

Quaker Peace  
& Social Witness

# Women in World War I

## Summary

Published on the centenary of the first International Congress of Women on 28 April 1915, this two-lesson sequence allows students to explore independently the wide range of activities women were engaged in during World War I (WWI) and ask, are women the real peacemakers? Students will become experts in the stories they discover about women who strove for peace, supported the war, worked, campaigned for suffrage or tried to help the victims of war.



American delegates to the International Congress of Women. By Bain News Service, publisher [public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

### Aim

*To explore gender by learning about the different experiences of women in World War I*

**Age range** 14+

**Duration** 2 hours

### Objectives

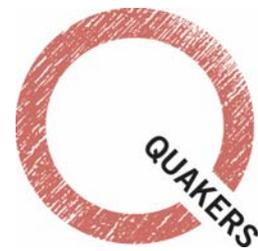
- ✓ Every participant will gain knowledge of a particular role women played in WWI
- ✓ Every participant will gain an understanding of gender and how it affects the way people act or are expected to act
- ✓ Every participant will practise speaking and listening about different roles played by women
- ✓ Some participants will critically evaluate different gender roles

### Resources

<b>(update using heading 5)</b>	“Agree” and “Disagree” signs .....	3
	Gender cards (printed list of cut-up cards in an envelope) .....	3
	Gender grid .....	3
	“Women of Britain say ‘Go!’” (page 13 of <i>Conscience</i> ).....	4
	Class access to the internet .....	5
	Women in World War I Resource sheet .....	5
	Any props, print-outs or computer files for student presentations.....	5
Presentation notes worksheet .....	5	

## This will help you with:

<b>OFSTED:</b>
✓ Pupils' social development by "cooperating well with others and being able to resolve conflicts effectively"
✓ Pupils' moral development by "investigating... moral and ethical issues" and by "understanding the consequences of their actions"
✓ Willingness to take part in a range of activities requiring social skills and the help they are given with developing these skills
✓ Responding to students' diverse needs... stereotypical views are challenged and pupils learn to appreciate and view positively differences in others, whether arising from race, gender, ability or disability
<b>PSHE &amp; Citizenship Curriculum</b>
Critical thinking and enquiry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ engage with and reflect on different ideas, opinions, beliefs and values when exploring topical and controversial issues and problems</li><li>✓ analyse and evaluate sources used, questioning different values, ideas and viewpoints and recognising bias.</li></ul> Advocacy and representation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ express and explain their own opinions to others through discussions, formal debates and voting.</li></ul>
✓ Diversity: appreciating that, in our communities, there are similarities as well as differences between people of different race, religion, culture, ability or disability, gender, age or sexual orientation.
<b>KS3 History</b>
✓ know and understand the history of these islands as a coherent, chronological narrative, from the earliest times to the present day: how people's lives have shaped this nation and how Britain has influenced and been influenced by the wider world
✓ gain and deploy a historically grounded understanding of abstract terms (in this case, "gender" and "peace")
✓ challenges for Britain, Europe and the wider world from 1901 to the present day <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ women's suffrage</li><li>○ First World War</li></ul>

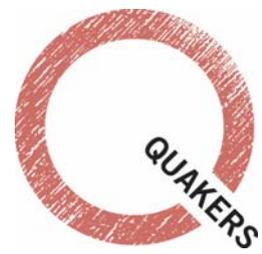


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## Lesson plan

Timing	Length	Activity	Notes
<b>LESSON 1 (of 2)</b>			
0–10 minutes	10	<p><b>Starter discussion: opinion spectrum</b></p> <p>Label one end of the room “Agree” and the other “Disagree”. Explain that there is an imaginary line between the two. Ask students to position themselves on that line in response to this statement:</p> <p>Agree ← “Girls are more peaceful than boys” → Disagree</p> <p>Discuss why students chose their positions, referring to what they know or have experienced. Suggest a no-names rule if they are talking about their own life in school.</p>	<p><b>“Agree” and “Disagree” signs</b></p> <p>Use this “opinion spectrum” activity to elicit students’ opinions about gender, and encourage debate and questioning between them.</p>
10–25 minutes	15	<p><b>Gender word sort</b></p> <p>Introduce the words “sex” and “gender” and explain that “sex” refers to the biological characteristics of men and women, and “gender” is about what we say maleness and femaleness are – they are an idea we have put together – for example, that girls like pink or boys like football. They shape who we are. Introduce language like masculine/ feminine if you feel the group is ready. Asks pairs or threes to sort the cards on the grid according to what is “good” and “bad” as well as generally “male” and “female”. Students who finish sorting can add words of their own. Discuss what they find and their reasoning. Explore why particular words are not typically used about one gender and the effect this might have.</p>	<p><b>Gender cards (printed list of cut-up cards in an envelope)</b></p> <p><b>Gender grid</b></p> <p>This activity should consolidate students’ understanding of “gender” as constructed, not absolute. Some students may observe that a word is positive when male and negative when female. To develop discussion, you could reintroduce the spectrum activity with more words,</p>

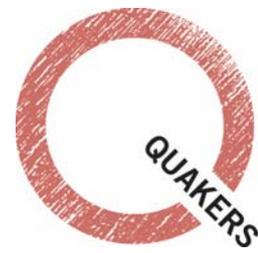
Timing	Length	Activity	Notes
			labelling one end “masculine” and one end “feminine”.
25–30 minutes	5	<p><b>Set the historical scene</b></p> <p>Through discussion and questioning, explain what was happening in World War I.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What was happening 100 years ago (in 1915)?</i> <i>World War I in Europe had gone on for nearly a year – it hadn’t finished by Christmas 1914 (as people had hoped). In fact, it had got bogged down in frontlines stretching from the North Sea to Switzerland</i></li> <li>• <i>Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand had just tried a big attack on the Ottoman Empire (today’s Turkey), which ended in failure – the war wasn’t going anywhere.</i></li> <li>• <i>Who was doing the fighting? Men – women could not join the army at the time. Does that mean that men are more violent than women?</i></li> <li>• Show students the poster “Women of Britain say ‘Go!’” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>What is its message?</i></li> <li>○ <i>Who is it aimed at (the audience)?</i></li> <li>○ <i>Would it work?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Explain that the idea of gender – what men/boys and women/girls are like – has changed over time. Students will explore what women were doing 100 years ago and what versions of gender they suggest.</p>	<p><b>“Women of Britain say ‘Go!’” (page 13 of <i>Conscience</i>)</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Useful images of women in war via Imperial War Museums (IWM)</b></p>



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Timing	Length	Activity	Notes
30–60 minutes	30	<p><b>Research Women in World War I – group task:</b>  <i>So what were women doing in WWI? You're going to find out.</i></p> <p>Divide students into groups of 4 or 5 to prepare a presentation on one of these topics. They could present Powerpoint slides, a drama, or a talk.</p> <p>Each presentation should answer these three questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What did the women you studied do?</i></li> <li>2. <i>Why did they do it?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What does this say about women being peaceful?</i></li> </ol>	<p>Either, you could arrange...</p> <hr/> <p><b>Class access to the internet</b></p> <p>...to allow students to research their topics online,  <b>or</b> you could print out materials from the websites listed on the:</p> <hr/> <p><b>Women in World War I Resource sheet</b></p> <hr/> <p>...then distribute these on each group's table.</p> <p>The presentations will require time to prepare. You could ask students to set themselves a relevant homework task as part of the process.</p>
			<p><b>LESSON 2 (of 2)</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Presentation practice</b>            At the start of the second lesson, give students some final time to prepare and practise their presentations</p>
10–50 minutes	40	<p><b>Watch the presentations (40 minutes):</b></p> <p>Give each student a worksheet to take notes on other groups' presentations.</p> <p>Discuss after each presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does that fit our idea of women's role or not?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did it fit people's idea about women at the time?</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>Presentation notes worksheet</b></p>

Timing	Length	Activity	Notes
50–60 minutes	10	<p><b>Final discussion</b>  <i>Based on what you've learnt, have your opinions changed?</i></p> <p>Reprise the opinion spectrum from the beginning of the first lesson to explore this:                      Agree ← "Girls are more peaceful than boys" → Disagree</p>	<p>Have students' feelings stayed the same or changed? What evidence from the presentations affected their opinions?</p>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>End</b>	



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## Printable Resource 1: Gender word sort: printable cards

These words can be cut up or simply printed for students to write onto the grid.

boring	mucky	adventurous
relaxed	weak	pretty
cheeky	gossipy	peaceful
naughty	aggressive	stuck-up
positive	strong	thoughtful
clever	wimpy	two-faced
bully	champion	pushover
bright	brooding	jealous
lazy	dainty	emotional
loud	nurturing	cowardly
gentle	active	funny
calm	chiselled	moody
weak	brave	hard-working
cruel	pleasant	dedicated
energetic	confident	elegant
ditsy	butch	slick
sensitive	thoughtless	ambitious
passionate	frigid	petty

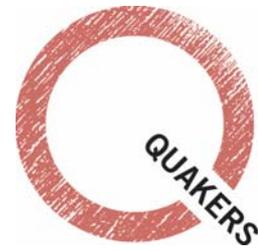


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## Printable Resource 2: Gender word sort grid

Sort the words according to whether they are generally more “male” or “female”, and whether they are “good” or “bad” things. If you finish the collection, you can add your own words.

Gender	Good	Both or neither	Bad
Boy			
Both or neither			
Girl			



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### Printable Resource 3: Women in World War I Research

In your group, prepare a five-minute presentation explaining:

1. *What did the women you studied do?*
2. *Why did they do it?*
3. *What does this say about women being peaceful?*

#### Group 1: Suffragette movement

The suffragettes were women who campaigned to get the vote even before the war:

- [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/suffragettes.htm](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/suffragettes.htm)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJNfNmbwyTI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJNfNmbwyTI)

#### Group 2: Women at work

Many women were working before World War I, but the need grew enormously as more and more men left to serve in the military:

- [www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-women-war-workers-of-the-north-west](http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-women-war-workers-of-the-north-west)
- [www.striking-women.org/module/women-and-work/world-war-i-1914-1918](http://www.striking-women.org/module/women-and-work/world-war-i-1914-1918)

#### Group 3: Striving for peace

Some women believed the war itself was wrong and campaigned for peace:

- Emily Hobhouse
  - [www.quaker.org.uk/files/Conviction-WWI-secondary-school-resource.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Conviction-WWI-secondary-school-resource.pdf) (p. 10)
- International Congress of Women, 1915, where women from 12 countries gathered for peace
  - [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/international-congress-of-women-opens-at-the-hague](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/international-congress-of-women-opens-at-the-hague)
  - [http://archive.org/stream/womenathagueint00adda/womenathagueint00adda\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/womenathagueint00adda/womenathagueint00adda_djvu.txt)

#### Group 4: Relieving suffering

Some women were distressed by the suffering of people and determined to do something to help:

- Hilda Clark
  - <http://whitefeatherdiaries.org/overwhelmed>
- Rachel Wilson and the women of the Friends Ambulance Unit
  - [www.quaker.org.uk/files/Conscience-WWI-primary-school-resource.pdf](http://www.quaker.org.uk/files/Conscience-WWI-primary-school-resource.pdf) (p. 23)

#### Group 5: Encouraging men to fight

Some women believed it was right to fight and campaigned to encourage more men to fight:

- *The Order Of The White Feather*
  - [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOnMFO21c6Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOnMFO21c6Y) (Scene from Downton Abbey)
  - [www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/11/first-world-war-white-feather-cowardice](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/11/first-world-war-white-feather-cowardice)
  - [www.opendemocracy.net/5050/nicoletta-f-gullace/white-feather-girls-womens-militarism-in-uk](http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/nicoletta-f-gullace/white-feather-girls-womens-militarism-in-uk)
  - <http://spartacus-educational.com/FWWfeather.htm>

**See also:** 12 facts about women in World War I:

[www.iwm.org.uk/history/12-things-you-didnt-know-about-women-in-the-first-world-war](http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/12-things-you-didnt-know-about-women-in-the-first-world-war)



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#### Printable Resource 4: Women in WWI Presentation notes

Topic	Notes (who/what/why?)
<b>Suffragettes</b>	
<b>Workers</b>	
<b>Striving for peace</b>	
<b>Relieving suffering</b>	
<b>Encouraging men to fight</b>	