# The Unknown Soldier: Citizenship



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## Learning objectives

Young people will:

* Have increased understanding of the humanitarian impact of armed conflict
* Explore feelings and emotions of people involved in, and affected by, armed conflict
* Have greater respect for human life and dignity
* Respect the values and the principles underpinning International Humanitarian Law

Age range: 14–19-year-olds

## Introduction

­This resource is based on the short film [*The Unknown Soldier*](https://vimeo.com/144877010) and has been designed to support humanitarian learning through the teaching of citizenship.

We recommend you read the [introductory sheet](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/49D044650D154F3D8591220B17D6357A.ashx) before using this resource.

This resource has been designed for delivery over three sessions but the structure can be adapted to suite your own teaching needs.

The sessions guide young people through Citizenship-relevant activities to explore the humanitarian impact of armed conflict and in particular to learn about the principles underpinning International Humanitarian Law (IHL). In particular learners will:

* Respond to The Unknown Soldier film and reflect on the impact of war on individuals
* Explore the links between armed conflict, laws and justice
* Think about compassion and human dignity in the context of armed conflict
* Reflect on the role citizens have played in armed conflict over the past 100 years.

Additional [supporting activities](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/D678FD21EB2A441AAA779EF14D29ABAB.ashx) also accompany this session plan.

## Curriculum links

Learners will also cover the following specific aspects of Citizenship as identified in the relevant curriculum or specification documents:

**England:**

* human rights and international law
* sources of law and how the law helps society deal with complex problems.

**Scotland:**

Within the cross thematic learning of Global Citizenship:

* develop an understanding of equality and human rights issues and make links to rights and responsibilities locally, nationally and globally
* demonstrate the values of wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity both within and outwith the school community.

**Northern Ireland:**

* identify and exercise their rights and social responsibilities in relation to local, national and global issues;
* develop their understanding of the role of society and government in safeguarding individual and collective rights in order to promote equality and to ensure that everyone is treated fairly;
* develop awareness of the role of non-governmental organisations.

**Wales:**

Learners should be given opportunities to:

* take different perspectives into account when making informed decisions and choices effectively
* use a range of techniques for personal reflection; and
* to understand: local and global contemporary issues and events, e.g. homelessness and international migration.

## Session one: Thinking about conflict

1. Explain to young people that over the next two sessions they will be critically analysing and responding to a short film or film short called *The Unknown Soldier*.

Show young people the film and use either [supporting activity 2](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/D678FD21EB2A441AAA779EF14D29ABAB.ashx): Character building or [activity 4](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/D678FD21EB2A441AAA779EF14D29ABAB.ashx): Counting the cost to help them engage with the film. This should take between 20-30 minutes.

1. Ask learners how relevant they feel the film is to understanding conflicts today. Allow for open responses to this and record key points from their discussions on a flipchart or whiteboard for later use. [To aid their thinking if they struggle, they might consider what the conditions are like, what the emotions of the soldiers might be, the sounds and sights they experience – do they think there are similarities or differences compared with WWI and today?]

As conversation naturally slows, push the discussions a little further by asking ‘how are today’s international armed conflicts different to WWI?’ [Issues that may come up include the use of technology, the weapons used, the locations of conflict, the methods of warfare (i.e. not in trenches), the impact on soldiers and civilians, the nature and number of casualties etc.]

1. Introduce to young people the idea that whether during WWI or in modern warfare, international armed conflict has a humanitarian impact – it affects people.

Ask learners to form small groups and ask them to discuss what they think the humanitarian impacts of armed conflict might be.

Give groups around five minutes to start a discussion, and then bring the whole group back together, inviting each group to contribute one example of a humanitarian impact. You could record their ideas for future reference.

To close the sharing of ideas ask young people: ‘In your opinion, is the humanitarian impact of international armed conflict more or less now than in the time of WWI?’ Use a position line to explore their response to the question:

* First give them a minute to think about the question.
* Next explain that there is an imaginary line across the room with ‘less impact’ at one end of the line and ‘more impact’ at the other. Ensure that ‘humanitarian impact’ as a concept is widely understood. Explain that they are free to position themselves at any point on the line based on their own feelings/understanding.
* Repeat the question ‘is the humanitarian impact of international armed conflict more or less now than in the time of WWI?’ and invite learners to move to their chosen position.
* Walk the line and invite insights from learners as to why they chose their position. [It is important that learners realise there are not right and wrong answers here – more about their own feelings and interpretations].
* Explain that the following activities will inform learners’ opinions further, and they will be asked to reconsider their viewpoints and whether they have changed.

1. Introduce to learners the idea of rules and laws to govern how conflicts are fought. Show them the [short animation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwpzzAefx9M) that introduces the ‘Rules of War’.

In small groups give each group of learners a set of ‘key principles’ cards that have been pre-cut from the [template](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/206B9C5AE23949BF852ACF38525471FB.ashx) provided. Ask learners to match the principle with the explanation [the purpose here is to check their understanding of the key principles drawn from the film]. The correct matching is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Distinction | People fighting in an armed conflict must distinguish between civilians and combatants and between civilian objects (e.g. schools, houses) and military objectives (e.g. buildings and positions where enemy combatants and their arms are located). |
| Proportionality | It is against the law to launch an attack which would also cause excessive (too much) loss of civilian life, injuries and damage to property when considering the real and direct military advantage that the attack might achieve. |
| Humane treatment | Everyone should be treated humanely and not be discriminated against. |
| Military necessity | Forces should only engage in those acts necessary to achieve a real military objective e.g. only target those facilities which, if destroyed, will lead to submission (as a step to ending the conflict) as quickly as possible. |

Explain to learners that these ‘rules of war’ (also known as International Humanitarian Law or IHL) are based on the Geneva Conventions.

Use the [PowerPoint presentation](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/2FBCB91669C141F9BC0D6819D99603A6.ashx) to explain that:

* This is the name for a collection of written agreements that began in 1865 in Geneva, Switzerland when a man called Henri Dunant who also founded the Red Cross brought countries together to create some shared rules that would make warfare more humane and allow those injured or caught up in the conflict to benefit from humanitarian assistance.
* Countries now sign up to these agreements to ensure that if conflicts happen there are protections for those not involved (e.g. civilians) or no longer part of the fighting (e.g. wounded soldiers).
* The first Red Cross societies were established around this time to provide medical assistance to those wounded on the battlefield.
* The red cross emblem was adopted as a sign of this assistance and has since been joined by the red crescent or the red crystal. When worn or displayed in armed conflict, by military medical staff or red cross and red crescent organisations, they indicate a neutral party providing humanitarian support to those caught up in conflict.
* The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have specific mandates arising from and related to the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC work with National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to raise awareness of them and uphold their principles.
* The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is impartial: it makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

1. Explain that now learners have taken on new information about IHL they will again vote with their feet.

Remind them of the imaginary line they stood on to show their thoughts about the humanitarian impact of conflict.

Ask them to again find a position that shows their opinion. This may be the same, or different. Thinking back to the film, *The Unknown Soldier* and what they have learned about the development of international humanitarian law, ask young people:

* Was the treatment of the soldiers in the trenches humane?
* Was the humanitarian impact of conflict greater during WWI than it is today?

Support learners to reflect on how their views have developed or shifted.

## Session two: Rules of war

1. Explain to learners that this session will build on their learning inspired by the film *The Unknown Soldier* and will focus in particular on the idea of rules. Begin with a broad discussion of rules and law using the following prompts to support discussion.

* Why do we need rules/law?
* What rules/laws do we have in our own lives? (you could consider these at scales from local to global)
* How are rules/laws made?
* Who is responsible for keeping the rules/law?
* What happens if rules/laws are broken?
* Do rules/laws ever change? And if so, why?
* Why might humanitarianism be an important concept in rules/laws?

A variation on a discussion could be to use each of the questions/prompts below as a stimulus for smaller groups to work on preparing a response. Learners could then present their ideas back to the whole group to build up a collective understanding around rules.

1. Show the film, *The Unknown Soldier* again and explain to learners that they are going to take on the role of being a rule keeper and to explore a series of ‘what happened next’ scenarios in relation to the film and to IHL [you may need to remind learners of their IHL learning from the previous session].

After the film has finished, organise learners into small groups (4-6 per group) and give them a [set of the scenarios](http://www.redcross.org.uk/~/media/A3531C421E144DF8819D4552E608D967.ashx). Explain that they should read each scenario and decide what action within IHL should be taken next and which principle (from step 4 in session 1) it relates to [you can reuse the ‘key principles’ cards from session one to support learners].

Once they have had sufficient time to address each scenario, work through each one in turn as a whole group. Ask groups to respond before sharing the official response as outlined below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Scenario | What should happen next | Related principle |
| Scenario 1: Soldier X makes it over the top and is approaching the enemy trenches. He notices an enemy combatant in front of him but the combatant is clearly injured and unable to use their weapon. | Soldier X should not engage the enemy combatant as they are no longer able to fight and do not pose a threat. | Distinction |
| Scenario 2: You are a Red Cross volunteer caring for the wounded in the British trenches. You are dealing with the dying and wounded when two soldiers tumble into the trenches in front of you. One of them, wearing a British uniform, has a deep cut which looks as though it is from a bayonet, but is not immediately life threatening. The other wearing a German uniform has a more serious injury from shell fragments and is having trouble breathing. | Prioritise treating the German solider whose injuries are more serious (greater immediate need). | Humane treatment and impartiality |
| Scenario 3: As you and your soldiers successfully gain ground you pursue a group of enemy combatants into a nearby village some distance from the battlefront. As you approach, they take refuge in a house, but as they burst through the door to take shelter you can clearly see there are civilians huddled together in the front room already. | You should not attack as there are civilians present and the military objective/advantage is not clear enough. | Proportionality and Distinction |
| Scenario 4: You have made it over the top, but the noise, smoke and rain is making it almost impossible to find your way forwards. You are tripping over fallen bodies and slipping in the thick mud. You hear a noise ahead and prepare to engage but catch a glimpse of a Red Cross and what looks like someone carrying a wounded soldier. | Do not engage – the red cross emblem indicates neutrality and protection and should not be attacked. Also, the wounded solider is no longer a combatant because he is wounded. | Distinction |
| Scenario 5: You have made good progress towards enemy lines but suddenly find yourself separated and surrounded by enemy combatants. You quickly realise you are outnumbered and surrender by dropping your weapon and raising your hands. | You should not be harmed as you have removed yourself from conflict and are no longer a threat or able to fight. You may be taken prisoner but you should be treated humanely by your captors. | Distinction, Humane treatment |

## Session three: Conflict, citizenship and humanitarianism

1. International humanitarian law (IHL) is underpinned by values such as compassion, justice, equality, respect and integrity – values that are often associated with citizenship too.

Ask learners: is being a humanitarian therefore also being a good citizen and are good citizens good humanitarians?

You could explore these through a Venn diagram looking at where they differ and where they overlap.

For further support understanding the concept of ‘humanitarianism’ refer to [supporting online Red Cross teaching resources](http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Lesson-plans/What-is-humanitarianism).

Pose the question**: ‘what is our role as citizens in upholding the humanitarian principles of IHL?’**

Encourage learners to use their Venn diagram or discussions to help answer this.

1. Volunteering as a humanitarian act – then and now.

**THEN:** One humanitarian/good citizen act that dates back to WWI is the act of volunteering in order to help those suffering from the impact of international armed conflict.

Many of the injured soldiers in WWI would have been treated by Red Cross volunteers in field hospitals on the battlefield and later in hospitals away from the front line. [Find out more about WWI volunteers](http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources/Lesson-plans/First-World-War-volunteers).

**NOW:** Volunteers with Red Cross and Red Crescent organisations continue to offer support to those affected by modern day armed conflicts today, whether on the front line in Syria or more remotely by managing the humanitarian impact of the conflict, such as caring for the large number of refugees who have been fleeing the Syrian conflict zone.

Thinking about being a volunteer in a conflict situation such as WWI or a modern day conflict such as Syria, what volunteer role from those listed below do you think you would be most suited to in terms of your skills and character? Once you have chosen a role discuss your reasons briefly with a partner.

Example volunteer roles

* Food provision (i.e. cook or baker)
* First aider
* Distribution (i.e. warehousing and delivery of supplies)
* Missing persons service (helping people to find their loved ones)
* Communications (assisting people to communicate with friends and family)
* Emotional support (i.e. helping those who have suffered loss or trauma)
* Meeting basic needs (i.e. building shelters, providing water, blankets etc.)
* Driver (supplies, ambulance, transport etc.)

Are there some aspects of volunteering that are common to all or most of these different roles? Why do people volunteer? What might motivate them?

To find out more about volunteering in modern-day conflict situations, such as in Syria, browse these pictures of volunteer roles and their motivations for volunteering

<http://www.ifrc.org/en/news-and-media/news-stories/middle-east-and-north-africa/syria/>

1. Another act of citizenship is that of raising awareness of the humanitarian impacts of armed conflict.

The film, *The Unknown Soldier*, is one such example of this. The filmmaker said of his choice to make the film:

*“ Research had shown that many young people failed to identify with WWI. It was an event that happened three or more generations ago and doesn’t easily lend itself to the moral story of good versus evil that World War II does.*

*“We wanted to create a film that made the war, the experiences of the soldiers, the horrendous conditions and ‘choices’ they were faced with seem more relevant to young people today …*

*“if most of the viewers had been born 100 years earlier they almost certainly would have been involved in the war in some way.”*

Ask learners:

* How effective do you think the film was as an act of citizenship?
* What about its effectiveness in raising awareness of humanitarianism?

1. Ask learners to use the film as inspiration to work in small groups to come up with their own act of citizenship that combines being a good citizen with being humanitarian.

This could link directly to WWI or if learners prefer they could apply their learning to a more current international armed conflict.

Learners can work individually or in small groups to think of way to express their learning, or they could use the suggestions below - their act could be in the form of:

* a creative piece – a play, a poem, a song, a painting etc.
* an awareness-raising piece – posters to raise issues, leaflet to inform other young people.
* an action – becoming a volunteer, committing to find out more, designing a workshop for younger learners in the school.