



Princess Mary Christmas Box, Distributed to all British Empire service members in 1914-1915

Online Collections Database, 2015.75.1a, www.theworldwar.org/research/database. National WWI Museum and Memorial. Online.

Christmas Truce: Crafting a Reader's Theater

Recommended Grade Levels: 6-12

Course/Content Area(s): History, ELA

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LESSON OVERVIEW:	Through a mixture of historical analysis, critical media literacy skills, and creativity, students will discover how soldiers at war could find camaraderie across a battlefield. Students will use a variety of primary and secondary sources about the 1914 Christmas Truce to craft characters and dialogue into a reader's theater.
OBJECTIVES:	<i>Students will:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will analyze primary sources, such as letters, diaries, and photographs, to gain insights into the experiences of soldiers in the trenches during December 1914. ● Students will read secondary source information, such as children's books, journal articles, and other written works about the Christmas Truce. ● Students will synthesize information and create characters and dialogue that will successfully tell the story of the Christmas Truce in the form of a reader's theater. ● Explore and research using an online museum exhibition.
STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:	<p>National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Framework Standards:</p> <p>D3.1.6-8 Gather relevant information from multiple sources while using the origin, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources to guide the selection.</p> <p>D2.His.8.9-12. Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.</p> <p>Common Core English Language Arts State Standards:</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.</p>
TIME NEEDED:	2-3 45-minute class periods
INTERDISCIPLINARY:	ELA, Performing Arts
PRIOR KNOWLEDGE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students should have a basic understanding of WWI, its causes, who was fighting, and where fighting was occurring.

MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planning Your Reader’s Theater Assignment ● Various children’s books about the Christmas Truce ● Various examples of reader’s theater ● National WWI Museum and Memorial: The Christmas Truce, Winter 1914
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LESSON

PRE-ASSESSMENT/INTRODUCTION/HOOK:

- Use a children’s book about the Christmas Truce as an introductory hook. Some choices include:
 - *The Christmas Truce A Place Where Peace Was Found* by Hilary Robinson & Martin Impey
 - *Silent Night, Holy Night* - Narrated by Walter Cronkite
- Show video clip - [Sainsbury Commercial](#) from Christmas 2014
- [Silent Night Edpuzzle Clip](#)

After each version of the truce, ask students to list the various characteristics that the enemy soldiers had in common with one another. Then, list differences between the two sides. Which list is bigger? Could any of these things that they have in common seem more important than allegiance to one’s country? What might happen if they see humanity in one another?

DIRECTIONS:

Part 1: Exploring the Exhibition

- Introduce students to the online exhibit offered by the National WWI Museum & Memorial. Show the [introductory video clip](#) with Jay Winter.
- Divide students into small groups. Assign each group one of the remaining parts of the online exhibit introduction: *Myth or Reality?*, *Christmas Truce*, and *An Ancient Tradition in an Industrial War*. Each group should read the brief essay for their part and then discuss. After small group discussion, have each group share a fact or two from their discussion with the whole group.

Part 2: What is Reader’s Theater

- Explain to students that they will be drafting a reader’s theater about the Christmas Truce that would help to teach elementary aged students about this unique event from WWI. A reader’s theater is a script developed from narrative in which parts are read aloud rather than acted out; no costumes or props are required. The script should tell a story that helps the listener understand and picture what’s happening. [Here’s an example of a professional version](#). What can students create that would be accessible for elementary students to be able to understand this unique event from WWI?
- Choose an example reader’s theater or two for students to get a better understanding of what they will be creating about the Christmas Truce. Here’s a [helpful website](#) for examples of plays about events in American history.

Part 3: In-Depth Research & Crafting a Script

- Students should create characters and dialogue that are based on primary source material and will tell the narrative of the truce. In small groups, students should use the [Explore Incidents tab](#) of the online exhibit. Students can use [this graphic organizer](#) to help organize dialogue and plot.
- Other helpful websites for research
 - [Imperial War Museums Collection](#)
 - [The UK National Archives](#)
 - [Library of Congress](#)

Part 4: Performing the Reader’s Theater

- Student groups will share their scripts by doing a reading of the narrative with the entire class. Students can evaluate one another’s choice of character and dialogue as they read through each script.

POST-ASSESSMENT:

After each group’s version has been shared, ask students which elements of the story were most commonly included. Were there some elements that appeared in every version of the story? What made those elements so important? Were there any elements in your own version, not included in the other versions that you strongly feel should be included? Why?

MODIFICATIONS/ACCOMMODATIONS

For struggling students, provide a list of possible characters and a timeline of events during the Christmas Truce to use as a frame for the script.