

British Life on the Home Front: World War I

Museum of Brands Worksheet

Move through the Time Tunnel to the section on Britain in the 1910s. The following questions relate to items found in this section of the collection (specifically 1914-18).

Propaganda

Propaganda is information and ideas that are distributed with the intention of influencing points of view and furthering political causes. It was used by the government during WWI to influence the way people thought about the war and what they believed. Propaganda appeared not just on posters, but in a variety of everyday items including food packaging, children's toys, and board games.

- Pick one example of propaganda from the display case for each of the following categories and write down what messages you think they are trying to communicate to the British Public.

Propaganda on food packaging

Food brand:

What message does it communicate?

How are imagery and text used to communicate this message?

Propaganda on the cover of children's books

Title of children's book:

What message does it communicate?

How are imagery and text used to communicate this message?

Propaganda on board games

Name of the board game:

What message does it communicate?

How are imagery and text used to communicate this message?

2. OXO is a popular food brand best known for producing stock cubes. Have a look at the OXO War Map on the bottom shelf of the display case. Branding is all about presenting an image of the company to its customers and is often used to build a company's reputation. With this in mind, why do you think OXO chose to produce a map like this?

3. At the outbreak of war in 1914 the British Army had approximately 710,000 men at its disposal. In comparison to the French and German armies this number was considered too small, so Lord Kitchener needed to find a way to persuade more men to enlist in the army. Next to the display of toys and games there are three propaganda posters. They share the same purpose of persuading young men to enlist in the army. To do so they use an important propaganda tool, emotional appeal. The posters are designed to play with the emotions of the public. Imagine you are a young man living in Britain in 1914, and for each of the three posters write down how they would have made you feel and why.

Forward! Forward to victory, enlist now!

Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?

There's room for you to enlist today

Which of the three posters is most effective in your opinion?

War and British society

The outbreak of war had an enormous impact on the home front for ordinary members of the British Public. Many of the men between the ages of 18-41 were called up to the front line to fight, leaving both their families and their jobs behind. British society had to adapt to the demands of war, which included some women moving out of their previously domestic lifestyles to join the workforce. The nation was also under the jurisdiction of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) from 1914, which gave the government new powers such as the power to imprison without trial, to suppress criticism, and to commandeer economic resources.

1. Pick two of the objects in the collection and consider what they tell us about what ordinary civilians believed life in the trenches to be like. Here is an example to get you started.

EXAMPLE: The Battle of Ypres booklet presented by the Home and Colonial Stores

The image shows a Scottish soldier pointing a musket at a defeated German soldier. There are several aspects of the image that suggest people held an idealised image of life in the trenches. The man surrendering is uninjured, no one appears to have sustained an injury. There is one dead body in the background near the canon, but the image is not in any way gory. Everyone is very clean and not covered in mud as you would expect, and there is no debris lying around. It suggests that people imagined life on the front to include conclusive victories with very little loss of life, and generally an idealised image. This image was produced by a retail chain so how far ordinary people would have believed this image to be accurate is difficult to gauge.

1.)

2.)

2. A) There are a number of war-themed board games and jigsaws within the WWI collection. Which features of this collection of games do you find most revealing of popular attitudes and ideas about the war? List three features and what is it you think they tell us about popular attitudes to the war.

1.)

2.)

3.)

B) What are some of the limitations of the board games as a source?

3. In 1916 conscription was introduced in Britain, requiring men between the ages of 18-41 to join the army. With a large proportion of the male workforce leaving their jobs to join the war, farms and factories were left without a sufficient number of workers. Women started to take over men's roles in these industries, and the traditionally domestic role of women began to be transformed.

Consider to what extent the museum's collection of WWI artefacts reflect this changing role. For instance, there are several images of women within the WWI section of the collection, what kinds of roles are the women serving? Write down which object it is and describe the image of the woman.

Object (description and brand name)	What is the woman depicted doing?