



WAR

Poetry Unit



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Lesson 1

What was it like being a soldier in World War II?



Read this information to your pupils as a group. It will help them understand what being a young soldier in World War II was like as the scene setter is based on a real soldier's experience.

Jack - 1927-2018

Jack was born and raised in North London and had spent his early teens living through The Blitz.

Jack joined the British Army in 1943, aged just 15, as a Private in the Border Regiment. He lied about his age as he believed it was his duty to fight for his country. He was one of 2.2 million men who were in the British Army in World War II.

Jack arrived in Normandy on 9th June 1944, 3 days after the D-Day landings. He was originally there to unload supplies from ships onto the beaches. A month later, he joined the 15th (Scottish) Division and was sent to the front line to join the fierce fighting in Normandy against a very determined enemy. His unit took prisoners of war as young as 13.

D-Day was the largest invasion ever assembled. 156,000 Allied troops landed by sea and air on five beaches in Normandy: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword.

The D-Day landings were much more than just invading 5 beaches, they were missions as part of Operation Overlord, which was to invade France and drive the enemy back to end the war in Europe.

D-Day was a terrifying experience. Soldiers were shot at as they got off the boats. For boats stopped by the rocks, soldiers plunged into the cold sea, weighted down by their packs and uniform. As they came ashore, they moved across the open beach full of ridges and water-filled holes, with no cover and were surrounded by enemy gunfire and explosions. The Atlantic Wall defences were another challenge, as they had to make their way around man-made seawalls covered in barbed wire and hidden mines buried in the sand. These obstacles were known as 'Hitler's Atlantic Wall' – a course of 'impenetrable' defences stretching 1,670 miles from Norway to Spain.

The cost of life from the Normandy campaign was high for the Allied forces; 226,386 casualties: 72,911 killed/missing and 153,475 wounded, and many were under 20 years old.

Jack survived. He was one of the wounded; he had been injured by shrapnel. He was recovering from his injuries in France, when he started to retrain to be sent to Myanmar to fight the Japanese army. Jack hadn't fully recovered from his injuries and he was discharged from the British Army in July 1945 as unfit for service.

The D-Day landings were the start of Allied operations which led to the liberation of Europe, defeated Nazi Germany and ended World War II. Jack was now 17.

Task - Discuss The Scene Setter Images

Here are some question suggestions to help you discuss with your pupils: (Write down your pupils' responses on the board to build a word bank for writing their poems in a later lesson.)

1. How do you feel after hearing Jack's story?
2. What do you think it would have been like to grow up during The Blitz?
3. Choose one of your senses to describe D-Day. E.g. hearing gunfire.
4. How do you think Jack felt on the boat?
5. How do you think Jack felt when injured?
6. How do you think he felt when the war ended?
7. Invite your pupils to ask any questions they may have.

You'll find these on the next page!



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Lesson 1

Scene Setter Images



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Lesson 2

What is Remembrance Day?



Remind your pupils of Jack's story. Do your pupils know what Remembrance Day is? Do any of them attend events or represent a club/cadets, etc. for this? If they do, invite them to share their experiences of how they've commemorated Remembrance Day with the class.

Here is some more information on Remembrance Day:

Remembrance Day is on 11th November each year. It marks the ceasefire in World War I which was signed on that day back in 1918.

It unites across faiths, cultures and backgrounds to remember the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces community from Britain and the Commonwealth.

Remembrance Day does not glorify war. Those who wish to remember wear a red poppy; a sign of both Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future.

The British Legion advises: "Remembrance unites people of all faiths, cultures, and backgrounds but it is also deeply personal. Everyone is free to remember in their own way, or to choose not to remember at all."

Invite your pupils to ask any questions.

Task - Create A Word Bank

You can do this as a class or individually. You'll need 2 columns:

Adjectives	Nouns
scary	soldier
noisy	prime minister
smoky	pilot

What descriptive words can your pupils think of to describe war? (Adjectives column)

What people or things would they expect to see in a war poem? (Nouns column)

Write down ideas in each column to create an individual or a class word bank your pupils can use when writing a poem at the end of this unit.

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Lesson 3

What is a sense poem?



Remind your pupils of Jack's story.

Now ask if your pupils can name the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

Read out these two short passages, then invite a couple of pupils to give an example of a description using one of the senses, to give your class examples of how they can describe war in a sense poem. E.g. 'Icy water flooding my boots'.

Passage 1

Taken from Jack's story in Lesson 1

"D-Day was a terrifying experience. Soldiers were shot at as they got off the boats. For boats stopped by the rocks, soldiers plunged into the cold sea, weighted down by their packs and uniform. As they came ashore, they moved across the open beach full of ridges and water-filled holes, with no cover and were surrounded by enemy gunfire and explosions."

Passage 2

Quote from Harry Leigh-Dugmore – full recount available at <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/stories/remembering-dunkirk-we-were-still-soldiers-by-god>

"One day we found a quartermaster's truck that had been abandoned. None of us had had a bath or even a good wash for at least a week, so we stripped at the side of the road and re-dressed ourselves in brand-new underclothes and shirts – wonderfully refreshing.

We helped ourselves, too, to his stock of bully beef and had a tin each to eat then and there. But even after about three days with nothing to eat we could not manage a whole tin each."

Task - Write A Sense Poem

There is a worksheet of this template available at the end of this unit. Each pupil needs a worksheet or to copy the template into their English workbook.

Ask your pupils to look at their (or the class) word bank you created in Lesson 2.

Next, explain the template poem of:

War looks...
War smells...
War sounds...
War feels...
War tastes ...
War reminds me of...
Lest we forget.



Your pupils now use the word bank to help them complete the sentences.

You can adapt this by asking your pupils to add in poetic techniques.

Once your pupils have written their poems, ask them to share their poem with the person sat next to them for feedback. Allow them 5 minutes for self-assessment, and a further 5 minutes for edits.

If your pupils have a relative they'd like to dedicate their poem to, please ask them to – this is a wonderful way to remember and commemorate them.



Invite your pupils to share their poems. Choose your favourite poems/performers to read their poems in a Remembrance Day assembly/service, should your school have one.

Task - Create A Display

You can provide your pupils with different war-themed templates, or simply invite them to write their poem up on A4 paper and then decorate with their own drawings or border design.

You can use these as a classroom, corridor or hall display. Please share your display photos with us, we'd love to see them! Email your photo to creatives@youngwriters.co.uk with 'War Poetry Photo As Requested' as the subject line.

Model Poems



My War Sense Poem

War looks like a quiet street, people hiding, trying to stay safe
War smells like smoke and burning
War sounds like an air-raid siren and whistling Doodlebugs
War feels scary, I am afraid, when will it stop?
War tastes like rations, I'm always hungry
War reminds me of... sadness and destruction
Lest we forget.

A Sense Poem About War

War looks like anger
War smells like fear
War sounds like banging drums
War feels wrong
War tastes like a rotten egg
War reminds me of a horrible dream
Lest we forget.

Boom!

War looks like mud splattering up soldiers' uniforms
War smells like gunpowder from shots fired
War sounds like banging, screaming, yelling
War feels like it will never end
War tastes like stale rations
War reminds me of a terrifying nightmare
Lest we forget.







Write your war poem ideas in the middle circle, then draw or write anything that describes your idea in each sense circle.

Sound

What can you hear?



Taste

What can you taste?



Touch

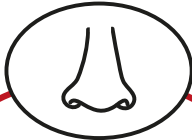
What can you feel?



My war poem
is about:

Smell

What can you smell?



Sight

What can you see?





FREEPOST RSLY-AUJA-RAHY

Young Writers War Poetry

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**Please provide any feedback
in this box, thank you!**

☐ (Tick if we can share your feedback, name and school)

TEACHER ENTRY FORM

Please complete information in the boxes below.

Alternatively, you can enter your pupils' work digitally at

www.youngwriters.co.uk/competitions/enter or by email to competitions@youngwriters.co.uk

Contact Name:

Job Title:

School Name:

School Address:

Town:

County:

Postcode:

Telephone Number:

Email:

Number of entries enclosed in this envelope:

Would you be interested in Young Writers' News? (Tick to receive) ☐

(Get the latest resources, activities, news, giveaways and offers straight into your inbox every week!)

(If you don't tick this you'll only receive email updates about your entries)

**WAR POETRY IS OPEN ALL YEAR ROUND. GET YOUR ENTRIES TO US BY THE
END OF TERM TO BE CONSIDERED FOR THIS TERM'S PRIZES**

www.youngwriters.co.uk



This war poetry competitions invites your pupils to write a poem in any style. They can write about past or current wars & conflict, the causes and consequences of war, the people who live through them as well as their hopes for a world free from violence. It's also an opportunity to express their thoughts on peace, change, and the possibility of a better future, helping them develop empathy and critical thinking skills.

Engage your pupils to write on this thought-provoking theme all year-round as part of a topic or for special days, such as D-Day, Remembrance Day or Refugee Week.

IT'S EASY TO TAKE PART

1. Download pupil entry forms or photocopy them (or use A4 paper)
2. Ask pupils to write their poem, ensuring their name, surname and age are included on their work
3. Send your entries, along with your teacher entry form (available to download online), to:

Freepost RSLY-AUJA-RAHY
Young Writers War Poetry
Remus House
Peterborough
PE2 9BF

GO GREEN!

Upload your entries at
www.youngwriters.co.uk/competitions/enter

OR email them to us at
competitions@youngwriters.co.uk

OR use the Online Writing Portal that your pupils can type directly in to.
Log in or create your teacher account at
www.youngwriters.co.uk/teachers

War Poetry is **open all year round**, get your entries to us by the end of term to be considered for this term's prizes.

PRIZES FOR SCHOOLS



Young Writers' Award of Excellence and a £250 National Book Token.

Plus a free copy of the book your pupils feature in for every participating school.

The more entries you send, the more free books you'll receive!

FOR PUPILS



Our favourite poet in each war poetry anthology, will win a fantastic creative writing goody bag!

Plus every entrant receives a bookmark for taking part. Pupils chosen for publication also receive a certificate.

(Chosen from schools who have entered the resource hub competitions each term)

Check out Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube to join in the conversation!

YoungWritersUK YoungWritersCW youngwriterscw youngwriterscw youngwriterscw-uk

Plus much more! All available today at: www.youngwriters.co.uk

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