



What actually happened on the Western Front during Christmas 1914?

In December 1914, thousands of German and Allied soldiers around Ypres took part in spontaneous and informal truces – an extraordinary moment that still has powerful resonance today.

Here are examples of some themes that you could pick up through an enquiry into *what actually happened on the Western Front during Christmas 1914?*

- How was this experienced by those who took part and who heard about it afterwards?
 - Was this a 'normal' event?
 - Why has it been difficult to establish exactly what happened? (*It was informal and spontaneous.*)
 - How do we know what actually happened?
 - Why might playing football have attracted particular attention – then and now? (*People have gone out of their way to deny that football was played.*)
- How significant were the Christmas truces of 1914?

Did you know that this was not the first time that unofficial truces had taken place in wartime?

You could ask your students to research the following wars and find out about the truces that took place in them:

The Peninsular War 1808-1814

The Crimean War 1854-1856

The American Civil War 1861-1865

The Boer War 1899-1902

More details about the truces are available at:

An Account of an American Civil War truce:

<http://www.nps.gov/anti/historyculture/dunkerchurch.htm>

A summary of historic war truces:

<https://suite101.com/a/wartime-truces-a84689>

Your students could compare the different truces looking for similarities and differences to the 1914 truces.



Some examples of resources relating to the teaching of the Christmas truces:

Football Remembers – an education pack for schools

British Council in partnership with the FA, Premier League and Football League, has published the *Football Remembers* education pack which is designed to offer support and resources for students learning about the events that took place over Christmas 1914. There is a history section with suggested activities and an excellent collection of resources for use in the classroom. It includes letters, diary extracts, photographs taken by the soldiers at the time, examples of the souvenirs exchanged by the soldiers, war records, memoirs and propaganda posters.

The pack can be downloaded from: <http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/classroom-resources/football-remembers>

A hard copy of the pack will also have been sent to your school.

Sainsbury's and the Christmas Truce 2014

The recent advert released by Sainsbury's has generated a lot of discussion about what really happened in 1914. Why not use the advert to set students up for an enquiry to investigate how accurate the advert is? Below is a link to an excellent resource developed by Mr Allsop which is well worth a look!

<http://www.mrallsophistory.com/revision/the-supermarket-and-the-truce-sainsburyschristmas.html>

What was the Christmas Truce, 1914? – from the BBC History website

Henry Williamson recalls what happened to him during Christmas 1914 in a video clip from the BBC History archive. Henry survived the war and went on to become a well-known author – his best known work is *Tarka the Otter*, first published in 1927.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/clips/zs7msbk>

The Christmas Truce - Recently discovered letter written by General Congreve VC reports on his experience of the Christmas Truce

This letter which has been recently discovered adds a further interpretation about the Christmas Truce. The newspaper headline talks about the 'Real Christmas Truce' and it would be interesting to get students to assess how useful this source really is? The article contains copies of the letter, a transcript and an audio clip.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11271839/The-real-story-behind-the-1914-Christmas-truce.html>

The Christmas Truce – Tunics for Goalposts: Football and the First World War. A BBC Radio Five Live production first broadcast on 11 December 2014

This broadcast looks at the role of football in the First World War and includes a very good clip on the role of football during the Christmas Truce, featuring renowned Truce expert Taff Gillingham.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b04svg19>

What really happened during the Christmas Truce? A BBC i-wonder guide, presented by Dan Snow

A BBC i-wonder guide which presents a brief but clear summary of the events surrounding the Christmas Truce including video, and audio clips from veterans who were there.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zxsfyrd>