

The Women's Peace Petition

Preliminary Activities

The story of the Women's Peace Petition is an amazing and inspiring story in its own right. It does, however, require learners to think themselves back into a very different era and involves complex issues such as understanding what peace is at different levels and how ordinary people can bring about change.

The aim of the activities in this section are to support learners in thinking through and experiencing some of the issues and gaining a better understanding of the context in which the Women's Peace Petition happened.



Activity 1

What does Peace mean to you?

Ask learners to work in small groups with large sheets of paper, post-its, pens and pencils. Say that we are going to explore what peace means to us. Ask them to portray this in whatever way they want – e.g. through images or words. Supporting PowerPoint slides are available if these are helpful.

When learners have finished, encourage them to walk round the classroom without talking to take in what other learners have drawn / written. This can be followed up by a circle discussion, including questions such as:



- 1 What do people's pictures / words have in common?
- 2 What makes a particular place peaceful?
- 3 What does it feel like to be peaceful?
- 4 What do we need for there to be peace?
(e.g. safety, respect, communication, listening, support...)

Say that learners will be looking at a story soon which involves thinking about peace at different levels – locally, nationally and internationally.

Activity 2

Peacekeeping, Peace-making, Peace-building

Put these words up for learners to see – and ask: what do you think the difference is between these three roles? Think- pair-share: ask learners to share ideas.

In small groups, give learners a series of visuals showing people taking on different roles in society. Ask them to 'sort' the visuals according to whether the people concerned are Peacekeepers, Peace-makers or Peace-builders. (Some of the people in the pictures may fit into more than one category!).

What qualities do they think these people need to play their roles effectively?

Learners share their findings. Some conclusions may be:

- **Peacekeeping** is about keeping order and sometimes keeping people apart for their own safety or wellbeing;
- **Peacemaking** tends to involve getting people together to 'sort things out', but often involves a third person (e.g. mediator);
- **Peace-building** – this is about giving people the skills to sort things out for themselves and creating conditions where people can be peaceful (e.g. fairness, safety, access to good food and health care....)

Sometimes the same people can take on different roles (e.g. parents, teachers).

Some questions to discuss:

- 1 Which of these is the most common?
- 2 Which is the most effective?
- 3 If there's a falling out at school or at home, how is this usually dealt with?
- 4 What do you think would be helpful so that conflict is solved in positive ways?
- 5 What can we all do to make sure that our home / school/ community is more peaceful?

Activity 3

Exploring life in the 1920s in Wales:

Learning about the Women's Peace Petition means that learners have to transport themselves back to a very different period in history. There are some activities on page 12 of the pack which support learners in doing this, but here are some further ideas.

A Use photos from the internet showing what towns and villages looked like in the 1920s. What do the photos show? (You could ask learners to look at things like shops [no supermarkets], modes of transport, adverts, fashions....

B Going on an imaginary journey: Ask learners to close their eyes and imagine they are in a time machine which is going to take them back to 1923. Ask them to imagine they are lying in bed in their home. Ask them to open their eyes and look around.

What do they see? (e.g. Any duvet? Any central heating? What kind of lighting?)

Now take them through a day in the 1920s: what do they have for breakfast? How do they get to school and what is school like? Where do their parents work – or does their mum stay at home? What do they do in the evening / at week-ends? (e.g listening to the wireless / playing outside / going to chapel). Ask groups to come together and reflect on the things that feel very different from 100 years ago.

C Creating a timeline: It might help learners to put the period in context by looking at the accompanying timelines. They could create a visual timeline by mapping out key events and inventions over the decades from 1918 to 1950. This may help to understand what people in 1920s Wales didn't have and what that meant for everyday life.

For instance, if many homes still didn't have electricity, how were homes lit? Without television, how did people amuse themselves in the evening or at week-ends? Might people in their town / village have been struggling to find work in a society already depleted because of the War? What might have been preoccupying people at the time?



Activity 4

Reactions to War:

The women who developed the Women's Peace Petition wanted passionately to prevent another world war because they had seen for themselves the devastating consequences of World War I.

Not everyone was against World War I, however, and there may have been mixed reactions in society afterwards. Ask learners to work in small groups, and hand out a set of the cards below to each group.

Ask them to consider:

- 1 Who is this person, do you think?
- 2 How are they feeling about the war and what happened since?
- 3 Can you explain their feelings?
- 4 What might you say to this person in a conversation?

Learners can then 'take on' the role of one of the cards and have a conversation.

You worked in the mines until War broke out in 1914.

At that point, you wanted to go and fight to show your family you must fight for what you believe in. You're proud of your efforts and your family are too.

You're the owner of the Pembrey complex (an ammunitions factory). When the war broke out, you had to make more weapons and lots of women came to work in the factory because the men had gone to the Front. Now it's over, your workforce is men again. How do you feel about that?

You were in charge of cooking, cleaning and looking after your children until 1917. At that point, you had to go into the factory to help with the war effort. You rather liked it because you were able to earn a wage and be more independent. Now it's back to 'normal'. How do you feel?

You are a teacher working in Aberystwyth.

You weren't expected to go to fight in the war because of the important work you were doing but sometimes you feel that you should have been able to join up. So many of your friends didn't come back.

You have seen the impact of the war on so many of the people in your community.

So many people in the village have lost brothers, fathers and sons or people have come back disabled. You want to make sure it never happens again.

In chapel you've always been taught that it's wrong to kill and you genuinely don't think you could kill another human being.

When the call-up came, you refused to join up. You had to go before a tribunal and spent time in prison because of your beliefs. It's now hard for you to get a job.

Conscientious Objectors (people who objected to war on religious, political or moral grounds) were very badly treated in World War I. You can find stories about Conscientious Objectors [here](#) (Primary) and [here](#) (Secondary) as well as a series of short films [here](#).

Activity 5

Who were the Women?

This activity will require internet access. Go to the page entitled ["Inspired by Annie": The Story of the 1923 Welsh Women's Peace Petition to America](#) on the Welsh Centre for International Affairs' website. There is more information about 3 of the women under Section 5.

- i** Look at the information given about Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths, Mary Ellis and Elined Prys and their photographs.
- ii** Discuss first in small groups then as a class:
 - A** What strikes you about these women?
 - B** What skills and experiences did they have?
 - C** What advantages did they have?
What may have been their obstacles?



Creating Portraits of the Women:

A more creative activity would be to ask learners to make portraits of the main 'characters' either through drawing, or with textiles or painting.

Ask them to use speech or thought bubbles to put themselves in the women's shoes and to represent what these characters might have been thinking at the start of the women's peace petition campaign. Who were they? What were their backgrounds and achievements? What were they concerned about, do you think? What did they want to achieve for the future? An example is given below:

Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths:

Who I am
.....
Where I come from
.....
What I did before 1923

I am concerned about...

I would like to make sure that ...

Now ask the learners to do the same for Mary Ellis and Elined Prys.

If they were able to make a difference, what would they like to achieve?
What would they like to do for the next generation?