

Chapel Street, Manchester

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World War One

Overview of learning:

- To introduce World War One
- To explore the effect of those 'left' at home
- To what memorials are and how/why we remember those from the past

Interesting aspects:

- How can we make the long list of names of men on war memorials have meaning for people today
- What memorials mean and why they exist
- How small communities are effected by big events

Inquiry questions:

- Why was Chapel Street called the "Bravest Little Street' In Britain?
- How did the war affect the people 'left' behind?
- How do we remember people from the past and is it important?

Narrative:

Chapel Street, Altringham, Manchester was once called the 'Bravest Little Street in Britain'. This small, ordinary terraced street in Manchester was home to men, women and children who lived and worked in local factories and consisted of 60 homes. Although it was bulldozed in the 196's you can still find a small blue plaque that commemorates the people that lived there and fought in WW1.

Other points of view:

- The men who went to fight in the war
- The Government who sent the men to fight in the war
- The families who campaigned in 2009 for the street to have a blue plaque dedicated to the men

Tasks:

- Create a street and family home representing Chapel Street 1914
- Work together to dramatise an ordinary day in the life of people living in the street
- Respond in role to the news of the declaration of war
- Make decisions about how/if you would say goodbye
- Create and share group poems about how 'waiting' for news
- Work together to imagine and dramatise what news from the front line might be
- Discuss memorials and if/why they are important

Links to curriculum:

- History
- English

Steps:

1) Signing the Space

Tell me about this photograph?. This 'community'? (Slide2)

It doesn't exist any more because it was bulldozed in the 1960's but I suppose it must have been both an ordinary street and an extraordinary street? Does this image tell us anything more information? (Slide3)

We are going to explore the story of an ordinary street in Manchester. A street that was awarded this (hold up a sign for the children saying "Bravest Little Street in England".) I know that in this street 161 men went to fight in World War One. That's quite a lot of men isn't it? I know that 29 of these men lost their lives. Never returned to this street, to their homes. I wonder what that street must have been like to live in? Do you think we could make that street here?

With the children tape on the floor the two parallel lines that create the two sides of the street. Discuss, as you tape, the size of the homes (the main living space) and the close proximity of the community. They should group themselves and create their 'homes' either side of the street. It can be affective to have the projection screen at one end of the 'street' to provide a focal point later.

Explain that we whilst we know who went to war we don't have the information as to which house number they lived in but that they will be inventing these. If they haven't already done so ask them to choose a home to live in and to give their house a number also marking this using tape. Ask them to add in the detail; windows, fireplaces etc using the tape. Support them with the historical facts for example

having a fireplace etc. They should also mark their front step as seen in the images, the door onto the street and a window looking out to the street.

Know this house. For this is your home.

2) Choosing a Name

Show the children of the family groups from the Roll of Honour (slide 4) and give them some time to explore the names. http://www.traffordwardead.co.uk/index.php?memorials=TRUE&memorial_id=73. Explain what a Roll of Honour is and give the children a chance to make decisions about which family they are going to imagine to be. Write the name of the family group on a card and place it near the door step of each home.

On a separate piece of paper write the first name of one of the men from the roll of honour (some families are mentioned several times so they need to pick one member to focus upon). Ask them to consider where this person would normally be, where they imagine that they would be and why e.g. John normally sits in the big chair near the fire as he likes to warm his feet after a long days work. Place the names of the one of the people from the list in the house where they would normally be. Ask them to share their rationale as this is the building blocks to imagining that this person is part of their 'family' living in their home with them. Remind them that this is the scene before the war has begun and that they should show the person who will be going to war by placing their name card where they would be. They need to be clear what that person would have been doing however such as eating at the table or sitting by the fire reading a story to his children. This will be used later when 'war is declared'.

3) Life Before

Ask the children to stand in the 'street' looking into their homes in 1914. Explain that the war has not yet officially begun. Explain that they will have some time to create a photo of normal life in their home **BEFORE** the war and to consider what they might be doing. Tell them that they will have to decide who is who in the family unit however they wont be the names on the cards or the soldiers but the extended family, the people that would be left behind as their loved ones, their brothers, their sons, their fathers went to fight.

Ask them to think about normal family life and what people would do on a normal day. Ask each to draw something that belongs to them (considering the time period) and place it in to the space where it would normally be found. For example it might be a watch they were given as a wedding present or something as simple as the cup they always use for their first cup of tea in the morning.

Ask them to add themselves into the image to create a ‘normal day’. What would they be going? Ask them to freeze in their positions. Explain that you are going to walk down this ordinary street, this street that has so many families living in it, this close community. Explain that as you pass you will listen in, when you do their home/scene will come to life. When you move on they will freeze again. You may give them some time to consider what they might be doing or saying before walking past.

Give the children time to make their images and walk down the street looking in to the windows of the homes listening to the houses of Chapel Street.

4) War is Declared

When you have passed each house and with a sense of urgency tell them that you have some news that will change their lives and the streets forever. Explain that war has broken out and that the call for men has begun, that last night the family gathered around the fire and that is when announced that someone in their family had decided to join the war effort and that they were going to sign up and fight. Ask them to turn to the card with the name of the person that they have placed in their image earlier imagining that they are sat there and that they had just announced that they are leaving for war.

What would your immediate reaction be? Change you positions to show your reaction. Hold that image. I wonder what would you say to each other? Would you want to ask them questions? Would you be pleased? Would you want them to stay at home? What would you be worried about?

Remind them that at this time it would be seen as their duty and something that the men must do.

Give them time to have small conversations in role before stopping them. Explain that you are going to walk down the street again but this time something has changed for war has been declared. Explain that as you pass each house you can listen in to their conversations but that as you pass their conversations will become quiet again. Slowly walk down the street eavesdropping in as though listening at the doors.

4) Saying Goodbye

And now the day had come. The men had signed up for war. On Chapel Street 161 men had signed up from 60 houses. 29 of these men would never return. But today their hearts were full of hope and pride as they prepared to say good bye to their families to go to the great War. Some had never left their city, most had never traveled abroad or been to another country but today these men, these ordinary men left to go to the trenches to fight.

Can you all place your name card on the street so I can read them? Now you have a decision to make. Are you going to come to the door, the street to wave them goodbye or would you stay in the house having said your goodbyes already? If you would come to the street can you stand on the line that is the front wall to your house? If you would stay inside would you make an image of what you would be doing instead? Encourage the children to move quickly and quietly.

As I walk down the street I will collect your name cards and this will be the men leaving. As I pass each of your homes and as the men leave your homes I am going to be able to hear what you would say to them as they left. You hope that they will return safely but you can't be sure so what you say is important. It is what you would want them to remember. If you are sat inside I will place a hand on your shoulder and be able to hear your thoughts.

Move down the street collecting the name cards giving each the time to say what they would say. When they have done this gesture for them to sit down as otherwise they can get restless. Consider any children that may need protecting with regards to saying goodbye to family members.

When you reach the end of the street narrate that you will walk down the street one more time but this time things are different for the men have left, that this is the first night and ask them to create a new still image of the first night at home without their loved ones. Give them thinking time to consider what might be different, what might have changed and what they would be doing.

5) Waiting

It must have been hard for the family groups being left at home, to be waiting at home. In your groups can you discuss how it would feel? Can I ask you as a group to complete the sentence "Waiting..."

In their groups they should complete the sentence and then practice how it should be said with regards to intonation as well as speaking in unison. They should then add one movement that they do and decide on which word they should do the action.

When all teams have done this ask the whole class to then complete the sentence "Our street is waiting...". It may be a new sentence or one that summarises theirs. Again ask them to create a movement that they can all do but encourage a naturalistic, considered move rather than a over dramatic one. When they have practiced this explain that they will now piece everything together ending with "Our street...".

Narrate their stories so far such as the men have left the street, the families are getting on with everyday life but all around them they can feel the echoes of war and all they can do is wait. Prompt each group by leading the narration "our street is waiting..." and by gesturing to which group should speak.

6) The Telegram

When they have completed the last sentence immediately hold up an envelope and tell the children that this contains news of their loved one. This is best done in role as part of their community. Highlight that it could be from the soldier, a friend of the soldier, the war office and that the news may be good or unfortunately it may be bad. In their small groups they will need to decide who it is from and what news it may carry.

Ask the children to create a still image with all of them reading the telegram in their homes. They should create two images; 1) the reading the news and 2) their reactions to the news. Give children time to practice moving swiftly but quietly from the still image to the next.

Explain to them that the telegram will pass through each of the homes so they need to also work out how they receive the telegram and how they will pass it on. Each group will essentially have four distinct choreographed movements: receiving the telegram, reading the telegram, reacting to the telegram and passing the telegram on.

Lead the start of this movement sequence by passing the letter to the first group. If you are brave singing a song as this sequence is done can add texture to the piece and help the children focus. It needs to be melancholy such as a slow version of Pack Up Your Troubles or When This Lousy War is Over.

7) The Roll Of Honour

Bring the children to the screen and talk them through the Roll of Honour (Slide 7). Remind them about the facts of this street. Ask them to discuss what they know about this community now that they have imagined it. Show them the images of the men standing around the roll of honour. Inform them that there was also a separate list that listed the men that did not survive or return. Show them the slide of names and wait whilst they look to see if their chosen man from their 'family' is listed.

8) The Plaque

Explain that the families of the people who lived there campaigned to get a plaque mounted on the site of the street because they felt it was important that people remembered. Show them an image of the plaque (Slide 8) and discuss what remembrance' may mean .

Resources

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/britain-at-war/6182767/Bravest-little-street-in-England-honoured.html>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Chapel-Street-Bravest-Little-England/dp/0750970421>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01sm2k8>

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