



INTRODUCTION

Before the performance of the play, spend a few minutes discussing what the pupils know about WW1, including life in the trenches. You could then explain that the class will be exploring the lives of some of the young men who went to school in Campbell College, Belfast and who joined up to fight between 1914 and 1918. This could lead to a description of the Men Behind the Glass project at the school where information uncovered by researchers meant that today we know more about the young men from the school who died fighting in the war.

The play details the life of one pupil/soldier, Robert McConnell and one of the only female teachers at the school 100 years ago, Miss Margaret Boal. It is based on information gathered through archival research about what Campbell College was like 100 years ago and real letters sent home by Robert before his death at the age of 21.

This workshop is designed for whole class participation and can be held in a large space, like a school hall, or in a classroom as long as there is ample space for pupils to work through written tasks and practical exercises.

For more information see: <https://menbehindtheglass.co.uk/>

RESOURCES NEEDED

- A school hall or classroom with enough space for pupils to engage in writing tasks and practical exercises.
- A play script (included within this pack).
- Four, brown paper wrapped boxes addressed to a soldier including typical WW1 care package items such as socks, knitted gloves, boiled sweets, Oxo cubes, family pictures.
- Half face portraits of some of the 'Men Behind the Glass' (included within this pack).
- Acrostic Trench Poem worksheet (included within this pack).
- Half finished letters to friends and family (included within this pack).
- A packet of postal tags

PERFORMANCE

The play can be performed or read aloud to the class by two pupils who feel confident in using different voices for the characters included in the story. While the stage directions contained within the script detail costumes worn, it is not a necessary requirement.

The play provides information on the life of pupils at Campbell College 100 years ago as well as details on the life and war journey of Robert McConnell. The performance of it will allow pupils to engage with this past through the experience of two people whose lives will be investigated throughout the workshop.

TASK 1: CHARACTER SCULPTING

Ask pupils to respond to Robert's story by prompting them to remember key moments of his life and how he might have been feeling at these times. This will encourage pupils to identify **adjectives** to describe Robert's emotions at various times of his life such as **proud, scared, homesick**.

Tell pupils that they are going to work in pairs to visually represent Robert at a moment in his life with one individual serving as the 'sculptor,' who moves the other individual serving as the 'clay,' into position. This exercise will allow pupils to explore how emotions can be displayed through body language and facial expression.

First, model the task using the pupils who played the roles of Robert and Miss Boal in the play. Ask 'Robert' to stand in a **neutral** position (ie hands by their side, looking straight ahead) Ask 'Miss Boal' to choose a moment from Robert's life and then physically shape 'Robert's' body into a position that would demonstrate his action at this moment eg. feet together, head up, hand up to the side of the head in a salute to show a moment from his life in the army.

Then split the class into pairs and ask each pair to play the role of either sculptor or model. Each sculptor should base their creation on a moment from Robert's life. Facial expressions should be modelled by the sculptor and copied by the model. Ideally, this exercise should be done without speaking.

Once all the models have been created, they should remain frozen while the sculptors walk about their newly created gallery. Ask the sculptors to describe what they see and make inferences and connections between the sculptures. Afterwards, the pupils can switch roles.

TASK 2: WHOLE CLASS TABLEAU

Tell pupils that you are going to explore how school life has changed in the last 100 years. Ask them to recall some of the details from the script about what Robert's experience of school was like 100 years ago and compare that to their experience today.

Invite pupils to show through their body language some of the activities that they carry out during a typical school day by asking them to recreate a typical playground scene at break-time. This task should be teacher led and pupils will volunteer to come up into the space to strike a pose in an action of an activity they might engage in during a typical break time. Pupils will then be invited to add to the scene one at a time to build up a picture until you run out of space or volunteers.

Those pupils who did not become involved in the tableau can comment on what they can see in this **still image, freeze-frame or tableau**.

Next, explain to the class that you are going to use a technique called **thought-tracking**. While the pupils are frozen in the image, explain that when you tap them on the shoulder you would like them to speak the thoughts or feelings of their character aloud. This exercise allows pupils to verbally express their understanding of characters and situations and they will gain confidence to speak in front of others.

Repeat the task with the class creating a picture of life at school 100 years ago.

TASK 3: SMALL GROUP WORK

In this task, the class will be split into a number of small groups in order to build up a profile of a soldier based upon various items in a care package. This information will then be used by the group to create three tableaux which represent three moments from their soldier's life.

Each group's box can contain a combination of items that would have been typically found in a WW1 care package including socks, gloves, family pictures, Oxo cubes, boiled sweets, soap, candles and tea.

Each box should also contain a number of writing and art tasks. These tasks are available in the PRACTICAL RESOURCES within this pack for downloading and photocopying. Give pupils ample time to discuss the significance of the items in the care package and complete the unfinished articles in order to build a profile of their soldier.

After 15 minutes, ask each group to begin to shape their **tableaux** for presentation. Tell pupils that each member of their group must be involved in all three **tableaux**. Explain to them that they must create scenes from their soldier's life including at school and at war and that the script will be built from the letters and poems that they have written. Some pupils can also use **thought-tracking** to articulate the thoughts and feelings of the characters within their **tableaux**.

WHOLE CLASS PRESENTATION

Each group will present their tableaux in succession, creating a whole class performance to which every pupil will contribute. This will be an opportunity for pupils to present their research in dramatic form, read aloud their letters and poems and also give those pupils who wish, a chance to improvise their own lines.

PLENARY

Ask pupils to spend some minutes reflecting on what they discovered about the life of young men 100 years ago as they went from 'classmates to comrades' during WW1. Remind them to focus on what they learned about their soldier from the care package and what the clues told them about their family and their time in the trenches.

Tell pupils that they will write a message to a WW1 soldier. This message could be written from the point of view of a pupil 100 years ago to a fellow pupil in the trenches or it could be written from today to the past. These messages will be written on postal tags which will be placed into the Time Traveller suitcase/trunk. The postal tags could also be used as part of a remembrance display.