when looking at schools located in areas with high percentages of migrants, or areas that are traditionally strong military or naval recruiting grounds. Other countries within the UK will also encounter different challenges as well as opportunities for the teaching of First World War history and literature, as different national identities and experiences (as well as the logistical issue of different curriculums and exam boards) potentially influence the degree to which students and teachers feel invested in the topic.

A participant at the Exeter focus group further raised the issue of the level of ability of the students, as teaching of the war can be significantly different depending on whether teachers start with a blank slate or at least limited prior knowledge. That said, a blank slate was, in some ways, preferable because there was then no need to 'myth

bust'. Last but not least, the teacher's own position within their school, their personal circumstances and experience impact upon their teaching of First World War literature or history. Younger, less experienced teachers are more likely to be bound by strict departmental schemes of work and will have comparatively less freedom to choose texts and topics than more experienced colleagues, particularly Heads of Department. Similarly, budget restraints are likely to make a big difference, as fee-paying schools are better able to afford expensive trips, activities or resources than the average state-maintained secondary school. Personal circumstances directly affect teachers' outlook and motivation, in that any teacher with personal links to the war is more likely to feel committed to teaching about it,<sup>102</sup> or in that teachers' political outlook, family history or affiliations – such as teachers married or otherwise related to members of the armed forces – will affect their interpretation of the war as variously futile or worthwhile.

### Cross-curricular and interdisciplinary work

Survey data and focus group discussions alike indicated that cross-curricular and interdisciplinary work are not as common as one might wish, even in relation to a topic as seemingly ideal for cross-curricular approaches as the First World War. Successful cross-curricular initiatives do happen, but are often relegated to

project days, trips and assemblies, spaces outside the actual classroom though still embedded in a school context. While we found evidence of some well-coordinated, on-going collaborative teaching, joint-up, cross-curricular activities seemed to occur more organically between other disciplines e.g. Art, Drama, Geography, French, with the frequent exception of cross-curricular collaboration in the organisation and running of battlefield trips and remembrance activities.

Whereas interdisciplinarity is desired and promoted at university level, particularly in research, it is more problematic in a school context for practical as well as ideological reasons: the First World War tends to be covered by the two subjects at different moments in the curriculum; it is often harder for teachers to collaborate across curricular boundaries due to time constraints and the restrictions of subject-specific assessment; teachers in one subject tend to lack the necessary expertise to teach another, and teachers' differing understanding of subject remit causes additional friction. We specifically encountered isolated cases of resentment felt by History teachers, who felt that English colleagues used their higher allocation of teaching hours to 'misteach' the First World War (and other historical subjects) that History colleagues then have to un-teach. The imbalance in timetable provision has been noted, more generally, by Ofsted which reported in 2007 that 'the

<sup>102</sup> A good illustration of how personal links to the First World War may shape teachers' understanding of their remit is Tracey Icton's short story 'The Passer-On'. Icton, a former English teacher, establishes clear links between the narrator's teaching of First World War literature and her sense of commitment to her great-grandfather's experiences in the war, stating about her profession: 'Stories live and, unlike the people who tell them, they become stronger with age. [...] My duty is passing them on. That's what I am, a passer-on of stories.' See Tracey Icton, 'The Passer-On', *Writer's Muse* 73 (June 2014), n.p. The widespread use of family stories, documents and memorabilia that emerged from our survey indicates similar views are common among other respondents across both pathways.



## Reflections and Recommendations continued

biggest issue for school history is its limited place in the curriculum'.<sup>103</sup> Conversely, English teachers may resent the implication that their concerns are limited to literacy and aesthetic appreciation if they subscribe to the view that English is about more than teaching language skills and an appreciation of literature. As Janet Alsup suggests, teaching English is often seen as 'a combination of direct experience and distanced analysis; a merging of emotional, personal response and socio-cultural criticism'<sup>104</sup> – including the cultural history of the First World War in relation to its literary legacy. As David Stevens has noted in his recent exploration of English in the context of cross-curricular teaching, failure of cross-curricular initiatives that team up English with History in the context of a general humanities approach may at times fail despite 'the shared concern for imaginative empathy that powerfully connects English with the humanities' because 'the subject identity of English is often contested, and invariably [...] guarded by its practitioners',<sup>105</sup> as is the subject identity of History.

Interestingly, the Exeter focus group revealed how pupil perception may also contribute to the divide between History and English Literature with regard to cross-curricular teaching of the First World War. An English teacher described how her

students are often resistant to the subject 'spilling' over into English classes arguing that they have 'done this already' in History. In addition, some students have to be persuaded that studying the literature of the war is not simply an exercise in making them 'feel dreadful' that can manifest itself in a physical stance as they enter the classroom.

Despite such concerns, it seems to us that the teaching of First World War literature and history in particular would benefit from more cross-curricular teaching, particularly based on individual testimonies of successful cross-curricular initiatives in our focus groups. If practical obstacles prevent such attempts in the course of routine teaching, schools may wish to consider extra-curricular activities as outlined above to facilitate a more joined-up approach.

### Teaching and student learning

Our project has focused on the teaching side of teaching and learning by concentrating on teachers' views and experiences. However, we are not blind to the fact that teaching and learning are two very different things. Focus group discussions in particular have shown that teachers frequently feel their teaching of the First World War is competing with media representations of the war in particular,

often unsuccessfully. Likewise, focus group and survey comments indicate tensions between learning outcomes in different subjects and a sense of discontent in particular among History teachers that what students learn – or think they learn – about the First World War in English Literature may interfere with the History teaching they receive. What did emerge particularly strongly was a feeling that the ability to establish personal links with the First World War is crucial to facilitate learning: teaching is more likely to 'stick' if pupils can be made to see the immediate relevance of what is being taught to their own lives. The need for establishing relevance entails some major challenges, particularly with a view to pupils of migrant backgrounds or nationalities other than English – but it also offers some important opportunities. Teachers are already finding various ways of overcoming a lack of immediate relevance, for instance by drawing on regional examples, establishing links with present-day politics or society, or using their own family history or that of local communities. Such initiatives have the potential to improve student learning and it seems desirable to encourage further debates as to how the First World War can be seen to be relevant to generations of pupils now and in the future.

<sup>103</sup> Ofsted, *History in the Balance: History in English Schools 2003-07* (London, 2007), p. 28. See <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/history-balance> [Last accessed 2 May 2014]. See also David Cannadine, Jenny Keating and Nicola Sheldon, *The Right Kind of History: Teaching the Past in Twentieth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> Janet Alsup, 'Identification, Actualization, or Education: Why read YAL?', in *Young Adult Literature and Adolescent Identity Across Cultures and Classrooms: Contexts for the Literary Lives of Teens* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 12.

<sup>105</sup> David Stevens, *Cross-Curricular Teaching and Learning in the Secondary School. English: The Centrality of Language in Learning* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 84; 82.

## Reflections and Recommendations continued

### Texts, topics and resources for teaching the First World War

Although the range and variety of resources and topics covered across the two subjects is great, teachers' choices in the main seem driven by what engages pupils, what is readily available and what is suited to developing subject-specific skills. For English teachers, linguistic or stylistic analysis are important, but they are often (though not necessarily) also interested in issues of remembrance, ideology or representation of the war. Hence contemporary writing is popular because it is easier to access for students, readily available and tends to come with ready-made learning resources, but seen as problematic by some teachers who wish to expose their pupils to more 'authentic' voices of the war. Likewise, History teachers place great emphasis on the development of source analysis skills, but are likely to also consider their remit as encompassing broader reflections on war and society. Reservations about textbooks were felt across the focus groups by teachers of both History and English, yet textbooks are among the most widely used materials certainly in History. The continuing link between textbooks, exam boards and exams will inevitably constrain the degree to which they can be resources to explore the war from alternative perspectives. The important point seems to be to use them selectively

and supplement them with additional materials where appropriate, particularly to 'update' older textbooks where there are no financial resources to regularly purchase replacements.

Canonical First World War texts still feature to a large degree in English Literature classrooms and in the private reading of both English and History teachers. Despite recent renewals of the debate surrounding the appropriateness of teaching the war through its poetry, this seems to us not necessarily a problem, provided canonical writers such as Owen and Sassoon are taught highlighting the literary and subjective nature of their writing, and provided it is placed in perspective. As time and curriculum constraints make it unrealistic to expect every English teacher to teach a wide range of different literary responses to the war, we would recommend placing more emphasis on canonical texts as individual responses rather than depictions representative of the war's wider experience. There are now many resources readily available online to achieve the necessary contextualisation, such as articles and resources on the colonial war experience, conscientious objectors or frontlines other than the Western Front, which can serve to illustrate the point that many men and women experienced the war in markedly different ways to the canonical 'trench poets' in as little as one additional lesson. New research-informed

teaching materials on canonical war texts further aid a more nuanced, reflective teaching of traditional material, such as a tablet app developed by Ian Bennett, a Lecturer in Film and Media at Anglia Ruskin University, that combines readings and texts of 45 war poems by Wilfred Owen with critical commentaries by academic experts on Owen's work.<sup>106</sup>

As far as resources are concerned, teachers can benefit from a wealth of old and new materials that enable varied and inclusive teaching, many of which are freely available online. A number of these materials have been developed recently and incorporate findings from the latest in academic research, such as the new British Library portal with resources and lesson ideas for a wide range of topics, and materials developed to support the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme, which strongly emphasise regional links.<sup>107</sup> The challenge now is to make it easier for a larger number of teachers to identify, evaluate and access these resources. Participants in our focus groups voiced concerns about the sheer range and wealth of sources as overwhelming, and as such, guidance on materials available in future seems to be even more important than generating ever more teaching resources for teachers to choose from, although it is naturally desirable to keep the pool of resources up-to-date. In the light of this challenge, we made the decision to

<sup>106</sup> See <http://www.centenarynews.com/article?id=1606>. Academic contributors include Dr Jane Potter (Oxford Brookes), Dr Kate Kennedy (Girton College, Cambridge) and Dr Santanu Das (King's College, London), whose recent *Cambridge Companion to the Poetry of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) also offers teachers and students a detailed treatment of canonical and non-canonical war poetry reflecting the fact that "the scope of First World War poetry is far wider than that of the trench lyric" (p. 4).

<sup>107</sup> See <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one> and <http://centenarybattlefieldtours.org/> respectively.

## Reflections and Recommendations continued

abandon ideas for creating new teaching resources in favour of a Resources and a Teaching Exchange section on our project website, which offer an overview of existing resources and ideas and allow the creators of new material to flag their resources to an audience of teachers with a specific interest in teaching the First World War.

### Continued Professional Development and research

Teachers' opportunities for CPD and keeping up-to-date with academic research are subject to the same problem as teaching resources: there is plenty out there, but little guidance to help teachers identify the materials most useful to them. Cost is also a factor: while there are great numbers of free teaching resources out there, most research-led publications are accessible by subscription only, and/or overly time-consuming and hard to navigate for a teacher with little time to conduct extensive literature searches. A potential remedy are more freely accessible summaries of new research publications for the use of teachers as well as the general public, as these would

help orientation and would reach teachers whose schools cannot afford costly library purchases. Examples of such initiatives are the research blog of the International Society for First World War Studies, whose website also offers a freely available bibliography of research publications by theme and location.<sup>108</sup> Another example of best practice are the specially commissioned articles on a variety of First World War-related topics collated on the British Library's World War One portal, which offer concise treatment of recent research in the field.<sup>109</sup> The forthcoming Berlin-based *1914-1918 Online*, a freely available international encyclopaedia of the First World War, will also be an important contribution to expanding teachers' understanding of the war in bite-size scholarly chunks.<sup>110</sup> Professional associations such as the Historical Association and English Association already provide a similar service, although the need to finance their activities naturally means their publications are tied to a subscription fee. More state-maintained schools should be enabled to purchase institutional membership so that more teachers can

benefit from their offerings. Universities should also be encouraged to offer CPD sessions based on local expertise for local teachers, an undertaking that is beneficial for all, as it helps teachers develop their portfolio and simultaneously establishes good relationships between secondary and Higher or Further Education institutions that should be desirable from the institutional perspective in terms of student recruitment. Last but not least, the centenary has created additional government-sponsored opportunities for CPD to accompany battlefield trips, in the form of training courses offered by the IoE funded as part of the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Programme.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>108</sup> See Members' Research blog at <http://www.firstworldwarstudies.org/member-research.php> and Collaborative Bibliography at <http://www.firstworldwarstudies.org/bibliography.php> [Last accessed 29 April 2014].

<sup>109</sup> See <http://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/articles> [Last accessed 29 April 2014].

<sup>110</sup> See [www.1914-1918-online.net](http://www.1914-1918-online.net) [Last accessed 30 April 2014]. It publicly launches on 8 October 2014.

<sup>111</sup> See <http://centenarybattlefieldtours.org/cpd/cpd-landing-page/>.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I: Survey questions for History and English Pathways

**Appendix 1a): HISTORY PATHWAY**  
**Note: Those parts of the survey included on behalf of the Institute of Education (pages 12-15) are marked in red.**

### PAGE 1

#### Page title:

Preliminary note

#### Body text:

Please note: This is the "History Pathway" for The First World War in the Classroom.

Please only proceed if you teach History in a secondary school or FE college in England. If you do not fall into either of these categories, please do not fill in this survey as it would compromise our data, and as you would find yourself unable to answer a number of questions.

### PAGE 2

#### Page title:

Welcome to The First World War in the Classroom: A research survey for History teachers in secondary and further education in England

#### Body text:

"Project leaders: Dr Catriona Pennell (University of Exeter) and Dr Ann-Marie Einhaus (University of Northumbria at Newcastle)"

#### "What is the survey about?"

Our survey for teachers of History and English Literature is funded by the Arts and

Humanities Research Council as part of their "Care for the Future" research theme. It aims to establish a clearer picture of the way the First World War is currently taught about in England's secondary schools and further education colleges. We want to hear about teachers' experiences to identify possible challenges and opportunities. The survey will also be used to shape the nature and content of the Institute of Education's WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project which aims to provide the opportunity for a minimum of two pupils and one teacher from every state funded secondary school in England to visit battlefields on the Western Front starting in 2014.

#### "Why should I take part in the survey?"

Are you interested in finding out what other teachers are doing in their classrooms? Would you like your own experience to inform others' practice and understanding?

The results from this survey will be used to establish a dialogue between teachers and researchers interested in First World War literature and history. Your input will work towards improving communication and understanding between sectors and subjects and will enable us to provide linked access to resources and ideas via our project website. In addition, the results will feed directly into the planning and development of the Institute of Education's First World War Centenary Battlefield Tour CPD programme providing through identifying the specific issues and challenges experienced by teachers when teaching about this subject and participating in battlefield tours.

#### "Can I be involved in the project beyond filling in the questionnaire?"

Should you be interested in participating in a follow-up focus group or interview, you will be able to state your contact details at the end of the questionnaire, or you may contact us directly. There will be a "prize draw for one £100 M&S voucher" for all participants who choose to leave their contact details.

"For more detailed information on our research and the use of survey results, please visit <http://www.intheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk/about/> or contact us directly."

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## Appendices continued

### PAGE 3

#### Page title:

Data Protection: How will my answers be used?

#### Body text:

By participating in the survey, you agree for us to use your responses as the basis for a report that outlines the survey results and compares them to debates about the First World War in contemporary media and literary writing. Your survey responses will contribute to providing first-hand information about particular aims, methods, motivations and limitations in teaching the First World War in your own subject. All survey responses will be collected anonymously through Bristol Online Surveys, and the results will subsequently be stored securely on password-protected university servers at the University of Exeter, the University of Northumbria at Newcastle, and the Institute of Education, University of London. We will ensure that the anonymity of participants is protected in all publications and other usage of the survey data.

### PAGE 4

#### Page title:

Focus of the Survey

#### Body text:

In all of the questions below, unless stated otherwise, we are looking for "your personal experience rather than school policy". Please focus on "current or most recent experience" wherever possible.

Please also assume that we are looking primarily for experience directly related to your teaching of the First World War. We define "the First World War" in

the broadest possible sense, including related events, developments, causes and consequences in the period from roughly 1900 to 1939.

### PAGE 5

#### Page title:

Consent

#### Body text:

"Please confirm the following by ticking the box below:"

""(1)"" I have read and understand the purpose of this study.

""(2)"" I have been given the chance to ask questions about this study and (if applicable) these have been answered to my satisfaction.

""(3)"" I am aware that my name (if applicable) and details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents.

""(4)"" I am aware that due to the anonymous nature of the data collected it will not be possible to remove my responses once I have taken the survey.

""(5)"" I am aware that I can quit the survey at any time before clicking the submit button after the final question, and that if I decide to quit early, my answers will not be recorded.

""(6)"" I agree to the University of Exeter, the University of Northumbria at Newcastle and the Institute of Education, University of London, recording and processing the answers I provide by filling in the following online questionnaire. I

understand that this information will be used only for the purposes set out above, and my consent is conditional upon the university complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

#### Question 1 [GRID]:

Do you consent to take part in this survey? You will have to consent by ticking the box below before you can take part in the survey:

[GRID OPTION]:

Yes

### PAGE 6

#### Page title:

Personal details

#### Body text:

n/a

#### Question 2 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Gender

[CHOICES]

Male

Female

Prefer not to say

Other (please state)

#### Question 3 [SELECTION LIST]:

Age group

[DROP-DOWN CHOICES]:

20-25

26-30

31-35

36-40

41-45

46-50

51-55

## Appendices continued

56-60  
61 and above

**Question 4 [SELECTION LIST]:**  
**Ethnicity**

[DROP-DOWN CHOICES]:

White  
Mixed  
Asian (Indian)  
Asian (Pakistani)  
Asian (Bangladeshi)  
Asian (other)  
Black (Caribbean)  
Black (African)  
Black (other)  
Chinese  
Prefer not to say

**Question 5 [SELECTION LIST]:**  
**Religion**

[DROP-DOWN CHOICES]:

Buddhist  
Christian (including all Christian denominations)  
Hindu  
Jewish  
Muslim  
Sikh  
No religion  
Prefer not to say

**Question 6 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:**  
Where did you hear about this survey?

[CHOICES]

WWI in the Classroom project website  
Institute of Education website  
Institute of Education mailing list  
University of Exeter website  
Northumbria University website

Guardian Education section  
Guardian Education newsletter  
Times Education Supplement  
Historical Association newsletter  
Other newspaper advert  
Word of mouth  
Online discussion forum  
Flyer at conference  
Twitter  
Facebook

**PAGE 7**

**Page title:**

Your teaching role and context

**Body text:**

“Please note”: We recognise you may currently teach at more than one institution. However, please choose just one option from the list for question 7 below, and answer the remaining questions on the basis of your experience in this school.

**Question 7 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

What kind of institution do you currently teach at? (Please note we are looking for your “main” place of work.)

[CHOICES]:

Academy  
Adult education  
Boarding school  
Independent school  
City Technology College  
Community School/College  
Comprehensive  
FE College  
Grammar school  
Middle school  
School with a religious character (Faith School)

Secondary modern school  
Sixth-form college  
Special needs school  
Other (please state)

**Question 8 [SINGLE LINE]:**

Where is your school situated? Please enter the postcode and county for your school in the field below (e.g. DH1 4PD, Durham).

**Question 9 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

What is your current employment status?

[CHOICES]:

Full-time  
Part-time  
Sessional or agency

**Question 10 [SELECTION LIST]:**

In which year did you begin teaching?

[DROP-DOWN CHOICES]:

1960 to 2013

**Question 11 [SELECTION LIST]:**

How many years, in total, have you been teaching, excluding any breaks (e.g. maternity leave)?

[DROP-DOWN CHOICES]:

1 to 50

**Question 12 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

What is your position in your school / department?

[CHOICES]:

Trainee teacher  
Fully qualified teacher  
Head of Department  
Head of School



## Appendices continued

### Question 13 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

At what levels do you teach history?

[CHOICES]:

KS3  
KS4  
Sixth form  
Adult Learners

### PAGE 8

#### Page title:

Teaching practice, aims and methods

#### Body text:

n/a

### Question 14 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

At which levels have you taught the First World War (in its broadest possible definition including related events, developments, causes and consequences in the period from roughly 1900 to 1939)?

[CHOICES]:

KS3  
KS4  
Sixth form  
Adult learners

### Question 15 [GRID]:

Where you do not teach the First World War, please rate your reasons for not teaching it by indicating their relative importance.

[CHOICES]:

Not allowed for by school.  
Exam board doesn't include option for First World War.  
Not enough time.  
Already covered at previous key stage.  
Covered sufficiently in the media.

Covered sufficiently in other subjects.  
Too emotionally upsetting for self.  
Too emotionally upsetting for pupils.  
Not sufficiently relevant to present-day pupils.  
Not enough materials.  
Hard to choose appropriate materials.  
Not personally interested.  
Not sufficiently knowledgeable.  
Worried that pupils will not take the topic seriously or react inappropriately.  
Other topics are more important.

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

### Question 16 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

If applicable, please specify what you consider the "main level" at which you teach the First World War. "PLEASE NOTE:" We would like you to answer subsequent questions on resources and topics with this level in mind.

[CHOICES]:

KS3  
KS4  
Sixth form  
Adult learners

### Question 17 [GRID]:

Where you do teach the First World War, what is your main motivation? Please rate by indicating relative importance.

[CHOICES]:

Part of the department's scheme of work  
Required by National Curriculum  
Part of exam board requirements

Personal interest

I consider it important to pupils' education  
I consider it part of our national collective memory  
It is too often confused with the Second World War  
It helps pupils understand the twentieth century more generally  
This subject is well resourced in my school  
Importance of the First World War to school community

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

### Question 18 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

How many "hours in total" do you devote to teaching the First World War on average in each year group you are teaching? (e.g. Year 9, 15 hours)

### Question 19 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

How many hours independent study time and homework time in total do you give pupils in addition to classroom teaching? (e.g. Year 9, 5 hours)

### Question 20 [GRID]:

If you do teach at KS4 and Sixth form level, please state which exam board(s) you follow (please ignore this question if you do not teach at these levels).

[CHOICES]:

KS4  
Sixth Form

## Appendices continued

### [GRID OPTIONS]:

AQA  
Cambridge  
Edexcel  
IBacc  
IGCSE  
OCR  
Other (please state)

### Question 21 [GRID]:

If applicable, please name up to three types of materials specified by your exam board(s) at KS4 and Sixth form (please ignore this question if you do not teach at these levels).

### [CHOICES]:

KS4  
Sixth Form

### Question 22 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Are you free to design your own lessons/module on or incorporating the First World War?

### [CHOICES]:

Yes  
No  
Partially (within framework of departmental policy)  
Partially (depending on year group)

### Question 23 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

Are you teaching the First World War as part of a larger series/unit/course/topic area (e.g. The Modern World)? If yes, please specify the series/unit/course/topic area and the level at which you teach it.

### Question 24 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Does your school engage in cross-curricular teaching with regard to the First World War?

### [CHOICES]:

No  
Unsure about school policy on this point  
Cross-curricular teaching is discouraged  
Does not discourage it, but does not happen  
Encourages it, but does not always happen  
Yes, across English and History  
Yes, across English and another subject (not History)  
Yes, across History and another subject (not English)  
Yes, across more than two subjects

### Question 25 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What resources have you used to teach the First World War? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

### [CHOICES]:

Family documents  
Historical documents  
Textbooks  
Anthologies of war writing  
War poetry  
Classic war novels (e.g. All Quiet on the Western Front)  
War memoirs (e.g. Good-Bye to All That)  
Modern novels for adults (e.g. Birdsong, Regeneration)  
Modern novels for young readers (e.g. Private Peaceful)  
Films about the war (e.g. Oh! What a Lovely War)  
Contemporary footage (e.g. old newsreels, Battle of the Somme)

YouTube clips  
School archive  
Television documentaries  
Blackadder Goes Forth  
The 'Horrible Histories' series (text or TV)  
Radio programmes  
Podcasts  
Oral history materials (e.g. interviews with veterans)  
Visual resources (e.g. photographs, paintings, cartoons)  
Objects/material artefacts  
Life writing (e.g. letters or diary entries)  
Web resources  
Resource packs from external organisations  
Resource packs compiled by self/school/department  
Other (please state)

### Question 26 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

If applicable, please name up to three non-web-based resources you have used:

### Question 27 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

If applicable, please name up to three online / web-based resources you have used:

### Question 28 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What methods/activities are you likely to use, or have you used in the past, to teach the First World War? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

### [CHOICES]:

Field trip  
Teacher talk  
Group work  
Pupils creating presentations  
Creative writing exercise  
Creating newspapers or posters

## Appendices continued

Staged classroom debate  
 Research project with thematic focus  
 Research project with school focus  
 Role play  
 Re-enactment  
 Internet research  
 Online tutorials  
 Historical enquiry  
 Research project with local focus  
 Research project with national/international focus  
 Other (please state)

### Question 29 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What topics do you cover when teaching the First World War? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

#### [CHOICES]:

Origins/causes of the war  
 How and why the war ended  
 Change connected with and/or consequences of the war  
 New technology and its impact  
 Trench warfare  
 Western front  
 War at Sea  
 The war in Africa  
 Other fronts  
 War on the home front  
 Women's changing position in society  
 Propaganda  
 Other events in the period (e.g. Easter Rising of 1916, Russian Revolution)  
 Links to Boer War  
 Links to Second World War  
 Colonialism/Decolonisation  
 Other (please state)

### PAGE 9

#### Page title:

Your teaching rationale

#### Body text:

n/a

### Question 30 [GRID]:

If you are given a choice, how do you decide what topics to include in your teaching of the First World War?

#### [CHOICES]:

Availability of materials.  
 Conveying the value of sacrifice for one's country.  
 Inspiring gratitude for the soldiers' sacrifice.  
 Challenging preconceived ideas.  
 Illustrating the horror/ futility of war.  
 Likely to interest pupils.  
 Pupils have responded well in the past.  
 Chance for cross-curricular collaboration.  
 Personal interest.  
 Am confident in these topics.  
 Illustrate changing bias in historiography.

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
 Important  
 Not that important  
 Unimportant

### Question 31 [GRID]:

What are you trying to achieve in teaching the First World War (i.e. what are your desired outcomes for your pupils)?

#### [CHOICES]:

No particular personal aims – set by exam board  
 Provide pupils with key facts about the war  
 Development of critical skills

Development of contextual understanding  
 Elicit a personal response from pupils  
 Educate pupils about the cost of war  
 Educate pupils about the social construction of values such as duty and sacrifice  
 Link First World War with subsequent events of the twentieth century  
 Demonstrate changes in attitude to war  
 Change the way we think about our society  
 Illustrate step change in recent history  
 Illustrate use impact of propaganda  
 Demonstrate the futility of war  
 Helps explore personal development in reaction to hardship  
 Illustrate the wide range of reactions to a major event  
 Widen understanding of the war beyond what is usually covered in the media  
 None of the above  
 Other (Please state)

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
 Important  
 Not that important  
 Unimportant

### PAGE 10

#### Page title:

Extracurricular activities

#### Body text:

n/a

### Question 32 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Are you planning to organise any teaching-related or extra-curricular activities to coincide with the forthcoming First World War centenary (2014-2019)?

## Appendices continued

[CHOICES]:

- Yes
- No

**Follow-up question 32 a)**

**[MULTIPLE ANSWER]:**

If so, what categories do these activities fall into?

[CHOICES]:

- Field trip
- Remembrance service
- Other remembrance event
- Oral History project
- Learning diary
- Other research-based project
- Invited guest speaker
- First World War-themed reading
- Author visit
- Drama project or performance
- Community based event
- Event linked to one organised by another organisation such as the Royal British Legion
- Other (please state)

**Question 33 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:**

If there are First World War-related field trips at your current school, where have these been to?

[CHOICES]:

- Western front battlefields/cemeteries
- Local cemeteries/memorials
- Local museums
- National museums
- Local library
- Local cinema for screening
- Local archive
- National archive
- Theatre (play)
- External talk or lecture (e.g. at local university or museum)
- Other (please state)

**PAGE 11**

**Page title:**

Your knowledge base and training

**Body text:**

n/a

**SECTION:**

To what extent do you agree with the following two statements:

**Question 34 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

I feel knowledgeable about the First World War.

[CHOICES]:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Question 35 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

I have read widely about the First World War beyond school textbooks.

[CHOICES]:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**SECTION:**

Please tell us about your First World War-related training and experience:

**Question 36 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Have you personally visited any First World War-related sites or museums?

[CHOICES]:

- Yes
- No

**Follow-on question 36 a)**

**[MULTIPLE LINES]:**

If applicable, please name up to three examples of sites or museums you have visited:

**Question 37 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Have you had specific training on teaching the First World War?

[CHOICES]:

- Yes
- No

**Follow-on question 37 a)**

**[MULTIPLE ANSWER]:**

If yes, what form did that training take?

[CHOICES]:

- Part of undergraduate degree
- Part of PGCE
- Part of MA
- Departmental CPD training
- Training offered by external organisations
- Self-taught
- Informal advice by colleagues
- Other (please state)

**Follow-on question 37 b)**

**[SINGLE LINE]:**

Please name the most recent First World War-related training in which you have participated:

**Follow-on question 37 c)**

**[MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Do you feel the training had a clear impact on your teaching practice?

## Appendices continued

[CHOICES]:

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

**Question 38 [GRID]:**

In general, how do you stay up-to-date with academic approaches/research in history? Please rate by indicating relative importance.

[CHOICES]:

I would like to, but I don't usually have the time  
Web research  
Reading books other than textbooks  
Personal network from previous study (e.g. PGCE or MA cohort)  
Professional magazines (e.g. Teaching History, BBC History Magazine)  
Academic journals (e.g. through JSTOR)  
Academic web resources (e.g. Oxford University digital archives or podcasts)  
Membership in society or professional association (e.g. Historical Association)  
Following research blogs  
Google alerts  
Inset Days  
Teacher conferences  
Academic conferences  
Facebook  
Twitter  
Museum web pages

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

**Question 39 [GRID]:**

Which of the following would you be likely to find useful to your teaching practice relating to the First World War?

[CHOICES]:

Workshops on First World War-related teaching methods  
Presentations on new research in First World War Studies  
Access to new research publications on the First World War  
More readily available teaching materials.  
Change to a different exam board  
Opportunity to attend teacher conferences  
Opportunity to discuss subject with university researchers  
Opportunity to discuss subject with other teachers  
Collaboration with colleagues in other subjects  
A dedicated discussion forum  
A database of ideas for lesson plans  
Links to high quality online resources recommended by specialists in First World War studies  
Links to teaching resources designed by other teachers  
Online support / Q&A sessions by specialists in First World War studies  
More help resourcing alternative First World War texts besides the established 'classics'  
A personal visit to the battlefields under expert guidance]

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Definitely  
Very likely  
Likely  
Quite Likely  
Unlikely  
Definitely not

**Question 40 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

You will now move on to the next part of the survey, which looks more specifically at battlefield trips and will inform the Institute of Education's WWI Centenary Battlefield tours project. Before you move on to the next page, please tell us if you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview or regional focus group related to this first part of the survey. There will be a prize draw for a £100 M&S voucher among all names submitted in this section in early September, and the winner will be contacted via email.

[CHOICES]:

Yes  
No

Follow-on question 40 a) [SINGLE LINE]:  
If yes, please provide a name and contact email address:

**PAGE 12**

**Page title:**

Battlefield Tours to France / Belgium

**Body text:**

Only complete this section if you have taken pupils to the First World War battlefield sites in the past 5 years or more. If not, please go to the next page and resume at question 50.

**Question 41 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Who organises your battlefields tours?

[CHOICES]:

You  
A colleague in your department  
A colleague in another department

## Appendices continued

### Follow-on question 41 a)

#### [SINGLE LINE]:

If a colleague from another department, please specify the department:

### Question 42 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

When organising the battlefield tours do you or a colleague:

#### [CHOICES]:

Primarily organise the tours

Organise the tours with support from bus/coach companies and hotels

Use a specialist commercial battlefield tour company

Use a School Tour Company

### Follow-up question 44 a)

If you use a tour company, please indicate which one:

### Question 43 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

If you have used a specialist School Tour Company how would you judge the quality of the tour experience?

#### [CHOICES]:

Excellent

Very good

Satisfactory

Poor

Very poor

### Follow-on question 43 a)

#### [SINGLE LINE]:

If poor or very poor please provide brief reasons:

### Follow-on question 43 b)

#### [SINGLE LINE]:

If good please provide brief reasons:

### Question 44 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

How long have you been taking students to the battlefield sites?

#### [CHOICES]:

1-3 years

4-7 years

8-11 years

12-15 years

15 years or more

### Question 45 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

On a typical visit which region/country do you visit?

#### [CHOICES]:

Ypres (Belgium)

The Somme (France)

Both

Other (please specify)

### Question 46 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

On a typical tour how long do you spend visiting the battlefield sites (excluding travel from the UK)?

#### [CHOICES]:

One day

Two days

Three days

Four days

A week

### Question 47 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

In which term of the school year do your tours typically take place?

#### [CHOICES]:

Autumn

Spring

Summer

### Question 48 [GRID]:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements using the scale provided:

#### [CHOICES]:

Teachers from our school do most of the teaching on the battlefield trips

The use of battlefield guides is an important part of the trip

Visiting museums is an important part of the trip

Using military or local historians is an important part of the trip

Our pupils always take part in remembrance ceremonies

Our students always learn about an aspect of WWI that has relevance to the school's local community, town or city

Our students always learn about an aspect of WWI that has relevance to the pupils' own backgrounds

Our students always learn a significant amount about the role played by former Empire and Commonwealth countries on the tours

Our tours are always built around an historical enquiry developed by our teachers

Specific reference to historical evidence and sources is a key feature of the trips  
Before embarking on the visit pupils have learned a great deal about WWI

On returning from the battlefield tour pupils spend considerable time on WWI work related to the trip

On returning from the trip pupils share their experiences with others in the school

On returning from the trip pupils share their experiences with the local community

On returning from the trip pupils create exhibitions, displays, websites or other commemorative projects

## Appendices continued

Pupils find the trips very interesting  
 Pupils find the trips highly motivating  
 Participating in the trips substantially  
 increases pupils' knowledge and  
 understanding of WWI

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

### PAGE 13

**Page title:**

WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project

**Body text:**

The WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project, which is funded by the Government and run by the IOE, aims to provide the opportunity for a minimum of two pupils and one teacher from every state funded secondary school in England to visit battlefields on the Western Front free of charge. The first tours will start in 2014.

We would greatly appreciate your taking the time to answer a few additional questions. Your answers will be critical in helping the IOE to plan the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project so that it can best meet the needs of schools.

**Question 49 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

The Institute of Education (IOE) will be putting together an extensive educational programme to support a 3 nights, 4-day tour to the battlefields. These free tours will be offered to all secondary maintained schools in England from 2014 to 2019.

Before completing this survey had you heard of the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project?

[CHOICES]:

Yes

No

**Question 50 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

How likely are you to sign up for one of these tours?

If you choose a 'definite' or 'likely' response, please go on to the next page (Section 1) and resume at question 51.

If you choose 'unlikely' or 'definitely not', please skip the next page and go on to Section 2, to resume at question 60.

[CHOICES]:

Definitely

Very likely

Likely

Quite Likely

Unlikely

Definitely not

### PAGE 14

**Page title:**

Section 1

**Body text:**

Please complete this section if your answer to the question about participation in the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project was 'Definitely', 'Very likely', 'Likely' or 'Quite Likely'. If your answer was 'Unlikely' or 'Definitely not', please skip to the next page.

**Question 51 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

What year group would you most likely want to go on a trip to the battlefields?

[CHOICES]:

Year 7

Year 8

Year 9

Year 10

Year 11

**Question 52 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

When would you like to go on the trip?

[CHOICES]:

On weekdays

Over the weekend with some weekdays (e.g. Friday to Monday)

**Question 53 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Would you prefer to go in the school holidays or during normal school time?

[CHOICES]:

In school holiday

In normal school time

Either

**Question 54 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

In which term of the school year would you prefer to go on the tour?

[CHOICES]:

Autumn

Spring

Summer

**Question 55 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

If you had to choose, where would you be most interested in visiting?

## Appendices continued

[CHOICES]:

- The Somme
- Ypres
- Cannot decide

**Question 56 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Who in your school has to give permission for you to take your students on an overseas trip?

[CHOICES]:

- The governing body
- The head teacher
- A member of the senior leadership team
- Your head of department
- You are the head of department and are able to give permission

**Question 57 [GRID]:**

Wherever possible it is expected that schools will use the battlefield tours as a focus for an historical enquiry (e.g., based on finding out more about a local soldier, family, or community, close to your school). The tours will be tailored accordingly. It is hoped that teachers and pupils who go on the trip will share their experiences with others in the school and the local community. The IOE will be running free professional development courses across England to help teachers develop and share local enquiries. Based on this information please respond to the following statements using the scale provided:

[CHOICES]:

- A focus on a local historical enquiry based on the battlefield visits is a good idea
- Finding out more about how soldiers from our local region were affected by the war is very important

On the tours I think it is important to know more about experiences of soldiers from all regions and backgrounds

On the tours I think it is important to know more about the role played by former Empire and Commonwealth countries  
I would be very interested in attending a one-day CPD course on how to conduct WWI enquiries at some point prior to the tour

I would be very interested in registering on an online CPD course that helps me develop a WWI historical enquiry

I think that it will be easy to decide which teacher should go from our school

I think that deciding which two pupils will come from my school will be easy  
I think that using the visit to develop a local historical enquiry that I can then use with the rest of my pupils is a good idea

I think that sharing the pupils' experiences with the local community is a good idea  
I think it is very important that our school takes part in the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project?

I like the idea of taking part in the tour but I do not want to carry out an historical enquiry

[GRID OPTIONS]:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**Question 58 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

On the battlefield tours battlefield guides will be used. What role would you like to the battlefield guides to fulfil – please select one of the following options:

[CHOICES]:

- To provide on hand expertise at the battlefield sites as and when you need it
- To provide detailed information for you and your students on arrival at each site visited and to provide suitable onsite activities for your students to complete
- To help you and your students to interpret each battlefield site but allow scope for you to pursue your own investigations
- To provide additional help in identifying aspects of the battlefield sites that have connections with your school's local area/ community

**Question 59 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:**

Would you be interested in receiving more information about the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project?

[CHOICES]:

- Yes
- No

Follow-on question 59 a) [SINGLE LINE]:  
If yes, please provide a name and contact email address:

**PAGE 15**

**Page title:**  
Section 2

**Body text:**

Please complete this section if your answer to the question about participation in the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project was 'Unlikely' or 'Definitely not'.

**Question 60 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:**

What are the main reasons for you not signing up for one of the tours?



## Appendices continued

### [CHOICES]:

We already organise our own battlefield tours and are very satisfied with them  
 The tour that you offer is limited to two students whereas we would prefer to take groups of students to the battlefield sites  
 It is very difficult for me to get permission to take students out of school  
 I don't have the expertise to take my students to the battlefield sites  
 I don't have the time to do this  
 I am not interested in taking my students to the battlefield sites  
 The battlefield sites are too far away from my school  
 Other (please state)

### Question 61 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What additional support could the IOE provide to persuade you or your school to reconsider?

### [CHOICES]:

Help with getting permission from my head teacher.  
 Help with planning a visit as I have not taken students overseas before.  
 Help with planning a visit as I have not taken students to the battlefields sites before.  
 Additional information about the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project so I can make a more informed decision.  
 Other (please state)

### Question 62 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Would you be interested in receiving more information about the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours Project?

### [CHOICES]:

Yes  
 No

### Follow-on question 62 a) [SINGLE LINE]:

If yes, please provide a name and contact email address:

### PAGE 16

**Page title:**  
 Further comments

### Question 63 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

You have now reached the end of the survey. If you would like to make any general comments on the experience of filling in the survey, the First World War in the Classroom research project, or the WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours project, please use the box below.

### PAGE 17

**Page title:**  
 Thank you

### Body text:

On behalf of ourselves and the Institute of Education, thank you very much for filling in this survey. We very much appreciate your taking the time, and we hope you will visit our project pages to find out about results and future developments. If you have signed up to receive more information and/or be part of the prize draw for participants, we will be in touch in due course.

You can find the "First World War in the Classroom" pages at <http://www.intheclassroom.exeter.ac.uk/>

More about the Institute of Education's WWI Centenary Battlefield Tours project can be found at <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/87073.html>

You can contact the project leads any time for further information:

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### Appendix 1b): ENGLISH PATHWAY

#### PAGE 1

**Page title:**  
 Preliminary note

#### Body text:

Please note: This is the "English Pathway" for The First World War in the Classroom.

Please only proceed if you teach English literature in a secondary school or FE college in England. If you do not fall into either of these categories, please do not fill in this survey as it would compromise our data, and as you would find yourself unable to answer a number of questions.

### PAGES 2 TO 3 AS IN HISTORY PATHWAY (see Appendix 1a)

## Appendices continued

### PAGE 4

#### Page title:

Focus of the Survey

#### Body text:

In all of the questions below, unless stated otherwise, we are looking for "your personal experience rather than school policy". Please focus on "current or most recent experience" wherever possible.

Please also assume that we are looking primarily for experience directly related to your teaching of First World War writing. We define "First World War writing" as writing that addresses the First World War, whether contemporary with the war or retrospectively.

### PAGES 5 TO 7 AS IN HISTORY PATHWAY (see Appendix 1a)

### PAGE 8

#### Page title:

Teaching practice, aims and methods

#### Body text:

n/a

#### Question 14 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

At which levels have you taught First World War literature (i.e. writing that addresses the First World War, whether contemporary with the war or retrospectively)?

#### [CHOICES]:

KS3  
KS4  
Sixth form  
Adult learners

#### Question 15 [GRID]:

Where you do not teach First World War writing, please rate your reasons for not teaching it by indicating their relative importance.

#### [CHOICES]:

Not allowed for by school  
Exam board doesn't include option for First World War  
Not enough time  
Already covered at previous key stage  
Covered sufficiently in the media  
Covered sufficiently in other subjects  
Too emotionally upsetting for self  
Too emotionally upsetting for pupils  
Not sufficiently relevant to present-day pupils  
Not enough materials  
Hard to choose appropriate materials  
Not personally interested  
Not sufficiently knowledgeable  
Worried that pupils will not take the topic seriously or react inappropriately  
Other topics are more important  
Other (please state)

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

#### Question 16 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Please specify what you consider the "main level" at which you teach the First World War. "PLEASE NOTE:" We would like you to answer subsequent questions on resources and topics with this level in mind.

#### [CHOICES]:

KS3  
KS4  
Sixth form  
Adult learners

#### Question 17 [GRID]:

Where you do teach First World War writing, what is your main motivation? Please rate by indicating relative importance.

#### [CHOICES]:

Part of the department's scheme of work  
Required by National Curriculum  
Part of exam board requirements  
Personal interest  
I consider it important to pupils' education  
I consider it part of our national collective memory  
I consider it an important part of the literary canon  
It is too often confused with the Second World War  
It helps pupils understand twentieth century writing more generally  
This subject is well resourced in my school  
Importance of the First World War to school community

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

#### Question 18 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

How many "hours in total" do you devote to teaching the First World War on average in each year group you are teaching? (e.g. Year 9, 15 hours)

## Appendices continued

### Question 19 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

How many hours independent study time and homework time in total do you give pupils in addition to classroom teaching? (e.g. Year 9, 5 hours)

### Question 20 [GRID]:

If you do teach at KS4 and Sixth form level, please state which exam board(s) you follow (please ignore this question if you do not teach at these levels).

[CHOICES]:

KS4  
Sixth Form

[GRID OPTIONS]:

AQA  
Cambridge  
Edexcel  
IBacc  
IGCSE  
OCR  
Other (please state)

### Question 21 [GRID]:

If applicable, please name up to three types of materials specified by your exam board(s) at KS4 and Sixth form (please ignore this question if you do not teach at these levels).

[CHOICES]:

KS4  
Sixth Form

### Question 22 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Are you free to design your own lessons/ module on or incorporating First World War writing?

[CHOICES]:

Yes  
No

Partially (within framework of departmental policy)  
Partially (depending on year group)

### Question 23 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

Are you teaching First World War writing as part of a larger series/unit/course/topic area (e.g. poetry analysis)? If yes, please specify the series/unit/course/topic area and level at which you teach it.

### Question 24 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Does your school engage in cross-curricular teaching with regard to the First World War?

[CHOICES]:

No  
Unsure about school policy on this point  
Cross-curricular teaching is discouraged  
Does not discourage it, but does not happen  
Encourages it, but does not always happen  
Yes, across English and History  
Yes, across English and another subject (not History)  
Yes, across History and another subject (not English)  
Yes, across more than two subjects

### Question 25 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What resources have you used to teach First World War writing? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

[CHOICES]

Anthologies of war writing  
Anthologies of war poetry  
Original drafts of poems (e.g. sourced from the First World War Poetry Digital Archive)  
Classic war novels (e.g. *All Quiet on the Western Front*)

War memoirs (e.g. *Good-Bye to All That*)

Modern novels for adults (e.g. *Birdsong*, *Regeneration*)

Modern novels for young readers (e.g. *Private Peaceful*)

Films about the war (e.g. *Oh! What a Lovely War*)

Contemporary footage (e.g. old newsreels, Battle of the Somme)

YouTube clips

School archive

Letters or diary entries

Family documents

Historical documents

Television documentaries

*Blackadder Goes Forth*

The 'Horrible Histories'

Life writing (e.g. letters or diary entries)

Web resources

School textbooks

E-books

Radio programmes

Podcasts

Oral history materials

Visual resources (e.g. photographs, paintings, cartoons)

Objects/material artefacts

Resource packs from external organisations

Resource packs compiled by school/ department

Other (please state)

### Question 26 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

If applicable, please name up to three non-web-based resources you have used:

### Question 27 [MULTIPLE LINES]:

If applicable, please name up to three online / web-based resources you have used:

## Appendices continued

### Question 28 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

Which of these books does your school have a set of in your stock cupboard? Please tick all that apply.

#### [CHOICES]:

Up the Line to Death anthology  
Minds at War anthology  
Poems of Wilfred Owen  
Other war poetry anthology  
Other anthology containing war writing  
Journey's End (play)  
Testament of Youth (memoir)  
Private Peaceful (novel)  
War Horse (novel)  
Regeneration (novel)  
How Many Miles to Babylon? (novel)  
Strange Meeting (novel)  
Other war novel  
Other war memoir  
Other war play

### Question 29 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What methods/activities are you likely to use, or have you used in the past, to teach First World War writing? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

#### [CHOICES]:

Teacher talk  
Group work  
Pupils creating presentations on texts and/or their contexts  
Creative writing exercise  
Creating newspapers or posters  
Staged classroom debate  
Research project with thematic focus  
Research project with school focus  
Role play  
Re-enactment

Internet research

Online tutorials

Field trip

Other (please state)

### Question 30 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

What topics do you cover when teaching First World War writing? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

#### [CHOICES]:

Comprehension and analysis  
Poetry analysis  
Use of language for propaganda  
Life writing  
Writing about conflict more generally  
Narrative  
Identity  
Short fiction  
Other (please state)

### Question 31 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

Which authors are you likely to teach? Please answer with the "main level" at which you teach the First World War in mind (as stated above).

#### [CHOICES]:

Wilfred Owen  
Siegfried Sassoon  
Isaac Rosenberg  
Ivor Gurney  
Edward Thomas  
Frederick Manning  
Robert Graves  
Erich Maria Remarque  
Henri Barbusse  
Ernest Hemingway  
Jessie Pope  
Vera Brittain

Susan Hill

Jennifer Johnston

Pat Barker

Sebastian Faulks

John Boyne

Michael Morpurgo

Other (please state)

## PAGE 9

### Page title:

Your teaching rationale

### Body text:

n/a

### Question 32 [GRID]:

If you are given a choice of texts or topics to cover, how do you decide what to include in your teaching of First World War writing?

#### [CHOICES]:

Availability of materials  
Conveying the value of sacrifice for one's country  
Inspiring gratitude for the soldiers' sacrifice  
Challenging preconceived ideas  
Illustrating the horror/futility of war  
Likely to interest pupils  
Pupils have responded well in the past  
Chance for cross-curricular collaboration  
Personal interest  
Am confident in these topics  
Consider it an important part of the canon  
Other (please state)

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
Important  
Not that important  
Unimportant

## Appendices continued

### Question 33 [GRID]:

What are you trying to achieve in teaching First World War writing (i.e. what are your desired outcomes for your pupils)?

#### [CHOICES]:

No particular personal aims – set by exam board  
 Development of critical skills  
 Development of contextual understanding  
 Elicit a personal response from pupils  
 Educate pupils about the cost of war  
 Educate pupils about how texts form or reflect values such as duty and sacrifice  
 Demonstrate changes in poetic language/ technique  
 Demonstrate changes in attitude to war  
 Show how it changes the way we think and write about war  
 Illustrate step change in modern literature  
 Illustrate use of literature for propaganda  
 Demonstrate the futility of war  
 Explore personal development in reaction to hardship  
 Explore the effect of intense / common experience on literature  
 Illustrate the wide range of reactions to a major event  
 Widen understanding of the war beyond what is usually covered in the media

#### [GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important  
 Important  
 Not that important  
 Unimportant

### PAGE 10

#### Page title:

Extracurricular activities

#### Body text:

n/a

### Question 34 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Are you planning to organise any teaching-related or extra-curricular activities to coincide with the forthcoming First World War centenary (2014-2019)?

#### [CHOICES]:

Yes  
 No

### Follow-up question 34 a)

#### [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

If so, what categories do these activities fall into?

#### [CHOICES]:

Field trip  
 Remembrance service  
 Other remembrance event  
 Creative writing project  
 Learning diary  
 Other research-based project  
 Invited guest speaker  
 First World War-themed reading  
 Author visit  
 Drama project or performance  
 Community based event  
 Event linked to one organised by another organisation such as the Royal British Legion  
 Other (please state)

### Question 35 [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

If there are First World War-related field trips at your current school, where have these been to?

#### [CHOICES]:

Western front battlefields/cemeteries

Local cemeteries/memorials

Local museums

National museums

Local library

Local cinema for screening

Local archive

National archive

Theatre (play)

External talk or lecture (e.g. at local university or museum)

Other (please state)

### PAGE 11

#### Page title:

Your knowledge base and training

#### Body text:

n/a

#### SECTION:

To what extent do you agree with the following two statements:

### Question 36 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

I feel knowledgeable about First World War literature.

#### [CHOICES]:

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

### Question 37 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

I have read widely on First World War literature beyond school textbooks.

#### [CHOICES]:

Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neither agree nor disagree

## Appendices continued

Disagree  
Strongly disagree

### SECTION:

Please tell us about your training and experience related to teaching First World War writing:

#### Question 38 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Have you personally visited any First World War-related sites or museums?

[CHOICES]:

Yes

No

#### Follow-on question 38 a)

##### [MULTIPLE LINES]:

If applicable, please name up to three examples of sites or museums you have visited:

#### Question 39 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Have you had specific training on teaching First World War literature?

[CHOICES]:

Yes

No

#### Follow-on question 39 a)

##### [MULTIPLE ANSWER]:

If yes, what form did that training take?

[CHOICES]:

Part of undergraduate degree

Part of PGCE

Part of MA

Departmental CPD training

Training offered by external organisations

Self-taught

Informal advice by colleagues

Other (please state)

#### Follow-on question 39 b)

##### [SINGLE LINE]:

Please name the most recent training related to teaching First World War literature in which you have participated:

#### Follow-on question 39 c)

##### [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

Do you feel the training had a clear impact on your teaching practice?

[CHOICES]:

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

#### Question 40 [GRID]:

In general, how do you stay up-to-date with academic approaches/research in English literature? Please rate by indicating relative importance.

[CHOICES]:

I don't usually have the time.

Web research

Reading books other than textbooks.

Personal network from previous study

(e.g. PGCE or MA cohort).

Professional magazines (e.g. The Uses of English)

Academic journals (e.g. through JSTOR)

Academic web resources (e.g. Oxford

University digital archives or podcasts)

Membership in dedicated society (e.g. War

Poets Association)

Following research blogs

Google alerts

Inset Days

Teacher conferences

Academic conferences

Facebook

Twitter

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Very important

Important

Not that important

Unimportant

#### Question 41 [GRID]:

Which of the following would you be likely to find useful to your teaching practice relating to First World War writing?

[CHOICES]:

Workshops on teaching methods for teaching First World War writing

Presentations on new research in First World War Studies

Access to new research publications on First World War writing

More readily available teaching materials

Change to a different exam board

Opportunity to attend teacher conferences

Opportunity to discuss subject with university researchers

Opportunity to discuss subject with other teachers

Collaboration with colleagues in other subjects

A dedicated discussion forum

A database of ideas for lesson plans

Links to high quality online resources recommended by specialists in First World War studies

Links to teaching resources designed by other teachers

## Appendices continued

Online support / Q&A sessions by specialists in First World War studies  
 More help resourcing alternative First World War texts besides the established 'classics'  
 A personal visit to the battlefields under expert guidance

[GRID OPTIONS]:

Definitely  
 Very likely  
 Likely  
 Quite Likely  
 Unlikely  
 Definitely not

### Question 42 [MULTIPLE CHOICE]:

You will now move on to the next part of the survey, which looks more specifically at battlefield trips and will inform the Institute of Education's WWI Centenary Battlefield tours project. Before you move on to the next page, please tell us if you would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview or regional focus group related to this first part of the survey. There will be a prize draw for a £100 M&S voucher among all names submitted in this section in early September, and the winner will be contacted via email.

[CHOICES]:

Yes  
 No

### Follow-on question 42 a)

[SINGLE LINE]:

If yes, please provide a name and contact email address:

**PAGES 12 TO 17 AS IN HISTORY  
 PATHWAY (see Appendix 1a)**

## Appendices continued

### Appendix 2: Publicity for the online survey

#### Incentives:

- Two prize draws for gift vouchers of a total value of £200 were held – the first in mid-September and the second in early December – as an incentive for teachers to fill in the survey, and to submit their contact details for notification about follow-up activities.
- Survey adverts specified how the completion of the survey would benefit teachers by sharing the results and best practice.

#### Online and email publicity:

- We established a project Facebook page and Twitter account, which were used for regular posts / tweets on relevant news items and resources and which we also employed to push participation in the survey, e.g. by highlighting deadlines and impending prize draws.
- We ran an online advert in the form of a targeted banner in the Guardian Education online section with an estimated 151k monthly users, geo-targeted to users based in England. The advert ran for three weeks from 21 June 2013 (survey launch date).
- The project was featured in the news sections of both the University of Exeter and Northumbria University in June 2013.
- Leeds Legacies of War website.
- Articles and adverts about the survey appeared in the Western Front Association electronic newsletter (June 2013), the English Association website

(June 2013), Historical Association website and newsletter (May/June 2013), the English and Media Centre's LATE website (July 2013), and the Podium newsletter for FE teachers (October 2013).

- Anglia Tours email newsletter (summer 2013).
- Blog post on 1914.org, the IWM centenary portal (June 2013 (<http://www.1914.org/news/first-world-war-in-the-classroom-researchers-want-to-hear-from-you/>)).
- Blog posts on the Schools History Project Blog (4 June 2013, <http://www.schoolshistoryproject.org.uk/blog/>), the Hodder History Nest blog (June 2013, <https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/Subjects/History/History-Subject-Community/Hodder-History-Blog>), George Simmers's Great War Fiction blog (20 June 2013, <http://greatwarfiction.wordpress.com/>), and Tim Kendall's War Poets blog (4 July 2013, <http://war-poets.blogspot.co.uk/>).
- A diary piece featured on the Thinking History website on 21 June 2013 (<http://www.thinkinghistory.co.uk/diary/2013/06/first-world-war-in-the-classroom/>).

#### Print publicity:

- Half page landscape adverts in *Teaching History* (June and October 2013).
- Articles and adverts about the survey appeared in the *TES* (21 June 2013), the Western Front Association Bulletin (July 2013) and the English Association newsletter (June 2013).

#### Conference publicity and educational contacts:

- We contacted the Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI), Voice the Union, NATE (National Association for Teachers of English) and the Holocaust Educational Trust with requests to publicise the survey. Unfortunately, the Holocaust Educational Trust had to decline publicising the survey, as it fell outside their remit. Voice the Union advertised the survey via their Facebook page and an e-newsletter (June 2013), while NATE also featured the survey/project on their website in July. Anthony Seldon (Master of Wellington College) circulated information to all Heads of the HMC (Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference) which represents all heads of independent schools.
- OCR, Edexcel and AQA circulated information via their subject web pages for English and History and via their school contacts.
- The Teacher Steering Committee, initial workshop participants and survey participants up to September 2013 were asked to circulate a flyer/poster and encourage colleagues and any other potentially interested teachers to participate.
- Information about the survey and a call for participation were further circulated via Laura Webb, PGCE Subject lead for History at Exeter, and via contacts in the Local Authorities in the South West and North East respectively.
- Flyers were displayed and/or announcements made at the Historical Association conference (May 2013),



## Appendices continued

English and Media Centre teachers' conference and the Schools History Project conference (both July 2013), Midlands History Forum (October 2013) and an English Association A-Level Reform conference (October 2013).

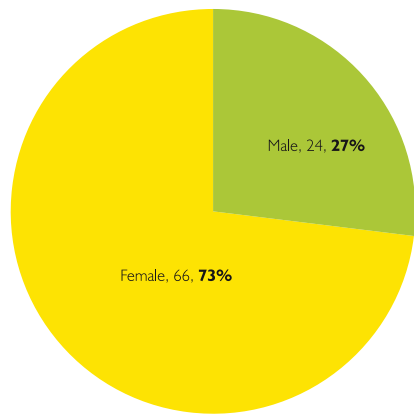
### Media publicity:

- Catriona Pennell appeared to talk about the project on BBC Spotlight South West (regional programme) on 21 June 2013, TES podcast on 7 November 2013 (<http://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/The-TES-Podcast-World-War-I-special-6373212>), and on BBC News 24 on 11 November 2013.
- Ann-Marie Einhaus spoke about the project on ITV Tyne Tees (regional news) on 13 November 2013.

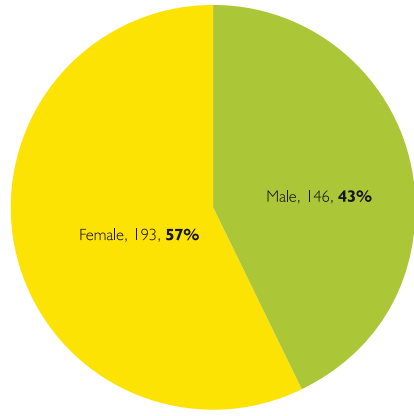
Appendices continued

Appendix 3: Demographic profile of survey respondents

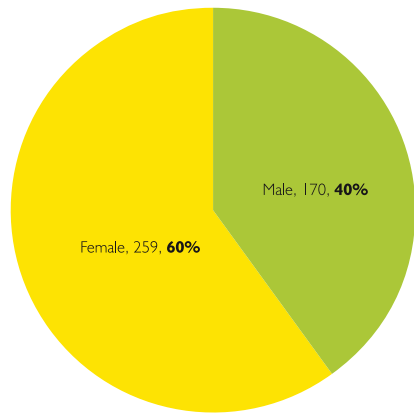
Gender English pathway



Gender History pathway

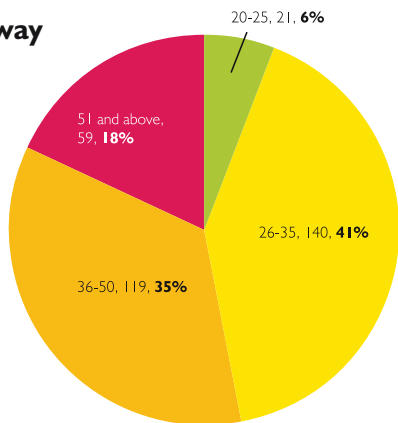


Gender All

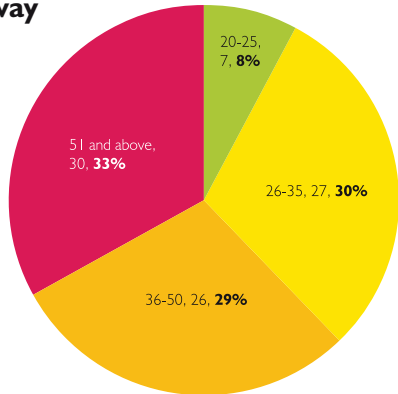


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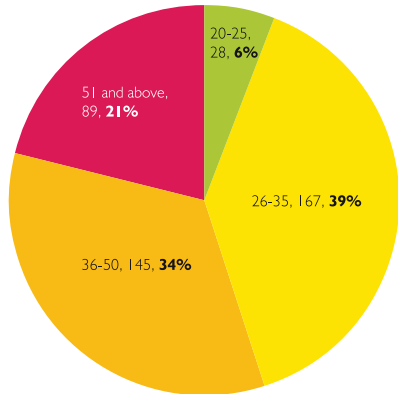
Age groups History pathway



Age groups English pathway

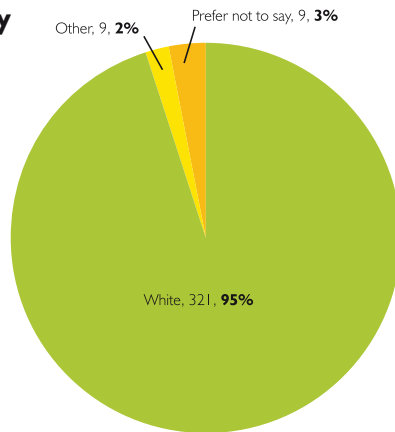


Age groups All

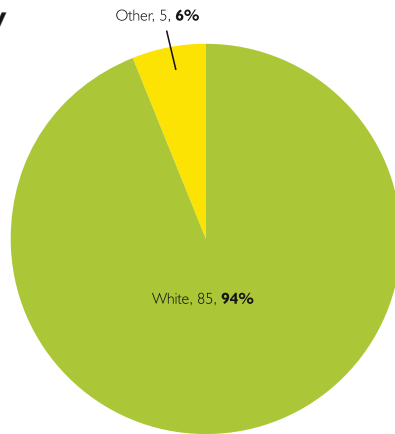


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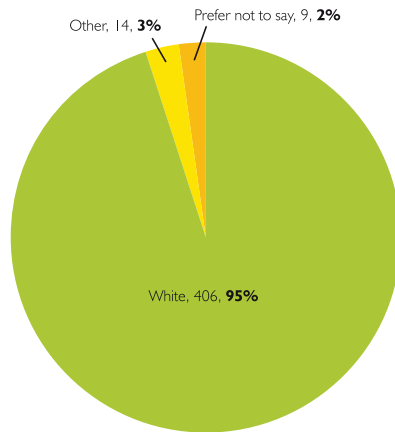
**Ethnicity History pathway**



**Ethnicity English pathway**

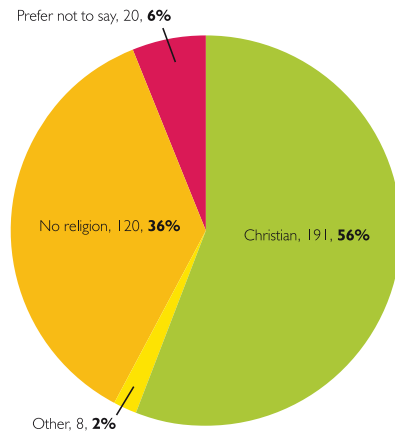


**Ethnicity All**

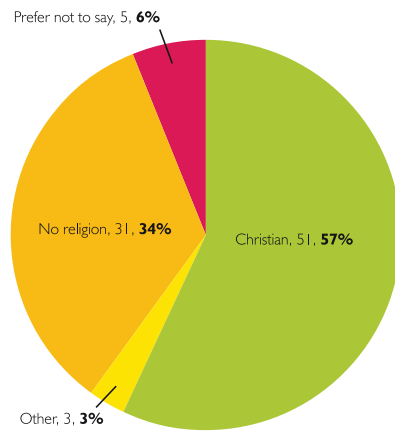


## Appendices continued

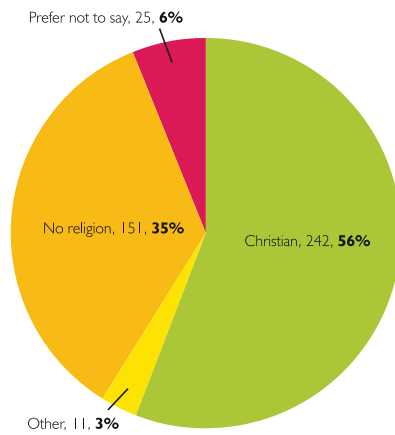
### Religion History pathway



### Religion English pathway

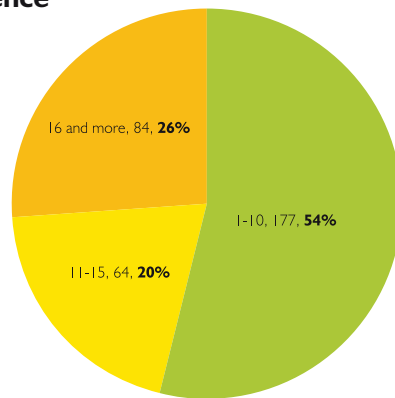


### Religion All

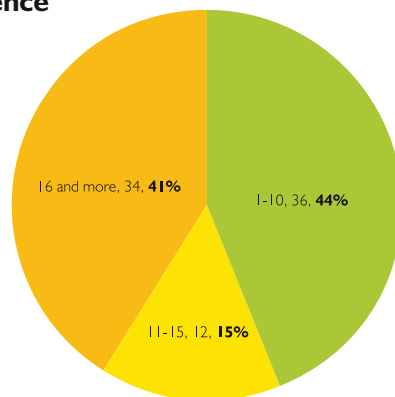


## Appendices continued

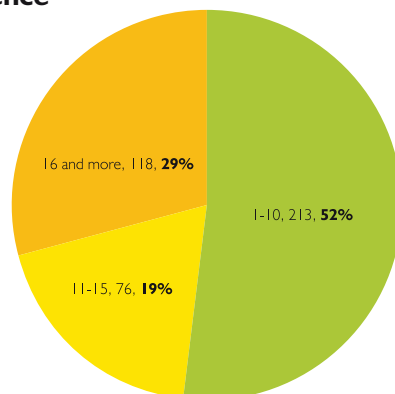
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**Years of teaching experience**  
**History pathway**

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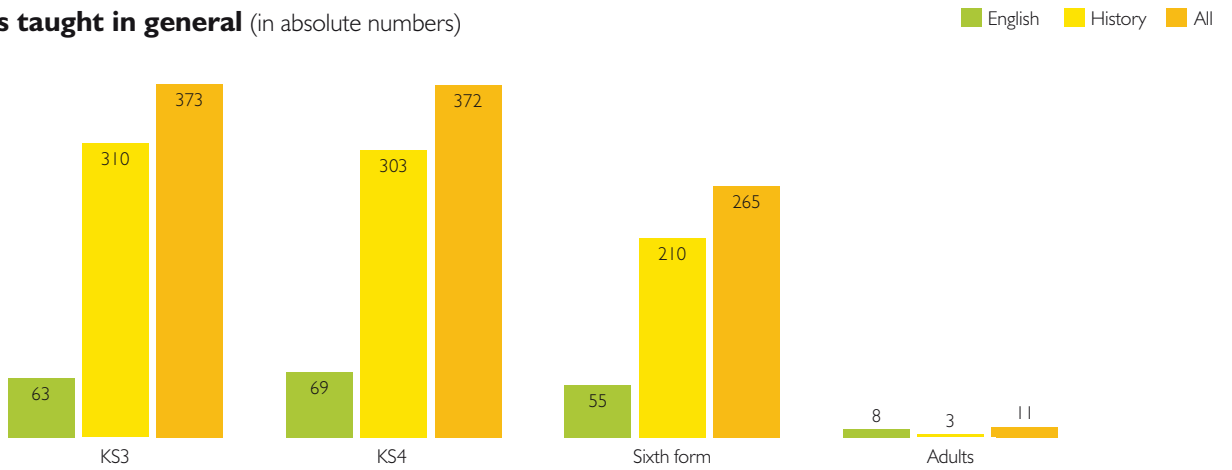
**Years of teaching experience**  
**English pathway**

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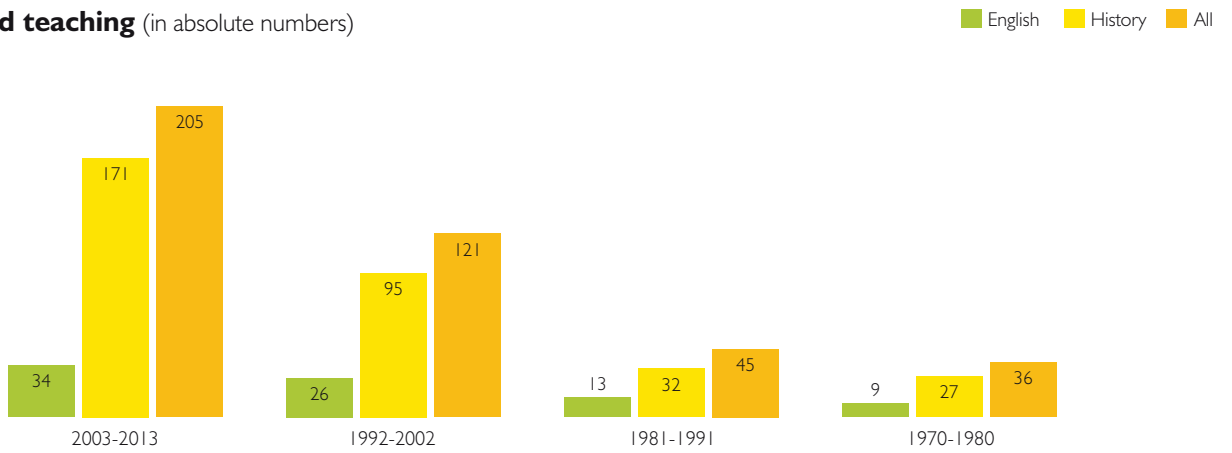
**Years of teaching experience**  
**All**

Appendices continued

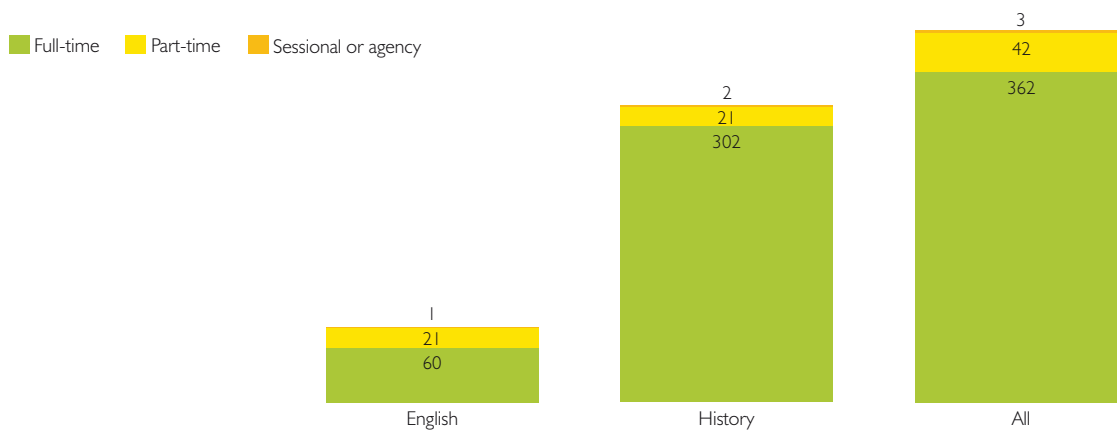
Year groups taught in general (in absolute numbers)



Year started teaching (in absolute numbers)



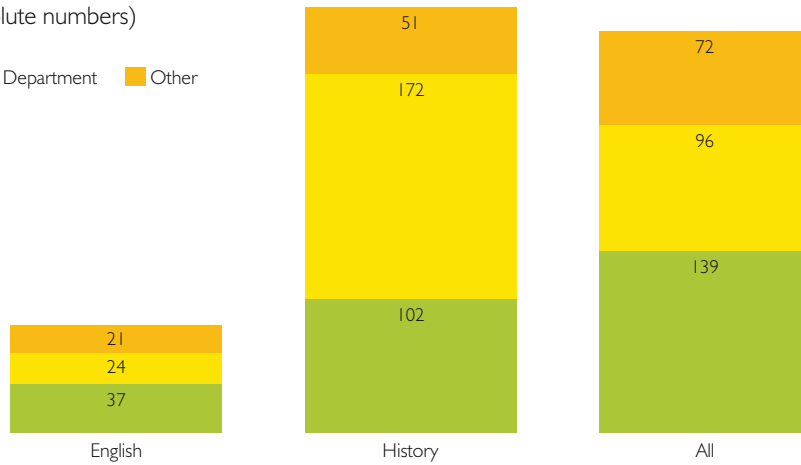
Employment status



Appendices continued

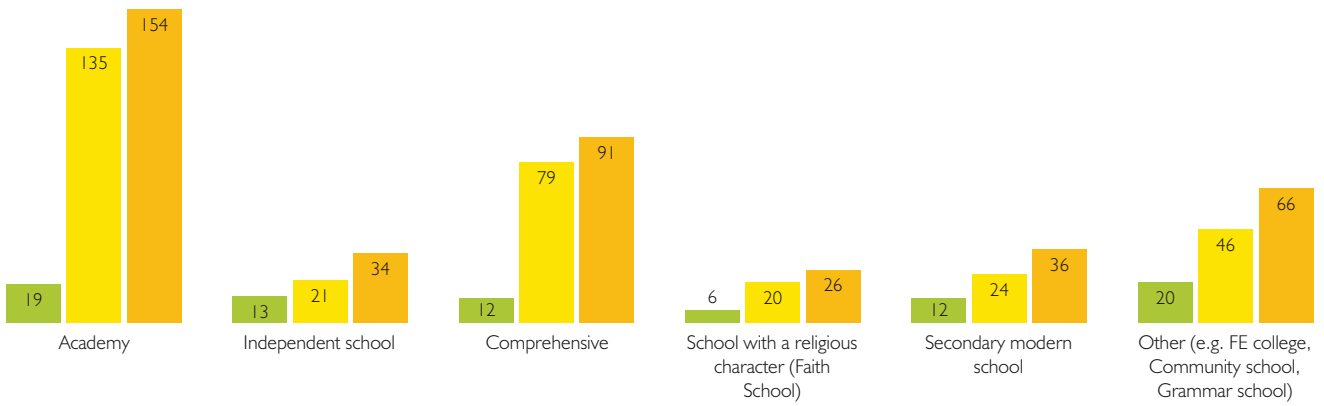
**Position in school** (in absolute numbers)

■ Fully qualified teacher ■ Head of Department ■ Other



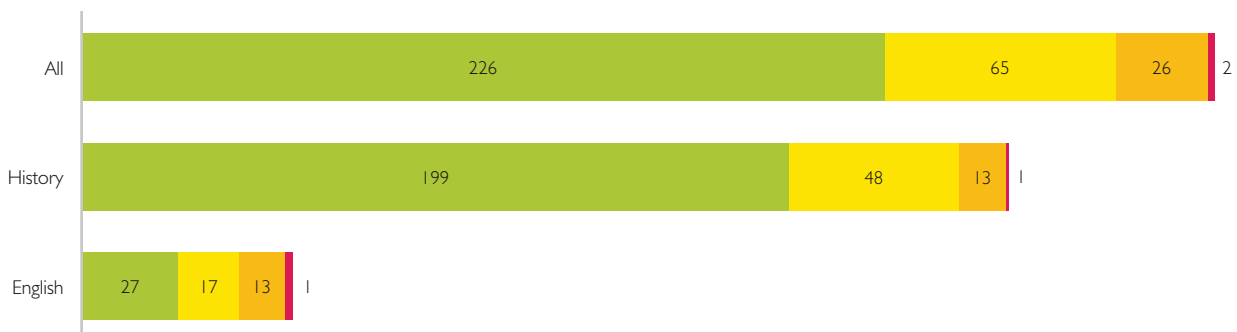
**Type of institution**

■ English ■ History ■ All



**Please specify what you consider the “main level” at which you teach the First World War** (in absolute numbers)

■ KS3 ■ KS4 ■ Sixth form ■ Adults





## Appendices continued

### Appendix 4: Free-text responses on examples of texts respondents have read and found useful

Responses have been grouped roughly by genre and put in approximate chronological order where this was possible. Texts or authors that were named more than once have been highlighted in red.

#### History Pathway

##### General statements

'Various academic books'  
 'Non fiction eg The Last Tommies'  
 'I read a variety of texts and articles. Jay Winter was my supervisor on the specialist subject of war memorial at Cambridge.'  
 'Too many to list. First studied it with Norman Stone in 1971. I'm a historian!'  
 'Causes of WWI'  
 'Books on causes and experiences of war'  
 'Can't remember'

##### Popular and scholarly historiography

Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (1961)  
 A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: An Illustrated History* (1963)  
 A.J.P. Taylor (text[s] unspecified)  
 A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (1965)  
 'Alistair Horne' (text[s] unspecified)  
 Philip Longworth, *The Unending Vigil: The History of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission* (1967/1985)  
 Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme: 1 July 1916* (1971) (x4)  
 John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme* (1976) (x2)  
 'Anything by John Keegan'

'John Keegan' (text[s] unspecified)  
 John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861-1945* (1980)  
 'John Terraine' (text[s] unspecified) (x2)  
 James Joll and Gordon Martel, *The Origins of the First World War* (1984)  
 Pierre Berton, *Vimy* (1986)  
 Trevor Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914-1918* (1986)  
 'John Laffin' (text[s] unspecified) (author of *British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One* [1988])  
 Ruth Henig, *The Origins of First World War* (1989)  
 Geoff Dyer, *The Missing of the Somme* (1994)  
 David Fletcher on tanks (text[s] unspecified)  
 Paddy Griffith, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18* (1994)  
 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995)  
 John Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (1997)  
 Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (1998) (x5)  
 John Keegan, *The First World War* (1998) (x4)  
 Richard Holmes, *The Western Front* (1999) (x2)  
 Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities* (2001) (x5)  
 'Anything by Gary Sheffield'  
 'Gary Sheffield' (text[s] unspecified)  
 Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume 1: To Arms* (2001) (x2)  
 'Hew Strachan' (text[s] unspecified)  
 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (2002)  
 George Robb, *British Culture and the First*

*World War* (2002)  
 Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Controversies and Consensus* (2002)  
 Gary Sheffield, *The Somme: A New History* (2003) (x3)  
 Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock: Britain and the First World War* (2003) (x2)  
 Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (2005)  
 Richard Holmes, *Tommy: The British Soldier on the Western Front 1914-1918* (2005) (x3)  
 'Anything by Richard Holmes'  
 'Richard Holmes' (text[s] unspecified) (x3)  
 Martin Gilbert (text[s] unspecified) (x2)  
 'Anything by Martin Gilbert'  
 Martin Gilbert, *Somme: The Heroism and Horror of War* (2006)  
 Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (2007) (x2)  
 Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (2008)  
 William Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (2009) (x2)  
 John Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War* (2010) (x2)  
 Jane Bingham, *Women at War: The progressive era, World War I and women's suffrage, 1900-1920* (2011)  
 Anthony Saunders, *Raiding on the Western Front* (2012)  
 Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (2012) (x2)  
 Kate Adie, *Fighting on the Home Front: The Legacy of Women in World War One* (2013)

## Appendices continued

### Oral History

Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (1978)

'Anything by Lyn MacDonald'

'Lyn MacDonald books'

'Lyn McDonald' (text[s] unspecified)

Lyn MacDonald, *They called it*

*Passchendaele: The Story of the Battle of Ypres and of the Men Who Fought in it* (1978) (x3)

Lyn MacDonald, *Somme* (1983) (x3)

Lyn MacDonald, *To the Last Man: Spring 1918* (1998)

Andy Simpson and Tom Donovan, *Voices from the Trenches: Life and Death on the Western Front* (1993/2006)

Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War* (2002) (x4)

Max Arthur, *Last Post: The Final Word from our First World War Soldiers* (2005)

### Regimental histories

'Various regimental histories'

'Regimental Histories'

History of the Bradford Pals Battalion

Philip Orr, *The Road to the Somme: Men of the Ulster Division Tell Their Story* (2008)

### Literary criticism

Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) (x2)

### Classic war novels

Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) (x4)

### Modern war novels for adults

'Lots of fiction'

'Fictional texts'

Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong* (1993) (x5)

Pat Barker, *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-1995) (x3)

### Poetry and biography

'War poetry' (x3)

Wilfred Owen's war poems

### Memoirs and other life writing

'Personal accounts, e.g. Guy Chapman, Sidney Rogerson etc'

'Memoirs of soldiers & home front'

'Diaries'

Ernst Jünger, *Storm of Steel* (version unspecified)

Charles Yale Harrison, *Generals Die in Bed* (1930)

Frank Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die* (1933)

Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (1933) (x2)

Francis T. Lind, *The Letters of Mayo*

*Lind: Newfoundland's Unofficial War Correspondent 1914-1916* (2001)

E.P.F. Lynch, *Somme Mud* (2006) (x3)

### Other named sources

BBC History Website (x2)

Guide books by Michael Stedman

Rose E.B. Coombs, *Before Endeavours*

*Fade: A Guide to the Battlefields of the First World War* (1976)

*My Boy Jack* (film)

R.C. Sherriff, *Journey's End* (1928) (play)

Frank McGuinness, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme* (1985) (play)

Andy Robertshaw, *24 Hour Trench* (2012) (experimental history)

Films and documentaries

Photo exhibitions

### English Pathway

#### Classic war novels and memoirs

Rose Macaulay, *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916)

Edmund Blunden, *Undertones of War* and poems (1928)

Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)

Robert Graves, *Good-bye to All That* (1929)

Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet...*

*Stepdaughters of War* (1930)

Siegfried Sassoon, *Siegfried's Journey* (1946)

and other Sassoon texts

#### Modern war novels and drama for adults

Peter Whelan, *The Accrington Pals* (1982)

Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong* (1993) (x2)

Pat Barker, *Regeneration* Trilogy (1991-1995)

Ben Elton, *The First Casualty* (2005)

#### Modern war novels for young readers

Michael Morpurgo, *War Horse* (1982)

Michael Morpurgo, *Private Peaceful* (2003)

Marcus Sedgwick, *The Foreshadowing* (2005)

### Poetry and biography

Poems of Edmund Blunden

Poems and biographies of Wilfred Owen (x3)

Jon Stallworthy, *The Oxford Book of War Poetry* (1984)

#### (Popular) historiography and oral history

Martin Middlebrook, *The First Day on the Somme* (1971)

Richard Holmes, *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (2001)

Max Arthur, *Forgotten Voices of the Great War* (2002)

Ann Clayton, *Chavasse, Double VC* (2006)

### Literary criticism

Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) (x2)

Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1991)

