

**National Service Remembered**

**History**

**National Curriculum KS2**



**Same but  
Different**

# Overview

Below is a suggested lesson plan to support National Curriculum learning for History using our 'National Service Remembered' resource pack.

If used in conjunction with History, the 'National Service Remembered' resource would offer a unique, localised tool for learning about Britain's past, as well as the wider role Britain played in the world. One of the core topics for Key Stage 2 learning reflects on 'Challenges for Britain' from 1901 until the present day. Using 'National Service Remembered' as a resource, issues that could be explored include:

- why did Great Britain need to conscript men into the armed forces from 1947 until 1963?
- What role did WW2 play in this?
- What did the decision to end National Service mean in the broader global historical context?

Part of learning about history is the importance of learning about the complexity of people's lives, the process of change and diversity of societies.

The PowerPoint presentation introduces students to National Service, beginning with an overview of what National Service was and the kind of experiences that all conscripts shared. Following this, a trailer for the entire project provides a more visual introduction to National Service. We also use an excerpt from one of our veterans to contrast with the overview.

## SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN

### Slide 1 to 5 (Introduction)

We suggest that these slides be read to the class by the teacher.

### Slide 3

"The term 'National Service' comes from the United Kingdom's National Service (Armed Forces) Act from 1939. National Service means that you have to sign up to government service, usually within the military. Signing up for National Service is also known as 'conscript'."

"After the Second World War, the young men of Britain were needed. In 1947, the National Service Act was brought into force. This Act meant that all healthy men from 17 to 30 years old were required to serve in the armed forces for 18 months, and remain on the reserve list for 4 years. Men were only exempt from National

Service if they worked in one of the three 'essential services', or if they had health issues."

## Slide 4

"All National Service conscripts were asked to attend medical assessments, after which they were sent for 6 weeks of basic training in the British Army. Once the conscripts arrived at their training base, they were issued with their uniform and equipment, and training could begin.

After basic training, National Service conscripts served in a variety of roles across the Armed Forces and, as well as serving at home, many Servicemen were posted to one of Britain's many garrisons around the world. An overseas posting also often meant that the conscripts saw active service."

## Slide 5

The trailer for the 'National Service Remembered' project can now be played.

## Slide 6 (Task)

National Service learning:

The focus of this lesson is to reflect on some of the 'Challenges for Britain', from 1901 until the present day. Why did Great Britain need to conscript men into the armed forces from 1947 until 1963? And what was it like for those men?

RECAP:

It is important to understand that the end of the Second World War did not bring an end to British military commitments abroad. Britain still needed to maintain her diminishing Empire, occupy post-war Germany and Japan, and to try to re-establish influence in the world, particularly in the Middle East. To solve this manpower shortage and meet new post-war challenges, wartime conscription was extended into an obligatory period of National Service for men of military age.

REFLECTION/PARTNER TALK – suggested questions:

- 1) After the Second World War, do you think people felt a sense of duty to serve their crown and country like their fathers had?
- 2) What do you imagine life was like in 1947?
- 3) Can you imagine what it would be like to be forced to sign up in this way, to have to do something for 18 months of your life?

## Slide 7 (Task)

Students could take turns to read the excerpt from Ivan Russ aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

*Ivan Russ – “I knew I had to do my service unless I was physically unfit. It was a pity because I’d completed my apprenticeship and being deprived a man’s wage, but in retrospect it was the best thing because I was a country boy down in Devonshire and I was then thrown into the British mix of people my own age, and that was eye opening. When you hear about lads that grew up in Glasgow and the room was separated by a curtain stapled to the ceiling to separate one family from the other, it makes you think a bit.*

*I got the train up to London, then to Cardington in Bedfordshire, just for a few days to get my uniform and then I went up to Wilmslow in Cheshire for square-bashing.*

*It’s all shouting, trying to reduce you mentally, change your attitude. I think our generation knew we had to do things and the easiest way was to just accept it and get on with it, but we knew that trade training was going to be easier.*

*After square-bashing I was sent down Yatesbury to train as a radar operator (I knew nothing about radar) and sadly, that meant that I was stuck in the UK. I ended up in Portland, which was a very nice posting. The billets were nice, relatively new, plenty of bathroom facilities. The camaraderie was great, we used to leg pull and it was always fun, a much more relaxed atmosphere.”*

## Slide 8 (Task)

REFLECTION/PARTNER TALK – suggested questions:

- 1) Can you imagine experiencing what Ivan Russ did?
- 2) Why do you think National Service ended?
- 3) Do you think we could re-introduce it today, or is our world a very different place?

WRITING:

Write a postcard home – remember to first think about where you are writing from, maybe your first Army Barracks (time and place), and reflect on why what you are doing is important for your family, community and country (historical context).

Students could use our postcards as inspiration for their own.

## Slides 9 to 13 (Finish)

### NATIONAL SERVICE MEDIA

Chose a video and a song to share with the class. We have added two of each for you to choose from. Please see times for each item below to help you plan.

John Harvey Video: 3 minutes 37 seconds

Mike Turner Video: 3 minutes 18 seconds

'This is the Army, Mr Jones': 2 minutes 15 seconds

'If I give my heart to you' 2 minutes 47 seconds

Finally, there is also a great video that was created by Blue Peter and features Matt Baker from the One Show. This video is 8 minutes 45 seconds.